

# A Letter from Assurbanipal to Enlil-bāni and the Citizens of Nippur

Sanae ITO

Assyriology, African and Middle Eastern Studies

Department of World Cultures

Faculty of Arts

University of Helsinki

## Abstract

*The Assyrian Empire (1350-c. 610 BC) reached its peak during the reign of Assurbanipal (668-c. 630 BC). Nevertheless, due to a lack of sources which may indicate the empire had begun to decline, the latter half of the reign is not well known and the empire entirely collapsed afterwards. Thus, this reign is considered a key period of the Assyrian Empire. Though the correspondence of Assurbanipal constitutes essential research material, it has never been seriously studied because much of it has only been published in cuneiform copy and only partially translated. To investigate this correspondence, the present article focuses on letter ABL 292 from Assurbanipal to Enlil-bāni, the governor of the Babylonian city Nippur and its citizens. The paper gives the transliteration, the translation, and a commentary of the letter. The text is undated, but it was probably written in or after 653 BC. The present research indicates that the letter is rich in rhetorical flourish and literary reference. Similar expressions are found in contemporaneous texts such as Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty, the royal inscriptions of the Assyrian kings and the Babylonian Creation Epic Enūma eliš. Especially interesting is how the King uses such political rhetoric towards the local governor and the citizens.*

**Keywords:** Assurbanipal, Enlil-bāni, citizens, Nippur, letter, ABL 292

## 要旨

アッシュルバニパルの治世の間に（紀元前668年—約630年頃）、アッシリア帝国（紀元前1350年—約610年頃）は最盛期を迎えたが、王の治世後半については史料の欠如のためよく知られていない。これは帝国の衰退の始まりを示すのかもしれない。王の治世後、帝国は急激に崩壊した。それゆえアッシュルバニパルの治世は、極めて重要な時期の一つとみられてきた。しかしながら、アッシュルバニパルの書簡は、王の治世に関する不可欠の史料であるにもかかわらず、その多くが楔形文字の複写のみ、または部分的な翻訳のみの出版に限定さ

れているため研究が滞ってきた。本稿では、アッシュルバニパルの書簡のうち、ABL 292に注目する。当該書簡はアッシュルバニパルからバビロニアの都市ニップルの知事であるエンリルバーニおよびニップルの市民に宛てられている。本稿では当該書簡の翻字、翻訳、および注釈を載せる。当該書簡は年代付けられていないが、おそらく紀元前653年以降に書かれたと思われる。研究の結果、当該書簡は美辞麗句に満ちており、また豊かな文学的関連性を持っている。類似した表現はエサルハドンの王位継承条約やアッシリア王の王碑文、バビロニア創生叙事詩エヌーマエリシュなどの同時代テキストに見つけることができる。とりわけ興味深いのは、王がいかにして政治的レトリックをローカルな知事や市民に対し使用したかということである。

キーワード:アッシュルバニパル、エンリルバーニ、市民、ニップル、書簡、ABL 292

## **Introduction**

ABL 292 (K 938)<sup>1</sup> is a small vertically-long clay tablet measuring 4.3 x 6.7 x 2.3 cm. This artifact is now in the possession of the British Museum. The tablet is a royal letter addressed from Assurbanipal, king of Assyria (668-c. 630 BC) to Enlil-bāni, the governor of the city of Nippur in Babylonia<sup>2</sup> and its citizens. The text was discovered in Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire in the 7th century BC, by A.H. Layard and C. Rassam sometime between 1849 and 1854 (Reade 2000: 421-422; Reade 1986: 213; Parpola 1986: 227-228). The excavation was carried out in the pre-modern way, which does not meet the current archaeological standard, therefore, the precise location of the find or the archaeological context of the letter is unknown. As the letter was not found in Nippur but in Nineveh, it is very likely that this text was an archival copy or a draft which was not sent out. ABL 292 is written in the Neo-Babylonian dialect and the Neo-Babylonian script.<sup>3</sup> The letter is not dated.

ABL 292 was first published by R. F. Harper. He provided a cuneiform copy in his book *Assyrian and Babylonian Letters* (part 3, 1896: 299). Later, L. Waterman issued its transliteration, translation, and commentary in his book *Royal Correspondence of the Assyrian Empire* (part 1: Translation and Transliteration, 1930: 202-205; part 3: Commentary, 1931: 115-116.). Around the same time, R. H. Pfeiffer also released the transliteration and the translation of ABL 292 in his book *State Letters of Assyria* (1935: 31-32, no. 35). However, this document has never been published in full in

modern text edition although its contents are highly thought-provoking. Therefore, it would be beneficial to present the transliteration, the translation, and a detailed commentary of the document in this article.



© Trustees of the British Museum  
Published by permission of the Trustees of the British Museum

**Figure 1: ABL 292**

## 1. ABL 292

### 1.1. Transliteration

- 1 *a-mat* LUGAL *a-na* <sup>md</sup>EN.[LÍL-*ba-n*]i
- 2 *ù* LÚ.EN.[LÍL.KI.MEŠ LÚ.AB.BA].MEŠ
- 3 *ù* TUR.MEŠ [ARAD.MEŠ-*ia*] *mál ba-šu-ú*
- 4 *DI-mu ia-a-ši* [ŠÀ-*ba*]-*ku-nu lu-u DÙG.GA-ku-nu-šú*
- 5 *at-tu-nu ti-da-a šá ina* ŠÀ GÍR AN.BAR *šá*
- 6 AN.ŠÁR DINGIR.MEŠ-*e-a* KUR *ul-li-ti*<sup>1</sup> *gab-bi-šá*<sup>4</sup>
- 7 *i-šá-a-tu tu-šá-ki-la u* KUR *ki-i taḥ-ḫi-sa*
- 8 *ta-at-tak-ba-as u pa-ni-šá ana* UGU-*ḫi-ia*
- 9 *tu-ut-tir-ma u en-na is-si-qa-áš-šú*
- 10 *dul-lu gab-bi šá ul-tu* UD.MEŠ *ul-le-ti*

- 11 *te-pu<sup>1</sup>-šá-a<sup>1</sup> a-mur<sup>1</sup> en-na t[u<sup>2</sup>-r]a si-ma-nu*  
12 *šá EN.NUN-šú ta-na-aš-ša-ra la-pa-an*  
13 *he-le-qu KASKAL.2.MEŠ-šú gab-bi tu-šab-ba-ta*  
14 *ina gab-bi KASKAL.2.MEŠ ki-i šá šá-ḫi-li*  
15 *ina KÁ mu-še-ši-i i-šak-kan-ú-ma*  
16 *ḫu-ša-bu si-ip-ru u ga-la-lu*  
17 *i-šah-ḫa-lu ap--pít-te ta-šah-ḫa-la*  
18 *ina UGU KASKAL.2.MEŠ<sup>5</sup> gab-bi ta-az-ziz-za*  
19 *mìn-de-e-ma sar-ta-at-ti ra-man-šú*  
20 *ú-šá-an-né-e-ma uš-ša-a mam-ma*  
21 *šá la šá<sup>2</sup> a-a-li la tu-maš-šar-a-ma*  
e.22 *la it-ti-iq u ki-i*  
23 *ina pa-ni gaš-su-te it-ti-qu*  
24 *man-nu šu-ú šá Á.2.MEŠ-šú*  
r.1 *la--pa-ni-šú ú-šah-ḫa-sa na-an-nab-šú*  
2 *ú-šel-li u šá iṣ-šab-bat-áš-šum-ma*  
3 *a-na pa-ni-ia ib-ba-kaš-šú u ki-i*  
4 *i-duk-ku-uš ki-i šá AD-AD-ía ina UGU*  
5 *<sup>m</sup>šu-zu-bu a-na <sup>md</sup>IM-ba-rak-ka*  
6 *ina GIŠ.zi-ba-ni-ti iš-kun-ú-šú-ma*  
7 *KUG.UD ma-lu-uš-šú i-ḫi-tu-ma id-da-áš-šú*  
8 *en-na ana-ku man-nu šá iṣ-šab-bat-áš-šum-ma*  
9 *u ki-i i-duk-ku-uš ina ŠÀ GIŠ.ERIM*  
10 *a-šak-kan-šú-ma KUG.GI ma-lu-uš-šú*  
11 *a-ḫa-ṭi-ma a-nam-da-áš-šú*  
12 *mi-nu-ú aḫ-ḫur mi-nu-ú aḫ-ḫur*  
13 *a-du-ú al-tap-rak-ku-nu-ši*  
14 *lu-u pít-qu-da-tu-nu a-mur ki-i*  
15 *i-si-qa-áš-šú pa-an šá mu-še-e-šú*  
16 *ú-ba<sup>2</sup> e-e-ma i-ḫal-liq*

## 1.2. Translation

I have made minor changes to Parpola's preliminary translation.<sup>6</sup>

(1) The king's word to En[lil-bān]i and the Nippu[reans ol]d and young, every one of [my servants]: I am well; you can be glad.

(5) You know that through the iron sword of Aššur and my gods you had that entire land consumed by fire, so that the land has retreated, been subjugated, and turned its face once again towards me. And now life has become narrow for him.

(10) All the work that you have done since those days – behold! Now a[gai]n it is time for you to keep him under watch, and lest he escape, you are to seize all his roads. On all the roads, just as sieves are placed at the outlets of gutters in order to filter out splinters, litter and trash, in like manner you are to filter and to stand (and wait) on all the roads.

(19) Maybe he will change his looks deceptively and escape; do not let anyone pass uninterrogated, even if he should pass with a face of gypsum!

(r.1) Whoever keeps his hands off him, I will delete his posterity; but if one takes him prisoner and brings him into my presence, even if he should kill him,<sup>7</sup> just as my grandfather, on account of Šūzubu, placed Adda-barakka on scales and weighed out and gave him his weight in silver, so I will now place on scales whomever takes him prisoner, even if he should kill him, and weigh out and gave him his weight in gold.

(12) What else, what else?

(13) Now then I am writing to you: be attentive, considering that since life has become narrow for him, he is seeking ways to get out and escape.

## 2. Commentary

### 2.1. Opening formula

ABL 292 has the very typical opening formula of royal letters which begin with the term “the king’s word”.<sup>8</sup> Following this phrase recipients are mentioned. The addressees of ABL 292 are Enlil-bāni and the citizens of Nippur.<sup>9</sup> Enlil-bāni was the governor of Nippur. His title is not referred to in this letter but the governors of Nippur between c. 755 and 612 BC had the specific title *šandabakku*<sup>10</sup> and they ruled the city and its surrounding area (Cole 1996a: 45). Enlil-bāni was appointed to the office sometime between 664 BC and 661 BC. The former year is suggested by the royal inscriptions of Assurbanipal which record that his predecessor Nabû-šuma-ēreš died from dropsy in 664 BC (Borger and Fuchs 1996: 96 and 223, B IV 62-63, B IV 67-68 // C V 70-71, C V 75). The latter year is indicated by the religious text BM 78903 dated on the 15th day of *Ṭebētu* (the 10th month) of 661 BC. This document mentions Enlil-bāni as the governor of Nippur for the first time (Cole 1996a: 54-55 and n. 71; Brinkman 1984: 92, n. 455; Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: 39, Kn. 9). After Enlil-bāni, no *šandabakku* is known as yet during the time of the Assyrian Empire (Cole 1996a: 55).<sup>11</sup>

Interestingly, Assurbanipal addressed this letter to the citizens of Nippur as well. We should note that Assurbanipal also sent letters to the citizens of other Babylonian cities, the citizens of foreign cities, and the citizens of tribal groups. It seems that Assurbanipal tried to approach them directly and influence them. After the recipients are mentioned, the greeting follows. This is also a typical greeting of royal letters. The king says “I am well; you can be glad”. The opening formula ends with this greeting and the main topics follow.

## **2.2. Dating**

Though this letter bears no date, it is possible to trace its historical background based on the description of lines 5-9. It seems that ABL 292 was composed in or after 653 BC.

The sentences on lines 5-9 are paralleled by those of ABL 297: 5-9, an undated Neo-Babylonian letter.<sup>12</sup> This letter was sent by Assurbanipal to Nabû-ušabši, the governor of the Babylonian city of Uruk (c. 661-649 BC, PNA 2/II: 901b-902b, no. 9), and the citizens of Uruk. After the parallel part, the rest of ABL 297 is broken away.

As Frame points out, we know from a letter from Nabû-ušabši to Assurbanipal that Nabû-ušabši was involved in the campaign against the Gambūlu (ABL 269: 7-9). The Gambūlu were one of the Aramean tribes who resided on the border between Elam and Babylonia (Frame 1992: 169). Assurbanipal ordered him to equip troops and send them against the settlement of the Gambūlu (Frame 1986: 269).<sup>13</sup>

Since these two letters duplicate each other, Frame (1986: 270) suggests that ABL 292 and ABL 297 were written at around the same time.<sup>14</sup> He further proposes that the episode mentioned in these lines may refer to the military campaign against the Gambūlu in 653 BC (Frame 1992: 121; Frame 1986: 159-160).<sup>15</sup> Therefore, both letters could have been written in or after 653 BC. On the other hand, no texts clearly mention that Enlil-bāni and the citizens of Nippur took part in the campaign against the Gambūlu.

## **2.3. Literary references**

We can find some interesting literary references in ABL 292. The phrase in the above-mentioned parallel lines “through the iron sword of Aššur and my gods, you had that entire land consumed by fire” (ABL 292: 5-7) is an unusual expression in the correspondence of Assyria. In addition, it seems that the phrase is related to Assyrian

royal ideology. When we look for a similar phrase in contemporaneous texts, we find it in Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty which was concluded when Esarhaddon appointed his son Assurbanipal as the crown prince of Assyria in 672 BC.

At least eight manuscripts of Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty were found in the Nabû temple at Nimrud, the former Assyrian capital of the 9th century BC, in 1955.<sup>16</sup> The names of Median rulers were inscribed as the treaty parties on these manuscripts. In addition, a recent excavation unearthed another manuscript from the Neo-Assyrian temple at Tell Tayinat in Turkey, which is identified with Kunulua/Kullania, the capital of the land of Unqi which was annexed to Assyria and became a province in the latter half of the eighth century BC (Lauinger 2012). In the manuscript of Tell Tayinat, an unnamed governor of the province of Kullania and sixteen persons referred to by their professions appear as the treaty partners. Since the manuscript from Tell Tayinat clearly shows that the text is rotated along its vertical axis and it is pierced through its horizontal axis (Lauinger 2012: 90; Lauinger 2011: 11-12), it would seem that the treaty tablet was displayed in the Neo-Assyrian temple.

The treaty states in the ceremonial curse section that "may iron swords consume him who goes to the south and may iron swords likewise consume him who goes to the north".<sup>17</sup> It is very likely that Assurbanipal and/or the scribe of these two letters were familiar with the language and wording in Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty.

Following the parallel sentences on lines 5-9, it is worth noting the phrase of line 9 *u en-na is-si-qa-áš-šú* "And now life has become narrow for him." This phrase actually does not mention "life" (*napištu*). However, when we look at idiomatic longer phrases of the verb *siāqu/sāqu* "to become narrow, tight"<sup>18</sup> this interpretation becomes more understandable.

The usage of *siāqu/sāqu* with *napištu* is provided in dictionaries. The combination appears both in the G-stem and the D-stem.<sup>19</sup> Interestingly, this combination occurs through the reigns of Sennacherib (704-681 BC) to Assurbanipal though the verb *siāqu/sāqu* was not frequently used in the Neo-Assyrian period.<sup>20</sup> Sennacherib states in his royal inscription that on his eighth campaign "I laid a close siege around him" (Šūzubu, hypocoristic of Mušēzib-Marduk, the Chaldean leader of the Bīt-Dakkūri tribe, PNA 3/II: 1297b-1298b, no. 3) "and I made his life narrow" (*nap-šá-tuš ú-si-qa*) (Luckenbill 1924: 42, V 24-25). In the reign of Esarhaddon, the Babylonian scholar Marduk-šāpik-zēri describes himself in a letter to the king as "the constricted life/breath" (*ZI-tim si-iq-ti*) (SAA10 160: 3). During the reign of Assurbanipal, this



combination is used in a literary text<sup>21</sup> and in royal inscriptions. The king states in the inscriptions that “I made their life narrow and short” (*nap-šat-su-nu ú-si-iq ú-kar-ri*) regarding Ba'al, king of Tyre and his people (Borger and Fuchs 1996: 28 and 216, A II 54 // F I 61 // B II 51 // C III 81; *ibid.*: 190 and 217, H II 19'),<sup>22</sup> and Ahšēri, king of Mannea and his people (*Ibid.*: 34 and 220, B III 49 // C IV 60). What is most interesting is that a very similar expression is found in the Babylonian creation epic *Enūma eliš* VII 132. It bears, “may her” (Tiamat) “life become narrow and short” (*na-piš-ta-šu li-siq ù lik-ri*) (Talon 2005:75, VII 132).<sup>23</sup> Since the noun and the verbs are the same in both texts,<sup>24</sup> the phrase in the inscriptions of Assurbanipal could be taken from *Enūma eliš*. Perhaps Sennacherib's statement is also related to *Enūma eliš*.

As we have seen above, it would make better sense if we assume that the verb *siāqu/sāqu* is said of “life” in the present sentence with the Neo-Babylonian pronominal suffix *-aššu* “to him” (Woodington 1983: 37-38). The verb *siāqu/sāqu* without *napištu* is also found on r. 14-15 in this letter. As the phrase on l. 9, the sentence on r. 14-15 is to be translated “since life has become narrow for him”. In addition, another Neo-Assyrian royal letter ABL 561 from Assurbanipal, probably to the citizens of Nippur, bears the same usage of *siāqu/sāqu* without *napištu* on r. 10 “because life has begun to get narrow for them!”<sup>25</sup>

#### 2.4. Who is the mysterious “He”?

Assurbanipal instructs Enlil-bāni and the citizens of Nippur to keep watch of all the roads and to interrogate everyone who tries to pass through in order to capture a certain person by drawing an analogy of sieves that filter out debris. The king warns them that this person may disguise himself. The king does not care whether the wanted person is caught dead or alive. The name of the person is not mentioned in this letter. Concerning this person, Frame (1992: 121) states that “could he have been Nabû-šuma-ēreš or someone involved with him in encouraging Elam to invade Babylonia?”. However, Nabû-šuma-ēreš, the predecessor of Enlil-bāni, conspired with the Elamite king Urtaku against Assurbanipal in 664 BC and died from dropsy in the same year as mentioned above (Borger and Fuchs 1996: 96 and 223, B IV 62-63, B IV 67-68 // C V 70-71, C V 75). Thus Nabû-šuma-ēreš was no longer alive when Enlil-bāni held the office of governor. Thus it is unlikely that Nabû-šuma-ēreš was the wanted person. On the other hand, Cole (1996a: 34) suggests that the fugitive could be Nabû-bēl-šumāti, the leader of the Sealand, who became disloyal during the revolt of Šamas-šumu-ukīn (652-648 BC). Nevertheless, Nabû-bēl-šumāti did not flee to Babylonia but defected to Elam. Hence he is not a likely candidate for the wanted person.



Assurbanipal promises the addressees that he will provide a reward in gold for apprehension of the unnamed person living or dead. When the king makes this promise, he uses the episode of his grandfather, in other words Sennacherib, as a literary device. This is very unique because, in general, letters seldom refer to old stories which go back to the reigns of predecessors. Assurbanipal states that Sennacherib paid in silver, not in gold as Assurbanipal promises, to Adda-barakka (PNA 1/I: 44b) on account of Šūzubu. During the reign of Sennacherib, two persons, both of them kings of Babylonia, had the hypocoristic Šūzubu. One was Nergal-ušēzib from the prominent Babylonian family of Gahal (694-693 BC). The other was Mušēzib-Marduk from the Bīt-Dakkūri (692-689 BC, see above). Both were captured and taken to Assyria (PNA 3/II: 1297b-1298, nos. 2 and 3).

It is not clear which Šūzubu is referred to in this letter. However, an interesting implication arises from this letter when taking into consideration the royal inscriptions of Sennacherib. As stated above, the present letter relates the episode of Sennacherib's capturing Šūzubu, king of Babylonia, through the hand of Adda-barakka. Since we did not know who captured Šūzubu, this information is historically new. In addition, the letter has the idiomatic shorter phrase of *siāqu/sāqu* "life has become narrow for him" on l. 9 and r. 15.

On the other hand, as discussed above, the royal inscriptions of Sennacherib have the same idiomatic longer expression of *napištu siāqu/sāqu*. Sennacherib says, "I made his" (Šūzubu) "life narrow" (Luckenbill 1924: 42, V 24-25). Furthermore, we know from the inscriptions that this Šūzubu was Mušēzib-Marduk from the Bīt-Dakkūri and the king of Babylonia.

The wording in the letter and in the royal inscriptions of Sennacherib is remarkably similar. Moreover, both texts deal with Šūzubu, and Šūzubu in the royal inscriptions of Sennacherib was Mušēzib-Marduk from the Bīt-Dakkūri. Therefore, it is very likely that Šūzubu in this letter was also Mušēzib-Marduk from the Bīt-Dakkūri.<sup>26</sup>

It is not clear who the fugitive was. However, the unnamed man must be an extremely important person because Assurbanipal promises to reward in gold and he relates the episode of Sennacherib and that Sennacherib gave silver to the person who took Šūzubu prisoner.

## 2.5. Trace of dictation

Among the written language in the letter, something like oral statement suddenly arises on line 12. The phrase of line 12 *mi-nu-ú ah-hur mi-nu-ú ah-hur* “What else, what else?” sounds as though Assurbanipal is talking to himself. In addition, though this document is written in the Neo-Babylonian dialect, *ah-hur* is a Neo-Assyrian word.<sup>27</sup> It seems that one of the languages of Assurbanipal was Assyrian, hence this line could show the oral statement which the scribe of ABL 292 took as dictation.

## 2.6. Assyrianisms

As stated above, this letter is written in good Neo-Babylonian but it contains several Assyrianisms or features of the Assyrian dialect. The Assyrian linguistic influence might have been from Assurbanipal, or an Assyrian scribe who had good command of the Neo-Babylonian dialect and script, or a Babylonian scribe who was familiar with Assyrian epistolary conventions (Worthington 2006). There is no convincing evidence, but the third candidate seems more probable. I will comment on the Assyrianisms in this letter and make some grammatical notes below.

Concerning Assyrianism, for example, we find the Assyrian *ta-* prefix for the 3rd person feminine singular on line 7 *taḥ-ḫi-sa* and on line 9 *tu-ut-tir-ma* though the *i-* prefix is used for the 3rd person singular both masculine and feminine in Babylonian. As another example, on reverse 4 there is a Neo-Assyrian compound preposition *ina muhhi* (UGU) “on account of, because” (GAG § 115 h). Instead of *ina muhhi*, *aššu* is expected in Babylonian (Ibid. § 114 s). The *man-nu šá* on reverse 8 is in strict sense Assyrian. In Babylonian, *mam-ma šá* is expected as occurs on lines 20-21 in this letter. However, it seems that *mannu* was gradually used in Babylonian due to Assyrian influence. For example, Neo-Babylonian texts from the early Neo-Babylonian governor’s archive from Nippur, show 13 instances of *mannu* and 13 instances of *mamma* (Cole 1996b: 339-340).<sup>28</sup> As stated above, *ah-hur* is a Neo-Assyrian adverb meaning “else, in addition, further(more)”.<sup>29</sup> The *ú-ba-’e-e-ma* on reverse 16 may be an Assyrianism because *še ’ú* is more common for “to seek” in Babylonian.

Regarding the grammatical notes which are worth noting, it seems that the *a-mur<sup>1</sup>* of line 11 is used as an interjection because this is a singular form, although the preceding verb *te-pu<sup>1</sup>-šá-a’* takes a plural form. The same usage is also found on reverse 14. In addition, on line 18, the preterit tense *tazzizzā* appears. However, the present tense

*tazzazzā* is expected in this context (GAG § 107 b). The reason why the preterit tense appears here is unclear.

## Conclusion

This paper has given the transliteration, the translation, and the commentary of ABL 292. As discussed above, the letter has the typical opening formula of royal letters. The text is undated, but it was probably written in or after 653 BC. It has rich literary references. Similar expressions are found in contemporaneous texts such as Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty, the royal inscriptions of the Assyrian kings, the literary composition of *Enūma eliš*, and other correspondence. The letter also bears the discernible trace of dictation. There are Assyrianisms in the letter though the text is written in the Neo-Babylonian dialect.

The letter is extremely significant. The exceptional quality of the letter is especially indicated by the subject of the unnamed fugitive. When Assurbanipal instructs the recipients to check all passengers on roads, he orders them to act like sieves that filter out debris. To draw such an analogy is very rare and makes a strong statement by comparing the fugitive with trash. In addition, Assurbanipal warns the addressees that the fugitive may change his appearance and pass through with a face of gypsum. Furthermore, Assurbanipal narrates a story from as far back as the reign of his grandfather Sennacherib. Assurbanipal relates that Sennacherib gave silver to the person who captured the fugitive, but he promises that he will give in gold. The letter shows us a full rhetorical flourish, but it also provides the new historical information that the person who took Šūzubu prisoner was Adda-barakka.

Especially interesting is that the Assyrian king uses such political rhetoric towards the local governor and the citizens. The current study has only examined ABL 292. However, further work needs to be done to establish how Assurbanipal strove to convey his royal image and political thinking based on the Assyrian royal ideology in his letters. The investigation of this issue will be carried out in my doctoral thesis.

\* I am very grateful to S. Parpola for allowing me to use the database of the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus (NATC) Project and his preliminary translation of ABL 292. ABL 292 will be included in a critical text edition of the Neo-Assyrian correspondence of Assurbanipal to be published by Parpola in State Archives of Assyria (SAA) series. I also would like to thank R. Mattila and S. Yamada for offering their invaluable comments on a draft of this article. This article is based on my presentation given at the Opening Forum of the Euro-Japan Academic Networking for Humanities Project at the University of Bonn in November 2011. My research was carried out as part of the Young Researchers Overseas Visits Program for Vitalizing Brain Circulation 2011-2012 supported by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science.

<sup>1</sup> K is a siglum for objects in the Kuyunjik collection of the British Museum.

<sup>2</sup> He is listed under the name of Illil-bāni in *the Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (PNA) because personal names in PNA are normalized in presumed Neo-Assyrian pronunciation. Concerning the transcription system in PNA, see Parpola, PNA 1/I, XXII-XXIV.

<sup>3</sup> In general, Neo-Assyrian letters are written in the Neo-Assyrian script and Neo-Babylonian letters are written in the Neo-Babylonian script. Nevertheless, some Neo-Babylonian letters, ABL 289, ABL 301, ABL 571, ABL 926, ABL 944, CT 54 509, K 00995, K 02931, K04534, K 11875, and 83-1-18,511, were inscribed in the Neo-Assyrian script. Reynolds (2003: XVI) points out that most of this type of letters “are from the Assyrian king to destinations in the south, where known.”

<sup>4</sup> Parpola collated the text on 14 Dec 2009 and confirmed the reading in Harper’s copy.

<sup>5</sup> I collated the text on 15 Dec 2009 and read KASKAL.2.MEŠ, cf. Harper suggests reading LÚ.MEŠ in his book.

<sup>6</sup> List of modifications compared to Parpola’s preliminary translation: (1) (···) Enl[il-bān]i (···), Parpola: Il[lil-bān]i; (10) (···) --behold! Now a[gain] it is time (···), Parpola: --behold, now [···] it is time; On all the roads (···), Parpola: In all the roads; (···) in order to filter out (···), Parpola: in order to filter away; (···) you are to filter and to stand (and wait) on all the roads, Parpola: you are to filter and examine all the roads; (19) Maybe he will change his looks deceptively and escape (···), Parpola: Maybe he will change his looks to get out like a thief; (r. 1) (···) gave him his weight in silver (···), Parpola: gave him his weight of silver; (···) give him his weight in gold, Parpola: give him his weight of gold.

<sup>7</sup> This sentence exactly denotes “Wanted: dead or alive!”

<sup>8</sup> “The king’s word” is the translation of the Neo-Babylonian dialect form *amat šarri* and the Neo-Assyrian dialect form *abat šarri*.

<sup>9</sup> The name of the recipient is half-broken. Only the first sign EN is readable. Waterman proposed that the recipient was Bēl-ibni, the general of the Sealand (Waterman 1930-1936, part 1: 202, see also Watanabe 1985: 149 and D. Schwemer 1998 in PNA 1/I 44b). However, this proposal is unlikely because Bēl-ibni was not involved in the issues of Nippur. In addition, taking into consideration that the other recipients are the citizens of Nippur, it is very probable that their governor Enlil-bāni was the recipient.

<sup>10</sup> *šandabakku* (LÚ.GÚ.EN.NA) is a Sumerian loan word. It originally comes from Sumerian *pisan.dub.ba.ak*, literally “the one in charge of the tablet basket”. This word denotes the title of the governor of Nippur from the Middle Babylonian. See CAD Š I 371b-373b, AHW 1162b and the Pennsylvania Sumerian online Dictionary.

<sup>11</sup> Cole (1996a: 55) points out that the *šandabakku* is referred to in eight Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid texts from Nippur.

<sup>12</sup> ABL 297: 5-9, *at-tu-nu ti-da-a šá ina ŠÀ [GÍR AN.BAR šá] / AN.ŠÁR DINGIR.MEŠ-e-a KUR ul-li-t[i gab-bi-šá] / i-šá-a-tú tu-šá-ki-la à KUR [ki-i tab-ši-sa] / [ta-at-tak-ba-as u p]a-ni-šá [a-na UGU-ši-ia] / [tu-ut-tir-ma x x x x x]*.

<sup>13</sup> Frame has kindly allowed me to use his preliminary translation of this letter.

<sup>14</sup> He further states in n. 61 of the article that Walker informs him that the two letters (or at least the archival copies) were probably written by the same scribe. Both photos of the letters are now available from Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative. However, the resolution of ABL 292 is not suitable for zooming in; therefore, it is difficult to decide whether the scribe is the same or not based on the handwriting of these texts.

<sup>15</sup> The campaign against the Gambūlu is recorded in the royal inscriptions of Assurbanipal. Having defeated the Elamite king Teumman (664-653 BC), the Assyrian troops marched into the territory of the Gambūlu to punish them for their alliance with Teumman as well as their support for the invasion of Babylonia of the previous Elamite king Urtaku (675-664 BC). The Assyrian army destroyed Ša-pī-Bēl, the capital of the Gambūlu, and took their leader Dunānu captive, see Borger and Fuchs 1996: 105-108 and 226-228, B VI 17- VII 2 // C VII 10-119; *ibid.*: 38-39 and 228, A III 50-69 // F II 72- III 5.

<sup>16</sup> SAA 2 6. SAA 2 6 is the composite text based on eight manuscripts.

<sup>17</sup> SAA 2 6 § 96, 635-636, *ša a-na ZAG il-lak-u-ni GÍR.MEŠ le-kul-a-šú / ša a-na KAB il-lak-u-ni GÍR.MEŠ le-kul-a-šú* // ms T viii 30-32, *ša a-na ZAG / il-lak-u-ni GÍR.MEŠ le-ku-la-šu / [š]a a-na KAB il-lak-u-ni GÍR.MEŠ-me le-ku-[a-šú]*. In addition, the same phrase of the treaty is possibly quoted in the letter SAA 16 126 from Itti-Šamaš-balātu, an Assyrian official in northern Phoenicia, to Esarhaddon. Perhaps the treaty including this phrase was well known at that time in the Ancient Near East under the control of the Assyrian Empire. SAA 16 126: 19-21, *a-ki-i ša i-na ŠÀ-bi a-de-<sup>r</sup>e<sup>7</sup> [qa-bu-u-ni] / ma-a ša a-na 15 il-la-[ku-ú-ni GÍR.MEŠ le-ku-la-šú] / ma-a ša a-na 150 il-la-[ku-ú-ni GÍR.MEŠ le-kul-šú]*, “As [it is said] in the treaty: ‘[May iron swords consume him] who go[es] to the south [and may iron swords consume him] who g[oes] to the north.’”

<sup>18</sup> CAD S 169b-170b (s.v. *sāqu*); AHW 1039a “eng, schmal sein, werden”.

<sup>19</sup> CAD S 170a-170b; AHW 1039a.

<sup>20</sup> The database of the NATC Project shows 12 instances of *siāqu* and six instances of *sāqu*.

<sup>21</sup> SAA 3 12 “Righteous Sufferer’s Prayer to Nabû” r. 17. Concerning the date of the text, see *ibid.*: XX.

<sup>22</sup> Prism H is in Babylonian script.

<sup>23</sup> Talon translates “qu’il l’étrangle et lui coupe le soufflé” (Talon 2005: 107).

<sup>24</sup> Their dictionary forms are *napištu*, *siāqu/sāqu*, and *karū*.

<sup>25</sup> ABL 561 r. 10 *né-me-il i-si-qa-áš-ša-nu-ú-ni*.

<sup>26</sup> See Brinkman 1984: 63, n. 301; Brinkman 1973: 92, n. 20. Brinkman tentatively also suggests that Šūzubu in this letter could be identified with Mušēzib-Marduk from the Bīt-Dakkūri.

<sup>27</sup> Parpola 2007: 38b (s.v., *hūr*); CAD A 186a-b (s.v., *aḥhur*). cf. AHW 359b (s.v., *hurri*, *hur*) “immer”.

<sup>28</sup> Woodington (1983: 47-48) points out that *mannu* was frequently used in Neo-Babylonian letters in place of *mamma*.

<sup>29</sup> See note 27.

## Abbreviations and Symbols

ABL	HARPER, R. F. 1892-1914. <i>Assyrian and Babylonian Letters Belonging to the Kouyunjik Collection of the British Museum I-XVI</i> , Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
AHW	von Soden, W. 1959-1981. <i>Akkadisches Handwörterbuch I-III</i> , Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag.
BM	Siglum for objects of the British Museum
CAD	<i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i> , 1956-2010. Chicago, IL: the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.
CT	<i>Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum</i>
e.	edge
GAG	VON SODEN, W. 1969. <i>Grundriss der akkadischen Grammatik</i> , Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum.
K	Siglum for objects in the Kuyunjik collection of the British Museum
l.	line
LB	Late-Babylonian
n.	note
NA	Neo-Assyrian
NB	Neo-Babylonian
PNA	<i>The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire</i>
r.	reverse

SAA	State Archives of Assyria
SAACT	State Archives of Assyria Cuneiform Texts
SAAS	State Archives of Assyria Studies
SB	Standard Babylonian
!	collation
?	uncertain reading
[ ]	break

### **Bibliography**

- BAKER H. (ed.) (2001). *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire 2, Part II: L-N*. Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project.
- BAKER H. (ed.) (2011). *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire 3, Part II: Š-Z*. Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project.
- BORGER R. and FUCHS A. (1996). *Beiträge zum Inschriftenwerk Assurbanipals. Die Prismenklassen A, B, C = K, D, E, F, G, H, J, and T sowie andere Inschriften. Mit einem Beitrag von Andreas Fuchs*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag.
- BRINKMAN J. A. (1973). Sennacherib's Babylonian Problem: An Interpretation. *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*, 25.
- BRINKMAN J. A. (1984). *Prelude to Empire: Babylonian Society and Politics, 747-626 B.C.* Philadelphia, PA: The Babylonian Fund, University Museum.
- BRINKMAN J. A. & KENNEDY D. A. (1983). Documentary evidence for the economic base of early Neo-Babylonian society: A survey of dated Babylonian economic texts, 721-626 BC. *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*, 35.
- COLE S. W. (1996a). *Nippur in Late Assyrian Times c. 755-612 BC*. Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project. (State Archives of Assyria Studies; 4).
- COLE S. W. (1996b). *Nippur IV: The Early Neo-Babylonian Governor's Archive from Nippur*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- FRAME G. (1986). The Correspondence of Nabû-ušabši, Governor of Uruk. In: VEENHOF K. R. (ed.). *Cuneiform Archives and Libraries, Papers read at the 30e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale Leiden, 4-8 July 1983*. Leiden: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul.
- FRAME G. (1992). *Babylonia 689-627 BC: A Political History*. Leiden: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul.
- HARPER R. F. (1892-1914). *Assyrian and Babylonian Letters Belonging to the Kouyunjik Collection of the British Museum I-XVI*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.



- LAUINGER J. (2011). Some Preliminary Thoughts on the Tablets Collection in Building XVI from Tell Tayinat. *The Canadian Society for Mesopotamian Studies*, 6.
- LAUINGER J. (2012). Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty at Tell Taynat. *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*, 64.
- LIVINGSTONE A. (1989). Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press. (State Archives of Assyria; 3).
- LUCKENBILL D. D. (1924). *The Annals of Sennacherib*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- LUUKKO M. & VAN BUYLAERE G. (2002). *The Political Correspondence of Esarhaddon*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press. (State Archives of Assyria; 16).
- PARPOLA S. (1986). The Royal Archives of Nineveh. In: VEENHOF K. R. (ed.). *Cuneiform Archives and Libraries. Papers Read at the 30e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale Leiden, 4-8 July 1983*. Leiden: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul.
- PARPOLA S. (1993). Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press. (State Archives of Assyria; 10).
- PARPOLA S. & WATANABE K. (1988). Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press. (State Archives of Assyria; 2).
- PARPOLA S. (ed.) (2007). *Assyrian-English-Assyrian Dictionary*. Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project.
- PFEIFFER R. H. (1935). *State Letters of Assyria: A Transliteration and Translation of 355 Official Assyrian Letters Dating from the Sargonid Period (722-625 B.C.)*. New Haven: American Oriental Society.
- RADNER K. (1998). *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire 1, Part I: A*. Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project.
- READE J. (1986). Archaeology and the Kuyunjik archives. In: VEENHOF K. (ed.). *Cuneiform archives and libraries. Papers read at the 30e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale Leiden, 4-8 July 1983*. Leiden: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul.
- READE J. (2000). Ninive (Nineveh). In: EDZARD D. O. (ed.). *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie*. Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter.
- REYNOLDS F. (2003). *The Babylonian Correspondence of Esarhaddon and Letters to Assurbanipal and Sin-šarru-iškun from Northern and Central Babylonia*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press. (State Archives of Assyria; 18).
- TALON P. (2005). *The Standard Babylonian Creation Myth: Enūma Eliš*. Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project. (State Archives of Assyria Cuneiform Texts; 4).
- WATANABE K. (1985). Die Briefe der neuassyrischen Könige. *Acta Sumerologica*, 7.



- WATERMAN L. (1930-1936). *Royal Correspondence of the Assyrian Empire I-IV*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- VON SODEN W. (1969). *Grundriss der akkadischen Grammatik*. Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum.
- WOODINGTON N. R. (1983). *A Grammar of the Neo-Babylonian Letters of the Kuyunjik Collection*. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms.
- WORTHINGTON M. (2006). Dialect Admixture of Babylonian and Assyrian in *SAA* VIII, X, XII, XVII and XVIII. *Iraq*, 68.