

The Colossi of Sennacherib's Palace and their Inscriptions

HANNES D. GALTER

Universität Graz

LOUIS D. LEVINE

Royal Ontario Museum

JULIAN READE

British Museum

The uncovering of Sennacherib's palace at Kouyunjik was largely the result of British sponsored excavations in the nineteenth century. This herculean task was accomplished over a long period of time, and the excavations and their recording were done with varying degrees of care, as all who have tried to work with the results quickly learn. The purpose of this short paper is to take two classes of information, inscriptional and architectural, and recombine them, specifically with reference to the inscribed colossi that flank the doorways of many of the rooms in the palace.

A few words of explanation are in order justifying what may seem an unnecessary venture into the obvious. The locations of the colossi are marked on the published plans of the palace, and the so-called 'bull inscriptions' are published in Luckenbill's standard edition of Sennacherib. Thus, on the face of it, the subject seems adequately covered in the literature. In working with the plans, however, and trying to integrate them with Luckenbill, it became clear that the obvious was not quite so, and the untangling of the diverse clues as to what appeared in each inscription, and where that inscription originally was located, proved to be a complex task. Even now, we have only partly succeeded in this venture, and what we present here is done so that this same ground need not be covered once again by other researchers.

As is usually the case with work on Nineveh, we begin with Layard, and as is again usually the case, one is greatly impressed by the care and accuracy with which he recorded his work. On his plan of the palace in *Nineveh and Babylon* (opposite p. 67), Layard records finding nineteen pairs of colossi, while his text (p. 645) mentions five more at the west entrance. Three of the five appear on his plan as restored, while two are absent. Six more pairs are restored on the plan with varying degrees of justification. There is also one pair of plinths on which colossi may have stood, and two pairs of restored plinths. These variations account for discrepancies in the total.¹ Of the twenty-four posi-

tively recorded pairs of colossi, nineteen are human-headed bull colossi (*lamassu* or *aladlammu*), four are human-headed lion colossi (*apsasātu*), and one is undesignated. Their locations and the type of figure (bull or lion) are indicated by number on the accompanying plan (Fig. 1). Restored colossi have their number enclosed in square brackets. Many of these sculptures were found in very bad condition, and most were left in situ. Some remain there, while others have or may have disappeared.

It appears that all the colossi were meant to carry inscriptions, although it is unclear how many actually did. This ambiguity can be attributed to a number of causes. First, not all of Layard's copies have been published, and some of the copies made by him seem to be missing. Some copies were available to Hincks, but have not been found among his papers in Oxford (Griffith Institute) or Dublin (Trinity College). Second, these texts have been treated in rather cavalier fashion by their various editors. Often the inscription was considered as something disembodied and unrelated to the object on which it was carved. This attitude led to publications which do not indicate from which sculpture the inscription derives, or that separate the building and military accounts of the same text, or that conflate different texts from different colossi into one. The final indignity in this tale is that an extensive series of paper squeezes or impressions made by Layard from the original inscriptions and deposited in the British Museum, were ordered destroyed by the late Sidney Smith on the grounds that they had outlived their usefulness.²

The only more or less completely preserved inscriptions (see nos. 1 and 5, below) start under the belly of the left colossus as one is facing the sculptures, continue between the hind legs, then take up between the hind legs of the right colossus, and end

lion-sphinxes.⁷

² There are numerous cuneiform copies in the notebooks of Henry Rawlinson and George Smith in the British Library (Department of MSS); these have not been searched and could prove useful. There may also be further useful archaeological information in Layard's notebooks in the British Library.

¹ For example, in *N&B*, 589, Layard mentions finding 'twenty-seven portals, formed by colossal winged bulls and

under its belly. While one might have expected this arrangement to be standard for all of the colossi, this does not appear to be the case (see nos. 2-3, below). Just why this is so is not clear.

All of the inscriptions originally began with the king's titulary, and all originally ended with an account of building in Nineveh. Some of the colossi also contained a description of military activity between the titulary and the building account. Details of what was contained in each inscription are included in the catalogue which follows.³

1 Bulls from room I, door a (= Court H, slabs 6 and 7). *N&B*, 136-47

Despite confusion and inconsistencies in the nineteenth century evidence, these bulls are the ones from which inscriptions were cut for removal to England. The BM numbers of the fragments are 118815 A+B (3 R 12, slab 1), from under the belly of bull moving left; 118821 (3 R 12, slab 2), from between the hind legs of same; 118819 (3 R 13, slab 3), from between the hind legs of bull moving right; 118817 (3 R 13, slab 4), from under the belly of same. There is also a squeeze of most of BM 118815, probably made before the bull was cut. The sawn-off bases of these bulls remain in position at Nineveh.

The text contains the titulary, a long annalistic account of *girru* one through five and the opening events of *girru* six, and a building inscription.⁴

The titulary and military account were edited by G. Smith (*History of Sennacherib*) as Bull Inscription 4 (= *OIP* 2, text F1). The building account has been edited only as variants to the text of no. 5 (= *OIP* 2, text I/1).

2-3 Bulls on the facade of Court H, (= Court H, slabs 1 and 3, and slabs 10 and 12). *N&R* II, 137; *N&B*, 135-47, with drawings of slabs 10-12 on pp. 135 and 137. The originals of 10 and 12 may survive in part, from indications on the modern

plan (*Sumer* 23 [1967], English section, pl. ix following p. 81).

There were two pairs of human-headed winged bulls, back to back, with a large figure of a 'hero grasping a lion' between each pair, flanking the 'grand entrance'. 'On the four bulls of the facade were two inscriptions, one inscription being carried over each pair, and the two being of precisely the same import' (*N&B* 138). No surviving copies or squeezes of these two pairs of bulls are known, but it is clear from the statements in *N&B*, and in Hincks's notebook in the British Library (Add. MS 22097), that the text was 'a compendium of the annals on the great bulls' (No. 1).

Unfortunately, there are a number of mysteries surrounding the texts which appeared on these colossi. G. Smith published the titulary and military section of a summary inscription from three 'bulls' that fits the description of 'a compendium of the annals of the great bulls.' That three texts are involved is clear from the label to the titulary section, 'Bull Inscription, Nos. 1, 2, and 3' (*History of Sennacherib*, p. 3). Luckenbill republished these, giving them the single number F2. As Layard had published a virtually identical text in *ICC* 59-61, we must assume that Smith used *ICC* 59-61 as one of his texts. Smith used Bull 3 as the main text, starting with the events of the first *girru*, and running through the sixth, as the line numbers run consecutively, and only Bull 3 preserved the description of the sixth *girru*. Since the *ICC* text ends after the description of the events of the fifth *girru*, it cannot be Smith's Bull 3. The remainder of the military account, which includes the description of the events of *girru* one through five is consistently labelled as deriving from Bulls 2 and 3. In this text, variants are indicated in parentheses, and these variants, which must derive from Bull 2, do not correspond to the *ICC* text. Furthermore, Smith's Bulls 2 and 3 include the two campaigns led by Sennacherib's generals, and these, too, are absent in Layard.⁵ Thus, it would seem that *ICC* 59-62 must be Smith's Bull 1.

Unfortunately, the situation is not that simple. The line numbers of the titulary section run from 1-10, while the line numbers of the continuation of the text begin with line 7. As the titulary is the only section to use Bull 1, it might be argued that the numbering is that of Bull 1. But it can also be argued that the numbering derives from Bull 2, and that all of the bulls are listed because all of the inscriptions were damaged and no two by themselves gave the entire titulary.

³ All room and doorway designations follow the numbering of the plan in *N&B*. When appropriate, this is followed by the numbering originally assigned in *Nineveh and its Remains*. Layard was not always consistent in the way in which he numbered the doorways to the rooms and courtyards, and the printer of *N&B* seems to have compounded the problem by mislabelling some of the doorways. Where the logic of the numbering appears clear, it is followed regardless of which direction the colossi face. When the numbering scheme is ambiguous, the room number given is the one onto which the colossi face.

⁴ For a discussion of annalistic accounts versus chronological summaries, see Levine, (in *History, Historiography and Interpretation*, ed. H. Tadmor and M. Weinfeld [1983] 64-5). For the sixth *girru*, see Levine, *JCS* 34 (1982), 41-8 and J.A. Brinkman, *Prelude to Empire* (1984), 61. This inscription ends before the revolt of Nergal-ushezib related in the standard annals text (*OIP* 2, 38, line 46).

⁵This last point is not as telling, however, as Smith lists the texts as fragmentary at this point (p. 79), and Bull 2 may have been broken before the end of the account.

Kouyunjik

Palace of Sennacherib

After Layard (1853) and Madhloum (1967)

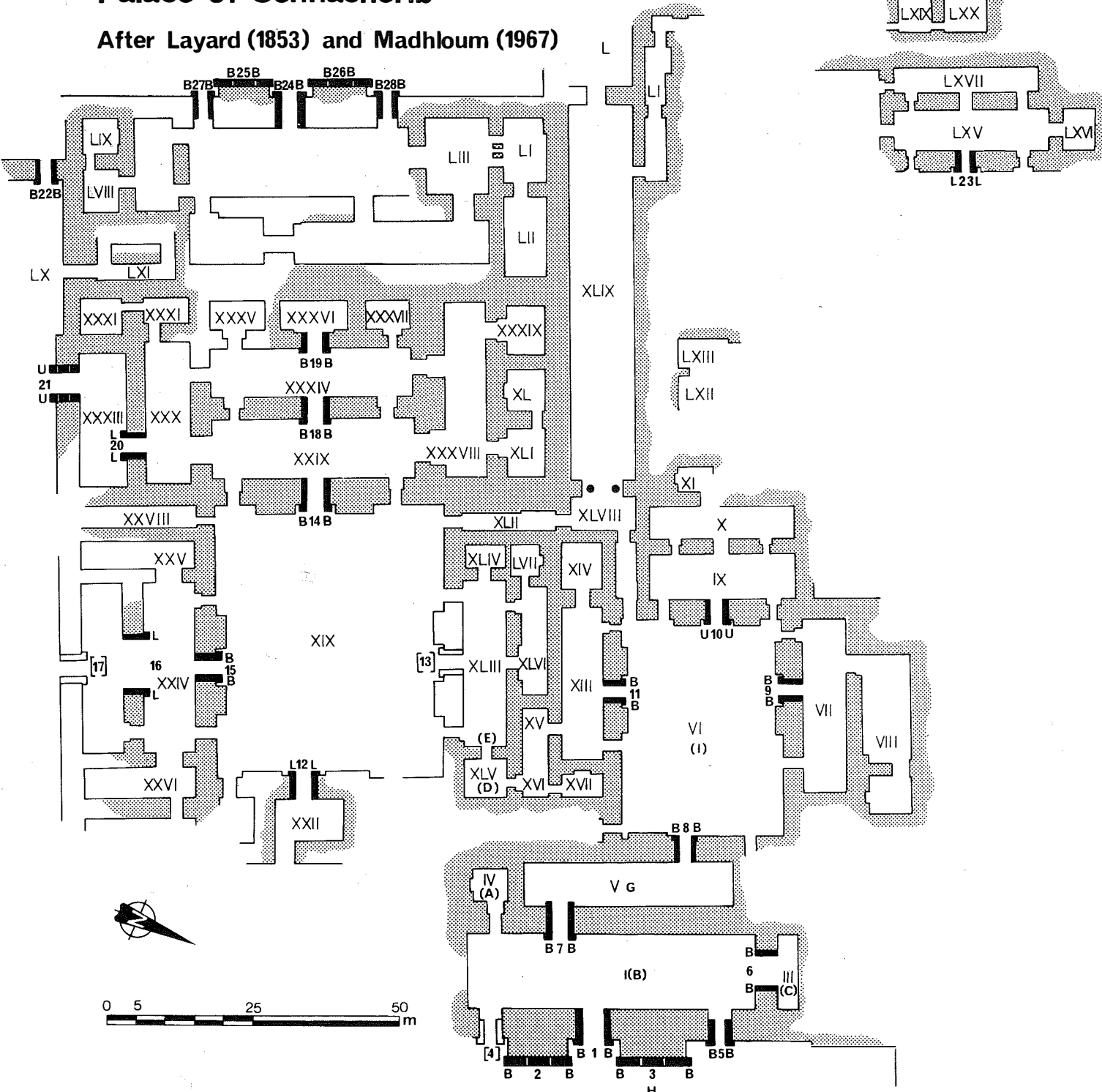


Figure 1
 The South-west Palace (Palace of Sennacherib) at Kouyunjik.
 Note that the position of the facade with Bulls 24–28 is not certain.

In summary, we are dealing with three texts. Bull 1, which had been published by Layard, was only used to fill in missing portions of the titulary, but not otherwise utilized by Smith. This text contained the titulary, a summary military account through the end of the events of the fifth *girru*, and a building inscription. The text appears on colossus 6 (see below), and so is not of further concern here. Bull 2, which contained most of the titulary, was used for the numbering of that section, but then only included as variants to the main text of Bull 3. It continued at least into the campaigns to Tilgarimmu and Cilicia and may have had the sixth *girru* (or more) as well. Bull 3 probably preserved little of the titulary, as it could not even be used to set the line divisions for this part of the text. It continued through at least part of the events related to the sixth *girru*, and it was used as Smith's main text.

Unfortunately, this does not dispel all of the mystery. If the inscription is read left to right, one would have expected it to start under the belly of the left bull, whichever pair of bulls it derived from. But the line lengths of the titulary on Bull Inscription 2 are so short that one is tempted to suggest that they were between the front legs of one of the bulls. This, however, would be a unique arrangement, and the question must remain unresolved. Furthermore, as John Russell (*Sennacherib's 'Palace Without Rival'* [Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania diss., 1985], 31-3) has recently pointed out, Bull 3 also contained less signs per line than expected.

When we try to place Smith's Bulls 2 and 3, Layard's observation that the two pairs of bulls on the facade were identical and of 'precisely the same import' as Bull 1 may or may not mean that both were from the facade. If one must choose, then Bull Inscription 3 with its account of the events of the sixth *girru* seems the more likely candidate, for Layard was usually not cavalier in the way he noted such matters. Thus, Smith's Bull 3 probably represents the text of our colossus 2, since the end of colossus 3 is shown as damaged in Layard's drawings.

- 4 Bulls from Room I, door b. This is a conjectural reconstruction, as no bulls were found by Layard or Madhloom. It seems beyond doubt, however, that a pair of bulls originally flanked this doorway.
- 5 Bulls from Room I, door c (originally Room B, door c). *N&R* II, 129-30. The text was copied by Layard, MS A, 141-8, and published as *ICC*, 38-42. The sculptures are still partly preserved (*Sumer* 21 [1965], Arabic section, fig. 2 following p. 9).

The text contains the titulary and a building inscription. It was edited by Luckenbill as *OIP* 2, text I/1.

- 6 Bulls from Room I, door d (originally Room B, door b). *N&R* II, 128. Two of Layard's copies, MS A, 136-41, a very defective version of which was published as *ICC*, 59-62, and MS A, 148-51, are labelled as having come from the pair of bulls in this doorway. It seems likely that MS A, 136-41, is the correct one, the other being the inscription on number 8. The bulls were still partially preserved when King re-excavated the area but now seem to have disappeared altogether (*Eretz Israel* 9 [1969], pl. II, fig. 1).

The text contains the titulary, the chronological summary up to the end of the fifth *girru*, but not including the campaigns to Tilgarimmu and Cilicia, and a building inscription. Luckenbill assigned the titulary and chronological summary the number E2, not understanding that this was the same as Smith's Bull 1, which he had included in his number F2. The military account ends with p. 77, l. 23 of *OIP* 2.

- 7 Bulls from Room I, door e (originally Room B, door a). *N&R* II, 126. The 'much defaced' inscription is found in Layard MS A, 135-6 (unpublished). Layard also noted the existence of a short text with Sennacherib's name and titles on the reverse of these bulls; this is presumably the one in Layard MS B, 29, published as *ICC* 75D (= *OIP* 2, 127f).⁶ The bulls are still partly preserved (see *Sumer* 22 [1966] Arabic section, Figs. 4-5 following introduction).

The copy includes only the building inscription starting on the second bull. The line numbering corresponds exactly to number 6, and so presumably this inscription had the summary inscription through to the end of the fifth *girru*, but did not include the campaigns to Tilgarimmu and Cilicia.

- 8 Bulls from Room v, door a (originally Room C, door b). *N&R* II, 132. They are described by Layard as 'very dilapidated'. At least one of these bulls is still partly preserved, and the inscription corresponds to MS A, 148-51, which is one of two labelled 'Entrance b, Chamber B' (see number 6, above). Layard compared the text of parts 1 and 2 to the inscription on number 5, and copied only line 7 of part 1 and lines 12ff. of part 2 (MS A, 151). MS A 148-51 is mostly the copy of parts 3 and 4 of the inscription. The text was published in *ICC* as variants to colossus 5.

⁶ In his catalogue, Luckenbill states that text I/14 is from 1 R 6, vma. That text, which is from Nebi Yunus rather than Kouyunjik, is identical with the *ICC* text, except for a minor orthographic variant.

From the line arrangements, it appears that this text contained only the titulary and the building inscription.

- 9 Bulls from Court vi, door d. *N&B* 229. There is no information as to whether these were inscribed.
- 10 Unspecified colossi from Court vi, door g. *N&B* 228. There is no information as to whether these were inscribed.
- 11 Bulls from Court vi, door k. *N&B* 71. Layard notes that the inscription was 'nearly entire', but there is no copy.
- 12 Lions from Court xix, door a. *N&B* 230. Layard describes these as made of 'coarse limestone' with the inscription 'nearly illegible'. There is no copy recognized, but Layard MS C, 58 recto, 'fragment on part of yellow bull at entrance', might be considered. This rough pencil copy contains only eight broken lines, not yet identified.
- 13 Colossi conjecturally restored along the north side of Court xix, door d.
- 14 Bulls made of 'fossiliferous limestone' from Court xix, door h. *N&B* 445. There is no information as to whether these were inscribed. On the stone, see number 20, below.
- 15 Bulls from Court xix, door l. *N&B* 442. There is no information as to whether these were inscribed.
- 16 Lions from Room xxiv, door c. *N&B* 442. There is no information as to whether these were inscribed.
- 17 Colossi conjecturally restored along the south side of Room xxvii.
- 18 Bulls from Room xxix, door l. *N&B* 445. There is no information as to whether these were inscribed.
- 19 Bulls from Room xxxiv, door b. *N&B* 445. There is no information as to whether these were inscribed.
- 20 Lions or 'sphinxes' made of fossiliferous limestone from Room xxxiii, door p. *N&B* 445-6, 459. There is no information as to whether the front of these colossi was inscribed. On the rear, however, was the inscription Layard, MS C, 66 recto, which is labelled 'fragment behind lion no. 1, entrance 1, Ch. BB, Kouyunjik', published with variants in 1 R 7 E (= *OIP* 2, 127, 1/9).⁷

Layard (*N&B* 459) says that 'the inscriptions behind the winged bulls ... will, consequently, enable us to determine the Assyrian word both for the colossi and for the stone of which they were made.' The text identifies the lion-sphinxes as *apsasāte*, and tells of their being made of a stone written as NA.ŠE.TIR, which was imported from

the region of the Judi Dagh. The reading of the stone in Akkadian is unclear in this context, but it is probably not to be read *pindu* (*CAD*, A/2, 451-2; *Iraq* 34 [1972], 111). This stone, which was used to panel Rooms xxix, xxx, and xxxiii, and for the bulls discussed as number 14, may have been imported after Sennacherib's fifth *girru* to the Judi Dagh in 697 B.C.

- 21 Blocks of plain limestone from Room lx, door c, 'which may, however, have been the base of a sphinx or other figure'. *N&B* 445.
- 22 Bulls from Room lx, door a. *N&B* 460. Layard, MS C, 56 verso-57 verso. This text, which is part of the inscription from between the hind legs and under the belly of the bull on the north side of the doorway, is labelled as coming from Chamber WW. The caption on WW slab 2 (MS C, 57 verso) is the one that refers to Bit Kubatti (*N&B*, 460, 'Bit-Kubitalmi'; Paterson, *Palace of Sennacherib*, 12 = *OIP* 2, 157, 1/39) and serves to identify Chamber WW with Room lx.
- The text from the bulls is unpublished, but contains the building account, as would be expected from the second of a pair of bulls. The building account, however, omitted the section describing the royal park (*OIP* 2, 124f, 40-51). It would appear from the line distribution that the text contained a chronological summary.
- 23 Lions from Room lxv, door a. *N&B* 584. Layard, MS C, 55 verso-56 verso. Parts of the inscription from both lions are preserved. The copy is labelled as from the door to 'Chamber EEE', known to correspond to Court lxiv, since unpublished *Original Drawings* iv, 32 and 33, showing carved panels from EEE, reappear as engravings of panels from Court lxiv in Layard, *Monuments of Niniveh* II, Plates 30 and 27.

The text preserves only the building account, but it is clear from the spacing that there was no chronological summary. Of special note is the new passage which occurs at the end of this text, replacing *OIP* 2, 124f, 40-53, and which dedicates this part of the palace to Tashmetum-sharrat, the wife of Sennacherib. Not only does this identify the northwest chambers as the residence of the queen, it presents us with an unparalleled text, one that is touching, sensitive and revealing of a side of Sennacherib's character hitherto hidden from us. The new lines are given as Appendix 1 to the article.

- 24-28 Bulls from the west facade. Found by Layard, who described the facade as consisting of 'five pairs of human headed bulls, and numerous colossal figures, forming three distinct gateways.' (*N&B*, 645). The area was apparently re-excavated by King, who seems to have found one pair of the facade bulls (R. Campbell Thompson, *A Century*

⁷ For the identification of Chamber BB with Room xxxiii, see Gadd, *Stones of Assyria*, 181.

of *Exploration at Nineveh* [1929], 61). Layard and King do not agree on the location of this facade, King locating it further to the southwest.

It is unknown if they were inscribed.

While all of the known colossi from Sennacherib's palace have been mentioned in the preceding list, the discussion cannot be concluded without mention of some further information. There are a number of texts which float incorporeal in the literature. One of these, the text represented by Smith's Bull 2, has been mentioned in the preceding discussion. The others are listed below. In each case, the original location cannot be ascertained with the information currently available. The texts are:

A A piece cut from a large object, presumably a colossus, now in the Kestner Museum, Hannover (Inventory number 1891, 12; 27.5 × 12.3 cm.). The piece was 'brought from Maskat in 1860 and presented to the Museum, said to be from Nineveh' (information courtesy of Dr Ulrich Gehrig, Director of the Museum). A photograph of the piece was published by E. Unger (*RLV* 4, pl. 61b).

The text, insofar as it is preserved, is a duplicate of Smith's Bull 3 (see numbers 2-3, above). It is not, however, the same exemplar as Smith's Bull 3, as the preserved lines are twice the length of the ones published by Smith.

B Meissner and Rost (*Die Bauinschriften Sanheribs*) copied and published portions of building inscriptions found on two squeezes in the BM. These they describe as 'zwei unnummerierte Abklatsche ... welche die dritten Slabs zweier Stierinschriften repräsentieren.... Abk. St. (= Abkürzung Stier) 4; 5'(p. 3).

The fact that they were squeezes found in the British Museum might be taken to indicate that they derived from the same colossi as did the squeezes utilized by Smith for his Bulls 2 and 3, but Russell (1985: 33-40) has recently argued that it is likely that the second squeeze is from the fourth part of an inscription, and that neither squeeze comes from the facade of the throne room. Their original position remains unknown.

D Two fragments which join (21 × 22 cm., 21 × 12.3 cm.) now in the Vatican Museum, presented to Pope Pius IX by G. Bennhi in 1855 (Pohl, *RPARA* 19 [1942/43], 250, n. 16; *Or. n.s.* 16 [1947], 459ff.).

The text preserves part of the building inscription, with the line distribution the same as that in the second unnumbered squeeze of Meissner-Rost (see number 2-3, above).

Appendix 1

Layard, MS C, 55 verso &- 56 verso, slab 4. See number 23, above.

15. *ù a-na* ^{fd}*taš-me-tum-šar-ṛat* MUNUS.É.GAL *hi-ir-tu na-ram-ti-ia*

16. *ša* ^d*be-lit-DINGIR.MEŠ* UGU *gi-mir* MUNUS.MEŠ *ú-šak-li-la nab-ni-sa* É.GAL *ru-a-me hi-da-a-ti*

17. *ù ri-šá-a-ti ú-še-piš-ma* ^fAB.ZA.ZA-a-ti NA₄.*pi-i-li pe-ši-i ina* KÁ.MEŠ-šá *ul-ziz*

18. *i-na qí-bit* ^dAŠ-šur AD DINGIR.MEŠ *ù iš-tar šar-ra-ti i-na tu-ub* UZU *ù hu-ud lib-bi*

19. *qé-reb* É.GAL.MEŠ *ši-na-a-ti ki-là-la-an* UD.MEŠ *liš!-šá-ri-ka lí-iš-ba-a*

20. *bu-a-ri* ^dALAD *dum-qí* ^dLAMMA *dum-qí i-da-at* É.GAL.MEŠ *šá-ti-na*

21. *da-a-riš lit-tas-ḫa-ru a-a ip-par-ku-ú i-da-a-ši-in*

'And for Tashmetum-sharrat, the queen, my beloved wife, whose features Belit-ili has made perfect above all women, I had a palace of loveliness, delight, and joy built and set *apsasātī* of white limestone in its doorways. At the command of Ashur, father of the gods, (and) of Ishtar, the queen, may she be granted days of health and happiness within both these palaces, may she have her fill of well-being, may the favourable *šēdu* and the favourable *lamassu* turn to these palaces forever and never leave them.'

Comments: The translation is based on the *CAD* in almost all cases. For *ekal ruāmē* and *buāru*, compare *AHW*, p. 991a and 135a. In line 19, the verbal form has to be *liššarika*, in spite of the fact that Layard copied the first sign as NU.

Although this is the only new passage in this text, the copy shows that previously known sections of Sennacherib's building inscriptions are arranged in an order that has no exact parallel among the other Sennacherib texts.