Munuscula amicitiae phoenicia et punica

Mélanges d’épigraphie et de philologie phénico-puniques
offerts à
Maria Giulia Amadasi Guzzo

édités par
Riccardo Contini et Felice Israel
The inscription from the first year of King Bodashtart of Sidon's reign: CIS I, 4

(Tab. XII)

José Á. Zamora

The inscriptions of King Bodashtart of Sidon constitute a famous epigraphic group, in many aspects still the object of disagreement. The publication of new readings, the discovery of new information about a lost inscription of the king, and the application of new techniques to the old documentation enable us to review the epigraphic group and study the history of his reign anew. In this first work, we have undertaken to study the Bodashtart inscription known as CIS I, 4 and by so doing wish to pay tribute to Prof. Amadasi, to whom the specialists in Phoenician epigraphy shall be eternally indebted.

1. The CIS I, 4 inscription

The CIS I, 4 inscription, engraved on the surface of an architectonic limestone block, was found in 1858, seemingly in a wall near the Lebanese town of Saida (the former Sidon). Although the inscription was well made, the block was damaged on three of its sides (affecting, above all, the top and bottom of the text, as well as its left side). Donated by Melchior de Vogüé, it is now kept in the Louvre (AO 4838).

The first publication regarding the document is one by Vogüé himself in 1860. The inscription was among the first of those catalogued by the CIS (with an extremely good quality reproduction, fig. 1a) and is, in fact,
included in the main epigraphic repertoires and anthologies. It has been studied by several different authors, who have been faced with various problems of reading and interpretation. A recent re-edition includes new results contrasting with the most common readings and interpretations.

2. The palaeography

Despite the damage to the sides of the block, the surface of the epigraphic field appeared to be in relatively good condition when it was discovered. Where the stone was not broken the text was clearly legible, maintaining great internal coherence (fig. 1). It is possible to observe certain singular palaeographic characteristics in the inscription which would appear to distinguish it from the other remaining ones from the time of Bodashtart's reign. We shall therefore study the palaeography of the whole in a future work, after having studied the rest of the documents.

3. The legible parts

Much of the text was thus clearly legible practically from the moment it was first unearthed. This was, for example, the (integrated) reading of the CIS: 1) byrḫ [-]+mp[\*] bšt m[k] 2) y mlk bdšttr mlk 3) šdam kb{textilm} bdšttr 4) mlk šdam *yt šrn *r[s] 5) [2] l[\*]ly lšttr.

1 In addition to CIS 1, 4, see M. Liedbardski, KI n° 10, 20-21 and ESE II 53; or G. A. Cooke, TNSI 40-42. Not present e.g. in KAI 17 ss., Gibson, TSS III 101 ss. or P. Magalhães, Le iscrizioni fenicie dell'Oriente (Roma 1973) 3 ss.


4 In the aforementioned catalogue of Phoenician art in the Louvre Museum, E. Gubel, Art phénicien, the inscription was edited by P. Bordreuil; see note 2.

5 The most detailed study of the palaeography of the group is still the one by J. B. Peckham, The Development of the Late Phoenician Scripts (Cambridge Mass. 1968) 87-101.
The text commemorates the dedication to Astarte by Bodashtart, “king of the Sidonians”, of a certain construction (following the basic sense of the verb bn). What had been built and dedicated was called šrn (noun introduced by a clear accusative mark), a term that is still under discussion. As a construction, what came to mind was a wall, a part of a building or something similar, even a neighbourhood of the city or, of course, a temple or sanctuary. Given the special presence of the toponym šrn in the inscription of Eshmunazar II, it was also thought that what appeared in the epigraph might be this geographic name or, in its etymological sense, the mention of an “esplanade” or “plain”. It has also been

---

* The problems involved in establishing the succession and chronology of the Sidonian dynasty during the Persian age, and especially those affecting the position and history of Bodashtart’s reign, will be dealt with in a later work. Regarding the expression mlk šdnn and its possible difficulties (in essence, the absence of -y- in šdnn), see Amadasi, in: El Mundo Púnico 48, n. 23; PPGI 147.

---

8 The verb is introduced, as in the Awali River inscription, by the conjunction k (see notes 60-62). It was initially read as whn (d. Vogüé, Mémoire) and, although CIS had already read it correctly as kbn (“difficultium ... whn nec legitur nec congruum est”), from time to time, differing readings and interpretations have since been put forward — trying to find, above all, another kind of structure for the text, even in recent times: see e.g. Eliay, Sidon 58-59: kbl; P. Bordreuil, “A propos de la généalogie de Bodashtart”, Trans 3 (1990) 93-94 and Syria 67, 501: bn, without k (in order to understand a new filiation, actually following some misinterpretations by Dunand). However, the k and the n are clear in all the reproductions and are coherent with the rest of the signs in the text. Moreover, the interpretations resulting from the alternative readings are inconclusive (see A. Lemaire, “Épigraphie”, Trans 4 [1991] 114; Amadasi, RSP 20, 99-10); Bonnet, Or 64, 216-217). Subsequent reinterpretations of kbn with a syntactic or morphological base are not necessary.

---

9 CIS had earlier collected the basic possibilities (“murum ... Sanonem ... planities”). Other early interpretations limited themselves, without contextualising, to known Semitic terms (“notre prince”) moving among conjectures in a general manner later on. See references e.g. in Eliay, Sidon 59.

---

10 Taking into account Hebrew šr and Aramaic š or šwr or šrn. These terms or similar words do not appear in Phoenician (see Bonnet, Or 64, 217, n. 20, with references; the author reminds us of the existence of the unrelated term qf, “wall”, in KAI 7) but a common root could well have given rise to related nouns in Phoenician as well, not yet attested. Amadasi, in: El Mundo Púnico 49, n. 32 uses the same etymology to defend the possibility “enclosure” (“recinto”) and, in any case, to support the idea that it has to do with a construction.

---

11 See e.g. Lidzbarski, KI 20-21; ESE II 53, who interpreted šrn as part of the proper name of the sanctuary (“Saron ist unser Land”), related to what was accomplished by the monarchs; see next note); also Garbini, AION 37, 409 (“edificio sacro”) or Amadasi, in: El mondo punico 48 (“uno specifico tipo di costruzione dedicato ad Astarte in un quartiere preciso”).

---

12 KAI 14: 19 šdš šrn, the "open land" or plain of šrn. Dor and Joppa, "which are in the plain of Sharon", were ceded to Sidon by the Persian King “as a reward for the striking deeds which I [= Eshmunazar] performed” (l. 18-19).

---

13 See e.g. CIS I, 4 and Cooke, TNSI 41 (which justified the use of bn, by means of biblical parallels, understanding “build the plain” in the sense of “build a city on the plain”). More recently Lipiński, Dieux et déesses 64, 136 directly translates šrn “esplanade”. Van den Branden, BMB 13, 90 also suggests a terrain, but by mentioning its delimiting milestones (by means of Akkadian parallels). Eliay, Sidon 60-61 (and now in “An Updated Chronology of the Reigns of Phoenician Kings during the Persian Period (539-333 BCE)”, Trans 32 [2006] 30: “he offered to Ashhtar the Sharon plain”), clearly proposes the toponym.
suggested that it might refer to a commemorative object\textsuperscript{16}. As there are no new data, either direct or indirect, the question must be considered to be as yet undecided, although the meaning of the so-called $\text{šrn}$ as a monumental structure\textsuperscript{17} seems to be clear. The possibility of the word being qualified by the terms following it (in damaged parts of the block) will bring us back to the problem.

4. The damaged parts: the dating formula and its difficulties

The damage sustained by the initial part of the inscription made it difficult to read from the time the block was first discovered. The beginning of a dating formula was clear (as in the Eshmunazar II inscription). Although the first signs of the text (byrk) were not free from damage, the formula made it possible to confirm the mention of a month, with an incomplete name (only the sequence $\text{mp}$ was clearly legible) and the later mention of the corresponding year, also in a fragmentary context.

In 1893, a Phoenician inscription discovered in Lapethos (KA 143) provided the complete attestation of a month name $\text{mp}$\textsuperscript{18}. From then on, most authors considered that the month mentioned was logically $\text{mp}$\textsuperscript{19}. In any case, the reading must be taken as a restoration: The older readings and photographs show that, even shortly after the piece was discovered, it was almost impossible to discern any clear strokes in this area of the inscription. The only thing that is clear is that there is an available space both before and after the visible signs\textsuperscript{20}. Less clear, but discernible, is the existence of some traces of incisions in the space following the letter $\text{p}$, which would support the existence of a grapheme in origin; the traces

\textsuperscript{16} E.g. a kind of "standard", Bonnet, Or 64, 214-222 (and Astarté 33-34 as well). See note 51.

\textsuperscript{17} In this sense, we may have to accept the relation of the term with the root of the Hebrew and Aramaic parallels; see note 12.

\textsuperscript{18} Other inscriptions (KA 110, 137) attested $\text{mp}$ $\text{lpw}$, probably an intercalary month added periodically to the calendar (just before $\text{mp}$). With regard to our knowledge of the months of the Phoenician calendar, see R. R. Stieglitz, "The Phoenician-Punic Calendar", in: Actas del IV Congreso Internacional de Estudios Fenicios y Púnicos (Cádiz, 2 al 6 de Octubre de 1993), Vol. II (Cádiz 2000) 691-695 and "The Phoenician-Punic Menology", in: M. Labetski – C. Gottlieb – Sh. Keller (eds.), Boundaries of the Ancient Near Eastern World: A Tribute to Cyrus H. Gordon (JSOT Suppl. 273; Sheffield 1998) 211-221.

\textsuperscript{19} Among first studies, see CIS ("\textit{post mp fere certum est}") and then e.g. Lidzbarski, ESE II 53. The reading or integration is obviously maintained in recent collations; see Elayi, Sidon 41 or again Bonnet, Or 64, 215. Bordreuil’s new contribution only makes mention of the existence of an indeterminable sign preceding and another following the sequence $\text{mp}$.

\textsuperscript{20} The rest of the inscription does not use spaces between letters as word-dividers. However, this does not in itself ensure the continuous presence of signs (i. e., without spaces between them) considering that we do find, from time to time, spaces between graphemes (even within the same word; see l. 3, $\text{bd'strt}$) due, perhaps, to difficulties encountered when incising.
could be compatible with the reading’, but there is actually no subsequent confirmation of this.

The mention of the year was also obscure from the time the document was unearthed. The simplest interpretation of the legible bšt suggested the “year one”22. Following this, one would expect to find, not a letter, but rather a numerical sign (as some commentators thought they saw and as Bordreuil’s last reading also contemplates) and the rest of a formula parallel to those already known. As was pointed out by former readings and is also noted by the new one, it was equally possible to read a grapheme m following bšt, opening the door to the presence between the lines 1 and 2 of the noun mlky23, typical of these formulae. This possibility, which is not identical to the formulae known in the contemporary inscriptions, has been questioned for that reason23.

The Sidonian epigraphy of the times provides us with the best parallels. This part of the dating formula is clearly visible in one of the recently found photographs of the inscription formerly located in the valley of the Awali river24: bšnt šb’ /// /// / mlk-y. As can be seen, following the indication of the years (šnt, in plural) is the explicit numeral (šb’) and the equivalent numerical signs /// /// ), followed by the mention, with a preposition, of what is usually understood to be the (suffixed) word “reign” (l-mlk-y). This occurrence may be considered to be the formula in its more complete form. The formula at the beginning of the Eshmunazar II inscription is almost identical to this one: bšnt ’sr w’rb’ — /// / mlk-y (prep. b + “year” (pl.) + numeral + numerical signs + prep. l + mlk-y). In the CIS I, 4 inscription, we could suppose that the mention, in the singular, of št renders the numeral “one” unnecessary25. But, what about the numerical sign, the figure, the vertical line that stands for “1”? As is clearly visible

22 See again CIS or e.g. Lidzbarski, ESE II 53.
23 See CIS (“einem post bšt cifra, non est; quae remanent vestigia mlk efficiunt”). Among modern works, see e.g. Elayi, Sidon 57 or Bonnet, Or 64, 215-216, both with direct analysis of the piece (and, in the case of Elayi, also with the help of an old estampage of the Académie).
24 Even by Bordreuil himself: “Toutefois, si ‘année’ de règne est suivie d’un millésime on devrait avoir écrit LMLKY et pas comme ici: MLKY”. See CIS: “nota i deesse”.
26 In accordance with some external parallels in similar expressions (see note 27 below) but also in accordance with the Levantine use of the singular and dual forms of nouns as equivalent to numerals “one” or “two”, already shown in the epigraphy of the Late Bronze Age (see e.g. in Ugarit J. W. Wesselius, “Some regularities in the Ugaritic administrative texts”, UF 12 [1980] 448-450). See common dating uses in Phoenician in PPG 221 as well.
in the older photographs and as can still be recognised on the inscription\textsuperscript{20},
two vertical strokes (the second one joining up with the upward stroke of a
lamed of the second line) follow st. Indeed, it could be supposed that the
figure one (1) appears. However, it looks more as if the two strokes that
follow the mention of the year correspond to an m.

There are several arguments for this: first of all, the perfect coherence
of the strokes that can be observed in the oldest photos with the stroke of the
other m’s of the inscription (cf. fig. 1b-c). Secondly, the morphological
coherence of the reading, considering that the preposition l is definitely
missing in this space (even reading the figure 1), an absence that can only
be understood if the following word is directly joined by a constructus
chain to the mention of the year\textsuperscript{27}. The expected word is, of course, mily,
esential to the formula. As has already been suggested, its final sense is
clarified here: \textit{b�t m[i]k[y] (with the y in the following line), “in the year
(one) of his reign”, or “of his enthronement”\textsuperscript{28}. A bit of a stroke that still
remains and that can be seen in the old photos must correspond to the
bottom of the k, as the comparison with the different mily sequences of the
text allows us to suggest. The reading could therefore be \textit{m[i]k[y]}\textsuperscript{29} (always
with the y in the next line).

5. Mention of the king

Special mention should be made of the absence of Bodashtar’s filiation in CIS I, 4. In the dating, the king is named as mily \textit{bd’sr [m]k šdnn}; as the subject of the phrase his presence is even more brief: \textit{bd’sr [m]k šdnn}. In the Awali inscription (both in the dating and also when mentioning the king as subject) and in the Bustân es-Sêh inscriptions (only in the mention of the king as subject, given that there is no dating) the part

---

\textsuperscript{20} As is pointed out not only by those in favour of the reading \textit{st mily}, but also by Bordreuil himself, in: \textit{Art phénicien 80} (BST\textsuperscript{T}1/M\textsuperscript{L}K).

\textsuperscript{27} CIS compares the absence of the numeral with the equivalent dating forms of the Assyrian annexes (“In titulus assyrius, siunt annum primum Regis item sine cifra notari”), a relationship accepted by some authors (see e.g. Elayi, Sidon 58, who also quotes a biblical parallel often related to these inscriptions: 2 Kings 25, 27: \textit{bint mily}).

\textsuperscript{29} Bonnet, \textit{Or} 64, 216 n. 9: “On notera que, si l’on suit notre interprétation, le verbe phénicien mily aurait ici le sens non pas de ‘regner’, mais de ‘devenir roi’. ” See also Amadasi, in: \textit{El Mundo Pontico} 48, who translates “nell’anno della sua ascesa al trono (lett. del suo diventare re)”. This is perhaps the best explanation for the absence of the numerical sign “1” (note e.g. that it is present in the dating formula of the Milicyon inscription from Kition, \textit{st li mily}, where there is a lamed! See M. Yon – M. Szyner, “Une inscription phénicienne royale de Kiton (Chypre)”, \textit{CRAI} 1991, 805). In any case, the sense was clear almost from the beginning, see e.g. CIS: “\textit{st mily} annum videtur designare quo regnare coepit”. See e.g. Cooke, \textit{TSNI} 40, as well.

\textsuperscript{29} Bonnet, \textit{Or} 64, 215 also reads remains of the l from mily, which may indeed make it possible to identify in the CIS photograph, but this is not clear.
corresponding to the filiation is included\textsuperscript{39}, in a peculiar fashion: no mention is made of the father, but rather of Bodashtart’s grandfather, King Eshmunazar: \textit{mlk bdšttr mlk šdān bn bn mlk šmn’zr mlk šdān}. This fact, as has been pointed out so many times, reflects Bodashtart’s secondary position in the line of Sidonian succession\textsuperscript{31}. The absence of the sequence \textit{bn bn mlk šmn’zr mlk šdān} in 	extit{CIS I, 4} must perhaps be explained by the fact that we are dealing with an inscription carved shortly after the enthroning of the king. Perhaps the mention of Bodashtart’s grandfather was not yet necessary; perhaps it was still a daring formula. The absence, in any case, seems to match the general preference of the author or authors of this inscription for brief formulae, which is evident in the fact that the noun \textit{mlk} is not present before the name of the king in the subject syntagma. In any case, this greater brevity and simplicity (when flaunting the official title of the king), as opposed to the rest of the inscriptions of the reign, all later ones, must be taken note of\textsuperscript{32}.

In theory, it is possible to propose a more drastic solution for these peculiarities of \textit{CIS I, 4}, supposing that the text is not complete to its left\textsuperscript{33}. However, the almost certain mounting of \textit{mlky} between lines 1-2\textsuperscript{34} proves that, at least in the first line, the text did not make use of extra space to the left of what remains. Should any attempt be made to justify this, not even the best restoration proposals could make the inscription present its formulae in a way that would be identical to the rest of the documents (given the already mentioned absence of \textit{mlk} before Bodashtart’s second appearance). Moreover, it is not likely that an inscription that has lost a significant part of its text could maintain the coherence that \textit{CIS I, 4} presents in its present state.

\textsuperscript{39} In fact, the king is mentioned in exactly the same way both in the Awali River inscription and in all those in the Bustān El-Shē temple (with a slight variance in some of these latter inscriptions, which we shall come back to in a later work): \textit{mlk bdšttr mlk šdān bn bn mlk šmn’zr mlk šdān}.

\textsuperscript{31} And his wish to underline his legitimacy as a direct descendant of, if not the preceding monarch, some other prestigious ancestor. See note 9.

\textsuperscript{32} See again \textit{CIS}: “Titulum a sacerdotibus non ab ipso rege scriptum fuisse testatur et lapis rudis aspectuet et regiae genealogiae absens et genus in dieci simplex.”

\textsuperscript{33} We may suppose that the original block was of a larger size (its left side, remember, was damaged) or, even better, that a second block existed, placed to the left of the one we know. In that case, it would seem possible to reconstruct: (2) \ldots \textit{mlk bdšttr mlk [šdān bn bn mlk šmn’zr mlk]} (3) \textit{šdān bn bn bdšttr [mlk šdān bn bn mlk šmn’zr]} (4) \textit{mlk šdān} \ldots This would also provide us with extra space to solve the problems of lines 4-5. A similar restoration was suggested by Amadaisi, \textit{RSF} 20, 101.

\textsuperscript{34} It is possible to suppose a different reading of the end of line 1, which would allow for a longer dating formula (taking into account, as well, the determining factors of the \textit{štr} — not \textit{štu} — form). But it must be admitted that such a reading and interpretation are highly improbable.
6. The damaged parts: the final expression and its difficulties

The greatest divergence between the traditional readings and interpretations and the most recent one is found in the last line. Badly damaged, only the final mention of Astarte was certain from the moment of its discovery. The sequence that preceded Astarte could soon be reinterpreted as $\text{I}^\text{I} \text{v}^\text{I}$, a reference to the goddess, not surprising in Phoenician, which coincides with the formula of dedication to Eshmun in the Bodashtar inscription. In what precedes this expression, the stone, in addition to some simple superficial damage, suffers a true loss of fragments. Some authors have suggested that a $z$ could be incised in this area. Interpreted as a postponed demonstrative, this grapheme finds support in the other inscriptions of the king, albeit not without some difficulties. Further back in the text, at the end of line 4, the recent reading by Bordesul now distinguishes only two clear characters (\text{r}^\text{r}, \text{r}^\text{s}), once commonly accepted and maintained in the latest collations and interpretations. We can therefore consider that the textual problems of the final expression could begin here.

These problems have given rise to proposals that, in fact, demand that the whole text of the epigraph be reinterpreted. In his recent proposal, Bordesul felt that it was necessary to suppose that there was a second verb in the damaged end part. He resorts to a well-known term, \text{ndr}, present as a verbal form in common formulae in other Phoenician and Punic documentary groups (though not in the Bodashtar inscriptions nor in others close to them in time or place). The author believes that it is possible to read, in the present condition of the piece, the final two signs of the verb (though incomplete). However, the visible marks do not seem to be

---

35 See uses and references (without CIS I, 4) in DNWSI 53-55.
36 Among recent collations, Elayi, Sidon 57-60 does not propose any readings for the space before I\text{v}^\text{I} (for her, I\text{m-}I\text{v}^\text{I}). However, shortly after that Amadasi (RSF 20, 99-100) thought there might have been a $z$ (see Amadasi, in: El Mundo Púnico 48 as well) and Bonnet (Or 64, 215-217) actually reads the $z$.
37 On the one hand, reconstructing or reading only one $z$, there would appear to be graphemes missing (the lacuna is wider than the single $z$ letter); on the other, the resulting expression is not an exact parallel to the other inscriptions, because there the demonstrative has clearly been placed following the designated object, rather than following a constructus chain (which could, possibly, determine in this case the noun by itself, "substituting" the postponed demonstrative, typical of this group of texts).
38 See again Art phénicien 80.
39 See CIS, \text{r}^\text{s} or Lidzbarski, ESE II 53, for example.
40 See the aforementioned readings (for example, the collations quoted in note 36) and discussion presented below.
41 The author, in any case, also considers the presence of the verb \text{bn}, although his final preference is for \text{ndr} (in: Art Phénicien 81). The linguistic considerations seem to be the fundamental basis for his suggestion.
enough to allow for such a reading, nor do they in the old photographs, and the new reading also gives rise to interpretative difficulties. As we shall see once again in future works, the comparison between the structures of the different Bodashtart epigraphs suggests that the sole, main verb in the text is bn (introduced by the conjunction k, as in other cases where the verb follows the dating formula). There is no need to suppose the existence of another verb. Including it, on the contrary, complicates the syntax and marks the text out from the contemporary documents. The structure of the text indicates that, between the main verb bn and the mention of the divinity of the dedication (introduced by the preposition l45) the only thing that appeared was the syntagma corresponding to the object of the dedication (introduced by the accusative marker 'yr). As can be seen in the other inscriptions, this is not the place to introduce added information nor are there any elements (prepositions, conjunctions) that would lead us to believe that that is necessary. The terms that follow the word srm form, with it, the syntagma that is the direct object of the sentence.

Some of those who studied the inscription proposed this kind of solution46. For example Krahmalkov supposed that, following srm, there should be a nominal complement to characterise the matter of the object of the dedication47. Lipiński restored the graphemes ym at the beginning of line 5 in order to form 'ry ym, “land-by-the-sea”, the name of one of the city districts48. Closely similar is Amadasi’s proposal49, which prefers to maintain, nonetheless, the z reading in line 5. She translates srm 'ry [ym] z45 “questo srm del paese / [del mare?]”. Indeed, the integration of ym at the be-

45 In the other Bodashtart inscriptions, the final dedication formulae (to Eshmun) place only lty before the theonym with no other titles of respect. This was likely the same with Astarte in C18 1, 4.
46 Even in the abstract, see e.g. Bonnet, Or 64, 217: “cette lacune contient sans doute une précision relative au srm 'ry ou plus particulièrement à l’un des deux termes qui le composent, un adjectif ou un substantif génitival, impossible à déterminer.”
47 He suggested reconstructing srm ‘rz z, where srm would be an object or construction made of cedar, ‘rz. Ch. R. Krahmalkov, Phoenician-Punic Dictionary (OLA 90; Leuven 2000) 481 (s.v. srm l “restoration and translation problematic”, sic). However, see shortly after, Ch. R. Krahmalkov, Phoenician-Punic Grammar (HOS 54; Leiden/Boston/Köln 2001) 287: srm ‘rz [z] “the Sharon, the region of grain”.
48 Lipiński, Dieux et déesses 64, 135-136, with no supporting argument, though obviously based on KAI 14: 16. See now Lipiński, Itineraria 127, 294 (“the harbour district bears the name sdn 'ry ym or sdn ym, “Sidon-(Land)-by-the-Sea”). According to the author, Bodashtart must have enlarged a sanctuary to Astarte built by his ancestors in the area, as proved by the Eshmunazar inscription.
50 The transcription of Amadasi, in: El Mundo Púnico 48 apparently contains a typographical error (in the use of the “’” character), but the author’s opinion is clear.
51 Amadasi suggests that it has to do with a specific cultic place, basing this idea as well on the information provided by the inscription of Eshmunazar’s sarcophagus. She even proposes reinterpretating this text, restoring KAI 14: 16 [srm ‘str] b’ry ym (sic; actually, the text presents b’sdn ‘ry ym) “the srm of Astarte in the Land-by-the-Sea”, where what is normal restored is
The inscription from the first year of King Bodashtart of Sidon’s reign

7. Epigraphic possibilities and textual parallels

Let us study, then, the material possibilities of this part of the piece through the old photographs and let us look at the different possibilities for reading and interpretation in the light of the content of the other Sidonian epigraphs of the time. Strictly speaking, the gap commences at the end of line 4. Following ‘r, a part of a possible ş is clearly visible in the oldest photographs (and even partially in the most recent ones). The sign, as it appears in other parts of the text (first sign in l. 3, fourth sign in l. 4), fits well with the strokes that have been preserved (cf. fig. 1b). The reading of ‘rş would thus seem to be still valid. We must therefore be dealing with the term “land”, “country” (or related senses). As we said, the absence of a preposition must link it (given that there are no arguments in favour of a change of phrase) to the syntagma introduced by the accusative marker and the successive term must be understood together with it.

At the beginning of l. 5, and considering the size of the signs in the rest of the inscription, the damaged space must have contained three letters...
or only two if they corresponded to wide graphemes\(^{35}\). The \(z\) reading\(^{36}\) seems, rather, to be due to the edges of the break, and no stroke truly compatible with the sign can actually be distinguished. Its hypothetical isolated appearance does not seem to be able to fill the available surface\(^{37}\), while the presence of the \(z\) following a chain formed by two wide signs (as \(ym\) \(z\) in Amadasi’s proposal) is, on the contrary, difficult (without seriously modifying the starting point of the line) given the lack of space\(^{38}\). No stroke truly attributable to a grapheme can be observed in the gap. Although several marks in the area at the top of the break could correspond to the very top part of the lost signs, they seem to be mostly a product of the breakage. The starting points of the rest of the lines and the inclinations of the last ones (which indicate the most likely starting point and the disposition of the first letters in line 5) point to an important conclusion: the lost letters were probably incised completely or almost completely under the edge of the damaged area, in the lost part of the stone (see fig. 1).

Starting from this material base (reading \(śrn\) ‘\(r̄s\) -(-)-\) we must turn to the inscriptions of the Sidonian group. Phoenician epigraphy does not provide us with many parallels for this kind of expression\(^{39}\), but the closest ones are revealing. On the one hand, the Eshmunazar II inscription (\(KAI\) 14) lists the works performed in Sidon by the king and his mother: various temples (\(bt\) ‘\(l̄m\)), the first of which was built for Astarte\(^{40}\) in \(ṣdn\) ‘\(r̄s\) \(ym\), “Sidon land of the sea” or “by the sea”. Further on, the inscription again speaks of the temples built in \(ṣdn\) ‘\(r̄s\) \(ym\) for the Baal of Sidon and Astarte \(šm\) \(b̄l\). Without entering into the interesting problems that the exact interpretation of the Eshmunazar texts raises with regard to the temples and their divinities, it seems clear that one part or district of the city was called \(ṣdn\) ‘\(r̄s\) \(ym\) and that the Sidonian monarchs had started up an important building programme there. So, in that district, in Bodashtart’s time, there was at least one recently built temple dedicated to the goddess.

\(^{35}\) \(CIS\) disagrees: “... ita ut una vel duae litterae duntaxat evanuerint”. But see the following paragraphs and fig. 1b-c below.

\(^{36}\) Proposed by Renan; see \(CIS\) (with references).

\(^{37}\) Even taking into account what has already been said about the use of the spaces in the inscription (see note 20). This surplus space is once again in opposition to Krahmalkov’s proposal. Note that the author does not read the \(z\), but rather restores it.

\(^{38}\) Amadasi, who proposes the integration \(ym\) \(z\), seems to have already recognised this difficulty; Amadasi, in: \(El Mundo Púnico\) 53, n. 24 (“\(A. 1. 4\) [sic; leg. 5] lo spazio per restituire \(YM\) [i.e. \(YM\) \(Z\)] è di fatto forse un po’ troppo stretto”). However, the proposal should not be totally rejected.

\(^{39}\) See a list of uses in the general panorama of Northwestern Semitic epigraphy in \(DNWSI\) 110-113, esp. 112.

\(^{40}\) See the suggestion by Amadasi, in: \(El Mundo Púnico\) 49; and note 48 in this text. As the author states, \(bt\) ‘\(l̄m\) must be understood to mean cultic places in the broadest sense.
On the other hand, in one of the series of inscriptions of Bodashtart himself in Bustān eš-Šēh and in the king’s inscription at the Awali River, in a famous long syntagma (perhaps not yet properly interpreted) we see again ṣdn ym, “Sidon of the sea” or “by the sea”58. This name could be the short version (in keeping with the rhythm of bimember chains presented by the syntagma) of ṣdn 'ṛṣ ym, “Sidon-land-by-the-sea”, from Eshmunazar’s sarcophagus. CIS I, 4 — a text that is characterised, as we have seen, by freely omitting parts of the formulae and official nomenclatures even when they refer to the king himself — could easily have included a second short form of the name, 'ṛṣ ym, “land of the sea”59.

Is this reading 'ṛṣ ym compatible with the available space? The answer is yes, and definitely so. In the light of the shape and sizes of the graphemes y and m in the rest of the text, both letters fit well into the gap, even considering the starting point of the line and the probable inclination of the signs. It is even possible that some of the top-ends of the letters coincide with some of the marks that are visible in the line of breakage (although, as we have said, this detail is difficult to make out, and the visible traces of strokes could easily be just a result of the damage). Restoration, therefore, can make use of a possible material base, good textual parallels and a coherent final sense: whatever was built or rebuilt, perhaps a temple, part of a temple or a special kind of cultic structure or place, was located in the part of the city called “Sidon land of the sea”, “Sidon of the sea” or “land of the sea”.

From an historical point of view, the presence of this toponymic reference in the text is not at all strange. Qualifying, identifying or naming a building after its location — after the name of a district, one of the parts that make up the city, which is also part of its official nomenclature — even seems to be intentional. Nor does it seem strange that this should be present in an inscription related to the rise to power of the king himself and his reaffirmation as the legitimate monarch by means of his service to the dynastic and civic divinities, because Sidon itself is introduced in the text in a none too indirect manner. In fact, the references to the territory of the city-state and to the extension of its domain, or to the splendour (thanks to the action of the king) of the city itself, of its parts and territo-

---

58 With some interesting differences between the documents, as we shall see in future works. See meanwhile the provisional reading and interpretation of the Awali inscription in Xella-Zamora, BAAL 8 (2004) 273-300.
59 It is even possible that the omission of the city name could be due to or influenced by the immediate presence of the term ʾāru. Regarding the districts and their names, see, however, Elayi, Sidon 81 ss., who proposes distinguishing ṣdn 'ṛṣ ym and ṣdn ym as two different parts of the city.
ries, with their most sonorous denominations (as proved by the set of epi-
graphs from the dynasty) fit perfectly into the historical context.

8. The structure of the inscription

We can establish a structure for the text that will be useful for us in
making comparisons. As we have seen, the inscription is made up of one
sole phrase. It first presents the initial dating (month and year), actually a
temporal circumstantial object; then, when specifically mentioning the
work carried out by the king, it presents the verb (in this case “build”) fol-
lowed by the subject (the king) and the direct object (the work carried
out); finally, it indicates the recipient or beneficiary of the action (the
divinity the work is dedicated to, the “dedicatee”), a prepositional syn-
tagma functioning as an indirect object:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Temp. circum. obj.</th>
<th>byrb mp[’] bštmt m[l]ky mlk bd’srt mlk šdnn</th>
<th>(Dating)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verb</td>
<td>k bn</td>
<td>(Action,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>promote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>r and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>work)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>bd’srt mlk šdnn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct object</td>
<td>’yi šrni ’r$ [ym]</td>
<td>(Dedicatee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect Object</td>
<td>[‘*]y l’srt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As we said, the initial dating formula seems to be a reason for or factor
in introducing the verb by means of a particle⁶⁶. Although the value of the
particle and its insertion in the text has been the object of much dis-
agreement⁶⁷, both the adverbial solution (“here”) and the more commonly
accepted conjunctive one (with consecutive or declarative value) are good
solutions not only as regards the syntax but also as regards the sense of the
text without having to fall back on more verbs. One might even wonder if it
would not be better to opt for a temporal value, given that the conjunction
comes immediately after the dating formula (in other words, as we have
said, after a temporal, circumstantial object)⁶⁸. Following this periphrasis

⁶⁶ The king’s inscriptions where no dating is present do not introduce the verb using k-. In
any case, the introduction of k- after the dating formula does not seem to be grammatically com-
 pulsory — the presence of the dating is not followed by the conjunction, for example, in KAI 14
— but it is quite suitable in a formula.
⁶⁷ See e.g. proposals by Cooke (TNSI 40-42), Lidzbarski (ESE II 53) or Amadasi (RSF 20,
100), as well as PFG† § 257, 321, 322, 323 (“fürwahr”); some more references in Elayi,
Sidon 73, n. 49.
⁶⁸ Thus acquiring its significant intensifying value: “in the month ... (was) when Bodashart
built...”. See another interpretation of k with a temporal value e.g. in Lipinski, Dieux et déesses
64, 135-136; again PFG† 185-186.
— caused or favoured by the initial location of the dating or because of the
formulary use — the order is normalised and the subject is placed after the
verb, which is then followed by the direct and indirect objects.

We will compare this structure, the formulae used and the actual con-
tent of the inscription, with the rest of the king’s inscriptions in a further
essay. For the moment, note the general “orthodoxy” of CIS I, 4 with
regard to the known parallels.

9. Conclusions

The inscription thus commemorates one of the king’s first public
works, carried out in the year he succeeded to the throne. It could have been
a building (maybe a specific cultic place, or a part of it, possibly added on
to, or an extension of pre-existing cultic constructions) located in a part
of the city of Sidon (the “land of the sea”) and dedicated to the main civic and
dynastic goddess. The text presents, in comparison with the rest of the
king’s texts, a greater brevity and simplicity, which affects, above all — and
perhaps not simply by chance — the royal title. But the inscription and the
other Bodashtart epigraphs seem to match the same structures and formulae.
CIS I, 4 falls within the framework of a particular ideological programme
and within the framework of a characteristic historical context.

Abbreviations

DNWSI  J. Holtijzer - K. Jongeling, Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscrip-
tions, I-II (HOS 1 21; Leiden 1995).
ESE  M. Lidzbarski, Ephemeris für semitische Epigraphik, I-III (Giessen 1902,
1908, 1915).
KAI  H. Donner - W. Röllig, Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften1, I-III
(Wiesbaden 1966-69).
KI  M. Lidzbarski, Kanaanäische Inschriften (Giessen 1907).
PPG  J. Friedrich - W. Röllig, Phönizisch-punische Grammatik, 3. Auflage, neu
bearbeitet von M. G. Amadasi Guzzo (Analecta Orientalia 55; Roma
1999).
TSSI  J. C. L. Gibson, Textbook of the Syrian Semitic Inscriptions, I-III (Oxford
1971, 1975, 1982).

Instituto de Estudios Islámicos
y del Oriente Próximo
C/. de los Diputados 19-21
E-50004 Zaragoza
Fig. 1
ORIENTALIA
A QUARTERLY PUBLISHED BY
THE PONTIFICIAL BIBLICAL INSTITUTE
Rome, Italy

Editor: Werner R. Mayer
Editorial Board: Maria Giulia Amadasi Guzzo
Agustinus Giano
Vincent Laissy
Philippe Luisier
Craig Morrison

Business Manager: Peter Brook

Orientalia appears four times a year. The price of subscription in the European Community is €75; in other countries, $110.00, payable in advance by check. Volumes 1-15 in phototypic reprint and 25-75 in the original printing are available at €75 or $110.00 plus postage. Articles should be sent to Editor, Orientalia, Pontifical Biblical Institute, Via della Pilotta 25, I-00187 Rome, Italy. Business correspondence should be directed to Business Manager, Orientalia, Pontifical Biblical Institute, Piazza della Pilotta 35, I-00187 Rome, Italy (Postal Account Number: IT 21 C 07601 03200 000034903005).