

THE POLITICAL STATUS OF ELAM AFTER 653 B.C. ACCORDING TO *ABL* 839

Raija MATTILA — Helsinki

ABL 839 is a well-known letter written to Ashurbanipal by the Sealander Nabû-bêl-šumâte while still a loyal subject of the Assyrian king. Although the letter is in Neo-Babylonian it is written in Assyrian script and the scribe has added a postscript to it in Neo-Assyrian¹. The postscript has been neglected in the discussion of this text due to some inaccuracy in Harper's copy that has impeded the understanding of it. For this reason a new copy is presented below². The whole text is given in transliteration and translation.

Obverse

- 1 [a]-na LUGAL EN-ia
[A]RAD-ka ^{Id}PA-EN-MU^{MEŠ}-te
lu-u DI-mu a-na LUGAL be-lí-ia
^daš-šur ^dPA ù ^dAMAR.UTU
5 a-na LUGAL be-lí-ia lik-ru-bu
tu-ub ŠÀ-bi tu-ub UZU^{MEŠ}
ù a-ra-ku UD-mi a-na L[UGAL be-lí-ia]
li-qí-šú ki-i áš-mu-ú
LUGAL ^{KUR}NIM.MA^{KI} mi-ši-id
10 ù URU^{MEŠ} ma-a'-du-ú-te
la pa-ni-šú it-ti-ik-ru
um-ma ina ŠU^{II}-ka ul ni-il-lak
ki-i šá áš-mu-u a-na LUGAL be-lí-ia
al-tap-ra KUR tam-tim šá ul-tu É

¹) I am grateful to prof. Simo Parpola for discussing this text with me.

²) I wish to thank Dr. Nicholas Postgate for copying the postscript and for collating the first part of this letter. The new copy is published with the kind permission of the Trustees of the British Museum. The exclamations marks used in the transliteration of the postscript mark deviations from the *ABL* copy.

- 15 ¹na-²i-id-^dAMAR.UTU la áš-bu
^{LÚ}hab-tu-te u ^{LÚ}mun-na-bi-^Γtu-te^Γ
 šá a-na ^{LÚ}gu-ra-sim-mu il-li-ku
 UN^{MES} 5-me šú-nu ^{1d}30-DIN-su-iq-bi
 ki-i iṣ-ba-tu iṣ-qa-a-ti
 20 it-ta-di-šú-nu-ti a-na ¹na-ta-[nu]

Edge

LUGAL šá ^{LÚ}tam-da-a-a EN^ΓKÚR^Γ
 šá LUGAL it-ta-din-šú-nu-t[i]
 na-t[a- x x x]

Reverse

- 1 ù a-na ¹na-t[an¹ iq-ta-bi]
 um-ma DUMU.MÍ-a-a ú-[x x]
 a-du-ú ina te-qí-ti šá-[x x]
 É ina ^{LÚ}tam-da-a-a ip-pu-[uš]
 5 ù KUR tam-tim ARAD^{MES} ša LU[GAL be-lí-ia]
 ú-šá-aD-Dal-ma a-na ¹na-tan i-[nam-din]
 a-du-ú ki-i áš-pu-ra LUG[AL]
 be-lí-a ul-te-eš-mu ù a-du-u
¹la-a-a-le-e LUGAL ^{LÚ}be-zu
 10 ina IGI LUGAL LUGAL be-lí-a liš-al-šú

-
- ^dP[A ^dAM]AR.UTU DINGIR^{MES}-ka ^Γuk^Γ-ta-as-si-u
^{LÚ}[KÚR]^Γ^{MES?}-ka^Γ ina [KI.T]A¹ GÌR^{II.MES}-ka
 is-sak-nu ma[?]-^Γa^Γ [KUR.KUR]^{MES} gab-bu
 li-be-el DUMU.LU[GAL 1-en] TA* ŠÀ ARAD^{MES}-šú
 15 a-na ^{LÚ}NAM-u-[t]e¹ ina ^K[^{UR}N]IM¹.MA^{1KI} liš-kun
 ù 1-en-ma [ina] ^ΓKUR¹ tam^Γ-t[i]m¹ liš-ku-nu
 [^dEN¹] u ^dA[G¹ x x x ^K]^{UR}NIM.MA^{KI} [(x)]
 [ina UG]U[?]-ka uh-tal-li-qu ma-a bi-si

Edge

- [x x] ^Γx x x x x x x ^Γ
 20 [ki]-^Γi h^Γa-an-nim-m[a x x x x]
 [x x]-tu-šú ta-hal-li[q x x]
 [a]-^Γa^Γ-lu ša ARAD^{MES} šá DUMU.M[AN]

Side

*im mat*¹ *e*² [x x x] DINGIR^{MEŠ} x [x x]
 [x x x x] x x [x x x]

Translation

To the king, my lord, your servant Nabû-bêl-šumâte: Good health to the king, my lord! May Aššur, Nabû and Marduk bless the king, my lord! May they grant the k[ing, my lord,] happiness, physical well-being and the length of days!

(8) Having heard that the king of Elam had suffered a stroke and that several towns had revolted against him saying: “We will not remain your subjects”, I wrote to the king, my lord, what I had heard.

(14) (As to) the Sealand, (which) has not been settled since (the time of) Na'id-Marduk — Sîn-balassu-iqbi has arrested the plundered refugees who had gone over to the Gurasimmu tribe, 500 of them, has put them in handcuffs and given them to Natan, the king of *Sealanders*³, an enemy of the king, ... and [has said] to Nat[an]: “ .[...] my daughter”. Now through a pretext⁴ .[...] he is making my house into *Sealanders*, ...ing the Sealand, servants of the ki[ng, my lord], (and) [giving](them) to Natan. I have now written and informed the king, my lord; Laylē, the king of the Bezu⁵, is now in the presence of the king; let the king, my lord, ask him.

(rev. 11) Nabû (and) Marduk, your gods, have tied [your enemies] and placed them [unde]r your feet saying: “May he govern all [land]s!”. Let him place a prin[ce] from amongst his servants to the governors[hip of El]am and let him place another in the Sealand! [Bêl] and Na[bû] have destroyed Elam *on your behalf* saying:

(rest too fragmentary for translation)

The date of this letter can be established on the grounds of lines 8-13 which state

³) The rendering of ^{LÜ}*tam-da-a-a* as “Sealander” is tentative and is taken to denote a contrast to the Sealand under the authority of Nabû-bêl-šumâte. Natan may be identical with the Natan mentioned, always without a title, in letters by Bêl-ibni concerning events in the Sealand during the Šamaš-šum-ukin rebellion (Dietrich, *WO* 5, 184-186). On the basis of *ABL* 622+ Dietrich considers him one of the sheikhs of the Puqūdu (Dietrich, *Aramäer*, 38 n.1) but in fact he is mentioned along with sheikhs, not as one of them.

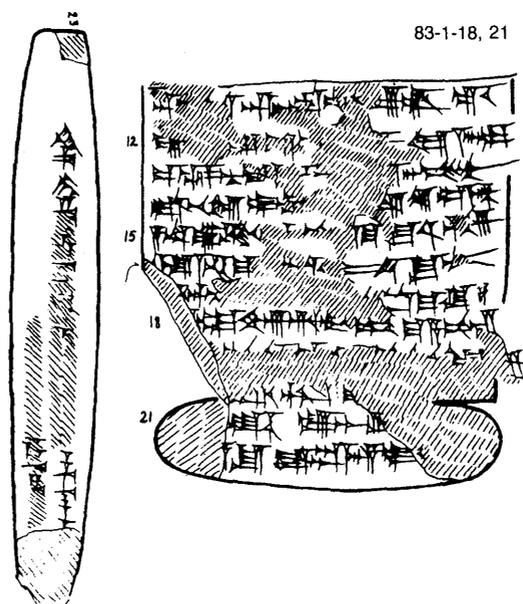
⁴) For *tēqītu* “pretext” see Durand, *ARMT* 21, 229-230.

⁵) For a discussion on the Bezu see Eph'al, *Ancient Arabs*, 130-137.

⁶) Piepkorn, *AS* 5, 105-109.

that the king of Elam had previously suffered but survived a stroke. This must refer to the paralysis that befell Teumman affecting his face, an incident described in Prism B of Ashurbanipal⁶ as a consequence of a lunar eclipse. The fact that the eclipse took place in Du'zu and was visible at sunrise is sufficient to identify it with the one of July 13, 653⁷. Only two months later, in Ulūlu, Ashurbanipal launched a major attack against Elam. Teumman was defeated at Til Tuba and beheaded. The postscript connects *ABL* 839 with these events⁸. The enemy being defeated the king is advised to reorganise the rule of Elam and of the Sealand. As suggested here, Urtaku's son Ummanigaš, who had sought refuge in Ninive when Teumman had seized power, was placed on the throne of Elam⁹.

Interestingly enough the term *pāhatūtu* is used in this context, implying that the king of Elam was a mere representative of the Assyrian ruler. It has been questioned whether Elam was ever made into a province of Assyria. Generally this is taken to have happened after the final break-down of Elam in 646¹⁰. According to *ABL* 839 Elam was annexed to Assyria already in 653 and its political status was considered comparable with that of a province.



⁷⁾ Mayr in Piepkorn, *AS* 5, 105-109.

⁸⁾ Dietrich's attempt to connect this letter with the stroke suffered by Humban-haltaš II in 675 (*Aramäer*, 37) was rejected by Brinkman (*Or* 46, 308 n.27). Malbran-Labat (*JA* 263, 13 n.25-26) recognizes that the Elamite king in question is Teumman but dates the letter to 655 without offering any comments.

⁹⁾ The possible implications of this letter on Nabû-bêl-šumâte's career are not in the scope of the present study.

¹⁰⁾ Carter & Stolper, *Elam*, 53.