A NEW TRANSLATION FOR 2 KINGS XV 25*)

The circumstances of the assassination of Pekahiah ben Menahem by Pekah ben Remaliah, described in 2 K. xv 25, have been obscured by a difficult reading in the text. The text reads:

\[\text{wyχr} \text{ ρqh \ bn rmlybw } \text{ ħlyw} \text{ wykhw b'mrwn bt mlk } \text{ t rhg w't h'ryh}\]

\textit{Vetus Testamentum, Vol. XXVI, Fasc. 3}
Pekah ben Remaliah, his officer, conspired against him and struck him in Samaria in the palace of the king, by ḫrgb and by the ḫryh.)

Most have either assumed that the last four words are corrupt, or that ḫrgb is a geographical location, as in Deut. iii 4.

Ugaritic literature, however, provides a key to the meaning of ḫrgb and ḫryh. In 1 Aqht (CTA 19) 121, we find a reference to ḫrgb ab nšrm, “Hrgb, the father of eagles,” which suggests that ḫrgb might mean “eagle” with ḫryh as “lion.” Thus, Pekahiah was murdered “near the eagle and the lion.”

This reference to the eagle and lion is explained by a similar description of the assassination of Sennacherib, who was murdered only a few years after Pekahiah 3). In his account of the incident, Ashurbanipal, Sennacherib’s grandson, swore to take revenge on the murderers, whom he described as

sittinišimēl baštsun ina aladlammu (a ALAD a LAMMA) ša ma Sin-

šašemēs erba ab abi bani-ia ina libbibi ispunu 4)

the rest of the people, who were alive, who had struck down Sennacherib, my grandfather, in the midst of the protective deities.

The protective deities, the šedu and lamassu (read together as aladlammu 5) were colossal figures guarding the gates of the royal palace, along with the apsasitu. The aladlammu was probably a colossal bull, and the apsasitu a sphinx 6). Sennacherib boasts that he had made a ALAD a LAMMA-MEŠ rabûte ana bâbî ekallî-ia, “aladlamme for the gates of my palace,” and that he had aladlamme and apsasîte brought to Nineveh 7). Many excellent examples of such colossi have been uncovered 8). The fact that both the aladlammu and apsasitu served the same function as protective deities at the palace gate can be shown from Esarhaddon’s inscriptions. In one instance Esarhaddon says that the aladlamme and apsasîte served to “turn away evil” (irti lemmî utarrû), and subsequently that the ALAD-MEŠ u LAMMA-MEŠ... irti lemmî utarrû, “turn away evil” 9). Ashurbanipal’s statement, therefore, that Sennacherib was murdered among the aladlammu could refer generally to either colossal bulls or sphinxes which guarded the palace gates 10).

Like Sennacherib, Pekahiah was murdered between the guardian figures of his palace. The Hebrew text employed the circumlocution, “near the eagle and near the lion,” to mean “near the sphinx(es)” 11), Such sphinxes appear on several Phoenician ivories from Megiddo 12),