

Stefan ZAWADZKI

WHO WAS THE SUPREME GOD OF CALAH
AFTER 800 B. C.?

The ancient Calah whose remains are known today as Nimrud was one of the first archeological objects to be studied by English scholars. Texts discovered already in the 19th century serve as evidence that the city founded in the Middle-Assyrian period¹ was reconstructed after its fall by A-šur-nāšir-apli II and functioned temporarily as the capital. It follows from the inscriptions that while the city was being reconstructed nine temples were erected in which to worship Enlil and Ninurta, Ea and Damqina, Adad and Šala, Gula, Sin, Nabû, Šarrat-nipha, Sibitti and Ištar Kidmuri². Of the total number of the temples the remains of three have been excavated so far, i. e., Ištar Kidmuri, Ninurta and Nabû. Ašur-nāšir-apli II declared god Ninurta, the god of war and hunting, patron of the city³. The particular worship for Ninurta as the war-god is understandable since the country was in a continuous state of struggle aimed at expanding its territory. Several rulers of the 10th and 9th centuries B. C. such as Adad-nirari II, Tukulti-Ninurta II, and especially Ašur-nāšir-apli II and Šamsi-Adad V attributed many of their accomplishments to Ninurta's providence and benevolent guidance which proves that the god was held in high esteem.

Ašur-nāšir-apli II's decision was probably influenced by his fondness of hunting and the territory around Calah lent itself particularly well to this activity.

The Nimrud excavations conducted by one of the most outstanding British archeologists M. E. L. Mallowan were resumed in 1949. Based on several of his findings and discoveries M. E. L. Mallowan proposed a theory according to which in Calah "from 800 B. C. onwards the older god (i. e. Ninurta), although still honoured, gave way to Nabû, patron of the arts, of writing, learning and science"⁴. The following arguments seem to support the theory:

1. Toward the end of the 9th century B. C. Ninurta's popularity began to decline while at the same time god Nabû was honoured more and more. In both the correspondence and the annals of the 8th and 7th centuries B. C. Ninurta's name appears less and less frequently and as one of the last among male gods. Nabû's position was definitely more prominent than Ninurta's.

2. These changes were reflected in Calah by the building of Ezida, a new large temple of Nabû, which was constructed in time of Adad-nirari III. The temple was by far a larger one than Ninurta's temple.

3. Numerous documents were found in the Nabû's temple attesting to its prosperity and economic activity; no such evidence was found in the Ninurta's temple.

4. A large number of theophoric names with the Nabû element, by far exceeding those with the Ninurta element. Another testimony to the growing popularity of god Nabû were also the gifts comprising people and grounds offered by the city's inhabitants for the temple of Ezida⁵.

I believe that those arguments are insufficient to state that in Calah god Ninurta lost his position of the supreme god of the city and the province in favour of god Nabû. Although from the materials published it follows that almost no economic documents were found in the temple of Ninurta, it does not necessarily imply that the temple was not active in the field. What is characteristic is that three documents⁶ pertaining to this temple were found in Nineveh. Some years ago K. Deller suggested that part of the Calah archives was transferred to Nineveh⁷. The contents of

the three documents as well as the lack of any relevant findings in the temple of Ninurta both imply that the transfer of the Ninurta archives was actually carried out at that time. It was probably then that a certain portion of the tablets were damaged and are irreplaceable now. Data quoted by M. E. L. Mallowan imply that materially the condition of the temples buildings was satisfactory, and the last time reconstruction work was done must have been under the rule of Sin-šar-iškun. Excavators also discovered magazines containing large jars with their capacity marked, as well as numerous valuable small objects such as ivory articles, amulets, bronze articles, seals, etc.⁸. That evidence proves that the temple of Ninurta was not in a poor economic state, nor was it deprived of the rulers' care.

Numerous data are available to support the view that Ninurta maintained the position of the supreme god of the city and province of Calah until the final days of the Neo-Assyrian Empire. While analyzing the Nineveh documents, C. H. W. Johns pointed out that if the terms of a contract were not met "a certain definite sum of silver, or gold, or both is named, to be paid to treasury of some god or goddess"⁹. Considering the fact that these sums were meant for specific gods, the writer has concluded that this may serve as the basis for study of local cults. In several of the Nineveh documents there is mention that these sums were to be paid to god Ninurta of Calah; this makes the writer conclude that "he (i. e. Ninurta) was therefore preeminently the town-god of Calah"¹⁰. This conclusion is confirmed by materials discovered in the Calah excavations, estimated to have originated in the 8th and 7th centuries B. C. According to those documents the sums of gold and silver were given to either the local god of the town where the grounds were located and of the people who were sold lived, or to god Ninurta, but never to god Nabû. The list of witnesses containing the representatives of both temples, i. e. Ninurta and Nabû, also confirm the preeminent position of god Ninurta in Calah. In several texts there are mentioned priests šangû heading these temples around 640 B. C.¹¹:

Iddin/ā/ja lúSANGA dMAŠ (Ninurta): ARU 45:18; ARU 44:29; ND 5463:23; ND 2314:21; ND 2307:53

Nabû-šar-ušur lúSANGA dPA (Nabû): ARU 45:19; ARU 44:30; ND 5463:24; ND 2314:22; ND 2307:52

In the first four texts the šangû of god Ninurta precedes the šangû of god Nabû. Only in the last text the order is reversed, but then the author, who probably realized the inappropriate order, omitted the name of the god after the title šangû indicating which temple was represented by each of the priests.

Interesting conclusions may be arrived at through an analysis of the lists of witnesses containing representatives of professional groups of both temples. In two of the documents lahhināni of these temples appear, and the order in the first one is as follows: Dudû, lahhinu of god Ninurta, Nanī, lahhinu of god Nabû and Nabû-ahhē-erība, lahhinu of god Nabû¹². An analogous order can be seen in another document discovered in the Calah excavations: Gallul, Ninurta's lahhinu, Nanī, Nabû's lahhinu¹³. That means, that in the case of equal positions, the representatives of the temple of Ninurta were always placed first. Even more interesting is the order of witnesses in ARU 45:31-34, where they appear as follows: Ninurta's nuhatimmu, Nabû's lahhinu, and Nabû's nuhatimmu. Contrary to J. V. Kinnier Wilson's view, lahhinu was higher in the social hierarchy than nuhatimmu, although the difference between them was probably not too significant¹⁴. In the text under consideration Ninurta's nuhatimmu precedes not only the representative of the temple of Nabû who held this position, but also the lahhinu of god Nabû, who ranked higher professionally. The latter, even though professionally ranked higher than Ninurta's nuhatimmu had to put up with a lower social status because of his belonging with the personnel of the temple of Nabû.

Sometimes Ninurta and Nabû appear as the legal antagonists of the party who will not meet the terms of a contract. It is also in those phrases that Ninurta precedes Nabû¹⁵. It is only in those cases, when the gods are to function as judges that Ninurta is left out altogether¹⁶, or follows god Nabû¹⁷. However, to function as a judge was one of the fundamental attributes of Nabû¹⁸, and therefore it is fully justified for him to appear first.

Finally, I would to bring into consideration text of a royal ritual in Calah from the times of Sargon II¹⁹, where Ninurta appears next to god Ašur; the former thus being honoured because of his preeminent position of

the supreme town-god. Ninurta is also in one of the top position in the list of Calah gods participating in the tākultu festival; god Nabû is in one of the final positions there²⁰. It is also worthwhile to quote the final fragment of text ND 1126 which deals with the construction of the South-West Palace in Calah. The text is closed with an address to a future restorer of the palace which stipulates that, if he keeps the name of Esarhaddon and fulfills the rites, "Ninurta, the son of Enlil will hear his prayers"²¹. This text would also imply that Ninurta was the town-patron of Calah.

Two documents of Calah probably concern the distribution of offerings. In the first one, god Šamaš received the largest share; next came Ninurta, and finally Nabû and Ištar²². In the other text, both Ninurta's and Nabû's shares are equal, but Ninurta is mentioned first²³.

The above data imply that both the citizens of Calah and the rulers of Assyria recognized Ninurta as the supreme god of the town and province until the end of the Empire. At the same time the popularity of god Nabû was on the increase accompanied by a growth of his worship in the society. These changes are reflected in particular by private gifts for his temple, as well as by predominance of names with the theophoric element Nabû. Nevertheless, god Ninurta was considered to be the supreme town-god of the city and the province of Calah.

Notes

¹ According to W. W. Hallo, *The Rise and Fall of Calah*, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 88 (1968), p. 774 Tukulti-Ninurta I (1244-1208 B. C.) began the foundation of the town.

² D. D. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, vol. I, Chicago 1929, § 524 and D. J. Wiseman, *A New Stela of Ašur-nāṣir-pal II*, *Iraq* 14 (1952), p. 33-34, vv. 53-60.

³ D. J. Wiseman, *op. cit.*, p. 34; vv. 68 ff and L. W. King, *Annals of the Kings of Assyria*, London 1902, p. 209 ff, vv. 15-24. In the phrase saying that "The city (Kalhu) I (i. e. Ašur-nāṣir-apli II) presented to Ašur my lord" (alu šu-ú a-na dAššur bel-ia a-qi-su, D. J. Wiseman, *op. cit.*, p. 30, vv. 40) the scribe merely meant to emphasize the preeminent position of Ašur in the empire, and by the same token in Calah, and not to state that Ašur was the patron of the city.

⁴ M. E. L. Mallowan, Twenty-Five Years of Mesopotamian Discovery (1932-1956), London 1956, p. 49.

⁵ ND 5550 and ND 5463

⁶ ARU 44, 45 and 464

⁷ K. Deller, The Neo-Assyrian Epigraphical Remains of Nimrud, *Orientalia* 35 (1966), p. 191.

⁸ M. E. L. Mallowan, Nimrud and Its Remains, London 1966, vol. I, p. 85 ff.

⁹ C. H. W. Johns, Assyrian Deeds and Documents, vol. III, Cambridge, p. 336.

¹⁰ C. H. W. Johns, op. cit., p. 341.

¹¹ K. Deller, op. cit., p. 191.

¹² ARU 464:32-34.

¹³ ND 5550:41-42. See the new edition of the text - J. N. Postgate, Fifty Neo-Assyrian Legal Documents, Warminster 1976, Nr 15.

¹⁴ J. V. Kinnier Wilson, The Nimrud Wine Lists. A Study of Men and Administration at the Assyrian Capital in the Eighth Century, B. C., London 1972, p. 80 ff. The author believes that both terms referred to two kinds of bakers, the nuhatimmē being master bakers. I think the former translations of lahhinu should be preserved, namely a "baker", whereas nuhatimmu should be used to mean "a cook". It also seems probable that the social status of lahhinu was higher than nuhatimmu; see chapter IV of The Economic Foundations of Neo-Assyrian Temple by the writer (in Polish, forthcoming).

¹⁵ ND 2332 and ND 2337.

¹⁶ ND 3420.

¹⁷ ND 3423.

¹⁸ M. Streck, Assurbanipal und die letzten assyrischen Könige bis zum Untergange Niniveh's, III. Teil., Leipzig 1916, p. 756.

¹⁹ ND 1120 - G. van Driel, The Cult of Aššur, Assen 1969, p. 198 ff.

²⁰ R. Frankena, Tākultu, Leiden 1954, p. 7, col. VI: 11 ff.

²¹ D. J. Wiseman, An Esarhaddon Cylinder from Nimrud, Iraq 14 (1952), p. 58, v. 62: ^dNin-urta apal ^dEnlil ik-ri-bi-šu i-šim-me.

²² ND 3476.

²³ ND 3489.

Zdzisław J. KAPERA

THE OLDEST ACCOUNT OF SARGON II'S CAMPAIGN AGAINST ASHDOD*

The ruins of Nineveh extend on the left bank of the Tigris, opposite modern Mosul and about 300 kilometres north-west of Bagdad. They lie within the famous Assyrian triangle formed by the great rivers Tigris and Zab and their tributaries Chosor and Ghazir. The triangle also embraces two other capitals of ancient Assyria, viz. Dur Sharrukin (Khorsabad) and Nimrud (Calah) ¹.

The area occupied by Nineveh in the Neo-Assyrian period was enormous. The prophet Jonah (8th century B. C.) wrote about Nineveh emphatically as "an exceeding great city of three days' journey" ². Nowadays, the ruins of Nineveh lie under two huge tells called Kouyunjik and Nebi Yunus. Kouyunjik rises about 300 meters above the surrounding plain and is 1000 metres long and 600 metres wide. The hill of Nebi Yunus is half as large.

* This is another part of my Ph. D. dissertation The Rebellion of Yamani in Ashdod: A Study in the History of Philistia Between c. 713-709 B. C. defended at the Jagiellonian University, Cracow, in 1978. (Cf. summary published in the "Folia Orientalia" XX (1979), pp. 313-314). This text was ready for print in 1979 and I deeply regret that it must be presented here in the original form. Nothing but some new bibliographical data could be included.