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KBo 28.61-64  
AND THE STRUGGLE OVER THE THRONE OF BABYLON  
AT THE TURN OF THE 13<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY BCE\*

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There are turning points in history when the members of an international “club” of great powers meddle in the affairs of a weakened member of the “club.”<sup>1</sup> Such apparently was the struggle for the domination of Babylon after the overthrow of the last Assyrian puppet king, Adad-šuma-iddina, who administered the city for Tukulti-Ninurta I until 1217 BCE.<sup>2</sup> Assyrians and Babylonians, Elamites and Hittites, and perhaps other players on the scene, threw in their lot with one of the contenders for the coveted throne of Marduk's city. Unfortunately, the sources pertaining to this obscure episode in Mesopotamian history are extremely disparate and fragmentary. More than three decades after J.A. Brinkman's seminal studies on Kassite history (1968; 1970; 1976; 1983) there are still large gaps in the sequence of events and any reconstruction must be deemed tentative and speculative. This also applies to the one presented below, which seeks to patch together various pieces of information from disparate sources in a conceivable way.

*Tukulti-Ninurta's Letter to Suppiluliuma (KBo 28.61-64)*

The starting point of our venture is a fragmentary and much-discussed Assyrian letter from Boğazköy. The four disjointed fragments published as KBo 28.61-64 were found in the 1930s on the Büyükkale.<sup>3</sup> They were soon recognized as belonging to an Assyrian letter on the basis of their language

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<sup>1</sup> In modern history one may compare the intervention of the western powers in Russia after the fall of the Tsarist regime or the invasion of Turkey by Allied troops after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

<sup>2</sup> The dates of the Babylonian kings are generally based on Brinkman 1977: 338; cf. also Sassmannshausen 2004: 67; van de Mieroop 2004: 288. For the Assyrian kings the Low Chronology of Boese & Wilhelm 1979 is followed; cf. also Freydank 1991b: 188.

<sup>3</sup> According to Mora & Giorgieri (2004: 55) the fragments were originally stored in Building B, Room 5.

and their distinctive whitish-yellow clay.<sup>4</sup> The obverse of fragments 61 and 62 join indirectly providing the beginnings and the ends of the lines, respectively; the isolated fragments 63 and 64 must belong somewhere in the huge gap between the obverse and the reverse. Despite this deplorable state of preservation, the immeasurable importance of this letter has been recognized by various scholars who have mentioned it in passing.<sup>5</sup> Full treatments have been presented by W. von Soden (1988), A. Hagenbuchner (1989: 270-275, nos. 198-201), H. Freydank (1991), and most recently by C. Mora and M. Giorgieri (2004: 113-127), who collated the fragments on photographs and improved considerably our understanding.<sup>6</sup> For a detailed philological treatment I refer the reader to the meticulous study of Mora and Giorgieri, which generally follows Freydank's. Here only a brief outline will be presented underlining the main points of interest of this exceptional letter.

It is best to start with the dating. The last line on the left edge has the name Ilī-padā (<sup>m</sup>DINGIR-*i-pa-da*),<sup>7</sup> probably as *limu*. Ilī-padā was a well-known member of an offshoot of the Assyrian royal family who served, like his father Aššur-iddin and his grandfather Qibi-Aššur, as Grand Vizier and “King of Hanigalbat” in the later part of Tukulti-Ninurta's reign and in the reigns of the following kings of Aššur (Freydank 1991b: 141; Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996: 20 ff.; 1999: 219 ff.; Freu 2003: 115).

Recently, valuable new information on Ilī-padā's career has been adduced by the Middle Assyrian texts from Tell Sabi Abyad (Akkermans & Wiggermann 1999: 61 ff.). Ilī-padā's eponym year must fall in the last decade of Tukulti-Ninurta's reign<sup>8</sup> and his Hittite correspondent must be Suppiluliuma II.

<sup>4</sup> Kümmel 1985: p. VI (with refs. to H. Otten's preliminary remarks in *MDOG*). In the *Inhaltsübersicht* Kümmel refers to a transliteration of B. Landsberger.

<sup>5</sup> For refs. see Mora & Giorgieri 2004: 113, to which add now Durand & Marti 2005; Freu 2006: 206 ff.

<sup>6</sup> I also had occasion to examine the photographs in Mainz in June 2005, for which I am grateful to Gernot Wilhelm and his team.

<sup>7</sup> For the possible readings of this name, see Brinkman 1976-1980a.

<sup>8</sup> Freydank 1991b: 59 ff.; Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996: 20. The eponym year of Ilī-padā does not appear in the texts from Tell Šēḫ Ḥamad/Dūr-Katlimmu and must therefore be dated to the last years of Tukulti-Ninurta (or thereafter), when this governmental centre was no longer active (Freydank 1991b: 44 ff.; 2005: 52; Wilhelm 1994: 550; Röllig 2004: 48 f.). The last eponym represented in Dūr-Katlimmu seems to be Ina-aššur-šumi-ašbat (Röllig, ib.), who's term must fall after the defeat of Kaštiliašu, but before the capture of Babylon by Tukulti-Ninurta (Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996: 17; Röllig 2004: 48).

The obverse contains a lengthy historical retrospective relating to the royal house of Babylon. Mention is made of Kuri[galzu] (l. 4'),<sup>9</sup> Kudur-Enlil (l. 5') and a “non-son of Kudur-Enlil” (l. 10': *lā mār Kudur-Ilil*). The following paragraphs repeatedly mention Šagarakti-Šurias (ll. 12', 14', 21', 24') and his sons (l. 12'; KBo 18.64, 3'), who appear to be the main protagonists in the letter. The Hittite king Tudha[liya] (l. 12') and [his son?] are reproached for “keeping quiet” (l. 13': *qālātunu*) and failing to intervene when someone “took [the throne of ?] Babylon” (l. 22'). The general impression is that Tukulti-Ninurta is trying to justify his own takeover of Babylon in the past and decrying a more recent usurpation of its throne by someone who did not belong to the legitimate Babylonian succession. The culprit may well be the unnamed “servant of the Land of Suhi” (ll. 13', 16', 21', 28': *İR ša KUR Suhi*) who seems to play a central role in the plot.

In line 8', *Šu-ḫi e-li-am-ma* may also refer to the omnipresent “servant of Suhi”, but it could be a statement in the first person recounting Tukulti-Ninurta's ascent/campaign to “[the Land of] Suhi”. In this connection Freydank (1991a: 30) called attention to two ration texts from Kār-Tukulti-Ninurta in which some persons were absolved from work because they had gone on a campaign in Suhi.<sup>10</sup> Regrettably, the date is not preserved, but it may be inferred from two clues: (1) Both texts refer to the erection of the zikkurat and the palace in Kār-Tukulti-Ninurta;<sup>11</sup> (2) one of them (VAT 18068 = MARV IV 30, 17' f.) mentions some Assyrians who escaped from Babylon (Freydank 1991a: 30, n. 13). Both chronological clues may point towards the second half of Tukulti-Ninurta's reign, and the latter may pin down the date to after the collapse of the Assyrian regime in Babylon in 1217 BCE. If so, we may have here an additional chronological indicator for the dating of KBo 28.61-64, besides the [limu] *Ilī-padā*.

The small fragment KBo 28.63 does not provide any useful context, but it probably also mentions a “throne” (l. 4'), as does the much better preserved KBo 28.64 (l. 5'). The latter provides the gist of the letter: the sons of Šagarakti-Šuriaš were killed or murdered (l. 3' f.), and someone (whose identity is lost in one of the gaps) seized the throne (l. 5'), presumably of Babylon. Tukulti-Ninurta quotes from a previous letter in which [he had asked] his

<sup>9</sup> The general assumption is that the reference is to Kurigalzu II, but Kurigalzu I should not to be excluded from consideration as well, especially in view of his importance for the legitimization of the Kassite dynasty (van Dijk 1986: 167; Freydank 1991a: 28, n. 8).

<sup>10</sup> The two texts are now copied in Freydank 2001: nos. 27 (VAT 18058) and 30 (VAT 18068); cf. his *Inhaltsübersicht* on p. 16.

<sup>11</sup> For the foundation of Kār-Tukulti-Ninurta after the defeat of Kaštiliašu IV, see Freydank & Eickhoff 1976-1980; Eickhoff 1985: 49; but cf. Wilhelm 1994: 550.

correspondent to send him “chariots and army troops” (l. 6'). Someone's “weak feet” (l. 8') are mentioned and then follows a surprisingly emotional statement of the Assyrian monarch: “If I am alive, [I will send(?)] a message of/about my life, but if I am dead, the message of/about my death [will be sent to you(?)]” (l. 9'). Prophetic words indeed, for a few years later Tukulti-Ninurta was murdered by conspirators, including his own son, in his palace at Kār-Tukulti-Ninurta.

The reverse of KBo 28.61(+)-62 preserves only the beginnings and ends of some twenty lines. Mention is made again of “chariots” (l. 6') and “troops” (l. 15'), and the remarkable “one hundred years, my brother[...” (l. 14'); might this refer to the duration of Assyrian-Hittite relations in the past, or is it perhaps wishful thinking about their future longevity? The left edge closes the missive with yet another sentimental phrase: “you have loved me with all your heart” (l. 1'). This is followed by the customary presents of gold and b[ronze] (l. 4') and the dating.<sup>12</sup>

As should be obvious from this brief presentation, any historical reconstruction based on this fragmentary text alone would be futile. Nevertheless, one is tempted to combine this limited information with other Mesopotamian sources pertaining to this eventful but poorly documented period.<sup>13</sup> Freydank (1991a: 29), followed by Mora & Giorgieri (2004: 117), has already raised the basic questions concerning the identity of Šagarakti-Šuriaš. Is he the 27th Kassite king of Babylon, and if so, was he ousted by his successor Kaštiliaš-šu? Could he have found refuge with his sons in the Land of Suhi and could he (or his son) have operated from there in order to reclaim the throne of Babylon? Alternatively, could this Šagarakti-Šuriaš be someone else, perhaps an unknown ruler of Suhi? And what was his role in the struggle for the throne of Babylon? And who is the mysterious “servant of Suhi” who figures so prominently in the text? Finally, what kind of involvement did the Assyrian king try to solicit from his Hittite “brother”? Difficult questions indeed, but one thing seems obvious: Tukulti-Ninurta's exceptionally emotive language – longing for his “brother's” love and fearing his own imminent death – must be taken into consideration, besides other clues, in reconstructing the

<sup>12</sup> That Ilī-padā is preceded by [*limu*] is almost certain, but one cannot entirely exclude the alternative possibility that the presents were delivered “[by the hands of] Ilī-padā”, whose jurisdiction was close to the Hittite border.

<sup>13</sup> A recent attempt to integrate this letter into a broad historical context (published after the Würzburg conference) has been made by Durand & Marti 2005 [2006]: 127 ff. I am in agreement with part of their arguments, but not with their general conclusions regarding the circumstances of the letter's composition and the identity of the “servant of Suhi” (whom Durand & Marti identify with Kaštiliaš IV).

historical circumstances of the letter and its dating. It seems to me very unlikely that Tukulti-Ninurta wrote this letter in the glorious days during and immediately after his occupation of Babylon.<sup>14</sup> On the contrary, its ominous atmosphere speaks for a later phase in his reign, after the loss of Babylon, when he remained secluded in his new capital increasingly alienated from his compatriots.<sup>15</sup> Granting these basic inferences, the Mesopotamian sources pertaining to this turbulent period will now be scrutinized.

### *Babylonian chronicles*

Traditionally, the major source for late Kassite history has been Chronicle P (no. 22), a late copy of a Babylonian composition of the mid-twelfth century BCE (Grayson 2000: 56 ff.; Glassner 1993: 223 ff.; 2004: 278 ff.). The end of the Assyrian occupation of Babylon and the assassination of Tukulti-Ninurta are briefly recounted as follows:

For seven years Tukulti-Ninurta dominated Karanduniaš. After the rebellion of the officials of Akkad (and) Karanduniaš and the installation of Adad-šuma-ušur on the throne of his father, Aššur-nāšir-apli, his son, and the Assyrian officials revolted against Tukulti-Ninurta, who for evil had laid [hands] on Babylon, deposed him from his throne, locked him in a room in Kār-Tukulti-Ninurta, and put him to death (iv 7-11; Glassner 2004: 281).

This laconic report conveys the impression that Adad-šuma-ušur's ascent to the throne of his father in Babylon followed immediately after the Assyrian retreat. The relevant passage in the Synchronistic Chronicle (no. 21) is unfortunately totally destroyed at this point and the narrative resumes only with the battle between Enlil-kudur-ušur and Adad-šuma-ušur (Grayson 2000: 55, 161; Glassner 2004: 178 f.). On the other hand, King List A provides the names and the reigns of the three puppet kings who were placed consecutively by Tukulti-Ninurta on the throne of Babylon: Enlil-nādin-šumi, Kadašman-Harbe, and Adad-šuma-iddina, altogether 9 years.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> To this phase may belong a fragmentary reference to Babylon in KBo 4.14, a text referring to the battle of Nihriya at the beginning of Tukulti-Ninurta's reign; "[...] became [king] of [Karan]duniya" (iv 39 *Ka-ra-an-du-ni-ya-aš ki-ša-at*) may well refer to Tukulti-Ninurta, since in the following line we read *Jl-NA KUR URU Aš-šur* (Stefanini 1965: 49; Singer 1985: 110, n. 60). A further reference to the overthrow of a king of Babylon, probably Kaštiliašu IV, and his survival is probably found in a recently published text from Ugarit, RS 23.025, 12' f. (Arnaud 2003: 11; cf. Freu 2006: 205 f.).

<sup>15</sup> The gloomy atmosphere of this late letter distantly recalls his prayer to the god Aššur, in which he bemoans "the ring of evil" closing upon him (Klengel 1961: 73 f.).

<sup>16</sup> Grayson 1980-83: 91. The duration of their reigns is indicated as "1 year and 6 months", "1 year and 6 months", and "6 years", respectively, which would add up to 9 years. However, if the first entries may be interpreted as "1 year (that is of) 6 months (only)", then the total of 7

The publication of a further Babylonian chronicle from the British Museum modified significantly the previous perspective on this tumultuous period in Mesopotamian history (Walker 1982). The left side of the tablet is broken and its restoration is very problematic. The beginning of the text was restored by Walker as referring to Tukulti-Ninurta's victory over Babylon (Walker 1982: 400, followed by Glassner 2004: 282 f.), but, in fact, the first preserved names are those of Enlil-kudur-ušur and Adad-šuma-ušur (ll. 3 f.), thus referring to events that occurred a decade after the death of Tukulti-Ninurta. A renewed showdown between Babylon and Assyria ended with a resounding victory of Adad-šuma-ušur, in the wake of which Enlil-kudur-ušur was taken captive and some Babylonians who had previously been moved to Assyria returned to their homeland (ll. 3-7). Allegedly, only now did Adad-šuma-ušur "conquer the city" (l. 7), i.e. Babylon. Next we get a reference to "the son of a nobody, whose name is not mentioned" (l. 8), followed by the successful revolt in Babylon which installed Adad-šuma-ušur firmly on the throne (ll. 9-10).

Walker's interpretation of Chronicle 25 changed considerably the traditional reconstruction of the period following the Assyrian interregnum in Babylon: "Prior to his defeat of Enlil-kudur-usur Adad-shuma-usur had not been in control of Babylon nor recognized as king there. This suggests that for the whole of his twenty five years he had been recognized as king only in southern Babylonia, leaving the Assyrians or their nominees in control of Babylon" (Walker 1982: 405). The reference to "the son of a nobody" (l. 8) is taken by Walker (1982: 407) to refer to an Assyrian puppet king whose name the Babylonian chronicler could not find in the historical sources available to him. In other words, Adad-šuma-ušur's alleged reign of three decades, the longest in the Kassite dynasty (Brinkman 1976: 89), would now appear to have been only nominal, and in fact, the city of Babylon continued to be ruled by the Assyrians or their proxies for another 25 years.<sup>17</sup>

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years would overlap with the duration of Tukulti-Ninurta's suzerainty according to Chronicle P (Brinkman 1968: 86, n. 444; 1970: 311, n. 125; Wiseman 1975: 443).

<sup>17</sup> Walker's assumption (1982: 406 f.) that prior to the takeover of Babylon Adad-šuma-ušur was in control of southern Babylonia is based on his early inscriptions from Ur and on a late copy of a bronze statue from Ur (BM 36042) which begins with the sentence: "When Anu and Enlil looked with steady favour on Adad-šuma-ušur, the shepherd who pleased their heart, at that time Marduk, the great lord, named his name as ruler of (all) land[s]." This, according to Walker (1982: 407), shows that "he was chosen by Anu and Enlil in Uruk and Nippur (which he will have controlled from 1216 B.C.), but only became king of the whole land when appointed by Marduk in Babylon (in 1192 B.C.)."

Even if one accepts Walker's innovative understanding of Adad-šuma-ušur's reign,<sup>18</sup> other aspects of his interpretation seem more questionable. First and foremost, I see no foothold in the text for his categorical statement that during the long period from the deposition of Adad-šuma-iddina until Adad-šuma-ušur's takeover of Babylon, 25 years later, the city was dominated by the Assyrians or their nominees. This may well be one possibility, but there must have been other contestants to the throne, and it is hard to tell who had the upper hand and for how long. The same applies to his identification of "the son of a nobody, whose name is not mentioned" (l. 8) with the Assyrian puppet king whose name was apparently ignored by the chronicler. This description is sandwiched between two references to Adad-šuma-ušur, and I wonder whether it might not refer to Adad-šuma-ušur himself or to his father.

In the following three paragraphs (ll. 11-18) not a single personal name is preserved and the context is also open to argumentation. Someone is killed in l. 11, a rebellion that removed "the king of Mari" is reported in ll. 12-13, and some defensive measures taken to fend off an Elamite threat are described in ll. 14-18. Only then does one again reach solid ground with the mention of Nebuchadnezzar (I) in ll. 19 ff. Walker (1982: 409 ff. and Appendix B) tentatively related these fragmentary references of ll. 11-18 to events in the 12th century BCE, but one can not exclude the possibility that these descriptions continue in fact the narrative covering Adad-šuma-ušur's reign. In any case, the evidence provided by this intriguing text (which seems to focus on kings who rebuilt Babylonian edifices) is insufficient to satisfactorily illuminate the eventful period following the deposition of Adad-šuma-iddina and the door is open for various other scenarios.

The same applies to the so-called Adad-šuma-ušur Epic, a late literary text which was previously thought to describe a rebellion by officers and nobles of Babylon *against* Adad-šuma-ušur because of his neglect of Marduk (Grayson 1975: 56-77). The king was nevertheless spared and he made amends to the god through extensive building projects in Babylon and other cities. In the light of Chronicle 25 the epic is now understood as "an account of the revolt in Babylon against the Assyrian nominee and *in favour* of Adad-šuma-ušur" (Grayson *apud* Walker 1982: 407). The fragmentary text of col. iv contains obscure references to a "Suhaean woman" (iv 10: *ana*

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<sup>18</sup> Followed by van Dijk 1986: 168; Kuhrt 1995: 356.



*pāni* <sup>SAL</sup>*Su-ḥa-’-i-tum*) and to other “Suhæan(s)” (iv 18: <sup>LÜ</sup>*Su-ḥa-’*). How these ethnica fit into the epic remains to be seen.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, mention should be made of another poorly preserved Babylonian epic which could also refer to events of this period (Grayson 1975: 47-55). It apparently deals with Elamite-Babylonian encounters, and a clue for its dating is provided by the reference to a certain Enlil-kidinni. There are two known officials bearing this name, one in the 14th century BCE and one in the late 13th. Grayson (1975: 47) opted for the former, relating the fragment to the Elamite-Babylonian hostilities in the age of Kurigalzu II (cf. Glassner 2004: 279 ff.). However, the Elamites also meddled in Babylonian affairs during and after the Assyrian interregnum and the fragment may well refer to events in the late 13th century BCE. The mention of someone who should not be allowed to be set on “my throne” (obv. 11') is quite suggestive, and so is the reference to an Elamite woman whose garment pins are taken away and given to the daughter of Enlil-kidinni (rev. 7' f.). The garment pins (*d/tudittu*) was an essential part of the jewellery given to the bride at the wedding (for refs. see RIA 9: 71). Taking the risk of overinterpreting this very fragmentary text, one might suggest that this is somehow related to a diplomatic marriage between Elam and Babylon, which brings us to the last and perhaps the most significant testimony, the so-called “Elamite Letter”. Before that, the gruesome fate of the Elamite woman (perhaps a princess?) should be mentioned in passing: she was murdered and her corpse was flung down the wall (rev. 11' f.).

#### *A royal letter from Elam to Babylon (VAT 17020)*

The text VAT 17020 (= VS 24, 91) from the Berlin Museum, which was published by J. van Dijk (1986; cf. Freydank 1991a: 29, n. 9), is a late copy of a royal letter sent from Elam to the great ones of Babylon. The name of the sender is lost, but it should be either Kutir-Nahhunte (van Dijk 1986: 166) or his son Šutruk-Nahhunte (van de Mieroop 2004: 176 f.). The Elamite ruler claims the right of succession to the throne of Babylon as the offspring of the daughter of the Great King Kurigalzu and as the husband of the daughter of Melišihu. He cites several precedents for dynastic marriages between Elamite kings and Babylonian princesses in order to convince his correspondents that the legitimate succession to the Babylonian throne should pass through the Elamite-Babylonian union. The Babylonian answer

<sup>19</sup> The Suhæan woman appears in a passage which also mentions various workmen (farmer, potter, launderer), and Grayson suggests that this could be a description of income assigned by the king to temple personnel.

to this letter is preserved in one of the so-called “Kedor-laomer Texts” in the British Museum.<sup>20</sup> In it the elders of Babylon reject the Elamite claim quoting a series of metaphors underlining the absurdity of such a Babylonian-Elamite coexistence, e.g.: “Can cattle and a rapacious wolf come to terms with one another?”

Scholars have raised justifiable doubts about the historicity of these literary compositions (e.g. Brinkman 2004: 292), but one has to admit that the author of the “Elamite Letter” had a good knowledge of the Babylonian line of succession, going back as early as Kurigalzu (I). In some details he is even more reliable than the author of Chronicle P (van Dijk 1986: 165; Lambert 2004: 201). He must have had access to historical sources and the information provided by him on three negative precedents in which the Babylonian throne was imprudently given to non-Elamite descendants may contain a kernel of truth.

The name of the first “villain” is very damaged (l. 25), and though his description as “the one who took Babylon, but whose reign until the present day has not been acknowledged” (ll. 26-29) would best fit Tukulti-Ninurta, the remaining traces would seem to better fit Kaš[tiliaš] or some other name (van Dijk 1986: 168). The second “villain” is Adad-šuma-ušur (ll. 30-32), who will be discussed in detail below, and the third is “Nabû-apal-iddina, the son of a Hittite woman (DUMU KUR *Ĥat-ti-ti*), an abomination for Babylon, a Hittite (KUR *Ĥa-at-tu-ú*)<sup>21</sup> whom you have chosen for the neglect(?) of Babylon and have placed on the throne of Babylon; his sin, his misdoing, his contempt and his ... you have experienced...” (ll. 33-36; van Dijk 1986: 161 f., 168).

We know absolutely nothing about this alleged king of Babylon whose mother was a Hittite (princess?). But we know of course that the political alliance between Hatti and Babylon was cemented by several dynastic marriages in the 14th-13th centuries BCE.<sup>22</sup> In Dūr-Kurigalzu a fragment of a letter was found in which a Hittite king addresses a queen of Babylon, who could well be a relative of his.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, one should not dismiss this reference out of the hand and one should at least take into consideration the possibility of a claimant to the Babylonian throne of mixed Babylonian-Hittite blood.

<sup>20</sup> Recently re-edited by W.G. Lambert (2004: 200 ff.; Spar & Lambert 2005).

<sup>21</sup> Cf. the designation *Ĥa-at-tu-ú* in a Nippur text from the Kassite period (Hölscher 1996: 82).

<sup>22</sup> For Hittite-Babylonian dynastic marriages, see Hagenbuchner 1989: 281 ff.; Singer 1991: 330 ff.; Houwink ten Cate 1996: 43 ff., 56 ff.

<sup>23</sup> IM 50966; Baqir 1946: 89 f., pl. xviii, fig. 13; Hagenbuchner 1989: 300 ff.

We may now return to Adad-šuma-ušur (ll. 30-32), whose description is of utmost interest for this investigation:

- (30) <sup>md</sup>*Adad-šuma-ušur mār* <sup>m</sup>*Du-un-na-d[Ša]-ah šá aḫi* (GÚ) <sup>id</sup>*Puratti*<sup>KI</sup>  
 (31) *šá [tal-q]a-nim-ma ina* <sup>GIS</sup>*kussī māt Kar-an-dun-iá-àš tu-š[e-ši]-ba* (32)  
*k[i-i<sup>2</sup> š]u<sup>2</sup>-ú mār mārṭi ú-qat-t[a- x]*

Adad-šuma-ušur, son of Dunna-[Š]ah, from the riverbank of the Euphrates, whom you have chosen and placed on the throne of Babylon, h[ow h]e destro[yed] the son of the daughter!

Taken at face value, this description implies that Adad-šuma-ušur was a usurper who seized the throne of Babylon after eliminating another claimant to the throne, “the son of the daughter.” In the context of this letter, the latter must be the offspring of a mixed Elamite-Babylonian marriage. His destruction, perhaps together with that of his mother, recalls the poor Elamite woman who was murdered according to the Babylonian chronicle mentioned above.

Adad-šuma-ušur himself is identified as the son of a certain <sup>m</sup>Dunna-Šah, who bears a Kassite name.<sup>24</sup> J. van Dijk (1986: 160, n. 17) emphatically claimed that Dunna-Šah must be his mother, despite the masculine determinative. In support of this claim he referred to a bronze dagger from Luristan which bears the inscription “Adad-šuma-ušur, king of the world, son of Kaštiliašu, king of Babylon” (Dossin 1962: 151, no. 1 and pl. xiii; Brinkman 1968: 87, n. 452; 1976: 90). Chronicle 22 iv 9 simply states that Adad-šuma-ušur was installed on the throne of his father (Glassner 2004: 280 f.).

Despite the seemingly solid evidence for Adad-šuma-ušur's filiation, I have some reservations with regard to the emendation of <sup>m</sup>Dunna-Šah's gender, as suggested by van Dijk. Brinkman has already shown that the formulaic filiation statements of the Babylonian Chronicles and King Lists cannot be considered as definitive proof,<sup>25</sup> and the dagger from Luristan (assuming that it is authentic) was surely ordered by the king himself who had a vested interest in portraying himself as the legitimate heir of Kaštiliašu. As a matter of fact, it is rather surprising that among the dozens of texts and inscriptions of Adad-šuma-ušur (Brinkman 1976: 89-94) this is the only document

<sup>24</sup> For the Kassite theophoric element Š/Zaḫ, see Saporetti 1970: 323 f.; Hölscher 1996: 269 f.; Sassmannshausen 1998: 833; 2001: 60, n. 917; 2004: 293, n. 45. Cf. in particular the name Tunami-Šaḫ (Hölscher 1996: 222).

<sup>25</sup> Brinkman (1976: 204 with n. 11) advocated a critical look at the genealogies provided by the Kinglists, “especially since Adad-šuma-ušur, king No. 32, may have come to the throne only 8+8 years after the accession of his father, Kaštiliašu IV, king No. 28, and because of the perhaps underestimated tradition of fratriarchal succession within the Kassite tribal society (which might have influenced royal succession as well).”

providing his filiation. This rather recalls Sargon II, who, except for one inscription, never alludes to his ancestry, with good reason (Lambert 2004: 202).<sup>26</sup>

In short, one should keep an open mind with regard to the paternity of Adad-šuma-ušur, seriously considering the straightforward evidence provided by the “Elamite Letter”, which contradicts official Babylonian historiography.

The “Elamite Letter” provides yet another important clue concerning the origins of Adad-šuma-ušur and his father Dunna-Šah, i.e. the epithet “from the bank of the Euphrates” (*šá aḫi*<sup>id</sup> *Puratti*<sup>KI</sup>). What might be the significance of this geographical indication? It can hardly refer to Babylon itself, for in that case some more explicit terminology presumably would have been used. It would rather seem that the author sought to single out the origins of this, in his view, evil king. It could refer to a more northerly segment of the Euphrates, beyond the confines of Babylonia proper. One finds indeed the term *aḫ Purattim* in various sources as referring to the narrow irrigated trough of the Middle Euphrates (known in Arabic as the *Zor*).<sup>27</sup> If so, the powerbase of Adad-šuma-ušur, from which he launched his offensive on Babylon, might well have been somewhere on the Middle Euphrates, perhaps in the Land of Suhi bordering on the Land of Babylon. Such an origin of the “villain” Adad-šuma-ušur would be in line with the Elamite author's agenda of defaming all “foreign” rulers of Babylon who were not the offspring of Babylonian-Elamite matrimonies.

It is now time to tie together all the disparate pieces of information presented above. But first, a short overview on the Late Bronze Age history of the Land of Suhi is presented which should serve as a background for the suggested reconstruction.

### *The Land of Suhi in the 13th century BCE*

The Land of Suhi stretched along the Middle Euphrates from Rapiqu on the northwestern border of Babylonia to about Hindanu south of Mari.<sup>28</sup> On

<sup>26</sup> A similar case would be Tukulti-Ninurta I's, should the hypothesis suggested by Lambert 2004 turn out to be valid.

<sup>27</sup> For refs. see *CAD*, E: 207 f.; Buccellati 1988: 45; Charpin 2002: 86.

<sup>28</sup> For refs. to Suhi, see Groneberg 1980 (RGTC 3): 210; Nashef 1982 (RGTC 5): 235 f.; Belmonte Marín 2001 (RGTC 12/2): 242. For general surveys on the geography and history of Suhi and the Middle Euphrates region, see Brinkman 1968: 183 ff. with n. 1127; Háklár 1983; Buccellati 1988: 44 ff.; 1990a; Kepinski-Lecompte 1992: 37-41; Massetti-Rouault & Rouault 1993; Massetti-Rouault 1998; 2006; Rouault 2004.

the northwest it bordered with the Land of Mari (also known as the Land of Hana) and these two adjacent regions on the Middle Euphrates were often combined under the designation “Land of Mari and Land of Suhi” (or *vice versa*), a term which survived well into the Iron Age. Throughout its history the region oscillated between the political hegemony of Babylonia and Assyria, but in many periods the so-called “governors of Suhi” maintained a certain degree of autonomy.<sup>29</sup> Culturally, however, Babylonia always managed to project its influence onto the region, irrespective of its geo-political orientation (Rouault 2004: 58)

The economic potential of the Middle Euphrates region is far more limited than that of the broad alluvial plains of Babylonia. The valley is too narrow to allow the development of vast irrigated areas, and its agricultural yield could thus only support a couple of major urban centres at any time, i.e. Mari then Terqa in the north, and Hana(t)/Anat,<sup>30</sup> the capital of Suhi, to the south. However, the steppe on both sides of the river provided good pasture for an expanding semi-nomadic population, which included, besides various Sutean groups, also Kassite tribes from the early part of the second millennium on (Sassmannshausen 2004) and Ahlamu-Arameans towards its end (Lipiński 2000: 45 ff.). These various tribal elements served as an important source for the recruitment of soldiers already in the Mari period (Durand 1997: 456; 1998: 18 f.).<sup>31</sup> The rulers of Suhi, who controlled the main transportation arteries between north and south, exerted a considerable influence on the political scene of Mesopotamia.

In the early Kassite period the Kingdom of Hana, with its capital at Tell Ashara/Terqa, was the major political centre in the Middle Euphrates region. Towards the early 14th century, however, it lost its predominance, as shown by recent archaeological investigations.<sup>32</sup> It seems that the political centre of

<sup>29</sup> As pointed out by Durand (1990: 78, n. 182), the nominal title “*šakin* of Suhi” denotes in fact more than a simple “governor” (“*préfet*”) and must refer to a royal personage.

<sup>30</sup> The name is spelled *Hana(t)* in Old Babylonian texts (Groneberg 1980: 90; Podany 2002: 248) and *Anat* in Middle Assyrian (Nashef 1982:31) and Emar texts (Bassetti 1996; Belmonte Marín 2001: 24 f.).

<sup>31</sup> Lower Suhi was the source of black and white alum according to the Mari texts (Durand 1997: 373) and the region was also exploited for its salt resources (Buccellati 1990b). In the first millennium the land of Suhi delivered textiles and ivory as tribute (Brinkman 1968: 183 f., n. 1127).

<sup>32</sup> The site was abandoned in the second half of the 14th century (Rouault 2004: 57 f.), although some ephemeral presence may have resumed later on. There is a significant late Kassite presence at Tell Mashtale, about five kilometres south of Terqa, but it seems to belong to the 12th century (ib.: 58). The Late Bronze Age levels at Tell Hariri are very much eroded (Geyer & Monchambert 2003; Margueron 2004: 526 ff.; Rouault 2004: 58; Masetti-

gravity shifted in this period further downstream to the Land of Suhi. Unfortunately, the archaeological record of this region is quite limited and much of the evidence has now disappeared with the site of ancient Anat (Qal'at 'Āna) being flooded by the rising waters of the Haditha (Al-Qadi-siya) Dam (Northedge et al. 1988: 135).<sup>33</sup>

The written evidence on Suhi in the Late Bronze Age has long been just as meagre (Háklár 1983; Ismail et al. 1983), but the texts from Emar and Tell Sabi Abyad have somewhat improved the situation, especially with regard to the end of the period. Many of the references refer to the dangers posed by the tribal groups on the Middle Euphrates who threatened to disrupt the northbound communications from Babylon.

In his famous letter to Kadašman-Enlil II, the Hittite king Hattusili III refers to the Ahlamu, who allegedly prevented his correspondent from sending his messengers to Hatti (Beckman 1999: 140). A similar concern is expressed in a yet unpublished letter from Ugarit written by Ini-Tešub, king of Kargamiš, to Šagarakt[i-Šuriaš] (Singer 1999: 652, with refs.).

A Middle Babylonian letter from Dūr-Kurigalzu contains a report on 500 Hiranu tribesmen who were dispelled by an Assyrian army led by Kibi-Aššur (IM 51.928; Gurney 1949: 139 ff. (no. 10); Faist 2001: 234 ff.; Freu 2003: 110 f.). Half of the band was in the Land of Subartu, in Assyrian-controlled territory, whereas the other half was in the Land of Suhi and the Land of Mari (ll. 21-27). The author of the letter, Zikir-ilišu, was apparently well informed about the situation in the north for he was able to inform his master about an Assyrian envoy who finally returned to Aššur after being detained in Hatti for three years (ll. 14-16).

Under the energetic rule of Tukulti-Ninurta the Assyrians attempted to exert a more effective rule in this region, in tandem with their conquest of Babylon.<sup>34</sup> In a late inscription from Kār-Tukulti-Ninurta the Assyrian monarch boasts of having “brought under one command the lands of Mari,

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Rouault 2006), but it is very unlikely that Mari reasserted itself at the end of the Late Bronze Age, replacing Terqa as the main urban centre of the region. This decline in the archaeological record of the region fully conforms with the scarcity of contemporary documents in the known corpus of Hana texts (Podany 2002; Dietrich 2001; Charpin 2002).

<sup>33</sup> An archaeological survey conducted in the region has located 17 late second millennium sites between Haditha and west of Ana (Abdul-Amir 1997: 219, table 2, fig. 3). The rescue excavations on the island of 'Āna, ancient (H)anat, have revealed impressive finds from the Neo-Assyrian period, but apparently no evidence for the earlier periods (Abdul-Amir 1997: 220; Northedge et al. 1988: 55).

<sup>34</sup> For various views on the historical background of the war between Kaštiliašu and Tukulti-Ninurta, see, e.g., Mayer 1988; Brinkman 1990: 90 ff.; Durand & Marti 2003: 159.

Hana, Rapiqu, and the mountains of the Ahlamu” (Grayson 1987: 273). It is not clear whether all these places refer to the traditional locations on the Euphrates or to some homonymous places in the Middle Habur region, as claimed by several scholars.<sup>35</sup> In any case, the Assyrian control over the Middle Euphrates must have been ephemeral at best,<sup>36</sup> and after the collapse of the Assyrian regime in Babylon, the Land of Suhi not only regained its autonomy, but was even capable of extending its influence upstream along the Euphrates.

The texts from Emar indicate that in normal times good relations were maintained with the Land of Suhi, under the watchful eyes of the Hittite governors of Aštata.<sup>37</sup> There is one document, however, which anticipates the expansionist tendencies of Suhi. In *Emar VI*: no. 263 (Arnaud 1986: 259 f.; cf. Durand & Marti 2005) an Emarite official reports to his master, “the overseer of the land” (LÚ.UGULA.KALAM.MA), the news that he had learned from two Ahlameans from Suhi. He was told that “the governor of Suhi” (LÚ.šakin KUR Sú-ú-*hi*), with his chariots and armies, conducted a massive attack on the Land of ...<sup>38</sup> The author promises to find out more about the booty taken in the wake of this raid and to report back to his master.

Now, this is undoubtedly a surprising development in the political history of Mesopotamia. Taking advantage of the temporary weakness of both Babylon and Assyria, the rulers of Suhi, a region of secondary importance throughout most of its history, managed to create a regional power exerting

<sup>35</sup> E.g., Maul 1999; Luciani 1999-2001: 103 f.; Charpin 2002: 75 f.

<sup>36</sup> The archaeological evidence is also incompatible with an Assyrian rule over the Middle Euphrates region in the 13th century BCE. See Kühne 1995: 75 f.; Pfälzner 1997: 340; Massetti-Rouault 1998: 225 ff.; Luciani 1999-2001: 106 f. On the other hand, in the Habur region there is a continuous Assyrian presence also after the death of Tukulti-Ninurta I (Kühne 1995).

<sup>37</sup> Two Suheans, Tiri-Dagan and Abdi-ili, appear as witnesses in two legal texts, *Emar VI*: no. 32: 25 (Arnaud 1986: 46) and no. 120: 18 (Arnaud 1986: 127), respectively. One of the main commodities imported from Suhi must have been alum, which was further transported to Ugarit and other coastal cities by the agents of Šipti-Ba'al (for refs. see Singer 1999: 658). To the very end of the period covered by the Emar archive belong the references to a certain Nabuni, governor of Suhi. According to *Emar VI*: no. 26 (Arnaud 1986: 36 f.) he was involved in a transaction in the city of Anat (for the reading see Bassetti 1996, but cf. Durand & Marti 2003: 167) in the second year of Melišihu (1185 BCE). According to an unpublished Emar tablet (Bassetti 1996: 246), Nabuni of Suhi received a letter from Talmi-Šarruma of Emar.

<sup>38</sup> The editor (Arnaud) read the name *Qa-at-na*, but (as brought to my attention by Dominique Charpin at the Würzburg conference) Durand & Marti 2005: 124 have recently suggested, after collation of the original, the reading *Ma-ri*<sup>KI</sup> instead.

its influence on neighbouring regions. There is valuable evidence for this important development in the documents from Tell Sabi Abyad, regrettably still unpublished. From preliminary reports one learns that Aramean tribes from Suhi conducted raids in the north, pillaging Assyrian and Hittite held territories (1999: 64). The northern powers cooperated with each other to fend off these recurring attacks. According to one of the latest documents from the Tell Sabi Abyad, Ilī-padā, the Assyrian governor of Hanigalbat, came to the rescue of the king of Karkamiš, sending him various provisions.

Later developments in the Land of Suhi are beyond the scope of this study, but it may be mentioned in passing that this exceptional interlude of independence and expansionism came to an end at the turn of the 12th century BCE, when Tiglath-pileser I resumed Assyrian control over the area, engaging the Aramean tribes “from the edge of the Land of Suhu to the city of Carchemish in the Land of Hatti.”<sup>39</sup> Still, the governors of Suhi exerted considerable influence in the Middle Euphrates region even in Neo-Assyrian times.<sup>40</sup>

### *The Contest for the Throne of Babylon*

Against this historical background the prominent role played by the anonymous “servant of Suhi” in Tukulti-Ninurta’s letter to Suppiluliuma may find its *Sitz im Leben*. Again, the historical reconstruction presented below is highly tentative, but it does explain, at least in its broad outlines, the extant data, until more decisive evidence comes to light.

Chronicle 25 has shown that the developments in Babylon after the removal of the last Assyrian puppet king, Adad-šuma-iddina, were not as straightforward as Chronicle 22 (P) would lead us to believe. Perhaps Adad-šuma-ušur did not seize the reins of power straight away, but, on the other hand, I see no evidence whatsoever for the ongoing Assyrian domination of Babylon for another 25 years. I would instead suggest that the expulsion of the Assyrians from Babylon created a power vacuum in which various parties tried to promote their candidates for the coveted throne of Babylon.

<sup>39</sup> Lipiński 2000: 35 f. (with refs.). The last mention of a “king of Mari” relates to Tukulti-Mēr who was defeated by Aššur-bēl-kala at the beginning of the 11th century (Grayson 1991: 89). A strong Kassite presence was still felt in Suhi as late as the 9th century BCE, when Aššurnāṣirpal fought at Suru, near the town of Anat, against the Babylonian governor of Suhi with his “extensive Kassite troops” (Grayson 1991: 213).

<sup>40</sup> For Suhi’s position of control on the trade routes to the west in the 9th century BCE, see Parpola 1990: 262 and map on p. 260.



Let us start with Elam, whose dominant political influence on Mesopotamia (even nowadays) hardly needs be stressed.<sup>41</sup> Twice during the Assyrian interregnum the Elamites raided Babylon,<sup>42</sup> and half a century later they brought down the Kassite dynasty. It would indeed be most unusual if the Elamites had not been deeply embroiled in the dynastic strife following the Assyrian interregnum. What may perhaps be a historical reminiscence of this Elamite involvement is preserved in the so-called “Elamite Letter” and also in the grim fate of an Elamite woman described in a Babylonian epic fragment. Could she be the Elamite princess whose son was destroyed by Adad šuma-ušur according to the “Elamite Letter”? It is quite common in bloody intrigues involving royal succession to eliminate both the rival contestant and his mother.

That the Hittites were most interested in the outcome of the power struggle in Babylon is obvious, not only because of their close political ties with both Mesopotamian powers in this period,<sup>43</sup> but perhaps because they entertained some plans of their own for the occupancy of the Babylonian throne. The “Elamite Letter” may preserve a vague memory of a half-Babylonian, half-Hittite prince vying for the throne of Babylon.

That the Assyrians were loath to renounce their grip on Babylon goes without saying, and Tukulti-Ninurta's emotive letter to Suppiluliuma provides ample evidence, if any were needed. The crucial importance that Aššur attributed to keeping Babylon at bay proved to be fully justified, for a short while after Tukulti-Ninurta's assassination the tables turned and the new king of Babylon, Adad-šuma-ušur, became the kingmaker in Aššur (Brinkman 1968: 87, n. 453, with refs.). Last but not least, the inhabitants of Babylon, both of Kassite and local Babylonian descent, must have had some say in determining the fate of their city.

But perhaps none of these contenders achieved his goal. A new player emerged on the international scene, an energetic ruler of the Land of Suhi. As indicated above, with regard to Adad-šuma-ušur's filiation I prefer to lend credence to the “Elamite Letter”. He was probably not the son of Kaštiliašu, who was taken captive to Assyria a decade earlier, but rather of an otherwise

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<sup>41</sup> As stated by Brinkman 1968: 86: “Babylonian history at this point can be understood only in conjunction with its counterpart in Western Iran.”

<sup>42</sup> Chronicle 22 (P) iv 14 ff., 17 ff.; Brinkman 1968: 86 f. with n. 447; 1970: 311, n. 125.

<sup>43</sup> For the political detente between Hatti and Aššur in the late 13th century BCE, see Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996: 38 ff.; Faist 2001: 213 ff.; Freu 2003; Singer 2003.

unknown Dunna-Šah from the “bank of the Euphrates”.<sup>44</sup> A Suhian origin of the new king of Babylon may also explain the appearance of various Suhaeans in the Epic of Adad-šuma-ušur.

Finally, I would tentatively suggest that the mysterious “servant of Suhi” who figures so prominently in Tukulti-Ninurta's letter to Suppiluliuma is none other than Adad-šuma-ušur himself.<sup>45</sup> It is him that the Assyrian monarch tries to defame in the eyes of his correspondent by exposing his lack of any connection to the legitimate Babylonian succession. He may even be the one who is accused of the assassination of Šagarakti-Šuriaš's sons. That the Assyrian monarch should refer to him as the “servant of Suhi” should hardly come as a surprise, for he would have considered him to be merely a rebellious Assyrian or Babylonian subject. Taking advantage of the temporary political vacuum in Mesopotamia, Adad-šuma-ušur elevated his land to the status of a key political player and eventually captured for himself the coveted throne of Babylon, sometime after the expulsion of the last Assyrian puppet king.

What the Hittite reaction to Tukulti-Ninurta's emotive letter was we shall probably never know.<sup>46</sup> I assume that Suppiluliuma had more urgent problems to deal with at this point in time. Besides, the bitter defeat at Nihriya (Singer 1985) was still fresh in Hittite memory, and this must have curbed any enthusiasm he may have had to rush to help Tukulti-Ninurta. In any case, a few years later both monarchs were gone and their kingdoms sank into an abyss, one of them irretrievably.

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<sup>44</sup> That this obscure Dunna-Šah, who bears a Kassite name, may have belonged to an offshoot of the Kassite dynasty is not impossible, but he could just as well have had a more modest background, such as a local chief or governor.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Durand & Marti 2005, who identify the “servant of Suhi” with Kaštiliašu IV. In my opinion, this option would place the occasion for the letter's writing about a decade too early, at the apex of Tukulti-Ninurta's victories. Both the eponym date and the letter's needy formulation speak for a low point in his reign, after the loss of Babylon.

<sup>46</sup> There are several Hittite fragments constituting drafts or copies of letters probably sent by Suppiluliuma II to Aššur (Mora & Giorgieri 2004: nos. 21-24), but their state of preservation does not allow one to establish a connection with the contents of KBo 28. 61-64.

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