

**ON THE  
KHORSABAD  
INSCRIPTIONS**

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On the Khorsabad Inscriptions by Edward Hincks

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THE KHORSABAD INSCRIPTIONS.

BY THE

REV. EDWARD HINCKS, D.D.

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ON

## THE KHORSABAD INSCRIPTIONS.

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1. THE high honour which the Academy conferred upon me at the close of its last session has naturally made me desirous of presenting to it some additional communication; and as it seems to be the general opinion, that I have been most successful in my attempts to decipher the cuneatic writing, and as more interest seems to be felt with respect to the inscriptions in the buried palaces of Assyria, which have been recently discovered, than in the longer known Egyptian monuments, I choose for the subject of my present paper the Khorsabad inscriptions.

2. The character in which these inscriptions are written resembles that of the third of the trilingual Achaemenian inscriptions; and, as many preformatives, affixes, and prepositions, which occur in these last inscriptions, are found at Khorsabad also, as well as the groups which represent nouns and verbs, the languages must be regarded as closely connected. Whether they differ as dialects of the same language used in different provinces, or as a language will often be found to differ from itself in the course of 200 years; or whether they are rather distinct languages, but resembling one another, as the English and the Dutch of the present day, cannot yet be decided; nor indeed is it easy to determine what degree of difference ought to be regarded as distinguishing languages, and what as distinguishing dialects only. I have shown in a former paper, that the complicated characters used on the Babylonian bricks, and in the great inscription at the India House, correspond to the third Persepolitan

characters in the same manner as our capital letters correspond to the small letters. The arguments, too, which prove the identity, or at least the great resemblance, of the languages of the Khorsabad and Third Achæmenian inscriptions, prove that the language of the Babylonian inscriptions is similarly related to the others. A like agreement in character and language exists between the Khorsabad inscriptions and those from Nimrud and Kouyunjik.

3. When I say that the Third Achæmenian, the Khorsabad, and the Nimrud characters resemble one another, I would be understood to mean that they bear that general resemblance which different forms of the same letter, when printed from different founts, or written by different persons, will be found to bear to one another. Some characters admit a much greater variety than others do; and the Khorsabad sculptors differed from each other more than either the Achæmenian or the Nimrud ones. A comparison of the different inscriptions at Khorsabad, which contain the same text, will show what forms are varieties of the same character. It will generally be found, that some one of these closely resembles either the Third Achæmenian or the Babylonian lapidary form which corresponds to it; and the equivalence of these is verified, and that of others is established, by the observation of words that are common to the two classes of inscriptions.

4. The inscriptions at Van resemble those of Khorsabad and Nimrud in their character, especially the more ancient ones. The later Van inscriptions, in place of one wedge intersecting another, substitute two wedges, one on each side of it. The language, however, of these inscriptions, is not the same; for, though there are many words common to both classes, the preformatives and affixes of the Assyrio-Babylonian inscriptions are not found in those at Van. On the other hand, there are case-endings and personal-endings to the Van nouns and verbs, which clearly indicate that they belong to an Indo-European language.

5. A very large proportion of the characters of the Second Achæmenian inscription, generally called Median, can be identified with Assyrio-Babylonian characters, having nearly the same phonetic values. The resemblance of the forms is, however, much less striking than between the kinds previously named. The language of these inscriptions is of a different family from that of any of the others; but is, I believe, of the Indo-European stock; though it differs

materially from all languages of that stock, which were previously known, and has, *perhaps*, a Tatar element introduced into it.\*

\* The opinion that the language of the Second Achaemenian inscriptions is Tataric, seems to be gaining ground. In the last Annual Report of the Royal Asiatic Society, it is expressed pretty confidently; no doubt on the high authority of Major RAWLINSON. And from this it follows, as a corollary, that this was not the language of the Medes; for all seem agreed that *they* spoke an Indo-European language. If, however, we attend to the precedence given to Media, next to Persia, in all the inscriptions of Darius, and to the peculiar importance attached to it,—it being not only placed first in the list of provinces at Nakshi Rostam, and in the inscription I. at Persepolis, but being distinguished from them, both at Behistun I. 34, 41, and in the Third Achaemenian inscription L of Niebuhr, where we have the expression, "Persia, Media, and the other provinces,"—we can scarcely think that the language of this favoured country would be passed over to admit that of Scythia. It has been suggested, that Darius selected these three languages as specimens of the three different races of men that were included in his empire; but this supposes an amount of ethnological and philological knowledge to be possessed by him, for which it is very difficult to give him credit. How minute a proportion of the population of this country, even in these enlightened days, are aware that the English language differs less from the French or the Irish (all three of these being Indo-European) than it does from the Hebrew or the Turkish! And how inconceivable is it, that a monarch should be guided by this consideration, supposing it possible for it to enter his mind, in preference to those political considerations by which he and all his subjects must be warmly affected! I hold it then to be certain, that the language of the Second Achaemenian inscriptions is Median; and that it is so is the first presumptive proof that it is Indo-European. A consideration, however, of the language itself, confirms this presumptive proof. The view which I take of it is this:—it bears a similar relation to a lost language, probably not very dissimilar from that of the Van inscriptions, which the English bears to the Anglo-Saxon, or the French to the Latin. Distinctions which at one time were marked by inflexions, have come to be marked by detached words. The use of inflexions has not been wholly abandoned, but the number of them in use is comparatively small, and other means of expressing what inflexions originally expressed have been adopted. The language of the Second Persepolitan inscriptions appears to me to be perfectly conformable to this hypothesis. Many of the verbal roots, the verbal inflexions, the pronouns and the particles, are decidedly Indo-European; and if there be some which are not so, the case is the same with all other languages belonging to this great stock, each of which has more or less peculiar to itself. There are some of these peculiarities which have been specified as Tataric or Turkish, and I am not prepared to deny that they are so; but this fact would not be sufficient, in opposition to other evidence, to establish the conclusion, that the main body of the language was not Indo-European. Yet the alleged fact may admit of question. The termination of the passive voice in a guttural consonant is one of these supposed proofs of Tatarism; but if we recollect that a guttural consonant is liable to pass into *y*, we have here no material difference from the termination of the Greek passive. There is, however, no passive verb, as it appears to



6. The first step towards the decipherment of these inscriptions is to determine what are distinct characters, and what are different forms of the same character. In the same manner as A, B, Y, a, a, differing as they do in appearance from one another, must all be recognised as one character, of which A may be assumed as the type or leading form; so a great variety of different forms, occurring in the different cuneatic inscriptions, may be classed together as modifications of one type. In my paper which was read on the 30th November, 1846,\* I gave a list of seventy-six Third Persepolitan characters, with the corresponding Babylonian lapidary characters. In that list I was in error as respects the identity of the characters numbered 15, 33, 34, 35, and 71. I must observe, however, in justice to myself, that those numbered 35 are equivalent, though not identical; those numbered 15 have the consonantal parts of their values alike, so as to be in some cases interchangeable; and those numbered 34 have the kindred value *wā* or *wā* and *bā*, which are confounded in some of the Babylonian inscriptions; so that in two cases only was I altogether mistaken. In two other instances I gave two Persepolitan forms as corresponding to a lapidary character, when only one of them did so. The first of the Persepolitan characters numbered 45, and the last of those numbered 65, are alone identical with the lapidary characters connected with them. The remaining sixty-nine characters correspond precisely as I then stated them to do. As the blocks from which this table was printed are still available, I will here insert, by way of specimen, an extract from it, containing eight pair of characters, with the equivalent Assyrian forms, and also those used in the Van and Median inscriptions.

me, in the Median inscriptions which have been published, so that I cannot speak confidently on this question. In D. 15, the word *gīyānac* appears to me to be an adjective of like form to the Greek *φραγμος*, meaning "visible;" and so in NR. 32, *kīmac* means "what ought to be done;" which Major Rawlinson has shown to be the translation of the corresponding Persian word (Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, vol. xi. p. 146). The use of postpositions, in place of prepositions, is another supposed Tatarism; but surely it is not more so than the placing the article after the noun in the Scandinavian and Decian languages. The Latin *verbo tenus*, and the like, to say nothing of *meum*, &c.; the Umbrian *peplēper*, "for the people," where the Romans would say *pro populo*; and the occasional instances which we meet in Greek, such as *ὑπερὸν ἑσπερί*; show that this is no peculiarity of the Tatar languages.

\* See Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy, vol. xxi.

𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎢	𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎢, 𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎢	𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎢, 𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎢	,"	ta
𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎢	𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎢	𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎢	,"	tā
𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎢	𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎢, 𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎢	𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎢	𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎢	at "father"
𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎢	𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎢, 𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎢	,"	,"	gi
𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎢	𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎢, 𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎢	𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎢	,"	bi? "house"
𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎢	𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎢, 𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎢	𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎢	𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎢	dā
𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎢	𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎢	𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎢	𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎢	du
𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎢	𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎢	𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎢	𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎢	as

The forms in the second division are from Khorsabad; those in the third from Van, the older form being placed first, if two were used; those in the fourth are Median. I believe the Median character (𐎧) is not an equivalent to the fourth set of characters in this specimen, but a compound of the two elements *u* and *i*; yet the supposition that it is such an equivalent is not an impossible one. The sounds expressed by *g* and *w* are as closely related as many which are expressed by the same character in different European countries, or even in the same country.

7. In assigning values to the above eight characters, and in transcribing cuneatic characters in this paper generally, I adopt the phonetic alphabet of Messrs. Pitman and Ellis, so far as the consonants are concerned. Accordingly I use *c* and *g* to express the hard sounds of these letters; *k* to express the continuant surd guttural,\* which is not used in English, and *q* the corresponding sonant; *ʃ* and *ʒ* to express the sonant and surd sounds of the English *th*; *g* for *ch*; *f* for *sh*, and *x* for *zh*, or *s* in *measure*: the remaining consonants have their usual English values. Although these characters will not be familiar to many

\* After Mr. Ellis (whose "Essentials of Phonetics" ought to be in the hands of every student of languages), I call such sounds as *f* and *v* *continuants*, and such as *b* and *p* *explosives*; but I retain the names *surd* and *sonant* as preferable to his *whispered* and *spoken*; and as much preferable to the *hard* and *soft*, or *sharp* and *flat*, of other phoneticians.

of my readers, and will, in some instances, if the explanation of their values that I have just given be forgotten, suggest sounds different from what I intend to express; I consider it much better to use them than to supply the deficiencies of the English alphabet by Greek letters, the values of many of which would necessarily be conventional, and would, therefore, be likely to be mistaken to a still greater degree than the phonetic characters which I use. It is essential to the correct expression in one character of what is written in another, that each letter used in the transcription should invariably represent one sound; a combination of characters used to represent an elemental sound, such as *th* in the English word *thy*, would be objectionable as a combination, even though it had not the further disadvantage of expressing not only the elemental sound which begins this word, but also the very different one which begins the word *thigh*. The only proper use of this combination is to express the combination of sounds which is heard between the vowels in the words *Chatham, hothouse*. As there are only four vowels in the system of writing of which I am treating,\*

\* In the Etruscan language there were four vowels, *a, e, i, and u*; and it is of importance to observe, that these precisely correspond to the four vowels of the cuneatic inscriptions. In the transcriptions, indeed, of Greek proper names, which are found on the Etruscan mirrors, *e* is sometimes the representative of *γ*, as in *Pele* for *Πηλεΐς*; but in the inflexions of nouns and verbs it is the equivalent of the first Sanskrit vowel, which I denote by *a*; as *a* is that of the second Sanskrit vowel, *ā*. Thus, where we have the nominative ending in *e*, the genitive ends in the Perugiaan inscriptions in *et*, but more generally in *eta*: I have no doubt that the original ending was *esia*. Here we have the old Persian declension, nominative *a*, genitive *ahya*, almost exactly reproduced; and likewise the Sanskrit nominative *as*, genitive *asya*, except *as* to the final letter. The Etruscan genitive in *eta* has been imagined to be a feminine termination. As well might the *ev* in *την ενω Οδύσειν* be called a feminine termination. The Etruscans used a formula similar to this, but were obliged to omit the article, which they did not possess. In like manner in the Sixth Eugubine Table, line 61, we have *PRESTOTA SERPIA (cyp'ā) SERPER MARTER, Prestata Domina Domini Martis*; the word *uzor* being sufficiently implied by the genitive which it governs. In the similar expression which immediately follows this, applied to *Turra*, we should probably supply *filia*. The genitive might denote either of these, and it is only by its position (before or after the mother's name, which was always in the ablative) that it can be known whether, in the Etruscan monumental inscription of a female, it belongs to her father or her husband. The termination *et* may be the nominative of a feminine patronymic, formed in imitation of the Homeric one, *Felinnai* from *Felinnas*, as *Χρυσόειν* from *Χρυσός*; for it is evident from the mirrors and paintings that the Etruscans were well acquainted with the poems of Homer. I see nothing, however, in the few inscriptions known to me, which excludes the supposition, that this termination was that of the genitive