A NEW TEXT RELATING TO ASHURBANIPAL'S ELAMITE WARS

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The text 83-1-18, 476+492+728 is an interesting account of incidents during the eighth campaign of Ashurbanipal. The text seems to be neither a letter nor a royal inscription; it is difficult, however, to determine the literary category to which it belongs. It has, in common with royal inscriptions, some formulae which are unusual in letters (e.g. šarrî d[anni, r.3]). On the other hand, the king (who is referred to in the third person, not in the first person as in royal inscriptions) does not seem to be the protagonist of this historical narrative; he is mentioned only at the beginning (4') and at the end (r.10; r.14), whereas his officials are frequently mentioned (e.g. the title ša rēšî/u occurs nine times). The language of the text seems to be relatively close to that of royal inscriptions, although it has a certain colloquial flavour (e.g. agā (?) 24', 25'; [m]uš-šar-a-n[i 6', cf. muš-ša-ra-ni-i ABL 157:19, muš-ša-ru-u ibid. r.3.) and it lacks the poetic quality of royal inscriptions. Finally, the text resembles chronicles (though lacking their terseness) in that it is prose narrative in the third person.

The text deals with some episodes on the Elamite border; these are also known from other sources, the most important of which are: 1) the Annals of Ashurbanipal (Rassam Cylinder, M. Streck, Assurbanipal und die letzten Könige ..., vol. II, p.46ff.); 2) two short fragments K. 2825 and K.1609+4699 (CT 35, 47); 3) a Neo-Babylonian letter (ABL 1007+82-3-23,40), in which the names Marduk-šar-uṣur, Milkirame and Arāšu are mentioned (r.16-19).

No line-to-line translation will be given because of the fragmentary state of the text: approximately two-thirds of every line is broken away. A summary of the contents will be given instead, though much of it remains pure guesswork.

1) Published with the kind permission of the Trustees of the British Museum. I am grateful to Professor Simo Parpola, who ceded his prior rights to edit this text to me and gave me much valuable advice during my work. Joins by Karlheinz Deller and Simo Parpola, copy by Simo Parpola.

2) The closest parallel to our text seem to be CT 46 45 (W. G. Lambert, "Nebuchadnezzar King of Justice", Iraq 27 (1965) 1-11) and the epical fragments published by A.K. Grayson, Babylonian Historical-Literary Texts (Toronto, 1975) p. 47ff; cf. especially the Nabopolassar epic, p. 78ff. However, it seems too bold to classify the present text as an “Ashurbanipal epic” on the basis of these parallels only.
Summary of the contents.

The beginning of the preserved part (1'-7') seems to form an introduction to the episode of Arasu. Already in this part the title LUGAL SU is prominent. From line 8' onwards the text tells about the campaign in Elam, mentioning perhaps the king of Elam (12'). Lines 14'-15' give an account of the magnates (of Ashurbanipal) entering some cities and looting them. After that the troops seem to conquer Arasu, and to open the gate of its palace (?), which they presumably robbed from its riches. Marduk-sar-usur (or somebody else?) from his chariot reviews then the booty and/or the captives. (From K. 2825 we indeed learn that Marduk-šar-usur took captives during the Elamite campaign). The rest of the obverse and the edge may have contained the names of some of the captives.

The reverse probably relates how a eunuch (possibly the same that was mentioned on lines 2'-5') is brought in handcuffs to Ashurbanipal, the mighty King. He may have been arrested by Milkiṣrate. The eunuch probably crawled on his belly (cf. K. 2825:10) pleading for mercy. The king listened to him (or, perhaps, slapped his face?). Rev.15 seems to be a citation, presumably from Ashurbanipal’s speech: “From the beginning you did not send (?) your reports to me (?)...”. After that the text becomes too broken to be paraphrased. The only words that are intelligible are on rev. 20 (“the lands”).

Transliteration
83-1-18, 476+492+728

Obverse
beginning broken away
1'  x x x [  
2' [L]UGAL SU [  
3' [L]UGAL SU [  
4' [LU]GAL re-e-mu [s̱kšn/rššu] 
5' [L]UGAL te-[e-mu] 
6' [m]uš-šar-a-n[u x x ] x [  
7' a -na UGU ši-pir ti ša [  
8' [ša] a-na KUR NIM.MA K I x [  
9' [x x -n]u LUGAL MES-šu [  
10' [x x KUR R NIM.MA K I LUGAL [  
11' KUR a-ra-šu-ma [(x)] ina KUR NIM.MA K I  
12' [LUGA]L' KUR NIM.MA K I x [  
13' [x x x ] x -su-nu TA* [  
14' [L]UGAL MES-šu ina ŞA UR[U  
15' [h]u-ub-tu ih-tab-tu [  

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16' [L]USAG-šū i-na-zi-ia x [ x
17' "a-ši KUR-a-ra-ši ik-šu-ud(-)m[a
18' [GIS]G-šu i-bat-te i Amur.UTU-LUG[AL-PAB
19' [L]USAG ina GIS-sa-par-ri-šū [
20' [L]KUR la GIS KUR-ma [
21' [ x ] x -nu-ū ina pi-i GIS[BA[N
22' [T]AMAR.UTU-MAN-PAB GIS[AG
23' [T][A* ŠA man-še NIM.MA][KI
24' [ x ] a-ga-a DUMU[ES? (or DUMU 1 )
25' [ x ] GISBARAN[ ]
26' [ KUR/NIM.M][A][KI

Edge (3 lines) broken away, except for a trace

Reverse

1 [L]USAG is qa-ti na-š[i
2 [ši]-šu-niš-šu ina dan-[-
3 a-na 'A.N.SÁR-DÚ-A LUGAL d[an-ni
4 l[mi]-ki-ra-me LÜGAL-[ka-sir
5 LÜGALMES šá tê-e-me tar-du il-[-
6 sa-bit-su LLU-ka-sir [
7 LÜGALMES ŠÁ-bi e-[-
8 ki ša a-na 2 LÜGALMES [
9 ki ša a-na 2 ŠESMES x [ x
10 šá=LUSAG ina IGI LUGAL ip-š[i-illa
11 LUGAL ina pa-an LÜGALMES n[[-
12 GISBAN a-na [(x)] 2° LÜ [
13 [L]USAG k[i
14 LUGAL lit-su id-[i
15 [T][A* SAG ul ū[d[- (špriškn)
16 [x-x-t][i x [ x
17 [ x
18 [ x
19 "a-na] x [ x
20 KUR.KUR x [ x
21 at- x [ x
22 [ x ] x [ x
rest broken away
Notes to the text

Obv. 11' The Elamite-Babylonian border district Arāšu (Rāšu) was conquered during the eighth campaign of Ashurbanipal (cf. Rassam Cylinder V 63-68).

16' Nazija was perhaps, though no Elamite etymology seems to be at hand for the name, a eunuch of the Elamite, not the Assyrian king. The name is otherwise attested only in ABL 1357:7', a letter of unknown provenience probably dating from the reign of Sargon.

18' A common name in Assyria (cf. Tallqvist, Assyrian Personal Names). This Marduk-šar-uṣur is met three times in the royal inscriptions of Ashurbanipal, viz. K. 2825:9, K. 1609+4699 (CT 35,47) r.6 and K. 4464:12 (Th. Bauer, Das Inschriftenwerk Assurbanipals, vol. I, plate 40). For the attestations in letters, see Tallqvist, op.cit. and L. Waterman, Royal Correspondence ..., vol.IV.

21' Probably [i]š-nu-ū (“they ...-ed another time”) or [š]u-nu-ū (“are they...?” with interrogative intonation common in Neo-Assyrian).

24'-25' Here we may have the Neo-Babylonian demonstrative agā, which belongs to the epistolary language: in royal inscriptions it is attested only in the Achaemenian period (attestation in CAD agā).

Rev. 4 Milkirame, eponym of 656, known by the title LUGAL-ka-šir/KA.KÉŠ in several Nimrud documents, e.g. ND 2328, ND 2330 (both in Iraq 16, p.43) and ND 5448: 27-29 (Iraq 19, plate 28). LUGAL-ka-šir “chief tailor” was an honourary title borne by one of the king’s magnates and it must not be confused with the title LUGAL-ki-šir denoting a lower level official (“cohort commander”) in the ilku system.

5 We seem to have here a relative clause beginning with šā. Šeme ṭardu is probably the object (tēme, assimilated for tēmu) with the verb (špr?, škn?) following it. The exact meaning of this line remains unclear.

8-9 The signs could also be read ki-ša-a-ru, but this seems to be a hapax. Besides, šā (not ša) is more common in medial position in Neo-Assyrian orthography. The writing of ki with ki is attested (e.g. ki ša ABL 158 r.21), though the plene writing ki-i is much more common. The reading ki ša-a-ru (“like the breath of ...”) does not seem to fit very well, either.

10 The titles beginning with ša- are sometimes written ša-LU (e.g. ša-LU BAD.HAL ABL 309 r.7, ša-LUBAD.HAL-li-a-ti ABL 1063:10’). An alternative reading is naturally ša LU.SAG “of the eunuch”. The verb pšl is found also in K. 2825:10 and K. 1609+4699 r.7.

12 [(x)] 2 should perhaps be read [ x ] x.

14 Here we may have the literary expression lētu nādû (see CAD lētu) “to pay attention”. The sense of the story would also allow a phrase “he slapped his face”, but neither nātû (it-[i] nor terû (it-[i]-ir) is convincing, though both occur in e.g. BINI 194:28 (NB letter, see CAD nātû 1). The last remaining possibility (sc. lētu ‘triumph’) fits even less.

21 Probably at-[a] or at-[u]-nu.