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Fratama

Fratama is repeatedly used in DB (along with *anušiya*) to refer to the supporters of Gaumata and the Lie-Kings, but has also been identified as a title in an Elamite form (*pirratama*) in four bureaucratic texts from Persepolis (PT 36, 44, 44a, PT 1957-2, as re-interpreted by Eilers 1955).

In DB the natural translation of the relevant phrase is “his principal supporters” (*fratama* being in fact cognate with Greek *protos*¹) and there is no cogent reason to treat the word as a title.² Certainly the fact that DB Akkad. replaces the whole phrase by *mar bane*, “citizens/free men”, is a weak argument. Immediately beforehand the Akkadian composer uses the same term in reference to Darius’ co-conspirators, where OP

¹ In Elamite we also have *pirratammiyaš* = of finest quality: PF 1978: 9f (mule, cow); NN 2355: 12 (of a female slave); NN 477: 8f (of a cow); NN 704: 1 (of a horse).

² *Pace* e.g. Gnoli 1981: 279.



and Elamite have just “with a few men”, and *mar bane* is the Akkadian response in other contexts in DB and elsewhere containing no more than rather general ideas of superiority.³ In DB Elam. the supporters of Gaumata and the Lie-Kings are described as *hatarrimanu dami-hupap-e*. The Elamite dictionary suggests that this means “principal adherents” (see *ElW* 277, 646, 698), whereas Grillot-Susini *et al.* 1993: 44 n.119 propose “les hommes en condition d’alliance qui l’avaient fidèlement suivi”. The conflicting etymological speculations involved are beyond my competence to judge independently (it is disconcerting to the philological outsider that the root *hupa* is variously seen as “precede” and “follow”); but neither version suggests that the Elamite composer thought he was dealing with a title.

The bureaucratic texts present a trickier problem. In each case the word immediately precedes a personal name, on three occasions the author of a letter (Bakadadda = Megadates), and on the fourth an individual, Mirampa (OP **viramfa-*), who is apportioner for a worker-group. Eilers 1955: 225-236 suggests it labels a member of the class known in Sassanian times as *azatan* (“noble”).

But questions arise. PT 36, 44, 44a are the only letters from Persepolis in which a named writer has any sort of title. The letter formula is: “To PN₁ speak, PN₂ says”, and PN₂ never has a

³ Cf. DB 3 [OP *amata*], DNb/XPl 2a [OP *tunuva*].



title. The only half-exception is PF 1860, where the anonymous writer is described as the *ansara*-official (this is, effectively, an exception that proves the rule).⁴ Apportioners, by contrast, can have titles, but one expects them to come after the name - which is, indeed, a problem for Eilers's reading of the letter texts as well.⁵

Why do only Bakadda and Mirampa among all the individuals in the Persepolis archives get this description? Eilers's suggestion that the title depended on a special grant by the King sorts ill with the alleged analogy with *azata* and does not address the problem. *Prima facie* either

1 *fratama* represents an extremely rare honour (so rare that even the likes of Parnaka do not have it) - which hardly coheres with DB's application of it to Darius' enemies, or

4 For the reverse phenomenon cf. Pfa 27, where the recipients are an anonymous group of accountants. There are some 36 texts in which a named recipient has a functional title and another 15 or so in which some other sort of description or qualification is attached to a named recipient.

5 Wouter Henkelman suggests that in PT 36, 44, 44a *pirratamma* might be meant to qualify the recipient (Vahush), but even if the placing of *turuš* (= "speak") between the name and its putative descriptive adjective/title were tolerable (and I have found no example in the 61 texts where the possibility might arise), this would not account for PT 1957-2 (though see below, ad 5).



- 2** *fratama* designates an extremely commonplace status (hence almost never mentioned in Persepolis texts), or
- 3** the inclusion of a non-functional status title in these texts is so arbitrary (no other such titles have been identified in the Persepolis archive, and comparable things are extremely rare in other documentary contexts⁶) that nothing can properly be inferred at all.

None of the above is an attractive possibility. Two others may be mentioned:

- 6** *Mar biti* and *br byt'* are only used intermittently. Aršam and other persons are *mr'* in various Aramaic documents: hardly a distinctive title or quasi-title, and certainly not confined to Iranians. I suppose the much-debated *saris* in Egyptian documents (and *srs* in Bowman 269?) might come into the equation. I don't know what to make of the King's *kppš* Ptah-hotep in Posener 1986: 91-6 (Louvre SIM 1244). (Nothing comparable appears in Brooklyn 37.353, for which see Jansen-Winkel 1999). The title *parastamu ša mat Parsu*, where *parastamu* corresponds to OP **frastavan* = "foreman" (Eilers 1940: 15 n.6; Zadok 1977: 98), appears in several Babylonian documents (cf. Dandamaev 1992: 114 [Piridatu: 426 BC], 118 [Rušunpatu: 458 BC], 145 [no.349: 458 BC]; Stolper 1994: 623 [VAT 15610: 7 (name lost) & r.3f (Huršenu, Mazdaisna): no date given]), and Stolper 1994: 623 wonders whether it is part of court-protocol, parallel to Herodotus' talk of *protoi ton Person* (3.68, 70, 77, etc.). But the Herodotean phrase ought not to be assigned quasi-titular status (cf. n.11).



4 Perhaps *pirratama* is actually the PN Fratama (attested in Akkadian form, Partammu, in Dar. 379, 410). That gives us two authors in PT 36, 44, 44a and two worker-group apportioners in PT 1957-2, both of which are possible circumstances.⁷ The only problem is that “and” would be missing between the two author-names in the letters. (By contrast it is present in PT 1957-2 but Cameron, influenced by Eilers, decided it had been partially erased by the scribe. Hallock presumably discounted this, since he thought the word could be a PN in PT 1957-2,⁸ and was surely right to do so.) Omission of “and” is, as Eilers conceded, not impossible.

5 In PT 36, 44, 44a *pirratamma* simply means “first” and it pertains to the addressee, not the addressor: the translation is “to Vahush speak, as the first one, PN₂ speaks thus...”, and the meaning that Vahush will receive the letter-order first and then pass it on. No such explanation works for PT 1957-2 but, as we have just seen, in that text *pirratamma* should on the face of it be interpreted as a PN. This would mean that the same word is explained in two different ways in PT 36, 44, 44a, and in PT 1957-2, but that is not impossible (one should keep in mind that Greek *protos* can be both a name and an ordinary

⁷ Letters with more than one writer exist, and *na-an* KI+MIN is possible for “spoke” in such a circumstance. Double “apportioners” appear in PF 559, NN 1422 (*šaramap*), NN 1762 (*šarama*; *ak* missing!), NN 1712 (*šarama*), NN 1479, NN 1872, NN 2165 (*šaramana*), NN 0161 (*šaramanna*).

⁸ Cf. Hallock 1969: 745.



adjective), and the hypothesis involved is arguably no less neat than the supposition that “and” has been omitted between pairs of PNs in PT 36, 44, 44a.

6 We *should*, after all, see *pirratamma* as a title, but not the designation of an honorific or “noble” status. Rather, it might mean something like “director”, a banal function-title that does not happen to appear often in the surviving Persepolis archives, perhaps because it only came into use at a relatively late date. The problem that the word either appears before the PN it qualifies or after it but separated by *turuš* would, of course, remain.

7 In a similar way one could also (finally) speculate that what had been an ordinary adjective at the time of DB and the Fortification Archive had become an honorific court-title by the 460s BC.⁹ That would reduce one’s surprise at its rare appearance, though it would not entirely eliminate it (PTT is quite a large corpus, after all). The problem of the word’s position in relation to the PN it qualifies would, however, still apply.¹⁰ In favour of this one *could*, I suppose, cite the claim sometimes advanced that the existence of the title at some date is indirectly detectable in Hebrew *partamim* (*Esther* 1.3, 6.9, *Daniel* 1.3). On the other hand, even if *partamim* reflects

⁹ The Bakaddada texts relate to months 9 and 11-12 of year 19 (467/6), PT 1957-2 to month 2 of year 20 (466/5).

¹⁰ Note that *duksšš* (royal woman) is always placed after the relevant PN.



fratama, it is no more a guarantee that *fratama* was a formal title than are references in Herodotus and other authors to *protoi* among the Persians.¹¹

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¹¹ Hdt. 1.206, 3.35, 68, 70, 77, 8.119, Arr.*An.*3.23.7, Plut. *Artax.* 25, ps.-Arist. *de mund.*398a. – This avowedly aporetic note arose as a *parergon* to Tuplin f/c. I am very grateful to Wouter Henkelman for elevating it from the status of an e-mailed plea for help to a contribution to ARTA, and for his contributions to its argument, for the final state of which he bears, of course, no guilty responsibility.



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