

109) Yasmah-Addu's letter to God (ARMI : 3) — We are indebted to D. Charpin and J.-M. Durand for providing us with new readings and restorations for Yasmah-Addu's famous plea to a god, MARI 4, 339-342; 293-299. They have good cause to alert us to how unskillfully written is the document; nevertheless, it may not be necessary to conclude that the scribe was composing as he went along (p. 339). In fact, damaged as it is, his text is pretty carefully laid out and seems sophisticated in its approach to historiography.⁽¹⁾

Yasmah-Addu opens his letter with an acknowledgment of the power of the god⁽²⁾, and follows it with an observation that from time immemorial, «No one has survived who ever sinned (*ugallilu*, preterit) against God.»⁽³⁾ From this, he derives a moral, «Each one must (therefore) uphold (*ukâl*, durative) the precept of that very God»⁽⁴⁾. It is at this stage that Yasmah-Addu turns to history in order to recount the sordid activities of Yaggid-Lim and his descendants (lines 8 to l. 22').

The historical information within the letter is given as third person narratives and is apportioned into integral segments which are separated by second person addresses to God. The first historical segment (8-14a) involves two ancestors, Ila-kabkabû and Yaggid-Lim, who pledge peace between themselves. As if to underscore his strong attachment to oaths and covenants, in this section it is Ila-kabkabû who is mentioned first, as the innocent party; Yaggid-Lim's nefarious act is mentioned next and is used as transition to the god's irritation with the Lim dynasty and as introduction to his decision to affect the course of history.

The phrase *telqema tašâlšu* [*u ana*] *idi Ila-kabkabû tallik* (14b-15) has three verbs, the first two of which are connected by means of the particle *-ma*. Charpin and Durand render these two verbs hendiatically, «tu entrepris de le mettre à l'épreuve ... », but I prefer to take them sequentially, «When you found out, you investigated him»⁽⁵⁾. These two activities lead to a third, which bears stronger consequence to the human drama unfolding on earth: God decides to fight on Ila-kabkabû's side.

The second historical narrative (16-9') considers the generation that follows. It begins by returning Ila-kabkabû to the foreground, but it also introduces Yahdun-Lim, albeit as a captive rather than as an active combatant. The introduction of Yaggid-Lim's son soon is followed by Samsi-Addu's own debut. Something other than Charpin and Durand's proposed restoration of *inûma* may be involved here, however; perhaps *ištu*. At this point, we begin to lose the thread of events, but it may well be that the tablet's reverse side would have taught us more about Yahdun-Lim's own impious acts. The editor's restorations here are extremely tentative. We first observe that the restored form of *ugallilu* of line 2' is spelled with *û*, which is found in the preserved sections of the documents only in l. 6 and 15', whereas in all its other occurrences is consistently spelled with *ù*.⁽⁶⁾ This is a useful indication that the phrase *ša AN ukallu* is probably replaying line 6's *ša An-ma ukâl* (with durative verbs in both cases!). I therefore tentatively suggest that somewhere in the break which begins at line 22 and through 3' we may have another focus on divine activity. Although I have nothing concrete to offer, I strongly doubt that a female personal name is to be found in 3'.

The narrative shifts to the Lim dynasty's troubled family history and reflects upon Sumu-Yamam's unexpected grab for power: «... [his son,] Sumu-Yamam removed him from Mari.»⁽⁷⁾ The information of line 4' and 6' makes Sumu-Yamam a son of Yahdun-Lim: «Much like his own father Yahdun-Lim, Sumu-Yamam launched repeated activities, doing unacceptable things by himself.»⁽⁸⁾ Yet this relationship is not evident from sources dated to Zimri-Lim's reign; there, Yahdun-Lim's loss to Samsi-Addu is regarded as direct and immediate (see Charpin and Durand, pp. 296-8) and it may have been merely convenient for Yasmah-Addu's chancellery to secure him within the rival dynasty.⁽⁹⁾ At any rate, the crimes with which Sumu-Yamam is charged are not those of breaking covenants made by men, but those in which sacred precincts are destroyed and replaced by secular, if not frivolous, constructions (1.9'). But in stating them as offenses against deities, Yasmah-Addu can now turn to address his god for the second time.

It is important to note that the verbs in the discourse which occupies lines 10'-16' are the same as those found in l.14-15, but are given in reverse order. This retrograde progression neatly rehearses the circumstances which forced the god's initial interference in Mari's history; but it also hides the fact that Sumu-Yamam's crime, sordid at it may be, was directed neither against Ila-kabkabû nor, as yet, against his son Samsi-Addu. Since it does not seem necessary for the god to avenge a covenantal infraction by marching on the side of the righteous (*ana idi PN alākum*), all we are told is that, «You went and investigated him» (*tallikma tašâlšu*); but the parricide had already met a violent death, «However, his very own servants killed him.»

Upon learning of the events (*telqema*), God chose to hand over the region to Samsi-Addu (12'-13'). It is only at this stage, almost as an afterthought and probably also as a conclusion, that Yasmah-Addu charges Sumu-Yamam with crime against his own father: «You [God] found out and turned the banks of the entire Euphrates over to Samsi-Addu. Because of the trespass Sumu-Yamam committed against Samsi-Addu, therefore, you turned over to him [Mari] and the banks of the [entire] Euphrates.»

The historical narrative resumes and tells us how Yasmah-Addu acquired the gift God bestowed to Samsi-Addu (17'b-21'-22'). The transition between 2nd-person to third-person discourse is affected through *ilteqēni*, which shares the same verbal root used in l. 12', but this time with Samsi-Addu as the actor. The verbal form which speaks to Yasmah-Addu's installation on the throne, however, is still difficult to assess.⁽¹⁰⁾

Somewhere around l. 22'-23', Yasmah-Addu abandons recalling the past in order to offer his appeal to the god. In this way, he neatly returns to the tone with which he began his letter. Although we cannot easily fill in the gaps and the breaks, it is still possible to get the drift of his argument as preserved in lines 24'-26': Where previous kings have asked God to give them land, all Yasmah-Addu wants is health for himself and an heir to follow him on Mari's throne. What the god should not be coveting (or looking for [l. 27']: *inika la tanašši*) is lost to us in the fragmented ending.

I propose therefore, the following segmentation of the document:

<i>Address</i>		1-4
<i>Deity I</i>	Observation and moral precept	5-7
<i>History I</i>	Ila-kabkabū vs Yaggid-Lim	8-14a
<i>Deity II</i>	God on Ila-kabkabū's side	14b-15
<i>History II</i>	Yahdun-Lim vs Samsi-Addu	16-22+
<i>Deity III (?)</i>	Moral precept and observation (??)	x+1'-3'
<i>History III</i>	Yahdun-Lim vs Sumu-Yamam	4'-5'
	Sumu-Yamam offends God	6'-9'
<i>Deity IV</i>	God punish Sumu-Yamam	10'-13'
<i>History IV</i>	God and Samsi-Addu	14'-17'a
	Samsi-Addu and Yasmah-Addu	17'b-19'?
<i>Apologia and Request</i>		20'ff.

As to when to date this text during Yasmah-Addu's reign, we can only guess. It is easy to think that it comes at a moment when the king was psychologically in need of divine help, and we can suggest his last days as possibility. The whole passage recalling how Samsi-Addu entrusted Mari to his son reads as if it is ancient history. However, Yasmah-Addu has left a trail of letters with lachrymose sentiments and they seem to have come from many moments during his reign. Anbar's suggestion that I: 3 comes from early in Yasmah-Addu's rule because he is asking for an heir (*IOS* 3 [1973], 17) would be valid if we know as much about Yasmah-Addu's children as we do about Zimri-Lim's.⁽¹¹⁾ Honesty requires us to hold judgment on this last score.

(1) Numbering of lines follows the new edition of the text.

(2) Traces in Charpin's copy favor the name of Nergal (see p. 293 n. 4). We may expect, however, that Itur-Mer is given credit for handing power to Samsi-Addu and his family, Charpin, *MARI* 3 (1984), 42 ff.

ša kēm iqbēm is not plausible, particularly since nowhere in the text do we have the god saying anything. For such a formula not be followed by *umma* or the like would indeed be remarkable. My best guess is that we have, *ana DN palhim šaqīm*, *EN* x x.

(3) When he wants to speak of his own youthful period Yasmah-Addu elsewhere uses *ištu šehreku* (I: 108, 17) or *inūma šehreku* (I: 113+, 34; Durand, *MARI* 5: 172).

(4) This understanding of the passage is close to that of D. & C. at p. 293, but not quite at 340.

(5) On the phraseology, see *Miscellanea Babylonica* (Mélanges Birot), 1985, 242-243.

(6) The *u-* that is to be found in l.15' [copy: l. 16'] is damaged, although the traces do favor *ú*.

(7) In OB, the verb *dekūm* does not normally speak of the removal of human beings, but rather of awakening or summoning them. Here, however, there may be an aural pun with *idūkūšu* of l. 10', meant to highlight the wages brought by the Sumu-Yamam's sin against his «father».

(8) cf. XIII: 143, 14-15, and 144, 30-32; both of which have been discussed by Kraus, *Oberhuber F.*, 1986, 128. *raṣābum* here controls a Gtn form, on which see Kraus, *ibid.*, 127; here it may suggest that Sumu-Yamam's acts were wildly aimed (if one accepts a «distributive» meaning for the form; discussion in Kraus, 140 n. 8) as well as regularly or repeatedly done.

(9) See also A.2636, another letter Samsi-Addu sent to his son, which recalls the Sumu-Yamam period; cited by Dossin in *RA* 64 (1970), 20.

(10) On the form *iškunanna* (lines 18'-19'), Von Soden's and Gelb's opinions (*GAG* 83c; *MAD* II/2, 170-171) may well be relevant to the second mention of the form, but not as readily to the first. Finet, *ALM*, 33 (§ 17g) suggests that it be a peculiar nasalization of *-ma*. It is still troubling.

(11) However, Anbar cannot be correct in assigning him grandchildren on the basis of I: 108, 3' since, broken as it is, this passage betray wishful thinking about the future; see now Durand's restorations in *MARI* 5, 177.

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