

26) Diplomats and Renegades in the Neo-Babylonian Empire¹⁾ — Apart of a small number of years that are covered by the Babylonian Chronicles, the history of the Neo Babylonian Empire remains largely unknown. Scholars try to reconstruct it on the basis of bits of information such as Menander’s attestation of the 13 years siege that Nebuchadnezzar placed on the city of Tyre (Jos. *Contra Apionem* 1.21), and the Biblical descriptions of the long siege on Jerusalem and its aftermath. The four texts partially published by Weidner (WEIDNER 1939) that record oil rations distributed to beneficiaries in Babylon furnish additional information on the History of the Neo Babylonian Empire. Among these beneficiaries, that received oil, there were foreign diplomats from one subjected kingdom and two friendly states as well as renegades from two hostile kingdoms. The presence of these dignitaries in the city of Babylon, at the time of the writing of these documents (between Nebuchadnezzar years 11 and 13)²⁾ shade light on the Geo-political situation of the Neo Babylonian Empire during that time.

The renegades and diplomats in the texts published by Weidner are summarized in the following table:

Name	Position and country of origin	
¹an-ši-ia	LÚ par-su-maš-a-a	Persian
¹ba-gi-in-du-u	KUR par-su-maš-a-a	(From) the land of Persia
[¹]ba-gi-in-du-ú	KI.MIN (A rev. 17)	Ambassador of the land of Persia
[]-di-bi-ia-³	LÚ EDIN-u šá KUR par-su-maš-[a-a]	Ambassador of the land of Persia
¹pa-ta-am u (and) ¹ku-un-zu-um-pi-[ia]	Broken	

¹ ku-un-zu-um-pi-[ia]	LÚ.EDIN-u šá ^{KUR} ia- man-na-a	Ambassador of the land of Greece
¹ lab-bu-nu	LÚ[]	
¹ lab-bu-nu	LÚ EDIN-ú šá ^{KUR} ia- man-na-a-a	Ambassador of the land of Greece
¹ kur-ban-ni	LÚma-da-a-a ma-ak-tu	Median renegade
¹ kur-ban-ni	LÚma-ak-tu šá ^{KUR} ma- da-a-a	Renegade from the land of Media
¹ mar-ma- ^o	Broken	
¹ mar-ma- ^o	LÚlu-da-a-a	Lydian
¹ mar-ma- ^o	LÚlu-da-a-a	Lydian
¹ ur-kul-lu u (and) ¹ ta-li-sa-am-mu	KI.MIN (B obv. col. I, 22)	Lydians
¹ ur-ku-lu	LÚlu-da-a-a LÚma-ak-tu	Lydian renegade
¹ za-bi-ri-ia	LÚlu-d[a-a- a]	Lydian
8 people	LÚia-ú-d[a- a-a]	Judeans
8 people	LÚia-a-ḥu- da-a-a	Judeans
6+ people	LÚia-da-a-a gi-ri-šú-nu	Judeans. (For) their journey

Ambassadors from friendly countries: These people are described as LÚ.EDIN-ú. We suggest LÚ.EDIN-ú = LÚ šēru (PEDERSEN 2005B, 270) which we translate “Ambassador.”³⁾ The “Greek” Ambassador (?) may have been from Mytilene. Mytilene is known to have sent warriors to serve in the army of the Neo-Babylonian Empire in its early years.⁴⁾

Emissaries from a vassal kingdom. Eight Judeans are listed twice (Text A Obv. 26, Text B Obv. 40). The same group is listed in Text A rev. 28: 6+? LÚ ia-<ú>-da-a-a gi-ri-šú-nu 3 SILÀ “6+? Judeans.”⁵⁾ Three liters (oil) for their journey.

The journey that is alluded to in this text may have been a journey of Judean diplomats back to Judah after they have completed their assignment in Babylon. Such diplomatic groups of emissaries are known to have been sent by Zedekiah king of Judah to Nebuchadnezzar, his overlord (Jer 29:1-3, Jer 51:59).

¹ We are indebted to Prof. Ran Zadok for his help.

² PEDERSEN 2005, II7.

³ Following BORGER 2004, 311: “Bote.” (Reference: Zadok) and PEDERSEN (2005B, 270) “messengers.” For LÚ šēru and its Hebrew cognate צִירָ (Isa. 13:2; eccl. 35, 13), see further PAUL 2005, 760-1 with earlier bibliography.

⁴ Alcaeus fr. 350 (Quoted in Strabo XIII 617), is a fragment of a poem written by Alcaeus in honor of his brother Antimenidas who served as an ally of the Babylonians. According to this poem Antimenidas took part in the Babylonian campaign against Ashkelon in the early years of Nebochadnezzar's reign. However, the similarities between the descriptions of Antimenidas' foe from Ashkelon and Goliath (1Sam 17:4) put the historicity of this Alcaeus' poem in doubt.

⁵ WEIDNER (1939, plate 2) considered the sign *ia* as a mistake. His reading is generally accepted. However a more probable possibility is the sign *ú* was left out and that both lines refer to the same group of people.

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Oded TAMMUZ <oded.tammuz@gmail.com>, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

Baruch ROSEN <rosenbar@netvision.net.il>