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A Letter to Sennacherib Referring to the Conquest of Bit-Ha'iri and Other Events of the Year 693

Simo Parpola, Helsinki

Introduction

Ever since the publication of the first comprehensive edition of the Sargonid royal correspondence, it has been evident that letters from the reign of Sennacherib (704–681) are sparsely represented in the corpus.¹ While hundreds of letters can be certainly dated to the reigns of Sargon II, Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal, only a few have hitherto been convincingly dated to Sennacherib's reign. My own feeling has long been that many letters summarily labelled as "Sargon" (often on the basis of prosopographical evidence only) may in fact date from the first years of Sennacherib, but such letters can only rarely be identified for lack of concrete historical evidence.² To explain the curious paucity of letters to and from the king who established Nineveh as the capital of the Assyrian empire, I have suggested that his correspondence may have been purposely destroyed after his assassination.³

In his studies on Neo-Babylonian letters from Nineveh, Manfred Dietrich has assigned several letters to Sennacherib's reign, even though he too holds that there are no Sennacherib letters after 700.⁴ Most of the relevant letters originate from two officials named Nabû-šuma-lišir and Aqar-Bel-lumur, who occasionally also wrote to the king together. The evidence quoted in favor of the proposed datings has been ambiguous, however,⁵ and consequently the datings

¹ Cf. L. Waterman, *The Royal Correspondence of the Assyrian Empire*, Vol. IV (Ann Arbor, 1936), p. 12; R. Pfeiffer, *State Letters of Assyria* (AOS 6, New Haven, 1935), p. 265.

² Cf. S. Parpola, "Assyrian Royal Inscriptions and Neo-Assyrian Letters" in F.M. Fales, ed., *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions: New Horizons* (= *ARINH*; *Orientalis Antiqui Collectio XVII*, Rome, 1981), 117–142, especially p. 119; idem, *The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part I: Letters from Assyria and the West* (SAA 1, Helsinki, 1987), p. XXIF.

³ *ARINH*, p. 120, n. 3; cf. *AOAT* 5/2 (1983), p. XII.

⁴ See M. Dietrich, "Neue Quellen zur Geschichte Babyloniens I–II," *WO* 4 (1967/8), 95–100 and 183–206; *Die Aramäer Südbabyloniens*, *AOAT* 7 (1970), p. 3; *Neo-Babylonian Letters from the Kuyunjik Collection*, *CT* 54 (1979), p. 25; and recently "Bel-ibni, König von Babylon (703–700)," *AOAT* 253 (1998), 81–108.

⁵ For example, the many references to Merodach-baladan's stay in Babylon in the correspondence of Nabû-šuma-lišir and Aqar-Bel-lumur could in principle also pertain to the reign of Sargon (years 720–710), see below.

have met with scepticism from experts in the field, including myself.⁶ In the present article, I am glad to present a new text from the correspondence of Nabû-šuma-lišir and Aqar-Bel-lumur that will, I believe, decisively confirm its dating to Sennacherib's reign and thus prove my earlier scepticism groundless. The surprisingly low date of the letter—almost certainly 693—also challenges my previous ideas about the chronological structure of the Sargonid royal correspondence in general.

The new text is a fragment in the collections of the *École pratique des Hautes Études* (henceforth: EPHE), Paris, which J.-M. Durand kindly brought to my attention and allowed me to transliterate in July 1986. I immediately recognized it as a piece of the correspondence of Nabû-šuma-lišir and Aqar-Bel-lumur, and after my return to Helsinki, to my pleasant surprise discovered that it joined K 7326, a British Museum fragment published in 1913 by R. F. Harper as no. 1335 of his *Assyrian and Babylonian Letters*. I subsequently prepared a preliminary transliteration of the whole text and sent copies of it to Durand and I. L. Finkel of the British Museum for verification of the join. In a letter dated August 13, 1986, Durand generously gave me permission to publish the text, and after the fragment had been cleansed and baked, had a cast of it made for me. Having revised my transliteration with the help of the cast, I sent it with Durand's permission to the British Museum, where it was joined to K 7326 in October 1986. Finkel subsequently collated the tablet for me and provided me with the photographs reproduced here. I am much indebted to both Durand and Finkel for their cooperation and indispensable assistance in the publication of the text. I am also grateful to the Photographic Department of the British Museum for the excellent photos of K 7326+ and to the Trustees of the British Museum for the permission to publish them.

Originally, it was my hope to publish the text by the end of 1986. However, the heavy demands of the recently launched *State Archives of Assyria* project made it impossible to continue the work after October 1986, and an opportunity to return to it presented itself only in spring 2000, when Manfred Dietrich submitted his edition of the Neo-Babylonian correspondence of Sargon and Sennacherib for publication in the SAA series. It thus gives me great pleasure indeed to make this important join finally available in a volume dedicated to him, in memory of the many months that we spent together in the British Museum in the sixties working on the Sargonid letters. Both of us made many joins, but Manfred was much more lucky than I was.

The following edition of EPHE 342 + ABL 1335 follows the conventions of the SAA project. Superscript exclamation marks indicate corrections to Harper's copy, based on collation; all of these, except those in obv. 10, 15, 26, rev. 17–19, 24 and 37, originate with Finkel. Dietrich's unpublished transliteration of ABL 1335, included in his SAA manuscript, also contained several improvements to Harper's copy; his readings in obv. 4, rev. 4, 18, 20 and 23 agreed with Finkels, and in two cases (obv. 10, 28) provided a better reading which has been

⁶ Cf. J.A. Brinkman, "Bel-ibni's letters in the time of Sargon and Sennacherib," RA 77 (1983), 176f, and my reservations in *ARINH* (1981), p. 119^f.

adopted in the present transliteration. Finkel's improvements to the transliteration of the EPHE fragment (obv.5 ʿšul^l, 20 [K]A šá ʿÍD¹) have not been indicated with exclamation marks below, since they do not correct a published copy.⁷

EPHE 342 + K 7326 (ABL 1335): Transliteration

- Obv. 1 *a-na* LUGAL *be-lí-i-ni*
 2 ʿARAD.MEŠ¹-ka^{m^d}AG¹-M[U-S]I.SÁ u^mKAL-^dEN-lu-mur
 3 [l]u-ú šul-mu *a-na* LUGAL *be-lí-i-ni*
 4 [u]m-ma-a *a-na* LUGAL *be-lí-i-ni-a-ma*
 5 ʿšul^l-mu *a-na* URU.ḪAL.ŠU.MEŠ ù *e-mu-qu*
 6 ʿšá¹ LUGAL *tè-e-mu šá* UN.MEŠ šul^l-mu
 7 ʿŠÁ¹-bi šá LUGAL *be-lí-i-ni lu-ú ta-ab-šú*
 8 ʿTILGAN² UD-8-KÁM mu-šú šá UD-ʿ9¹-KÁM¹ LÚ.A-KIN
 9 šá^{md}UTU-EN-ŠEŠ ʿLÚ.qi^l-pi¹ šá BÂD.DINGIR.KI
 10 *i-na* ANŠE.BAD-ḪAL ʿx¹ [k]a-ban¹-nu-ti
 11 *ik-tal-da* ʿx¹ x[x x]^mzi-ta *a-a-lu*
 12 *il-tak-nu um-ma a-na dan¹-ʿna¹-ti*
 13 *e-la-a um-ma* LUGAL KUR.NIM.MA.KI
 14 *a-na* UGU-ḫi-ku-nu ʿki^l-i niq-ʿba¹-ás¹-šú
 15 *um-ma et-ʿqa-ni¹-šú qi-ban¹-na-a-ši*
 16 *um-ma mi-ʿnam¹-ma a-a-lu ta-šak-kan*
 17 *um-ma ʿul^l-tú¹ [x]x-ka-ni tè-e-mu*
 18 šak-ʿnak¹ *um-ma šu-um-ḫi-iš um-ma*
 19 *ul-tu kib-s[i] šá* BÂD.DINGIR.KI *a-di*
 20 [K]A šá ʿÍD¹.[x]x-^dU.GUR *gab-bi ul-tam-ḫi-iš*
 21 [x x] ʿx ki^l-[i] niš-mu-ú *ma-aš-šar-ti*
 22 [x x nu-dan-ni]ⁿ UN.MEŠ KUR *gab-bi*
 23 [*a-na* UGU *a-ḫ*]a-meš *it-ta-at-ba-ku*
 24 [x x x x x]x *qu-lu i-na* UGU *si-si*
 25 [x x x x ki]-ʿi¹ niš-mu-ú *a-na* ŠÁ¹-bi URU
 26 [x x x ni-il]-li-ku^m *lul-la-E[N¹]*
 27 [x x x^mmu]-kin-ni¹-aš-šur ù^{m^d}. [x x x]
 28 [x x x x.R]A[?].KI ḫu-lu x[x x x x]
 29 [x x x x x i]t-ti-ni *il-l[i-ku (x)]*
- Edge uninscribed
- Rev. 1 [x x x x x]-ki UN.MEŠ KUR *i-[x x]*
 2 [x x x x i]t-ti-šú-nu *a-n[a x x]*
 3 [x x x x x]-šú-nu-ti *a-na^ml[ul^l-la-EN]*

⁷ For previous information on EPHE 342 see V. Scheil, RA 18 (1921) and the catalogue entry and brief description in J.-M. Durand, *Documents cunéiformes de la IV^e Section de l'Ecole pratique des Hautes Etudes, Tome I: Catalogue et copies cunéiformes* (Publications du Centre de Recherches d'Histoire et de Philologie de la IV^e Section de l'Ecole pratique des Hautes Etudes, Paris, II, 18, Genève-Paris: Librairie Droz, 1982), p. 25, no. 342.

- 4 [x x x x]x-ma¹ ki¹-i i-ba-á[š-sú-ú]
 5 [x ERIM.MEŠ GIŠ.BA]N ù GIŠ.a-ri-t[i x x]
 6 [x x a-na ŠÀ] URU.ĤAL.ŠU šá LUGAL nu-[ul-te-rib]
 7 [ši-pir-e-ti ki]-i ni-iš-tu¹-ru a-na U[GU²]
 8 [LUGAL be-lí-i-ni nu-u]l-te-bi-la ù ^mlul-la-^rEN¹
 9 [x x x x x]-ni ši-pir-e-ti-ma
 10 [x x x x x x]x ul-te-bi-la
 11 [x x x x x x]x LÚ.A-KIN i-na ANŠE.BAD-ĤAL-la
 12 [a-na URU.x x]x ki-i il-li-ka
 13 [um-ma ĥi-tu ia]-²a-an um-ma šá A.ŠÀ-šú-nu
 14 [šá² KUR.NIM.MA].KI-a-a a-di É-^mĥa-a-i-ri
 15 [x x x x]x-lu-ni A.ŠÀ it-ta-šú-ú
 16 [ù it]-te-^reh¹-su ki-i niš-pu-ru ši-pir-e-ti
 17 ^ršá a¹-[na L]UGAL be-lí-i-ni nu-še-bi-la nu-^rti¹-e-ra
 18 um-ma LUGAL BE-ni i-šem-me-e-ma¹ ŠÀ¹-ba¹-šú¹
^ri¹ -šah¹-ĥi-ṭa
 19 min-de-e-ma ši-pir-ti šá ^mlul-la-EN i-na-áš-šú-ni
 20 šá pi-i ši-pir-ti LUGAL BE-ni la i-qa-pi¹ ĥi-tu¹ ia-²a-an
 21 ŠÀ-bi šá LUGAL be-lí-i-ni lu-ú ṭa-ab-šú
 22 áš-šú dul-lu šá ÍD šá É-^mrde¹-ra-a-a šá LUGAL BE-ⁿi¹
 23 ṭe-e-mu iš-kun-an-na-ši um-ma lí¹-is-ki¹-ru¹
 24 LUGAL BE-ni i-di ^rina šad-da¹-qàd šal-^rla-šaf¹-ti UN.MEŠ
 KUR ma-a²-du
 25 ù a-ki šá 1-en LÚ.ENGAR šú-ṣu-nim-ma ina UGU-ĥi
 iz-zi-iz-zu
 26 ù en-na UN.MEŠ KUR i-ṣu u (erasure)
 27 ù ul ni-iḥ-ru-up-ma i[na U]GU-ĥi ul ni-iz-ziz
 28 UD.MEŠ iq-ter-ba-ni ù U[N].MEŠ ma-la šá-šú-nu
 29 ^rŠÀ¹-ba-šú-nu ul pa-ṭir-ma a-ki ŠÀ-bi-šú-nu ul ip-pu-šú
 30 LUGAL BE-ni i-qab-bi um-ma dul-lu ip-pu-šú ^rx¹-ga-ma¹ ^rul¹
^ri¹-^rx¹
 31 ul i-šem-mu-na-ši-ma dul-lu ul ni-ip-pu-uš a-ki šá LUGAL
 32 i-le-²u-ú li-^rpu-uš¹ it-ti URU.ur-ĥu-la-a-a
 Edge 33 URU.da-mu-na-a-a ù URU.a-ra-da-ta-a-a
 34 x x x x x-šú-nu mi² KUR e tu ^rš¹
 35 x x a x x x ti² ib² us la-pa-an LUGAL
 36 ^rbe-lí-i-ni pal-ĥa¹-nu-ma a²-^rx¹-a ina ŠÀ-bi-šú-nu
 37 [ul²] ^rni-šak-kan¹ LUGAL BE-ni a-ki šá i-le-²u-ú
 38 (blank) li-pu-uš

Translation

¹To the king, our lord: your servants, Nabû-šuma-lišir and Aqar-Bel-lumur. Good health to the king, our lord! Say to the king, our lord: The king's forts and troops are well. The mood of the people is good. The king, our lord, can be glad.

⁸On the 8th of *Kislev* (IX), on the eve of the 9th day, a messenger of Šamaš-bel-ušur, the legate (*qīpu*) of Der, arrived [...] on horseback. (While) [the ...s of] Zitta were organizing help, he said: "Go up to the fortified place! The king of Elam is (marching) against you!"

¹⁴When we said to him, "Proceed against him! Tell us, why are you organizing help?" he said: "[...] I am under orders to call (people) to arms, and I have called to arms everybody from the trail of Der as far as the [mo]uth of the river of [...] Nergal." When we heard this, we strengthened the guard [...]; all the people of the country were crowded [together] [...].

²⁴Silence [...] upon ... [Wh]en we heard (this) [and we]nt into the city, Lulla-Bel, [... Mu]kinni-Aššur and [PN]

²⁹[.....] went with us

^{r.1}[.....] the people of the country [...]

²[.....] with them to [...]

³[.....] them to Lu[lla-Bel].

⁴When there [was], we [brought [bo]wmen and shieldmen [...]] [into] the king's fort, wrote down [letters] and dispatched them to [the king, our lord]. Lulla-Bel too [.....] dispatched letters [.....].

¹¹[On the xth day], the messenger came (back) [...] on horseback, saying: "There is nothing [to worry about]! They have [gon]e up to the territory [of the Elami]tes, taken land as far as Bit-Ha'iri, [and] returned." We sent (word) and had the letters which we had dispatched to the king, our lord, returned, thinking: "Should the king, our lord, read (lit., 'hear') them, he would get startled." In case they bring in the message of Lulla-Bel, the king, our lord, should not believe the content of the message. There is nothing is to worry about; the king, our lord, can be at ease.

²²As to the work on the river of Bit-Deraya which the king, our lord, ordered to be dammed—the king, our lord, knows that last year and the year before it the people of the country were many, and they were brought out and worked on it like one farmer. But now the people of the country are few and (...), and we have not worked on it earlier. The days have arrived, but all the people are sulky and do not act according to their hearts. The king, our lord, will say, "They shall do the work," (but) they do not obey us, so we cannot do the work. May the king act best as he can.

³²With the Urhulu, Damunu and Aradatu (tribes) [.....] We fear the king, our lord, and shall [not] place ... among them. May the king, our lord, act best as he can.

Philological Notes

Obv. 8: 'ITI.GAN'¹: badly effaced, reading from the cast (August 1986). According to Finkel (coll. October 1986), the unclear sign is "not GAN." The traces copied by him would fit AP[IN] (= Marchesvan, the 8th month).

9: Šamaš-bel-ušur is referred to as "the governor" (*pāhutu*) of Der in the letters of his deputy Nabû-duru-ušur to be discussed below.

- 10: The sign before [*k*]a-ban¹-nu-ti is illegible (= *la*? Cf. r. 11) and the meaning of the word itself is obscure (masc. pl. of an adjective **kabnu*? Cf. Syr. *kbn* “to gird?”).
- 11: The verb *kašādu* in the meaning “to arrive,” with the ventive suffix but without indication of the place of arrival, is also attested in ABL 451 r. 7 (UD-5-KAM *a-ga-a kul-da-ni*), ABL 906 r. 7 (UD-5-KĀM *kul-da-ni*) and r.10 (*ḥa-an-tiš kul-da-nu*), ABL 774:19 and r. 21 (*ḥa-an-tiš e-mu-qu lik-šu-dam-ma*), and OIP 2 H₄: 42 (ITI.AB *ku-uš-šu dan-nu ik-šu-dam-ma*; cf. ABL 698:15, *a-di la ku-uš-šu i-kaš-šá-du*), all NB; cf. also ABL 896 r. 17 (*ár-ḥiš ina IGI MAN lu tak-šu-da*), NA letter from a Babylonian nobleman educated in Nineveh. The semantics of *kašādu* (basically, “to reach or overcome by running”) and its frequent coupling with the adverb *ḥantiš/arḥiš* “quickly” in the parallels, imply that the verb primarily referred to sudden or unexpected arrivals; note that in r. 11f, where the arrival of the messenger is expected, the verb *alāku* is used.
- For ^mzi-ta cf. ^mzi-it-ti, witness in a legal document from Nineveh dated 692 BC (ADD 324 = SAA 6 142 r. 17). Reading the name as ^mzi-ta-a-a (cf. ^mzi-ta-a-a, ADD 711 r.7; CTN 3 29 s. 2, 61 r. 4, and ^mHA.LA-a-a, CTN 3 7 r. 8; 9 r. 6; 73:10, all post-canonical) is excluded by comparison with line 16.
- 12, 16: The phrase *aiālu šakānu* “to organize help” is not found elsewhere in the Sargonid letter corpus and the translation is tentative only. The word *aiālu* is otherwise attested in the phrases *ana aiāli alāku* “to come to help” (ABL 222 r. 19 [NA], 328:20 and 1311+:27 [NB]; CT 53 29:8 and 454:5, NL 5 r. 6 [NA]; CT 54 464 r. 5 [NB]), *ana aiāli uzuzzu* “to stand by as help” (ABL 1286 r. 2 [NB]), and *aiālu šapāru* “to send help” (CT 54 591:14 [NB]). To judge from the spelling LÚ.a-’a-lu in the latter phrase, the word could also refer to auxiliary troops. It is accordingly possible that *aiālu šakānu* (lit., “to set up help”) actually referred to the formation of auxiliary troops from the local population for a campaign against the Elamites, which in fact was the proper mission of the messenger (see lines 18ff). See the discussion below.
- 18, 20: *šumḥušu*, lit. “to cause to fight,” is otherwise best attested in NB/NA in the meaning “to incite to fight, to cause an armed conflict” see SAA 2:6 326 and 342; SAA 4 154:9, r. 12; 156:10; 157:3; 158:6; 159:9; 161:7; 165 r. 4; 166:7; ABL 879:6 and 21, 967 r. 3, 1364 r. 9. These meanings are obviously out of the question in the present context.
- 23: Cf. ANŠE.KUR.MEŠ *ina ŠĀ-bi a-ḥa-iš it-ta-ad-bu-ku*, “horses piled together making up a heap,” SAA 5 249:11f (NA).
- 24: The meaning of *si-si* here cannot be determined.
- 26, r. 3, 8: *Lulla-Bēl*: not otherwise attested, but certainly a good Babylonian name meaning “Let me extoll Bel.” Cf. CAD E 126 s.v. *elū* 5c “to extol,” with examples such as *ilam šūpām lulli* “let me extol the manifest god”, *dun-naša lulli* “let me extol her (Ishtar’s) might,” and *i nulli šumšu* “let us extol his name.”
- 27: The name *Mukinni-Aššur* (written syllabically ^mmu-ki-nu-aš-šur, ^mmu-ki-ni-aš-šur, ^mmu-kin-ni-aš-šur, and ^mmu-kin/kin-aš-šur, and logographically ^mmu-GIN-aš-šur, ^mGIN-aš-šur, and ^mGI.NA-aš-šur) is well attested in

- documents from Assur, Calah and Nineveh dated between 698 (SAAB 9 73 r.28) and 615 BC, but it is impossible to identify the individual mentioned here with any of the other attestations of the name.
- r. 5f.: Cf. LÚ.ERIM.MEŠ GIŠ.BAN GIŠ.a-ri-t[e] *qé-reb-šú-un ú-še-rib* “I brought bowmen and shieldmen (var. ERIM.MEŠ *šu-lu-ti-ia* “my garrison troops”) inside them (= Bit-Ha'iri and Rašâ),” AfO 20 83ff.21f // OIP 2 39 iv 59 (inscriptions of Sennacherib), and see below, p. 572–576.
- r. 6: *ḥi-tu ia*]-³*a-an*: Restored from r. 20. This phrase is not otherwise attested in the NB letter corpus, but certainly is a translation of NA *laššu ḥittu* or *ḥittu laššu*, “there is nothing to be worried about” (SAA 10 236:7, 237:9 and 242:14; SAA 10 206 r.7); note that the phrase *libbu ša šarri bēlīni lū ṭābšu* (r. 20) also follows it in SAA 10 206. It is thus an Assyrianism comparable with *ḥarāpu* + *uzuzzu* in r. 27 and not to be confused with the phrase *ḥītušū(nu) ia'nu* “he is/they are not guilty” occurring e.g. in CT 54 305 r. 13 and 468:13.
- r. 14: [KUR.NIM.MA].KI-*a-a* “Elamites”: the restoration imposes itself as there is no other toponym with the determinative KI suiting the context. On *Bit-Ḥā'iri* see below.
- r. 22: Bit-Deraya does not otherwise occur in the Sargonid letter corpus. Zadok lists three N/LB attestations in RGTC 5 (1985) 303f. s.v. Tamertu-ša-Bīt-Dērāja, which according to him point to a location “not far from Uruk.” Note, however, that Bit-Deraya occurs in the Calah Annals of Tiglath-Pileser III (Tadmor Tigl. p. 66:6) as a variant of URU.BÀD (Der) next to LÚ.*damu-nu* mentioned in r. 33 of the present letter. As pointed out by Tadmor (ibid., p. 67), “The variant Bit-Derāya appears much later in Syriac (Beth Deraya: Herzfeld, *Persian Empire*, p. 42, n. 3) and, as R. Zadok points out, it explains the old Arabic form *Badarāya* (hence modern Badrah/Bedrah).” The river of Bit-Deraya could thus well be the modern Galāl Badra along which Der/Badrah is situated.
- r. 27: *ul ni-iḥ-ru-up-ma ... ul ni-iz-ziz: ḥarāpu* used in hendiadys with another verb in the meaning “to do something earlier” is a well-known NA idiom, but is otherwise attested only once in NB letters from Nineveh, in CT 54 23 r. 5, a letter also written by Nabû-šuma-lišir and Aqar-Bel-lumur. The occurrence of the idiom in their letters must accordingly be regarded as an Assyrianism, reflecting the long period of training they must have gone through at the Assyrian court before being appointed to their offices; see my remarks in *Iraq* 34 (1972) 33f, and cf. p. 567 below.
- r. 30: The traces at the end of the line are partially erased but could be read *ul* ¹*i*-[*man*]-¹*gūr* “they don’t agree (to obey us)”; cf. *ul i-man-gur ul uš-šu-nu* “they don’t agree to come out,” CT 54 141 r.10. However, the verb *magāru* is otherwise spelled with the *gūr* sign in the Sargonid corpus of NB letters, as in the above example.
- r. 33: On the *Damunu*, an Aramean tribe resident in Gambulu, see A. Fuchs, *Die Annalen Sargons II. aus Khorsabad* (Göttingen 1994), p. 423. The other tribes mentioned here are otherwise unknown.
- r. 34: *šī*² “very small, possibly erased” (Finkel).

The Correspondence of Nabû-šuma-lišir and Aqar-Bel-lumur

As already mentioned, the Sargonid letter archive contains many more letters originating from Nabû-šuma-lišir and Aqar-Bel-lumur. Currently a total of 21 letters are certainly attributable to them, 5 of them authored by the two men together (see Chart 1 below). 11 letters of the dossier open with the following distinctive introductory formula, which is found in all the joint letters and in 6 letters authored by Aqar-Bel-lumur alone:

- (a) *ana šarri bēlījalni aradka/ardānika* PN(N)
 (b) *lū šulum* (EPHE 342+: *šulmu*) *ana šarri bēlījalni ummā ana šarri bēlī(ni)jāma*
 (c) *šulum* (EPHE 342+: *šulmu*) *ana bīrānāti* (URU.ḪAL.ŠU.MEŠ)⁸ *u emūqu/i*⁹ *ša šarri (bēlījalni)*¹⁰
 (d) (*tēm(u)*)¹¹ *ša niši (māti)*¹² *šulum/šulmu*)¹³ *libbila*¹⁴ *ša šarri bēlījalni lū tābi/tābšu*¹⁵
- (a) To the king, my/our lord: your servant(s), PN(N).
 (b) Good health to the king, my/our lord! Say to the king, my/our lord:
 (c) The king (my lord)'s forts and troops are well.
 (d) (The mood of the people (of the land) is good.) The king, my/our lord, can be glad.

Outside the correspondence of Nabû-šuma-lišir and Aqar-Bel-lumur, this formula occurs only in ABL 893, a letter from a certain Badâ (^m*ba-da-a*).¹⁶ In another letter of his (ABL 892), Badâ fervently recommends Aqar-Bel-lumur for the royal service. It is obvious from the contents of the letters that Badâ is an Assyrianized Babylonian holding a high administrative position in his native country, while Aqar-Bel-lumur, described as “fatherless servant” equally devoted to the king, as yet has no position in the imperial administration. Since Aqar-Bel-lumur after his subsequent appointment to the royal service adopts the introductory formula of Badâ, which is typical of a provincial governor of the

⁸ Regularly spelled URU.ḪAL.ŠU.MEŠ. The reading *bīrānāti* is ascertained by the introductory formula of ABL 893, from Badâ.

⁹ *e-mu-qi* ABL 264, 857+; CT 54 23, 114; *e-mu-qu* ABL 261 and EPHE 342+.

¹⁰ Omitted in ABL 261, 857+; CT 54 39.

¹¹ *tē-em* ABL 264, CT 54 39, 114, 393; *tē-mu* CT 54 23; *tē-e-mu* ABL 261 and EPHE 342+.

¹² Omitted in EPHE 342+.

¹³ *šu-lum* ABL 857+; CT 54 39, 114 and 401; *šul-mu* EPHE 342+; whole phrase omitted in ABL 261 and CT 54 393.

¹⁴ *ŠĀ-bi* ABL 261, 1319, CT 54 350; EPHE 342+; *ŠĀ-ba* ABL 264; CT 54 23, 39 and 393.

¹⁵ *ta-a-bi* ABL 261 1335; DÜG.GA ABL 857 and CT 54 39; *ta-ab-šu* EPHE 342+.

¹⁶ See PNA 1/II (1999), p. 249 s.v. Bādāia. Since the name is normally spelled ^m*ba-da-a* in Assyrian texts as well, I prefer the normalization Badâ. The ^m*ba-da-a-a* mentioned in ABL 962 r.5 is probably a different individual, since he had a son; see p. 568 below.

period,¹⁷ it is evident that he inherited Badâ's position; probably the former had intervened on his behalf because of his old age or failing health. The letters written by Aqar-Bel-lumur featuring Badâ's introductory formula must thus be dated after ABL 892 and 893.

Badâ is known from a contemporary Assyrian letter (CT 53 61) as a magnate involved in the construction of Dur-Šarrukin, the new residence of Sargon II. He was thus appointed to his gubernatorial status by this king and very probably stayed in his office until late in Sargon's reign. Clear Assyrianisms in his letters indicate that he had spent a long time in Assyria¹⁸; his return to his home country therefore probably coincided with Merodach-baladan's expulsion from Babylonia in 710 BC and was part of the administrative reorganization of the country following it. On the other hand, he must have resigned from his office already before Sargon's death (705), because the king to whom he addresses the petition for Aqar-Bel-lumur clearly is the same who appointed him. Since Aqar-Bel-lumur, in contrast to Badâ, does not appear at all in Assyrian sources from Sargon's time, he must have succeeded Badâ only quite late in Sargon's reign, probably about 706 BC.

These conclusions are confirmed by a study of Aqar-Bel-lumur's correspondence, which shows that his (and consequently, also Badâ's and Nabû-šumališir's) seat of office was Dur-Abihara,¹⁹ the capital of the province of Gambulu established by Sargon in 710 BC.²⁰ Note especially ABL 1319 r. 6ff: "[PN], the brother of Ku[...], has come with many archers and entered [my] presence [in Dur]-Abiharu."²¹ As recently shown by Andreas Fuchs, Dur-Abihara was situated in the vicinity of Der, on the bank of the Surappu river, which is probably to be identified with the modern Chankula Gala, a tributary of the Tigris west of the Nahr at-Ṭīb.²² This location perfectly fits the geographical setting of EPHE 342+ (note, in addition to the messenger from Der, also the reference to the Gambulian tribe Damunu in r. 33); it also accounts for the volume and scope of

¹⁷ Cf., e.g., the introductory formulae of Našur-Bel, governor of Amidi (SAA 5 1-18); Ašipâ and ša-Aššur-dubbu, governor of Tušhan (SAA 5 21-40); Šamaš-bel-ušur and Nabû-duru-ušur, governor and deputy governor of Der (below, p. 574).

¹⁸ The Assyrian salutation formula *ana šarri bēlija aradka PN lū šulum ana šarri bēlija* in ABL 892 and 893; *be-li* "my lord" instead of *bēlā* in ABL 893 r. 11.13.20 (in ABL 892 correctly *be-li-a*).

¹⁹ Commonly (but mistakenly) referred to in Assyriological literature as "Dur-Athara." Syllabic spellings for Abi-ḥara are listed in PNA 1/I, p. 9.

²⁰ A. Fuchs, *Die Inschriften Sargons II. aus Khorsabad* (Göttingen, 1994), pp. 326-330; cf. *ibid.* 399-405 and the analysis of the campaign and its aftermath in J.A. Brinkman, *Prelude to Empire* (Philadelphia, 1984), 50-52. Dietrich in WO 4 (1968) 193-200 places Aqar-Bel-lumur's and Nabû-šumališir's seat of office in Babylon, but this is incompatible with the geographical horizon of EPHE 342+ and the fact that Marduk and Nabû are consistently omitted in Badâ's, Aqar-Bel-lumur's and Nabû-šumališir's introductory formulae.

²¹ The name form occurring in the letter (BÂD] šá ^mAD-ḥa-ru) is paralleled by BÂD šá ^mia-ki-ni (for Dur-Yakin) in ABL 899 r. 9f.

²² Fuchs, *Die Inschriften Sargons II*, p. 423.

Aqar-Bel-lumur's and Nabû-šuma-lišir's correspondence, for Gambulu was a very important province which played a key strategic role in the control of the Aramean tribes east of the Tigris and as a buffer zone against Elam.

The strategic importance of Gambulu is reflected by its many forts, which are referred to both in the greeting formula of Aqar-Bel-lumur's and Nabû-šuma-lišir's letters and in Sargon's account of the conquest of Dur-Abihara.²³ In his inscriptions Sargon explicitly states that he installed a *eunuch of his* as governor of the new province.²⁴ Accordingly, Badâ was a royal eunuch, which explains why in his petition for Aqar-Bel-lumur he does not refer to the latter as his *son* but as a "fatherless servant" (*ardu sumaktar*, ABL 892 r. 23). Note, however, that Aqar-Bel-lumur himself was not a eunuch: in one of his letters (CT 54 393), he mentions that "his wives, sons and property" had been ruined and given over to Elam and Bit-Yakin; a letter of Nabû-šuma-lišir (ABL 511) also refers to a wife of his. His non-eunuch status may have rendered him not entirely reliable in the eyes of Sargon's successor, Sennacherib, and led to the later appointment of Nabû-šuma-lišir as his superior (see below).

We can thus confidently delimit Badâ's tenure of office as 710–c. 706. As already noted, Aqar-Bel-lumur's career started only at Badâ's retirement, hence c. 706 at the earliest.

This fact is of considerable importance, for most of Aqar-Bel-lumur's and Nabû-šuma-lišir's letters contain intelligence reports on the whereabouts of Merodach-baladan (referred to as *mâr lakini*, "the Yakinite"), who in all ascertainable cases is said to be "in Babylon" (see Chart 1: 2–11). Since Merodach-baladan had been expelled from Babylonia in 710 and had no chance of returning until the first year of Sennacherib (704), when he regained the Babylonian throne for a period of about nine months, these letters must be dated to this period, more precisely between Merodach-baladan's accession (704-II/III) and his flight (704-XI/XII) after the battle of Kish.²⁵ A later date is very unlikely; note that the letters parallel the intelligence reports sent to Sargon before the invasion of Babylonia in 710,²⁶ and hence most naturally were likewise sent in order to find a suitable opportunity to invade.²⁷ Moreover, since the letters are addressed

²³ See Fuchs, *op. cit.*, p. 138:265f (translated on p. 327).

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 329:288 and 330:295.

²⁵ See E. Frahm, *Einleitung in die Sanherib-Inschriften* (AfO Beiheft 26, Graz 1997), 9–11.

²⁶ See ABL 502 (Sennacherib?), 504, 1071, 1057; CT 43 64 and 68; and (mentioning the king of Elam) ABL 170, 1003, 1453, 1463; CT 53 186, 507, 716, 884, 892.

²⁷ CT 54 442, a letter from Bel-ibni reporting on Merodach-baladan (Dietrich, AOAT 253 [1998] 84–86) likewise logically dates from the year 704, since the latter is reported to be in Babylon. The introductory formula of CT 54 442 resembles that of Nabû-šuma-lišir and Aqar-Bel-lumur, which suggests that Bel-ibni at this time presumably held the governorship of a Babylonian city not controlled by Merodach-baladan. The letters in which he approaches the chief eunuch (ABL 283) and the king (ABL 793) for rehabilitation should probably be dated at the end of Sennacherib's accession year (late 705). As shown by Dietrich (*ibid.* 89–95), the fragment CT 54 304 duplicates ABL 283 and thus certainly represents a third petition of Bel-ibni from the same time, addressed to another

to the king (i.e., Sennacherib) directly, they logically must antedate the installation of Bel-ibni as the puppet king of Babylon in late 703. With the Assyrians in control of Babylon already by 704-XII,²⁸ why would reports on developments in the city have been needed from Gambulu any more?

Five of the Merodach-baladan reports were sent by Nabû-šuma-lišir and Aqar-Bel-lumur together (Chart 1: 9–13). Since Nabû-šuma-lišir's name is mentioned first in all these letters, he must have been Aqar-Bel-lumur's superior from the very beginning; it seems likely that he was appointed to this position after Merodach-baladan's accession, to make sure that his colleague would not slip to the enemy side (cf. p. 568 above). Hence all the 5 letters where Aqar-Bel-lumur alone uses the gubernatorial greeting formula (Chart 1: 4–8) should antedate the letters written by Nabû-šuma-lišir and Aqar-Bel-lumur together. The "Yakinite" is referred to in three of these "pre-Nabû-šuma-lišir" letters, as well as in two letters by Aqar-Bel-lumur *not* containing the gubernatorial formula (ibid. 2–3); moreover, a fragmentary letter by Aqar-Bel-lumur where a reference to Merodach-baladan may have been lost in a break (ibid. 8) shares a topic with a letter written jointly with Nabû-šuma-lišir *and* referring to the "Yakinite" (ibid. 9). Thus, virtually all letters written by Aqar-Bel-lumur alone and most of his joint letters with Nabû-šuma-lišir certainly date from Sennacherib's first year (704).

Chart 1. The Correspondence of Nabû-šuma-lišir (N) and Aqar-Bel-lumur (A)

Letter	Sender	Report on M.	Other Matters
1. ABL 856	A to king		[---]
2. CT 54 119	A to king	The Yakinite [---]	[---]
3. ABL 436	A to king	The Yakinite is in Babylon	Nabû-ḥamatu'a
4. ABL 857+ ²⁹	A ♣	The Yakinite is in [---]	NN received in [Dur]-Abiḥaru
5. CT 54 39	A ♠		Kalbi-ukū'a visits the king
6. CT 54 393	A ♠	The Yakinite [---] His wife has died	Assurances of loyalty
7. CT 54 305A	♦	The Yakinite [---]	Ḥananu, Badā
8. CT 54 401	A ♦	[---]	Ḥananu, Belet- taddin
9. ABL 261	N+A ♣	The Yakinite is in Babylon	[Belet]-taddin

high official at the royal court. Yet another similar petition of Bel-ibni duplicating ABL 283 is CT 54 175, identified by the present writer while working on this article. The letter ABL 1374 + CT 54 497 assigned by Dietrich to Bel-ibni in AOAT 253 86–89 was included among the letters from priests edited in SAA 13 185, and may be a letter of Rašil or Šuma-iddin.

²⁸ Thus following Frahm, *Einleitung*, p. 9.

²⁹ ABL 857 very probably belongs to the same tablet as ABL 1319 (not collated).

10. ABL 264	N+A ♠	The Yakinite is in Babylon	King's messenger should hurry
11. CT 54 23	N+A ♠	The Yakinite is in Babylon	King's messenger should hurry
12. CT 54 114	N+A ♠	The Yakinite is in [---]	Lanšê, Nabû-ušallim
13. CT 54 350	N+A ♣	The Yakinite [---]	Nippur
14. EPHE 342	N+A ♣ [?]		Bit-Ĥa'iri
15. ABL 854	A to Bel-ibni "my lord"		Badâ
16. ABL 855	A to chamberlain "my lord"		Visit of the prince
17. ABL 511	N to king		Aḥu-eriba. Mentions Aqar-Bel-lumur Mentions Aqar-Bel- lumur Eunuch Troops Nabû-šumu-iddina (fort commander of Lahiru)
18. ABL 640	N to [---] "my lord"		
19. CT 54 410	N to king		
20. CT 54 192	N to king		
21. CT 54 322	N to king		

- ♠ = to the king, gubernatorial greeting formula, scribe A³⁰
 ♣ = to the king, gubernatorial greeting formula, scribe B
 ♦ = to the king, gubernatorial greeting formula, scribe A or B

There are, however, at least three letters in the dossier that must be assigned a later date. In ABL 854, Aqar-Bel-lumur replies to an order of Bel-ibni, whom he addresses as "my lord,"³¹ which implies a date between 702–700, when Bel-ibni was the puppet king of Babylon. In ABL 511, Nabû-šuma-lišir lavishes gifts on Abu-eriba, a relative of the king (*zēr šarri*) visiting Gambulu with his wife; this suggests a date after the conclusion of Sennacherib's second campaign (late 703).³² The third and most important case is the new text EPHE 342+, whose historical context we will now consider in detail.

³⁰ See p. 571 with n. 33.

³¹ I would slightly modify Dietrich rendering of obv.4-5 (in AOAT 253 96) as follows: *a-du-ú NÍG.ŠID š[á be-li-a] 5 iq-ba-a ak-k[a-a-i lu-pu-uš]* "Now, ho[w should I do] the accounting wh[ich my lord] ordered me (to do)?" Note the reference to a large amount of silver on the reverse.

³² The reference to Aqar-Bel-lumur's and his wife's attempts to calumniate Nabû-šuma-lišir before the visitor (obv. 20 – rev. 8) are to be understood in the light of Nabû-šuma-lišir's promotion as Aqar-Bel-lumur's superior, discussed above.

The Date and Historical Context of EPHE 342+

EPHE 342+ resembles the other joint letters of Nabû-šuma-lišir and Aqar-Bel-lumur in that it opens with the same distinctive gubernatorial greeting formula. However, it differs from the other letters in two important respects.

On the orthographical level, EPHE 342+ is the only letter in the dossier where the word “well-being” in the greeting formula is not spelled *šu-lum* (in the Babylonian fashion) but *šul-mu*, in the Assyrian fashion. This little detail may at first sight seem insignificant: orthographic analysis reveals that the letters dating to 704 were written by two scribes (“A” and “B”), who differed considerably in their spelling habits.³³ However, the fact that both A and B consistently wrote *šu-lum* while the scribe of EPHE 342+ did not, implies that the latter does not belong to the same time period. If he nevertheless can be identified with scribe B, as seems probable,³⁴ he must have changed his habits slightly with the passage of time.

Secondly, despite its remarkable length—with its 67 lines, EPHE 342+ is the longest letter in the dossier and one of the longest letters in the Sargonid letter corpus—the letter contains no reference to Merodach-baladan, who is the *dominant* theme in the other letters. By contrast, it is dominated by a conflict with Elam, which is a theme *completely missing* from the other letters. To judge from r. 24–29, the military conflict referred to in the letter was not an isolated event but part of a larger conflict that had already prevailed for a considerable period of time.³⁵ All this implies a political situation drastically different from that reflected by the other letters of Nabû-šuma-lišir and Aqar-Bel-lumur.

The battle of Kish in 704, where (according to Sennacherib) 80,000 Elamite troops assisting Merodach-baladan were defeated, does not account for the situation. For one, the battle did not take place in Gambulu but in central Babylonia; the Elamite troops joined the battle as allies of Merodach-baladan, not as invaders; they had not ravaged the country; and most important of all, in contrast to the situation described in EPHE 342+, Merodach-baladan was still present on the political scene.³⁶ After 704, Assyria's relations with Elam remained peaceful until 694, when Sennacherib invaded the southwestern coast of Elam in order to capture the Yakinite nobility that had sought asylum there. This opera-

³³ Scribe A consistently spelled the words *ṭēmu*, *libbu* and *emūqu* in the introductory formula as *ṭē-em*, *ŠĀ-ba* and *e-mu-qi*, scribe B, by contrast, as *ṭē-e-mu*, *ŠĀ-bi* and *e-mu-qu*. Many more orthographic features distinguishing the two scribes could certainly be discovered in a more detailed analysis.

³⁴ The way he spells *ṭēmu*, *libbu* and *emūqu* agrees with the conventions of scribe B.

³⁵ “The king, our lord, knows that last year and the year before it the people of the country were many ... But now the people of the country are few ...” This implies that it was well known to the king, even before the dispatchment of the letter, that the country had been subjected to enemy aggression that had started *within a year before the writing of the letter*.

³⁶ See M. Waters, *A Survey of Neo-Elamite History* (SAAS 12, Helsinki 2000), 23–24; Frahm, *Einleitung* (1997), 9; and Brinkman, *Prelude* (1984), 57. I follow Frahm in the dating of the events.

tion achieved its goals but provoked a response from Elam that led to years of continuous warfare with Assyria, culminating in the battle of Halulê in 692/1 BC.³⁷ It is to this troubled period between 694 and 692 that EPHE 342+ must be dated.

Rev. 11–15 of EPHE 342+ refer to an Assyrian counteroffensive which had resulted in the conquest of Elamite territory “as far as Bit-Ha’iri.” Apart from the present letter and a contemporary Assyrian one (ABL 1093) to be discussed presently, the city of Bit-Ha’iri is known only from a passage in the inscriptions of Sennacherib, where its conquest is presented as one of the high points of the campaign against Elam in late 693. The relevant passage, extant in two slightly variant versions, reads as follows:

“In my 7th campaign (var. for a second time, in the time of Kudurru his brother), I marched to Elam. In the passage of my campaign, I conquered Bit-Ḥa’iri and Rašâ, cities belonging to Assyria which the Elamite had taken by force in the reign of my father. I pillaged them, brought my garrison troops (var., bowmen and shieldmen) into them, returned them into Assyrian territory, and entrusted them in the hands of the fort commander of Der.”³⁸

The expedition then develops into an extensive pillaging and devastation of the border country of Raši, as a result of which the Elamite king (Kudur-Nahḫunte) leaves his royal city Madaktu and flees to Ḥidalu.³⁹ Adverse weather conditions prevent the Assyrians from proceeding farther, and the expedition returns to Assyria in the 10th month (January/February).⁴⁰

In the preceding year (694-VII), the Elamite king had in retaliation for the Assyrian attack invaded Babylonia, massacred people at Sippar, captured Sennacherib’s son Aššur-nadin-šumi, put his own protégée, Nergal-ušeziḫ, on the throne of Babylon, and forced a retreat of the invading Assyrians troops.⁴¹ The conquest of Bit-Ḥa’iri reported in the inscriptions was thus preceded by period of military distress in Babylonia, which perfectly matches the situation in EPHE 342+. Moreover, the time of the recapture of Bit-Ḥa’iri also agrees in both sources. In the inscriptions, the Assyrian troops return by 693-X, having plundered and destroyed Raši extensively; the conquest of Bit-Ḥa’iri must hence have been accomplished in 693-IX or possibly 693-VIII. In EPHE 342+, the messenger mobilizing troops for the Assyrian offensive indeed makes his ap-

³⁷ Waters, *Neo-Elamite History*, 29–30; Frahm, *Einleitung*, 14–15; Brinkman, *Prelude*, 61.

³⁸ D.D. Luckenbill, *The Annals of Sennacherib* (OIP 2, Chicago, 1924), p. 39, iv 53–61 // A. K. Grayson, “The Walters Art Gallery Sennacherib Inscription,” *AfO* 20 (1963), 83–96, lines 18–23.

³⁹ According to D. Stronach (oral communication), to be identified with modern Ardjan, midway between Susa and Pasargadae.

⁴⁰ Luckenbill, *Sennacherib*, pp. 39–41, iv 62 – v 11. Cf. Waters, *Neo-Elamite History*, 33; Frahm, *Einleitung*, 15–16; Brinkman, *Prelude*, 62.

⁴¹ A.K. Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* (TCS 5, Locust Valley, 1975), p. 78. Cf. Waters, *Neo-Elamite History*, 30; Frahm, *Einleitung*, 15; Brinkman, *Prelude*, 61.

pearance in month IX (or possibly VIII). Keeping further in mind the fact that an expedition to Bit-Ḥa'iri is not reported in any other Assyrian sources, there is no reason to doubt that EPHE 342+ refers to the same event. It can thus be confidently dated to the *12th year of Sennacherib*, which makes it the latest letter in the Nabû-šuma-lišir/Aqar-Bel-lumur dossier and by far the latest Sennacherib-letter identified to date, postdating by at least 7 years Aqar-Bel-lumur's letter to Bel-ibni (ABL 854).

Considering the fact that almost all other letters of the dossier can be dated to the first year of Sennacherib, the proposed date may seem "suspiciously late." It has to be kept in mind, however, that 7 years, after all, is not a long time period at all, and that the Sargonid letter archive contains many dossiers of letters extending over a longer period of time⁴² and thousands of letters dating from later times, not to forget the more than 160 legal documents dated in Sennacherib's reign.⁴³

The Conquest of Bit-Ḥa'iri according to ABL 1093

The conquest of Bit-Ḥa'iri is also alluded to in an Assyrian letter hitherto dated to the reign of Sargon. A closer look at the text in light of the above analysis suggests, however, that it pertains to the same time as EPHE 342+ and hence also dates from the year 693. The text (ABL 1093) reads as follows:

To the governor, my lord: your servant, Nabû-duru-ušur. Good health to my lord! The city of Der and the fort are well.

Lu-aḥu'a, a man from Bit-Ḥa'ir, and Aḥu-yaqar from Bit-Sin-ibni, had an audience with me and Bel-emuranni, and spoke with us as follows: "Come with al[l the men] in yo[ur] hands, [gather] wha[tever can] go with y[ou t]o Bit-Ḥa'ir, all those w[ho] are devoted to Eṭeru and [do not g]o with the Elamites, and come! [W]e shall give up the city [and deliv]er it [into your hands]." I said: "I shall send [Bel-e]muranni [to the Palace. Bit-Ḥ]a'ir be[longs] to the King, and the governor [has go]ne there [...]." Now then I am writing to my lord; let [my lord] do what[ever] he finds acceptable. The report included in the letter which I sent to the Palace with Bel-emuranni and the one in this letter are identical. Perhaps the gods of the governor, my lord, will make it happen, and we shall go and retake Bit-Ḥa'ir: Whom shall we appoint there? And who will be here in our r[e]jar? Let my lord decide and write.

Perhaps my lord will say: "Did you wr[it]e to the Palace in this very manner: 'Perhaps [we shall re]take Bit-Ḥa'ir; whom shall we appoint there?' [I should have wr]itten so!"—I wrote so [to] my lord in [thi]s [letter on]ly. [Now let] my lord quickly [send me what]ever orders there are.

⁴² See, e.g., Appendix O in my *Letters from Assyrian Scholars, Part 2: Commentary and Appendices* (AOAT 5/2, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1983), p. 467–471.

⁴³ SAA 6 (1991), nos. 34–200.

Like EPHE 342+, the text can be studied in light of a whole series of related letters (see Chart 2).⁴⁴ Its addressee is Šamaš-belu-ušur, governor of Der, who is also mentioned in EPHE 342+; the sender Nabû-duru-ušur is his deputy (*šaniu*), who exercised the gubernatorial functions in Der in his lord's absence. In addition to ABL 1093, four other letters from Nabû-duru-ušur are extant, all but one of them likewise addressed to the governor; from Šamaš-belu-ušur, at least 10 letters are extant, all addressed to the king. All letters by these two writers are distinguished by a standardized greeting formula referring to the well-being of Der and its fort.⁴⁵

Chart 2. The Correspondence of Šamaš-belu-ušur (Šbu) and Nabû-duru-ušur (Ndu)

<i>Letter</i>	<i>Sender</i>	<i>Contents</i>
1. CT 53 382+	[Šbu]	King of Elam has heard that a citizen of Babylon has written to the king of Assyria Intinerary from ẖunnur to Bit-Bunakki
2. CT 53 893	[Šbu]	King of Elam in Bit-Bunakki
3. CT 53 89+	Šbu	King of Elam leaves Bit-Bunakki on IV-13 and goes up to the mountain to quell a rebellion in Burati; will march from there to Ellipi and against the Ho[use of Dalt]â Fortifying the fort
4. ABL 1348	Šbu	King of Elam in the mountain, in Burati
5. ABL 800	Šbu	King of Elam in the mountain
6. CT 53 110+	Ndu	King of Elam has left Burati and sent his messenger to Parsumaš to mobilize; coming (back) to Bit-Bunakki Umman-minâ the herald raising provisions in Bit-Bunakki King of Assyria possibly coming to Der Son of Daltâ [---] Fortifying the fort Governor in Meturna, gathering provisions
7. ABL 1044	[šbu]	Gathering troops in Meturna; conquest of Gabê
8. ABL 1315	Ndu	King of Elam mobilizing troops Chiefs of ẖupapani and Pillat refuse to join him against Assyria The herald Umman-minâ [---]

⁴⁴ All these letters will be published in A. Fuchs and S. Parpola, *The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part III: Letters from Babylonia and the Eastern Provinces* (SAA 15).

⁴⁵ *a-na* LUGAL *be-lî-ia* ARAD-ka PN *lu-u* DI-mu *a-na* LUGAL *be-lî-ia* DI-mu *a-na* URU.de-(e)-ri DI-mu *a-na* URU.Ī.L.SU. The orthography is (with minor variations) the same throughout.

- | | | |
|---------------|-------|--|
| | | Son of Daltâ [---] |
| 9. ABL 1349 | Šbu | King of Assyria has left Meturna and crossed the river |
| 10. ABL 1063 | [Šbu] | King of Elam in Bit-Imbî (a city of Raši) Elamite troops under the herald invade Malaku (in Raši); unclear if they will proceed to Der |
| 11. CT 53 77 | Šbu | King of Elam [---]
Stacking provisions in the fort
The people of Malaku [---] |
| 12. ABL 1093 | Ndu | Mobilizing troops for the reconquest of Bit-Ḥa'iri |
| 13. CT 53 285 | Ndu | [---] |
| 14. CT 53 917 | Ndu | Babylonians in Der on their way to the king |
| 15. CT 53 306 | Šbu | Messenger carrying a letter from the king of Elam captured in Der |

While ABL 1093, studied in isolation, contains few useful chronological indications (apart from the reference to Bit-Ḥa'iri, which is not yet in Assyrian hands), a study of the correspondence surveyed in Chart 2 as a whole reveals important things. It appears that most if not all letters of Šamaš-bel-ušur and Nabû-duru-ušur are *interconnected* and can be arranged in a logical chronological sequence which seems to reflect a succession of events during a *single calendar year*. One can follow the unfolding of a major military conflict between Assyria and Elam; one sees the Elamite king arriving on in month IV to the city of Bit-Bunakki (on the Elamite border of Raši), going from there up to the mountain to quell a rebellion, then returning to Bit-Bunakki and sending out orders to mobilize, while his herald is raising provisions for a campaign (Chart 2, nos. 1–6). At this point, Šamaš-bel-ušur leaves Der to join the approaching Assyrian army at Meturna, leaving Nabû-duru-ušur in control of the fort (*ibid.* 6–12).

Some elements in the chronological order reconstructed in Chart 2 are uncertain and it is not certain that all the letters pertain to the same year. However, it seems certain that at least nos. 1–12, including the Bit-Ḥa'iri letter, are interconnected. Significantly, the resulting outline of the Assyrian-Elamite conflict is in perfect agreement with the outline of Sennacherib's 7th campaign, which ended in the conquest of Bit-Ḥa'iri, the destruction of numerous cities of Raši "as far as the pass of Bit-Bunakki," and the flight of the Elamite king.⁴⁶ One can speculate that the conquest of Bit-Ḥa'iri, which according to ABL 1093 was achieved by Nabû-duru-ušur with the help of pro-Assyrian inhabitants of the city, decisively contributed to successful end of the campaign; this would account for the importance accorded to it in the royal inscriptions. The Elamite herald Umman-minâ figuring in three letters of the dossier (nos. 6, 8 and 10) is doubtless identical with Kudur-Nahhunte's brother Umman-menanu, who usurped the Elamite throne in 692-V-17 after his brother had been killed in a rebellion.⁴⁷ The refusal of the chiefs of Ḥupapani and Pillat to join the Elamite

⁴⁶ See p. 572 with n. 38, above.

⁴⁷ Waters, *Neo-Elamite History*, 35–38; Frahm, *Einleitung*, 16; Brinkman, *Prelude*, 63.

army confirms the dating to 693: these two cities had been conquered by Sennacherib in the previous year, and had evidently learnt a lesson.⁴⁸

Dating the dossier to the reign of Sargon is out of the question for several reasons. No comparable confrontation with Elam occurred in Sargon's reign after the battle of Der in 720, when Bit-Ḥa'iri was lost; in 710, when Merodach-baladan tried to rally Elamite help against Sargon, the Elamite king refused to comply.⁴⁹ It is significant that *no references to Merodach-baladan* are found in *any* letters of the dossier, even though contacts between Merodach-baladan and the Elamites are reported in several letters datable to the reign of Sargon.⁵⁰ This is understandable since Šamaš-bel-ušur appears to have been appointed as governor of Der only under Sennacherib; in 710 he was still governor of Arzuhina,⁵¹ and probably stayed in this office until the death of Sargon at least, to judge from the many letters he sent to the king from his seat of office.⁵² The lack of references to Merodach-baladan also prevents dating the letters to the first years of Sennacherib, which is anyhow impossible for reasons already stated under discussion of the date of EPHE 342+ (above, p. 571).⁵³

Final Considerations

It thus appears that not only EPHE 342+ but the entire correspondence of Šamaš-bel-ušur and Nabû-duru-ušur relates to the 7th campaign of Sennacherib and must be dated to the year 693. This conclusion has far-reaching consequences for the chronology of the Ninevite letter archives. If more than 30 letters representing the dossiers of four senders can be dated to the reign of Sennacherib, and about half of them to the middle of his reign, it stands to reason that many more letters dating from his reign may remain unidentified in the archives. The theory that the correspondence of Sennacherib was purposely destroyed by his murderers does not seem to be valid—or the destroyers were not very thorough in their work. We must therefore free ourselves of the notion that there are no letters to Sennacherib after 700, and try to identify further letters belonging to this period among the available material. Every identified

⁴⁸ Grayson, *Chronicles*, p. 78:36–39 and Luckenbill, *Sennacherib*, p. 38:32–53; cf. Waters, *Neo-Elamite History*, 29–30; Frahm, *Einleitung*, 14; Brinkman, *Prelude*, 61. Sargon had also invaded Pillat in 710 BC (Fuchs, *Inschriften*, pp. 152 and 330); however, the military context of that invasion, possibly referred to in ABL 1003, differs significantly from that of the year 694.

⁴⁹ See Brinkman, *Prelude*, 51; cf. ABL 1453+ and CT 53 186.

⁵⁰ See n. 26, above.

⁵¹ A.R. Millard, *The Eponyms of the Assyrian Empire* (SAAS 2, Helsinki, 1994), pp. 47 and 118.

⁵² SAA 5, nos. 227–236. Two more letters belonging to this correspondence will be published in SAA 15.

⁵³ Waters, *Neo-Elamite History*, p. 22, tentatively dates CT 53 110+ to the end of Sargon's reign based of the reference to a "son of Daltâ" in this letter. However, "son of Daltâ" is a dynastic name comparable to "son of Yakin," and there is no guarantee that either Ašba-bara or Nibê, or indeed any son of Daltâ at all is in question.

piece will contribute significantly to the history of the period, as the case of the Bit-Ḥa'iri letters demonstrates.

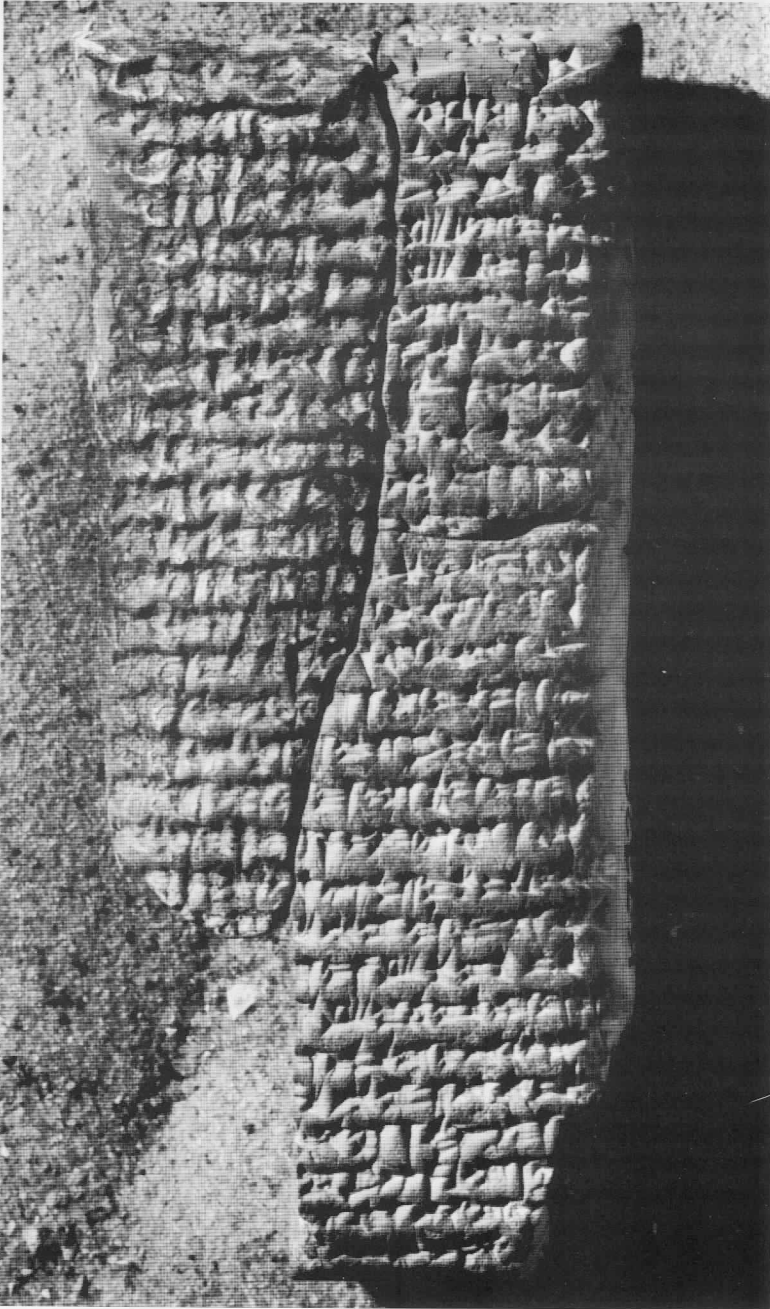


Plate I: EPHE 342 + K 7326, Obverse
Photograph courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum

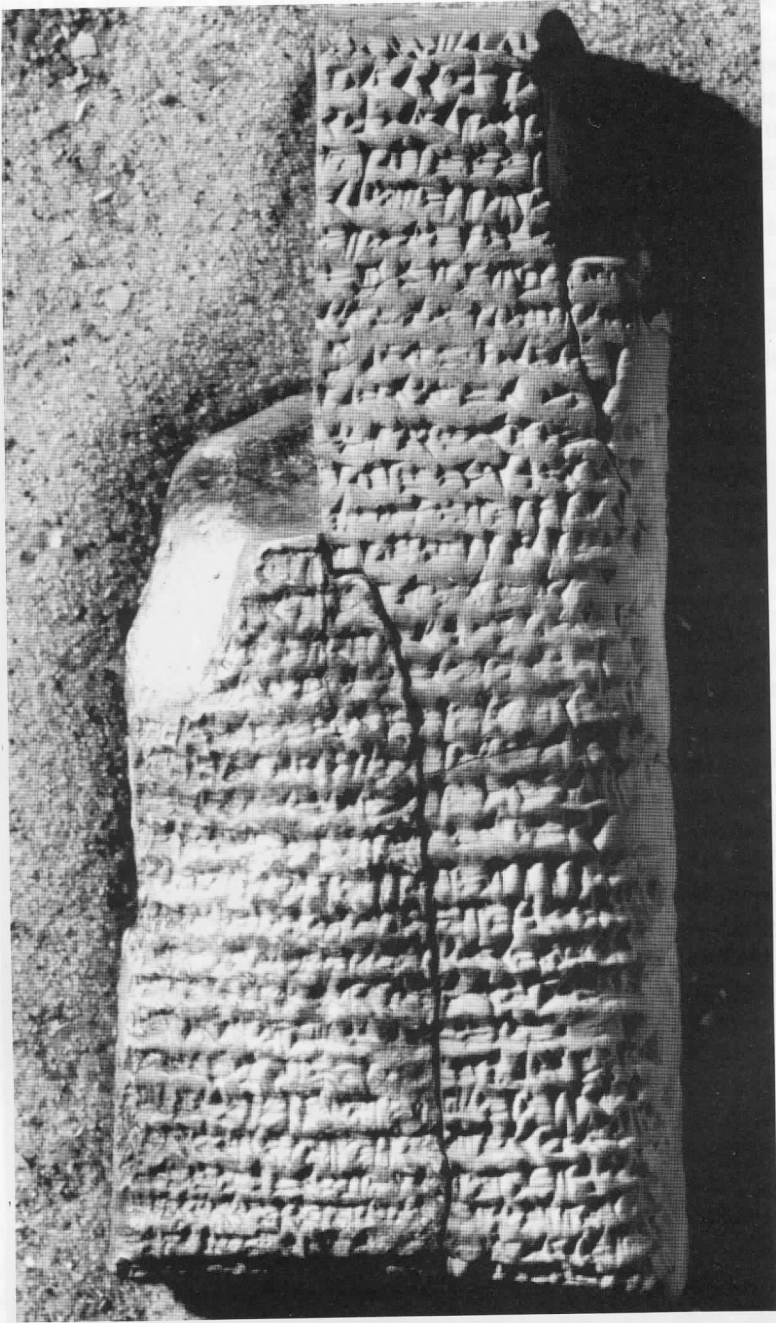


Plate II: EPHE 342 + K 7326, Reverse
Photograph courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum



Plate III: EPHE 342 + K 7326, Right Side
Photograph courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum



Plate IV: EPHE 342 + K 7326, Upper Edge
Photograph courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum