

NABU 1989-66 Paul-Alain Beaulieu

Agade in the Late Babylonian Period – In a recent issue of this journal J.-M. Durand and F. Joannès published a cuneiform text from Agade dated to the reign of Darius I and offered a few comments on that city in the first millennium, discussing its location and administrative status (Durand and Joannès 1988). I would like to add a few remarks of historical interest.

1) *Hellenistic Agade* : I recently came across an unpublished text in the Yale Babylonian Collection, NBC 11545, which mentions a group of ¹⁶a-ga-dè^{ki}.MEŠ in a broken context, perhaps as recipients of a commodity. The text has close affinities with the Hellenistic documents from Babylon published by D. Kennedy in *CT* 49. The date is Nisanu, day 12, year 8 of Seleucus (I), the first year documents were dated according to his reign (304 B.C.). So far the most recent mention of Agade was in a document from the 29th year of Darius I (*CT* 4, 41b), after which the city was generally supposed to have disappeared. The archaeological evidence shows that the lower Diyala region, where the location of Agade is probably to be sought (McEwan 1982 : 11-12), underwent a steady increase in its population and number of settlements throughout the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid periods, culminating in a full-scale wave of urbanization in the Seleuco-Parthian period (Adams 1965 : 58-68). In Hellenistic times the royal road from Bactria to Babylonia passed through the region, a factor which motivated the foundation of new capitals, Seleucia and Ctesiphon, near the confluent of the Tigris and the Diyala. One may presume that Agade benefited from these circumstances and continued to flourish as a provincial center, possibly as late as the Parthian period.

2) *Cyrus the Great and Agade* : Cuneiform documents written in Agade are rare. The following text published by H. Stigers has some interesting historical implications (Stigers 1976 no. 6) :

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| o. 1. | ¹⁶ DUMU-DÙ.MEŠ šá ina UKKIN ina
IGI I ¹ KI-LUGAL-IGI-ia |
| 2. | ¹⁶ qí-pí É.UL.MAŠ ù I ¹ MU- ^d NÀ
¹⁶ UNUG ^{ki} |
| 3. | iq-bu-ú um-ma a-natar-ši I ^d NÀ-
NÌ.GUB-URÌ |

4. u₄-mu 1 SILÀ^{giš}GEŠTIN a-na
5. dA-É šá^{um}Èš-nun-na^{ki} ul i-iq-ru-ub
6. IdU.GUR-SÙH-SUR A-šú šá IRI-mut
7. A^{is}SANGA A-ga-dè^{ki}
8. IdNÀ-MU-lil-bir A-šú šá IdNÀ-DU-A
9. A^{is}SANGA A-kàd^{ki}
r. 10. IA-MU rA-šú šá^{l^{is}}NÀ-ú-šur-ZI A I LÚ-
ÌR-dKÙ
11. IdNÀ-MU A-šú šá ILa-ba-a-ši A
^{is}SANGA A-kàd^{ki}
12. IRI-mut-dKÁ A-šú šá I r x x¹ A IKI-ía
13. IBA-šá-A A-šú šá IÉ.SAG.Í[L]-
r x x¹.MEŠ
14. IdA-É-A-URÌ A-šú šá IdA-É-BA-šá
15. ^{is}UMBISAG IdNÀ-KAR-ZI.MEŠ A-šú
šá IDÙ-a
16. A^{is}SANGA A-kàd^{ki} A-kàd^{ki} ^{is}ŠE
17. U₄-15-KÁM MU-4-KÁM IKur-raš
LUGAL E^{ki}
18. u KUR.KUR

(These are) the citizens who declared in the assembly, in the presence of Itti-šarri-iniya, the trustee of the Eulmaš, and Iddin-Nabû, an Urukæean, thus : « At the time of Nebuchadnezzar, was it not one litre of wine each day that was offered to the god Mār bīti of Ešnunna? » Nergal-tēši-ēṭir, son of Rīmūt, descendent of the priest of Agade ; Nabû-šum-lilbir, son of Nabû-mukīn-apli, descendent of the priest of Agade ; Apla-iddin, son of Nabû-ušur-napišti, descendent of Awēl-Arad-AN.KÙ ; Nabû-iddin, son of Lābāši, descendent of the priest of Agade ; Rīmut-Ba`u, son of r x x¹, descendent of Ittiya ; Iqīša-apli, son of Esagil-r x x¹ ; Mār-bīti-apla-ušur, son of Mār-bīti-iqīša. The scribe : Nabû-ēṭir-napšāti, son of Ibnā, descendent of the priest of Agade. Agade, month Addaru, fifteenth day, fourth year of Cyrus, king of Babylon and all the countries.

This document tells us that the authorities of the Eulmaš of Agade made an inquiry in the fourth year of Cyrus in order to determine the amount of

offerings given to the god Mār bīti of Ešnunna at the time of Nebuchadnezzar, presumably Nebuchadnezzar II. Is it possible to assess the historical background of the text? A similar inquiry which took place in the Eanna of Uruk in the first year of Nabonidus is documented by two texts which I have discussed elsewhere (Beaulieu 1989 : 118-24). This inquiry was ordered by the king, whose purpose was to reestablish the offering system of the Eanna as it had been during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II. Nabonidus was thus trying to acquire an aura of legitimacy, linking himself to the most prestigious sovereign of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty. Text Stigers 6 suggests that Cyrus, emulating his old rival, concocted the same kind of propaganda for his new Babylonian subjects. Of course, the text does not specify that the authorities of the Eulmaš were acting upon imperial orders, but Cyrus himself does refer to his cultic reforms at Agade in his building inscription from Babylon, the « Cyrus Cylinder » (1.30-34) :

From [Ninev]eh, Aššur, and Susa, Agade, Ešnunna, Zamban, Mēturnu (and) Dēr, until the border of Gutium, the cult cent[ers acr]oss the Tigris, whose (divine) dwellings had lain in ruins for a long time, I returned to their places the gods who dwelt in them and established (for them) an everlasting dwelling. I gathered all their inhabitants and returned (them) to their habitations.

It seems reasonable to correlate this passage of the Cylinder with text Stigers 6. Cyrus' purpose in singling out these cities has never been elucidated. Cameron compared a passage from Herodotus reporting that the Persian ruler spent several months in the Diyala region before his march to Babylon, reorganizing its irrigation network (Cameron 1974). Yet, in his discussion of the passage, Adams points out that « no dense grouping of new Achaemenid sites, such as might have been expected if substantial irrigation projects had been completed, was found in the survey of the lower Diyala basin. » He also stresses the fact that no evidence of an Achaemenid occupation was found at Ešnunna (Tell Asmar), suggesting that Cyrus may have built only a small shrine on an abandoned mound (Adams 1965 : 59). The purpose of the Cyrus Cylinder was probably to reassert Persian claims on an area with historical and strategic importance. The region described constituted the border zone between the Medes and the Babylonians, and it might have been included in the Median sphere of influence after the fall of Assyria and subsequently reclaimed by Nebuchadnezzar II when the Babylonians fell out with their former ally. The Achaemenid royal highway from Susa to

Sardis passed through that region, if not through several of the cities mentioned in the cylinder. The mention of Nineveh, Aššur, and Agade also suggests that Cyrus intended to pose as legitimate heir to the great empires of Akkad and Assyria, thus counteracting similar propaganda by Nabonidus. The last Neo-Babylonian monarch often emphasized his claim to the Assyrian heritage and also paid special attention to the city Agade and the Sargonic dynasty (Beaulieu 1989 : 141-43). So, the list of cities in the cylinder would largely be a « programmatic » statement, with text Stigers 6 showing that Cyrus reinforced his verbal claims with deeds. Yet, the Eulmaš of Agade was not an abandoned shrine, as the cylinder says : it had been rebuilt and reorganized by Nabonidus a few years before (*VAB* IV Nbn. 4, II, 29 ff.). Nebuchadnezzar II also claims in the Wadi Brissa and Nahr el-Kelb inscriptions that he reestablished the cult of Ištar of Agade, but, since the context is broken, the reference could be to the temple of Ištar of Agade in Babylon (McEwan 1982 : 9). Nevertheless, Nabonidus does refer to Nebuchadnezzar II as one of the kings who had rebuilt the Eulmaš before him. Cyrus' orders apparently aimed at reinstating the offerings of Nebuchadnezzar, ignoring the changes made by Nabonidus. There are other instances where Cyrus tried to present himself in the garb of a native Babylonian ruler, taking care of sanctuaries and increasing offerings to the gods :

1. Cyrus Cylinder : this inscription, inspired by local Neo-Assyrian models, commemorates the repair of the fortifications of Babylon. It refers to Aššurbanipal, ignores Nabonidus' building works on the defensive wall of the capital, and mentions that Cyrus ordered an increase in cultic offerings, probably for the Esagil (Kuhrt 1983 : 86).

2. *UET* I 194 : an inscribed brick of Cyrus from the sacred enclosure at Ur, found in several copies in the hinge-box of the « Cyrus Gate » (Woolley 1923 : 315). The gate had been previously restored by Nabonidus.

3. *UET* I 307 : half of a foundation cylinder found in the debris southeast of the ziggurat at Ur (*UET* I p. 96). The name of the ruler is not preserved, but the inscription can safely be ascribed to Cyrus on the basis of close parallels with the Cyrus Cylinder and *UET* I 194. The ziggurat of Ur was restored by Nabonidus in the last years of his reign.

4. Two inscribed bricks of Cyrus were found at Uruk, one with unrecorded findspot (*VAB* III p. xi Kyros b, and pp. 8-9), the other found in the structure of the Eanna (*UVB* I no. 31). They contain the same titulary with minor variants.

Weisberg has suggested that the work carried out at Uruk was the reason for the drafting of the « Craftsmen's Charter » of the Eanna which he published as YNER I : 1 (Weisberg 1967 : 47). The Charter is dated to the fourth year of Cyrus, and so is text Stigers 6. In the same year the satrapy of « Babylon and Transeuphratene » was created with Gubaru as the first incumbent (San Nicolo 1941 : 54-56). Are these facts indicative of a change of policy at the Persian court in that year ? In any event, Cyrus' policy of ingratiation was not carried on by his successors. Active patronage of Babylonian temples by the court resumed, though on a very limited scale, only in the Seleucid period. Other Achaemenid rulers have left no building inscriptions in the Babylonian style, and occasionally they even pursued hostile policies towards native shrines.

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