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„Tigranu, the Crown Prince of Armenia“: Evidence from the Babylonian Astronomical Diaries***

The texts

Unusually, Babylonian astronomical diaries for the year 216 of the Seleucid Era (= 95 BC) pay special attention to some events concerning the country of *ar-mi-ni-i* (Armenia) and the Armenian ‚crown prince‘ *ti-ig-ra-nu* (arm. Տիգրան, gr. Τυγράνης). Although valuable, this evidence has been neglected by Armenologists and ancient historians.¹

The text established by Abraham Sachs and Hermann Hunger, although generally correct, may be improved in some points. The ‚Armenian file‘ consists of the following three diaries:

a) AD 3–95C (BM 45712 = Sachs/Hunger [1996] 418)

- 5' [... a]l-te(?) *um-ma* lugal *ša* uru.*ar-mi-ni-i* nam.meš x [m]Ti-ig-ra-nu
6' [lú.dum]u.nita² *pi-qid ana* uru.*ar-mi-ni-i* mu-a-ti³ *ana* lu[gal *ša*]
7' [ina k]ur ur^{ki} tuš-u' *ú-pe-bi-ir ma-diš*⁴ érin.tah.meš-šú it-[ti]

„[...] I heard thus: the king of Armenia died (and) [Tigran
the Crown Prince, entrusted to [protecting?] Armenia for the king ... who]
resided [in] Babylonia. He extensively musters his auxiliary troops with
[.....]“⁵

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¹ The late Gagik X. Sargsyan wrote a short article concerning AD 3–95D (Sarkisjan [1994]), but he dated it to year 230 of the Seleucid era (= 82 BC): therefore, his historical conclusions cannot be taken into account, since he thought the „Crown Prince“ was Tigran the Younger.

² Normally read as *ibila*, but Sachs/Hunger (1996) (followed by Böck [2010] 110) read x UŠ (= *nita*), which is likely to be in context a designation of Tigran's status as Crown Prince, mentioned at the end of this same diary (rev. 12), *al-te-e ša lú.dumu lugal ša ur[u.ar-mi-ni-i]*, „I heard about that the crown prince of [Armenia]“.

³ Böck (2010) 110 reads *mu-a-tim*.

⁴ Sachs/Hunger (1996) (followed by Böck [2010] 110) read *ú-pe-bi-ir-ma ana*, which misses the transitive meaning of the verbal form.

⁵ Böck (2010) 110 (who dates the notices on Tigran to 96 BC and inverts their chronological order) translates: „[...] ich hörte folgendes: Der Herrscher Armeniens war gestorben .../ ...ihm war ... anvertraut. Nach eben diesem Armenien ... wegen der königlichen [Nachfolge?] .../ ...die in Babylonien leben, versammelte er und zu seiner Unterstützung...“.

b) AD 3–95A (BM 46040 = Sachs/Hunger [1996] 416)

- 9' [..... ^mar-šá-ke]a-a lugal lugal.meš ina uru.meš šá ina li-[miš]
 10' [..... mu]-a-ti šá uru.ar-mi-ni-[š]
 11' [..... lú].gal ú-qa-a-nu ina ká.[gal⁶ uru]
 12' [.....].meš dù-u'

„[.....] Aršak, king of kings, [entered] into the cities which were in the frontier [of]

[.....] that [.....] of Armenia,
 [.....] the army general performed [(rituals?)]
 [.....] in the [city] gate“.⁷

c) AD 3–95D (BM 34791 = Sachs/Hunger [1996] 420; see also Böck [2010] 110)

- 10' [... ^uru]se-lu-ke-'a-a šá ana ugu ^{id}idi[gna
 11' [..... ^mli-ig-ra-nu dumu lugal šá uru.ar-mi-ni kaskal ana ^{uru}d[ura?.....

„[.....from] Seleucia which is on the Tigris [.....

[...] Tigran, crown prince of Armenia, marched to Du[ra?“.8

„The king is dead“

The dead king of Armenia is Artawazd I, son of the first king of Greater Armenia, Artasēs (Gr. Ἀρταξίας). As far as we can reconstruct from the scanty evidence, Artawazd was the uncle of Tigran, and the brother of another Armenian king called Tigran.⁹ Various reconstructions of the genealogy of Artasēs's dynasty have been attempted, but Chaumont proposed to delete this Tigran from the genealogy of the Armenian kings.¹⁰ However, the *Liber Memorialis* of Lucius Ampelius (*terminus post quem*: 131/3 AD) mentions the help provided by the Armenian king *Tigranes* for the third Punic war;¹¹ moreover, an Armenian tradition recorded later by the historian Movsēs Xorenac'i mentions a king *Tiran*. Although the name is different, it seems here to recall the same situation: according to Xorenac'i, Artawazd drove away all his brothers from Ayrarat, except for Tiran (Տիրան), whom he designated as his successor, since he had no male children.¹² We can conclude from this that a Tigran may have been the successor of Artasēs.

Before Tigran's reign, we have evidence of a Parthian attack against Armenia. The date of this attack is controversial: as suggested by Schippmann (and, more hesitantly, by Will), the Parthians

⁶ Normally abul.

⁷ Böck (2010) 109 translates: „...[der Arsakide], König der Könige... in den Städten der Umgebung .../ ...eben dieser ...aus Armenien ... [das Ober]haupt über die Truppen ...am Tor/...sie machten die...“.

⁸ For this integration see below, 451.

⁹ Introducing Tigran in his historical narrative, App. Syr. 48, 247, calls him „the king of Armenia Tigranes, the son of Tigranes“ (βασιλεὺς Ἀρμενίας Τυγράνης ὁ Τυγράνου). See Brodersen (1989) 76.

¹⁰ Chaumont (1985–1988) 18f. Assar (2006) 142 claims that „Judging from the cuneiform evidence records, it is clear that the king preceding Tigranes II was his father and not brother“.

¹¹ Ampel(ius) 32.1 (chapter on the kings of Armenia and Cappadocia): *Tigranes, qui iam scriptus est, qui tertio Punico bello populo Romano iuvit sub Manilio consule* [149 bc] *et Scipione Aemiliano*. See also Ampel. 46, 7, referring to the destruction of Carthage by Scipio Aemilianus „together with Tigranes“ (*una cum Tigrane*). For the date and the philological problems of Ampelius see the introduction of Arnaud-Lindet (1993).

¹² Movsēs Xorenac'i, *History of Armenia* 2.61. Sandaljian (1917) 443 calls him „Tiran I“.

subdued Armenia only in 97.¹³ But this contradicts Justinus, who says that the Parthian king Mithradates subdued the Armenian king Artawazd at the end of his reign;¹⁴ moreover, Justinus says that Tigran had been a hostage of the Parthians for a long time.¹⁵ Justinus' account raises some chronological problems, as Mithradates I died in 125/4, and Mithradates II reigned between 124/123 and 88/87 BC. Wolski reconstructs the events as follows: Mithradates II waged two different campaigns against Armenia, and he dates the first campaign between 115 and 105 BC, and the second, against Tigran the Great, about 90 BC.¹⁶

This is confirmed by AD 3–110B, which refers to the after-effects and consequences of military operations in the land of kur.*ba-bi-gal-bat* (Ḥanigalbat). The historical note reads as follows:

13' [... *n*]ag-ba-šú sa-ki-ki diri ur3(=urāt)-su na-du-u.me <ig>ga[m]-mar ta an.
ta-[šú]

14' [ana šap-]i-ti-šú ana tar-ša kur.ba-bi-gal-bat áš-šú lú.d[am.g]âr.meš al-te-[me]

„[As for ...], I heard due to merchants: its cisterns are filled with silt, its roofs are collapsed, it is ruined from [its] upper part [to] its lower part, as far as Habigalbat.“

In cuneiform tradition, the name Ḥanigalbat (var. Ḥagigalbat) originally designated the Mittani;¹⁷ it has been identified with Armenia in the context of AD 2–164,¹⁸ whose fragmentary indications hint at two campaigns of Antiochus IV: first to Armenia, then „the sea“, that is to the Persian Gulf.¹⁹ In fact, in this text (but the tablet is in bad condition) the toponym Ḥanigalbat occurs together with the first attestation of the toponym *ar-mi-ni*,²⁰ which we will find again, sixty-nine years later in three passages of the Diary of 95 BC.²¹ But it is not necessary to consider Ḥanigalbat as an archaizing, „aulic“

¹³ Schippmann (1980) 97; Will (1982) 452. During the nineteenth century, several scholars claimed that the Parthians had already attacked Armenia under Mithradates I: see the critical discussion in Schottky (1989) 204 ff.

¹⁴ Iust. 42.2.6: *ad postremum Artoadisti, Armeniorum regi, bellum intulit*. On the name of the king, see Chaumont (1985–1988) 17; Otto Seel's Teubner edition of 1960 accepts the conjecture *Artoasdi* made by the former Franz Rühl's Teubner edition (1886). See also Prol. 42: *utque Phrati successit rex Mithridates cognomine magnus, qui Armeniis bellum intulit*. This passage results from a confusion between Mithradates II and Mithradates III (Wolski [1980] 257; Assar [2005] 17 f.).

¹⁵ Iust. 38.3.1: *obses Parthis ante multum temporis datus*. See below, 450.

¹⁶ Wolski (1980). For the second campaign see Arnaud-Lindet (1993).

¹⁷ See Van De Mieroop (2006) 150.

¹⁸ BM 35015 (+ 35332 + 55531). Sachs/Hunger (1988) 496, B 15':
[.....] uru.meš šá uru.ba-bi-gal-bat šá kur.ar-mi-ni; mu-šú sa₄-ú pi x x x [.....]

[.....] the cities of Habigalbat, the name of which is called Armenia

¹⁹ See Del Monte (1997) 80 f. The line B 15' is not recorded in the duplicate BM 45848+45907: possibly, the ordering of the Diary is not so clear, and the historical considerations of Gera/Horowitz (1997) (followed by Mittag [2006] 296 f.) are less sure than they claim.

²⁰ Hunger read kur.*ar-mi-il*?, because he was not certain about the IL-sign in this position and it is ambiguous, and the shape of the sign resembles *ni*₅ (NE), which makes much better sense in context, *pace* Gera/Horowitz (1997), who claim that „Armīl“ was the name of the Armenian capital Artasat. According to Del Monte (1997) 81, „[...] lo IL finale è abbastanza sicuro [...] si può supporre che il Diarista abbia avuto difficoltà a trascrivere un nome geografico per lui nuovo che solo più tardi entrerà nella tradizione scribale“. The use of the determinative URU instead of KUR seems to be characteristic for the land of Armenia. For the older Akkadian name *Uraštu*, both determinatives are used: Zadok (1985) 320 f.

²¹ In a cuneiform context, this name seems to be only attested by Darius's inscription of Bisutūn, where the Armenian satrapy, named *Uraštu* in the Babylonian and Elamite versions, is called *Armina* in Old Persian:

name of Armenia,²² and it may well mean the territory of Upper Mesopotamia.²³ Anyway, AD 3–110 might give the precise date of 110 bc for the campaign of Mithradates II against Artawazd, as already proposed by Del Monte.²⁴ This is also confirmed by the title of „king of kings“ in the same Diary, attested for the first time for an Arsacid king, a title which Mithradates II will keep until 91 bc in the Babylonian diaries (until the usurpation of Gotarzes).²⁵

Tigran's exile

Until 95 bc, Tigran resided in the Parthian empire as a royal hostage.²⁶ As attested by AD 3–95D 11', he was duly recognized as „Crown Prince“ of Armenia. His exile was the consequence of an agreement with the Parthian king Mithradates II. We have a precedent with the exile of the Seleucid king Demetrius II, who Mithradates I sent to Hyrcania.²⁷

AD 3–95D calls him *mār šarri*, that is „Crown Prince“. Del Monte remarks that Tigran was not the son of Artawazd, but that the title is not incorrect, for it can be also employed with the general meaning of „prince“. On the other hand, as he was the son of the preceding king Tigran, he may have presented himself as „the son of the (preceding) king“.²⁸

According to AD 3–95C, 7', the king resided in Babylon, that is, in Lower Mesopotamia;²⁹ in fact, as we argue from AD 3–95D, 10', Tigran may have resided in Seleucia-on-the Tigris. On the other hand, it is worth noting the special interest accorded to him by the Babylonian diarists: Del Monte, who rightly points at the acquaintances cultivated by the crown prince of Armenia with the priests of the Esagila, does not exclude that Tigran may have resided in Babylonia rather than in Seleucia.³⁰

The return of the king

The year 95 bc is generally accepted as the first year of the reign of Tigran the Great.³¹ AD 3–95D gives an account of Tigran's march to the royal residence of Artasat (Ἀρτάξ-

DBi §26–30. Lecoq (1997) 197f. For the name *Uraštu* in the Babylonian documents of Achaemenid age, see Zadok (1985) 320f.

²² Del Monte (1997) 81 considers it a „reminiscenza letteraria“ and mentions the use of *Meluhha* for Egypt in the Diary of 169 bc, possibly in the broad sense of „borders of the world“ (Del Monte [1997] 77).

²³ Philippe Clancier writes (e-mail of 10/14/2012): „Je vois mal le terme Ḫanigalbat désigner d'un coup et seulement là une région au nord du Zagros. Du coup on aurait une désignation traditionnelle de l'Urartu au-delà du Zagros (mais à plus haute époque) et du Ḫanigalbat = Arménie du sud, dans la région couvrant le Triangle du Ḫābūr et le tout nord de la Mésopotamie jusqu'au Zagros. Cela marcherait bien aussi avec la campagne d'Antiochos IV en 164 qui se battait contre les débordements de l'Arménie en Mésopotamie“.

²⁴ Del Monte (1997) 154. Del Monte does not mention the former studies of Wolski and Chaumont, but simply remarks (note 255): „Il fatto che Pompeo Trogo collochi questa guerra verso la fine del regno di Mitridate II non fa naturalmente difficoltà“.

²⁵ Del Monte (1997) 153 and 250.

²⁶ Strab. 11.14.15 (ὁμύρευσσε παρὰ Πάρθοις); Iust. 38.3.1 (*obses Parthis [...] datus*).

²⁷ See Dąbrowa (2000) 52f.

²⁸ Del Monte (1997) 167.

²⁹ The expression *kur uru^{ki}* (literally „country of the city“) is translated by Hunger as „Babylon“ (Sachs/Hunger [1996] 419). This follows the same pattern of *uruArmini* referring to Armenia as a country.

³⁰ Del Monte (1997) 166.

³¹ When he received in Antioch the Roman ambassador Appius Claudius (71 bc), the king was in his twenty-fifth year of reign (Plut. *Lucullus* 21.6).

ατα). Sargsyan read the final Du[..... as a verb.³² This is more likely a toponym: and it would be tempting to integrate it as *Du[win*, that is, the future medieval capital of *Duin* (Դւին), which in this period was a fortress and formed a part of the defensive system of Artasat, from the foundation of the kingdom of Greater Armenia (about 188 BC) and the Roman military operations in 59 AD.³³ But in fact, this hypothesis is unlikely, for Duin is not located on the road from Mesopotamia to Artasat.³⁴ It would seem more reasonable to read *Du[ra*: this ancient Macedonian colony (called Europos by the Greeks), was definitely occupied by the Parthians by 116 BC.³⁵ But we must consider this hypothesis with some caution, as it would be the first attestation of this name in cuneiform, but it would be more logical to argue that Tigran made his way from Babylon to Armenia passing through this important centre on the Euphrates.³⁶

In exchange for his release, the king gave Mithridates II some territories of southern Armenia. This episode is reported in a passage of Strabo concerning Tigran's changes of fortune: „for at first he was a hostage among the Parthians; and then through them he could return home, they receiving as reward therefore seventy valleys (ἑβδομήκοντα αὐλῶνας) in Armenia“.³⁷ The context of AD 3–95A seems to attest the occupation by Mithridates II of a series of cities located in the surroundings of Armenia, which may well correspond to the administrative units called „valleys“ by Strabo. As a matter of fact, several Armenian sources name *Jor* ‚valley‘ a pass between the Armenian province of Tarōn and *Asorestan* (= Mesopotamia).³⁸

The rest of the story is well known. At a first moment, Tigran must have been considered as a vassal of Parthia, as hints AD 3–95C, 6'. But after his return to Armenia, he made an alliance with Mithradates VI, king of Pontus,³⁹ which allowed him to occupy Sophene and Southern Cappadocia by 94 BC.⁴⁰ In some years, he became powerful enough to start a glorious, although ephemere policy of conquest. The death of Mithradates II in 87 BC accelerated this process, for the kingdom of the Arsacids was eventually plunged into a new dynastic crisis, Armenia subsequently ceased being a vassal kingdom, and Tigran took the title of „king of kings“.⁴¹ Possibly, he was lucky enough to connect the beginning of his escalation with a major astronomical event, that is, the passage of Halley's Comet in the inner solar system.⁴² Such a sensitivity for astronomy was not

³² Sarkisyan (1994) 238, „Am Ende der Zeile 11 haben wir als Ergänzung die Verben *dù-epēšu* ‚machen‘ und *dù –alāku* ‚gehen‘ als Alternativen vorgeschlagen“.

³³ K'oc'arean (1996); for the name, see Hübschmann (1904) 422; Garsoïan (1989) 460.

³⁴ See Dillemann (1962).

³⁵ Sommer (2005) 295. On Dura see most recently Coqueugniot (2011); Grassi (2012).

³⁶ The cuneiform name of Dura has been identified, with some hesitation, with the place-name *Da-ma-[ra]* by Wiseman (1967) 496 (see, dubitatively, Zadok [1985] 116).

³⁷ Strab. 11.14.15. Chaumont (1985–1988) 24f. thinks that the „Twenty-five Valleys“ were a small region of Media, but proposes a parallel with the toponyme *Chiliocomum* (Amm. 23.3.5).

³⁸ Ps. Faustus 4.1; see Garsoïan (1989), who tends to identify it with the Bitlis pass.

³⁹ Arnaud (1987) 134. The traditional name of „Pontus“ has been challenged by Mitchell (2002), who prefers „Northern Cappadocia“, but see the criticisms of Ballesteros Pastor (2007).

⁴⁰ Manandian (1963) 26f. For the historical context see Ballesteros Pastor (1996) 71 ff.

⁴¹ Traina (2012). The title of „king of kings“ is still attested for an Arsaces in 88/87, as show the Greek parchment of Avroman: Minns (1915) 38. For the meaning of this title in the Babylonian diaries concerning Parthian kings see Oelsner (1975) 36 ff. (more recently, Böck [2010]); Arnaud (1987) 144f.; further bibliography in Dąbrowa (2010) 120 n. 50. Traina (forthcoming). For a different interpretation, see Shayegan (2011) 315 ff.

⁴² On some silver and copper coins of Tigran the king, a comet has been identified as one of the elements of the tiara, possibly hinting at the beginning of a new era (Gurzadyan/Vardanyan [2004]; Mayor [2009] 30ff.;

unusual in Asia Minor: Mithradates Eupator, his future father-in-law, exploited a similar phenomenon in the same way as early as 120 BC, that is, at the beginning of his rule⁴³. Yet it is tempting to suppose that the priests of the Esagila contributed to the formation of Tigran's royal ideology.

Summary

Two astronomical diaries, dating to the year 216 of the Seleucid Era (=95 BC), refer to the Crown Prince *ti-ig-ra-nu*, i.e. the Armenian king Tigran 'the Great' (95–ca. 55 BC). A fresh reading of the texts allows us to resolve some passages and propose a historical commentary of the events related to Greater Armenia, from the death of Artawazd I to the beginning of Tigran's reign after his staying in Lower Mesopotamia as a royal hostage.

Key words: Armenien, Hellenismus, Babylonische Astronomie

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Duyrat [2012] 196f.). But this evidence, although interesting, needs to be more thoroughly examined: see the doubts of Panaino (forthcoming)

⁴³ Mayor (2009) 30 ff.

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