

21) Arsacid Naval Attack on Mesene? New Reading of a Passage in the Astronomical Diary -132D₁ – The purpose of this note is to propose a new reading for a passage in the Astronomical Diary of Month XII, 133/2 BC (-132D₁ ‘Rev.’ 30). Hunger and Del Monte transliterate the passage as follows¹.

ITU BI g^{iš}MÁ^{meš} šá TU^{meš2} ana KARAŠ LUGAL ʾx x (x)¹ [...]

We would like to propose the following reading, based on the photograph (AD 3, Pl. 222) and the copy (Pl. 223) of the tablet.

ITU BI g^{iš}MÁ^{meš} šá KU₄^{meš} ana KARAŠ LUGAL EN kurA^[meš-šá-an ...]

That month, the ships, which had entered the king’s camp³, as far as Me[sene⁴ ...] This passage probably shows the maneuver of the ships under Arsacid order for Mesene. In this year, Month VII, Aspasinē, the ruler of Mesene, had attacked a port on the Tigris (-132B Rev. 18-20). The Arsacid naval maneuver in Month XII was probably a counterattack on Mesene.

¹ A. J. Sachs & H. Hunger (eds.), *Astronomical Diaries and Related Texts from Babylonia*, Vol. 3, *Diaries from 164 B.C. to 61 B.C.*, Vienna, 1996 (= AD 3), 234; G. F. Del Monte, *Testi dalla Babilonia Ellenistica*, Vol. 1: *Testi Cronografici*, Pisa / Rome, 1997, 129.

² Hunger (AD 3, 235) does not interpret the sign TU (*walādu*, to give birth / to produce). “Ships which were produced” is possible, but the verb *walādu* is usually described by the signs Û-TU (AHw 1457a; cf. -324B Rev.’ 6-7; -322D Obv. 4; -133B ‘Obv. 26’; -125A ‘Rev.’ 7’; -124B ‘Rev.’ 14’; -123A Rev.’ 8; -122A ‘Obv.’ 7’; -77A ‘Obv. 30’-31’). Del Monte suggests that the sign is an abbreviation for TU-RA (*maršu*, sick) and he interprets g^{iš}MÁ^{meš} šá TU^{meš} as “navi (che trasportano) malati” (Del Monte, *op. cit.* [n. 1], 129), but there is no determinative sign for the persons.

³ This unusual syntax is due to Aramaic influence (von Soden, GAG §130c). For similar examples in the Diaries, see: -141C ‘Obv.’ 11’; -126B ‘Rev.’ 2’; -124A ‘Rev.’ 19’; -107C ‘Rev. 16’.

⁴ We propose the restoration: kurA^[meš-šá-an] (**Mēšān*) from the expressions “a canal of Mesene: ÍD A^{meš-šá-an} (-125A Obv.’ 15)” and “... of Mesene: A^{meš-šá-nu-ú} (-132B Rev. 19 *et passim*).” About the toponym “Mesene,” see: Del Monte, *op. cit.* (n. 1), 117.

The “King’s camp (*karāš šarri*)” was probably placed on the shore of some canal or river leading to Mesene. From this passage, we can understand the camp’s role as an Arsacid naval base. Other descriptions about the “King’s camp” in the Diaries (-129A₁ ‘Obv.’ 6’-10’; -129A₂ ‘Obv.’ 16’-18’; -124B ‘Obv.’ 4’; -96A ‘Flake’ 12’-13’), however, do not show such a role. Nor is the word *karāšu* used in those passages, *madaktu* being used instead. *Madakti šarri* had a different role from that of *karāš šarri*. The former was probably the Arsacid kings’ residence during their tours of Babylonia⁵. According to another passage in the Diaries, *madaktu* accommodated cavalry (-126B ‘Rev.’ 4’).

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⁵ I am indebted to Prof. Seiro Haruta (Tokai University, Hiratsuka, Japan) for a personal communication in which he suggested to me that *madakti šarri* had this role; Yasuyuki Mitsuma, “Provincial Governor in Seleucid and Aršakid Babylonia,” *Bulletin of the Society for Near Eastern Studies in Japan* 47-2 (2004) (In Press, in Japanese with English summary).