

The Çineköy Inscriptions: Proving Syria is Derived From Assyria

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In November 1997, a late Hittite style statue representing the Storm-god Tarhunza was found buried in a farm at the Çine village of Adana province, in modern Turkey. The god figure is standing upright on a cart pulled by two bulls. The statue is about 2.5 meters high standing on a base. There is a Phoenician and Hieroglyphic Luwian bilingual inscription on the base.¹

The Çineköy Inscriptions became a subject of a October 2006 paper published in the fourth issue Journal of Near Eastern Studies, in which Prof. Robert Rollinger lends support to the age-old debate of the name "Syria" being derived from "Assyria". It also sheds new light on today's Assyrian identity and the relation between the terms Suroyo, Suryoyo and Asuroyo. According to Prof. Rollinger the question has finally been solved. "Suroye or Suryoye means nothing else but Assyrians".

Author of the Çineköy text identifies himself as Warika² and refers to his land as Hiyawa (the ancient name of Cilicia). He praises himself for strengthening his country and declares himself as a good ally of Assyria. King Warika of Hiyawa may be the same person as Urikki the king of Que (Quwe)³ mentioned in the Assyrian sources dating to Sargon II.⁴ It was suggested by some scholars that the land of Hiyawa mentioned in the text refers to Ahhiyawa, which in Hittite cuneiform texts refers to the land of Mycenaean Greeks. Warika's name has also been compared with Awariku the king of Adanawa mentioned in the Karatepe and Hasanbeyli inscriptions. The monument should date to the second half of the 8th century BC. It is currently on display in the Adana Museum. King Warika is also mentioned in Incirli and Cebelireis inscriptions, although the latter one is likely to belong to a namesake descendant.

The examined section of the Luwian inscription reads:

§VI *And then, the/an Assyrian king (su+ra/i-wa/i-ni-sa(URBS)) and the whole Assyrian "House" (su+ra/i-wa/i-za-ha(URBS)) were made a fa[ther and a mo]ther for me,*
§VII *and Hiyawa and Assyria (su+ra/i-wa/i-ia-sa-ha(URBS)) were made a single "House."*

1 <https://www.hittitemonuments.com/cinekoy/>

2 Warikas must be identified with Urikki, king of Que (the Assyrian transcription for Hiyawa), mentioned in various Assyrian texts of Tiglath-pileser III (745-727) and Sargon II (721-705), and with Awarikus, king of Adanawa (the ancient name of modern Adana).

3 The provincial status of Que seems to be attested beyond any reasonable doubt in a letter found in Nimrud/Kalhu, written by Sargon to Aššur-šarru-usur, who is mentioned in other texts as the governor of Que; in the letter Aššur-šarru-usur is encouraged by the king to exert his (provincial) authority over local princes. In the letter it is also stated that Midas, king of Phrygia, had delivered to Aššur-šarru-usur a group of envoys who had been sent to Urartu by Urikki (= Warikas). Since Urartu was a formidable enemy to Assyria during Sargon's reign, it is easy to deduce that Urikki's/Warikas's envoy was a patent infringement of the duties of a king tributary to Assyria. This might imply that an Assyrian governor, probably but not surely Aššur-šarru-usur, was installed in Que in the place of Urikki/Warikas, who might have been removed from his throne when his treason was discovered, as customary in the Assyrian political usage according to many Assyrian texts, or might have fled abroad to avoid punishment.

4 In some royal inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III composed between 737 and 729 it is stated that Urikki (=Warikas) paid tribute to Assyria in 738; therefore, represents a date post quem for ÇINEKÖY, even though it cannot be excluded that Que was already tributary before that year. From the Assyrian point of view, the tributary status of a country ceased when the country was incorporated in the empire and turned into a province: since this transformation necessarily implied the de-thronement of the ruling dynasty, an inscription such as ÇINEKÖY could not have been composed when Hiyawa was an Assyrian province.

The corresponding Phoenician inscription reads:

*And the king [of Aššur and (?)]
the whole “House” of Aššur (’ŠR) were for me a father [and a]
mother, and the DNNYM and the Assyrians (’ŠRYM)
were a single “House.”*⁵



The Phoenician version there is the word Assyria written in the original form with an “A” in the beginning making it “Assur”. In the Luwian version, the same word but without the initial “A” making it “Sur”. So the name Assyria had lost the initial “A” in the Luwian version. Of course, both Assur and Sur mean Assyria.⁶

⁵ <https://en-academic.com/dic.nsf/enwiki/7045395>

⁶ See Also https://www.academia.edu/3331075/the_luwian_phoenician_bilinguals_of_cinek_%C3%B6y_and_karatepe_an_ideological_dialogue