

THE GREAT INSCRIPTION OF ARGISTIS ON THE ROCK OF VAN

TRANSLATED BY THE EDITOR

THE following inscription is engraved in cuneiform characters, but in the Vannic language, on the face of the cliff on which stands the castle of Van in Armenia. It records the conquests of Argistis, the son and successor of Menuas, who widely extended the empire of Bianias or Van in the early part of the eighth century B.C., at a time when Assyria was in a state of weakness. The Vannic armies marched victoriously in all directions, and even threatened the frontiers of Assyria. As will be seen from the Assyrian Chronicle, of which a translation is given in the *Records of the Past*, new series, ii. p. 123, the reign of Shalmaneser III was mainly spent in war with Ararat or Armenia. His successor, Assur-dân, seems to be referred to by Argistis in this inscription (No. ii. 52).

The inscriptions of which the text is composed are cut below the site of the citadel built by Sarduris I, the founder of the Vannic monarchy (B.C. 840). They begin to the right of a small chamber ex-

cavated in the western face of the rock at the commencement of a flight of twenty steps. Above the steps are the three first inscriptions (I, II, and III), which are divided from one another by vertical lines, and should properly be regarded as the three columns of one and the same inscription. Turning a corner at the end of the steps we reach the entrance into a series of five sepulchral chambers. To the left of the entrance are inscriptions IV, V, and VII, while above it is the mutilated inscription VI, and on the right inscription VIII.

The inscriptions were first copied by Prof. F. E. Schulz, and published in the *Journal Asiatique*, 3d series, ix. 52, in 1840. They were again copied by Sir A. H. Layard in 1850, whose variant readings were published by myself in 1882, and also by Dr. L. de Robert in 1876. The copies of the latter, however, are not trustworthy. Squeezes of the inscriptions have further been taken by M. Deyrolles, and are preserved in the Louvre, where they have been examined by M. Stanislas Guyard.

The inscriptions were first deciphered by myself in 1882, and translations published in my Memoir on "The Cuneiform inscriptions of Van" in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, xiv. 3, pp. 571-623. Corrections and improvements were subsequently made in the translations by M. Stanislas Guyard, Prof. D. H. Müller, and myself, and were embodied in a paper I contributed to the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, xx. 1, in 1888. The

following version brings them up to the present level of our knowledge of the ancient language of Van. For a description of the latter reference may be made to the *Records of the Past*, new series, i. p. 163.

The great inscription of Argistis is the prototype of the similar historical inscription carved by Darius Hystaspis on the rock of Behistun, and may have suggested the latter to the Persian king. At all events the bilingual inscription of Xerxes, which is engraved on the south side of the cliff of Van, expressly states that it was his father Darius who had originally intended to have it made.

The inscriptions which follow are numbered XXXVII, XXXVIII, XXXIX, XL, XLI, XLII, XLIII, and XLIV in my Memoir on the Vannic texts.

THE GREAT HISTORICAL INSCRIPTION OF ARGISTIS

No. I¹

1. One says: This [is the record of the conquest] of countries
2. (and) cities [which has been made]. Argistis says:
3. By the command of KHALDIS,² the lord, TEISBAS³ (and) ARDINIS,⁴
4. the company of the great (gods) of (my) people,
5. the same year I collected (my) chariots⁵ (and) troops.
6. On approaching the king who is the son of Diaves⁶ I overthrew the king the son of Diaves,
7. I conquered (him). The cities of the country of SERIAZIS I burned. The palaces I dug up. On departing
8. out of the city of PUTIS I removed the *princes* (?) of the countries of BIAS (and) KHUSAS (and) the *priests* (?) of the land of TARIUS.⁷

¹ No. xxxvii of my Memoir.

² Khaldis was the supreme god of Van. Each Vannic state had, moreover, its own local Khaldis, and these local deities were collectively known as "the Khaldises." The other divinities were regarded as the "children of Khaldis."

³ The Air-god, identified with the Assyrian Rimmon.

⁴ The Sun-god.

⁵ Or, perhaps "baggage."

⁶ This was in the country which adjoined the western frontier of Biainas or Van, near the modern Melasgerd. It is called Dayaeni, or "belonging to Diaves," in the Assyrian inscriptions. The name of Diaves is also written Diaus. In the time of Menuas "the son of Diaus" was called Udhupursis (Sayce, xxx. 12), and it is probable that it was the same prince who opposed Argistis.

⁷ Tarius, which means "powerful," may not be a proper name. In this case, we should translate: "the powerful country."

9. On approaching the people of ZABAKHAS I conquered the district of ZABAKHAS.
10. On departing out of the city of UZINABITARNAS, out of the country of 'SIRIMUTARAS, a distant land,
11. the *priests* (?) of the city of MAQALTUS in the land of IGAS I removed. After taking away the lands that belong to the son of Erias,
12. on approaching the country of ABUNIS, I conquered the city of UREYUS, the royal city, together with the inhabitants (namely)
13. 19,255 children, 10,140 men alive, (and) 23,280 women ;
14. in all, 52,675 persons¹ partly I slew, partly I took alive.
15. I carried off 1104 horses, 35,016 oxen, (and) 1,001,829 sheep.
16. Argistis says : This (is) the spoil of the cities² (which) I obtained for the people of KHALDIS³ in one year.
17. To the KHALDISES I prayed, to the supreme powers who have given the country of the son of Abiliyanis⁴
18. (and) the country of Ultuzais the relative of Qudhurzas⁵ of the country of ANISTIR as a present to the race of Argistis.
19. To KHALDIS, the giver, to the KHALDISES, the supreme, the givers, the children of KHALDIS the mighty,
20. I prayed, (even to the gods) of Argistis the son of Menuas ; to the KHALDISES I brought offerings.
21. Argistis says : I have conquered the districts of the country of ETIUS. On departing out of the country of E[TIUS],
22. out of the land of Uduris⁶ the ETIUIAN, men and women I carried off. Argi[stis] says :

¹ Literally "5 myriads, 2675 of the men of the year."

² Or, "for the city." ³ The inhabitants of the Vannic kingdom.

⁴ If the name belongs to the Vannic language it would signify "one who belongs to the place of fire."

⁵ The name is written Katarzas by Menuas (Sayce, xxxi. 11) and also by Argistis further on (No. VII. 48) His kingdom had the name of Lusas, and was comprised in the country of Etius. Etius seems to have lain to the north-east of Dayacni, and to have represented the modern Georgia.

⁶ Called Udharus by Menuas (Sayce, xxxi. 2) and also by Argistis further on (No. VII. 52).

23. By the command of KHALDIS the lord, TEISBAS (and) ARDINIS, the company of the great (gods) of the people,
24. the same year,¹ on approaching the country of UMEKU (?) . . .
25. I conquered the countries of URYAS (and) DHAIRTSU[S]; I conquered Muruba . . .
26. I made (his city) a heap of stones.² His spoil for a booty I took. Men (and) women [I carried off].
27. I conquered the city of UBARU-GILDUS, the royal [city of Muruba . . .]
28. After [departing] out of the country of KU(?) . . . RUPIRAS (and) out of the country of TARRA . . .
29. on [approaching] the city of ID . . . KU . . . AUS the stones and [spoil I took away];
30. the men and women [I carried off].
31. I conquered the country of IRKI . . .
32. After departing [out of] . . .
33. on approaching the country of ARTARMU . . .
34. the slaves [I] seized³ . . .
35. the cities . . .
36. [On] departing [out of] . . .
37. out of . . .
38. 3 . . . children,
39. 10,000 . . . women,
40. in all, 20,279 men of the year,
41. partly I slew,
42. partly alive
43. I took.

No. II⁴

1. [I carried away] 128(0) [horses, . . .] oxen
2. (and) 1,200,6(00) [sheep. Argistis says:]
3. This [is the spoil of the cities⁵ which I obtained] for the people of KHALDIS,

¹ We must read *sa-a-li-e*, "year."

² This seems to be the meaning of the phrase *gari-ni gar-bi*. That *garbê* (with the plural affix *bê*) signified "stones" we know from the determinative prefixed to it.

³ 'Su-[bi].

⁴ No. XXXVIII of my Memoir.

⁵ Or "for the city."

4. which belongs to Argistis . . . the city.
5. To the KHALDISES [I] prayed, [to the powers supreme, who have given] the land of the HITTITES,¹
6. who have given [the kingdom] of Khite-ruadas [as a present] to the race of Argistis.
7. To KHALDIS, the giver, to the KHALDISES [the supreme, the givers, to the children of KHALDIS the] mighty,
8. Argistis the son of Menuas says: By [the command of KHALDIS] the lord,
9. TEISBAS (and) ARDINIS, the gods [of the country of] BIAINAS,²
10. [the company of the] great (gods) of the people, the gods have prospered³ me.
11. Argistis the son of [Menuas] says:
12. I have brought offerings to the KHALDISES. . . . On approaching the land of the HITTITES
13. I conquered the country of NIRIBA⁴; I overthrew the land of . . . URMAS; all the plunder of it
14. for a spoil I took. The city of . . . ADAS, the royal city, I captured
15. for the children of KHALDIS, the mighty ones. On approaching the country of the HITTITES
16. the *priests* (?) of the land of the son of Tualas (and) the *princes* (?) of the city of MALIDHÂ⁵ I removed.
17. On departing out of the city of PILAS [I changed its] name. [I crossed ?] the *ford* (?) of the river:
18. I deported the men (and) women of the countries of MARMUAS (and) QA. . . .

¹ *Khâte*.

² Bianas, also written Bianas, was the native name of the district in which the capital of the Vannic kingdom stood. Through the Byana of Ptolemy the name has passed into the modern Van. Van is now the name of the city which in Vannic times was called Dhuspas, while Tosp, the modern representative of Dhuspas, is now the name of the district.

³ *Khasi-al-me*, a compound of *khasu*, "conquer," and *al*, "increase," and so meaning "to increase conquest."

⁴ The Nirbi or "lowlands" of the Assyrian inscriptions in the neighbourhood of Diarbekir; see *Records of the Past*, new series, ii. p. 146, note 1.

⁵ Melidha is the Melidi of the Assyrian inscriptions, the modern Malatiyeh.

19. The palaces I dug up, the cities I [burned]; 25[2]9 children,
20. 8[8]98 men alive, (and) 10,847 women [I took];
21. in all [22,]274 men of the year, partly I slew, partly alive I took;
22. . . . horses, 17,942 oxen (and) 2 . . . sheep I [carried off],
23. [Argistis the son of] Me[nuas says]: This (is)
24. the spoil [of the cities] which I [obtained] for the people of KHALDIS in one year.
25. [To the KHALDISSES I prayed, to the powers] supreme who have given the land of the ETIUIANS,
26. [who have given] the land [of Uduris] as a present to the race of Argistis;
27. [to KHALDIS the giver, to the KHALDISSES the supreme], the givers,
28. [to the children of KHALDIS the mighty I prayed, even to the gods of Argistis] the son of Menuas.
29. [To the KHALDISSES I brought offerings. Argistis says:]
30.
31. I carried off
32. [as well as sheep. Argistis the son of Menuas] says:
33. the gracious [gods]
34. all its [plunder]
35. [for a spoil I carried away.] . . . I destroyed them.
36. I destroyed them.
37. Argistis
38. [the son of Menuas] says: [By the command of KHALDIS, the lord,] TEISBAS (and) ARDINIS,
39. the gods of BIANAS, the company of the great (gods) [of the people],
40. the gods have prospered (me). The same [year on approaching] the people of UBURDAS
41. I conquered the lands of the inhabitants of UBURDAS the kingdom of Isluburas.
42. [The city] of IRDUAS, the royal city, I captured. The country of UISUSIS I ravaged.
43. I deported the men and women that belonged to them. On approaching the people of KHAKHIAS

44. the palaces I dug up, the cities I burned. The city of Br . . KHAUNIS
45. (and) the inhabitants I burned with fire ; [8648] children, 2655 men, alive,
46. (and) 8497 women, [in all] 19,790 persons of the year
47. partly I slew, partly I took [alive] ; 232 horses,
48. . . 803 [oxen] (and) 1(?)1,626 sheep [I carried away].
49. [Argistis] says : This (is)
50. the spoil of the cities (which) I have obtained for the people of KHALDIS.
51. To the KHALDISES I prayed, to the powers supreme,
52. who have given the lands of Har'sitas,¹
53. who have given the armies of ASSYRIA,
54. as a present to the race of Argistis.
55. Argistis
56. the son of Menuas says :
57. The citizens of ASSYRIA

No. III²

1. occupied part of the country. I assembled (my) armies.
2. By the command of KHALDIS, the lord, TEISBAS (and) ARDINIS the gods of BIAINAS,
3. the company of the great (gods) of the people, the gods have prospered (me).
4. Argistis [says] : For KHALDIS the giver, for the KHALDISES the supreme, the givers,
5. for the children of KHALDIS, [the great] ones, the possessions of the family of Dadis³ of the land of KULASIS, a distant country,
6. [I] acquired . . 31,439 children of them . . .
7. . . . I carried off. I carried away (also) the tribes of the country.

¹ This seems an attempt to represent the name of the Assyrian king Assurdân.

² Sayce, xxxix.

³ Dadis seems to have derived his name from the god Dadi. As Dadi was the king of Khubuskia in the time of Samas-Rimmon (B.C. 820), it is probable that it is his descendants who are here referred to by Argistis.

8. The same [year, on approaching the cities of MENABSUS (and) DUQAMAIS
9. [I captured the city of . . .] the royal [city]; the country I conquered.
10. of the city of SATIRARAS¹ in the country of BUSTUS.¹
11. [On approaching] the countries of . . . KHUBILUIS,
12. [BA]RUATAIS and BARSUAIS,²
13. I carried away the population of [BARSU]AIS; the cities I burned.
14. [In all,] 5(c)40 men of the year
15. [part]ly [I] slew, partly I took alive.
16. 977 oxen
17. (and) . . . sheep [I carried off].
18. [Argistis says:] This (is)
19. [the] spoil [of the cities] which [I have obtained] for the people of KHALDIS in one year.
20. To the KHALDISES [I prayed], to the mighty powers,
21. who have given the country of ASSYRIA, who have given the countries of . . . (and) BUSTUS,
22. a powerful country,³ as a present to the race of Argistis.
23. To the children of KHALDIS, the great ones, Argistis says:
24. After restoring the palaces of the country of SURISILIS⁴ I settled (in them)
25. the soldiers of ASSYRIA who had occupied part of (my) land.
26. By the command of KHALDIS, the lord, TEISBAS (and) ARDINIS
27. the gods of BIAINAS, the company of the great (gods) of the people,

¹ We learn from the Assyrian monuments that Bustus lay to the west or south-west of Lake Urumiyeh. Satiraras is the Sitivarya of the Black Obelisk inscription of Shalmaneser (line 184).

² The Par'suas of the Assyrian texts which was situated on the south-western shores of Lake Urumiyeh. The Parthians may have derived their name from it. We learn from an inscription of Sarduris II, the son and successor of Argistis, that Baruatais adjoined the country of Babilus.

³ Or the country of Tarius, a proper name as in i. 8.

⁴ Surisilis was the name of a Hittite city according to Menuas; see *Records of the Past*, new series, p. 166, line 5.

28. the gods have prospered me. Argistis the son of Menuas says :
29. For KHALDIS the giver, for the KHALDISES the supreme, the givers,
30. for the children of KHALDIS the great, I collected the AVERASIANS ;¹
31. the country of ASSYRIA I [took] for a possession ; I I made [it] part of my country.²
32. To DADAS³ the AVERASIAN I apportioned⁴ (it).
33. The same year on approaching the countries of . . .
34. (and) ARKHAVEIS, [the city of . . .], the royal city,
35. (and) 60 (other) cities, (with the) men [and women] I took.
36. On approaching the country of BUSTUS [I conquered the city of Zi]KHARARAS,
37. the city of ABURZIAUS, the city of . . . GIS,
38. (and) the city of QADUQANIUS ; the country I conquered.
39. Argistis says : [On approaching the country of] I carried away.
40. On departing out of the land of the MANÂ⁵ . . . a distant [land]
41. 18, 827 men of the year
42. partly I slew, partly I [took] alive, (as well as) 606 horses,
43. 184 camels, 6257 oxen (and) 33,203 sheep.
44. Argistis the son of Menuas says : This (is)
45. the spoil of the cities (which) I have obtained for the people of KHALDIS in one year.
46. To the KHALDISES I prayed, to the powers supreme,
47. who have given the country of the IYAIANS, who have given the countries of MANÂS⁶ (and) BUSTUS

¹ The word perhaps means "those who dwell by the water."

² This must refer to the Assyrian colonies settled in the north.

³ Not to be identified with the Dadis of line 5.

⁴ *Amâ-bi* connected with *ama-ni* "half" or "share," *amas-tu-bi* "I partitioned."

⁵ The Mannâ of the Assyrian inscriptions, the Minni of the Old Testament (Jer. li. 27.) They adjoined the eastern frontier of the kingdom of Van.

⁶ Or Manâ, also written Manai(s).

48. as a present to the race of Argistis (and) the mighty children of KHALDIS.
49. Argistis says: After I had gathered together the chariots¹ (and) the cavalry,
50. by the command of [KHALDIS] the lord, TEISBAS (and) ARDINIS
51. the gods of [BIAI]NAS, the company of the great (gods)
52. of the people, the gods prospered (me).
53. Argistis the son of Menuas says:
54. For KHALDIS the giver, for the KHALDISES the supreme, the givers,
55. for the children of KHALDIS, the mighty, on approaching
56. the country of the IYAIANS, I conquered the country.
57. The palaces I dug up, the cities I partitioned,
58. The city of ERADHALIS [and the district] belonging to ERADHALIS [I] conquered.
59. Their men [and women I] carried off.
60. The same [year] on approaching the country of the MANAI²
61. [adjoining the land of B]USTUS on the river TURA . . .
62. I made (the cities) heaps of stones; the plunder
63. [for a spoil] I took.
64. Their men I carried away
65. [as well as the] women.

The next six lines are lost.

No. IV³

1. 18,243
2. men of the year
3. partly I slew,
4. partly I took alive,
5. (as well as) 79(0) horses,
6. 100 camels,
7. 22,529 oxen
8. (and) 36,830 sheep.

¹ Or "war-material."

² Usually written Manâ.

³ Sayce, XL.

9. Argistis says :
10. For the people of KHALDIS this
11. (is) the cities'
12. spoil (which)
13. I have obtained in one year.
14. To the KHALDISES I prayed,
15. to the powers supreme,
16. who have given the MINNIANS'
17. country,
18. who have given [the country of IRKI]UNIS
19. as a present
20. to the race of Argistis.
21. To the children of KHALDIS
22. the mighty
23. Argistis
24. says : By the command
25. of KHALDIS the lord,
26. of TEISBAS (and) of ARDINIS
27. the gods of BIANAS,
28. the company of the great (gods)
29. of the people, the gods have prospered me.
30. Argistis
31. the son of Menuas says :
32. For KHALDIS the giver,
33. for the KHALDISES, the supreme, the givers,
34. for the children of KHALDIS the mighty, on approaching
35. the land of the MANAI I conquered the country of
IRKIUNIS.
36. On departing out of the country of ALGAS which be-
longs to ASSYRIA
37. 6471 men of the year partly I slew,
38. partly I took alive, (as well as) 286 horses,
39. 2251 oxen (and) 8205 sheep.
40. Argistis says : This (is)
41. the spoil of the cities (which) I have obtained for the
people of KHALDIS in one year.
42. To the KHALDISES I prayed, to the powers supreme,
43. who have given the country of the MANÂ,
44. who have given the land of BUSTUS as a present

45. to the race of Argistis the son of Menuas.
46. To the mighty children of [KHAL]DIS Argistis
47. says : By the command of KHALDIS, the lord,
48. TEISBAS (and) ARDINIS, the gods of BIANAS,
49. the company of the great (gods) of the people,
50. the gods have prospered me. Argistis
51. the son of Menuas says : For KHALDIS the giver,
52. for the KHALDISES the supreme, the givers, for the
children of KHALDIS
53. the mighty, on approaching the land of BUSTUS,
54. I conquered the country of ASQAYAIS ; I destroyed
the land of SATIRARAUS.
55. The *priests* (?) of the land of UGISTIS I removed,
56. (and) the *princes* (?) of the land of VUSIS. On depart-
ing
57. out of the land of ALADHAIS, a distant country,
58. the country I partitioned ; the cities I dug up ;
59. their men (and) women I carried off ;
60. 1(?)873 men [of the year]
61. partly I slew, partly I took alive,
62. (as well as) . . . 80 horses,
63. . . . camels . . . [oxen],
64. (and) . . . sheep.
65. [Argis]tis says : [For the people] of KHALDIS [this is]
66. the spoil of the cities [which I have obtained in one
year].
67. To the KHALDISES I prayed, to the powers [supreme],
68. who [have given] the countries of MANÂ [and . . .]DIS
69. to the family of Argistis the son of Menuas.
70. To the children of [KHAL]DIS the mighty,
71. [Argis]tis the son of Menuas says :
72. I restored [the district] (which formed) the satrapy of
the son of Argistis,¹

¹ It appears from an inscription of Argistis found at Armavir on the Araxes (Sayce, lxviii) that the district which formed the satrapy of the son of Argistis was "cut off" from the land of Lulus. It was included in the territory of the Mana or Minni, which may, therefore, as Prof. Schrader believes, have extended northwards as far as the Araxes and the neighbourhood of Armavir.

73. (and) I took the hostile land of MANÂ, the kingdom of Hazais.¹
74. [I seized] the corn-pits (and) *grain* (?)² of the country of MANÂ.
75. By [the command] of KHALDIS, the lord, TEISBAS
76. [and ARDINIS], the gods of BIANAS,
77. the company of the great (gods) of the people, the gods have prospered (me).
78. Argistis says. . . .
79. belonging to the cavalry (and) belonging to the whole army
80. . . . the corn-pits I approached: I subjugated the country of MANÂ.
81. To the children of KHALDIS, the mighty,

No. V³

1. Ar[gistis the son of Menuas says:]
2. By the command [of KHALDIS the lord, TEISBAS and ARDINIS],
3. the gods [of Bianas], the company [of the great gods]
4. [of the people, the gods have prospered me. My armies I collected.]
5. On approaching the country of URMES⁴ [I conquered]
6. the land. The population I carried away. On departing [out of the land of . . .]
7. the cities I burned, the men (and) women I took to BI[ANAS].
8. (More than) 14,813⁵ of the men of the year partly I slew, partly [I took] alive,

¹ Hazais is elsewhere called Hazas (Sayce, lxviii. 1). A later Aza, according to the Assyrian monuments, was the son of Iranzu, king of the Minni in the early part of the reign of Sargon.

² *K'hailâ-ni*, probably connected with *khai-di-a-ni* and *khai-ti-ni*, "fruit," from *khai*, "to gather in."

³ Sayce, xli.

⁴ We gather from an inscription of Sarduris II (Sayce, xlix) that Urmes lay to the north-east, beyond Babilus and Baruatais.

⁵ One or more wedges are lost at the beginning of the line, so that ten or twenty must be added to the thousands (24,813 or 34,813).

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