

THE TABLET OF AGAPTAḤA

HOWARD WOHL

The tablet of Agaptaḥa is a private inscription recording a royal grant of land.¹ The recipient was a leatherworker, Agaptaḥa by name. He apparently fled early in the reign of Kaštiliaš IV (1242-35) from the newly annexed district of Hanigalbat, in Assyria, to Babylonia. He was apparently an expert bridle maker, and, for his services to the Babylonian army, he was granted 195 acres of land near the border with Elam. Agaptaḥa's prosperity seems to have been short-lived, for the Elamite king Untaš-AN.GAL invaded Babylonia and carried off the tablet to Susa as part of the spoils of war. No doubt Agaptaḥa's land was ravaged at the time. Furthermore, the victory of Tukulti-Ninurta I over Babylonia, in 1235, must have depressed his condition even more—if he was still alive.

It is very unlikely that the tablet of Agaptaḥa was an official and legal document. As the commentary points out, both the granting formula (lines 5-6) and the curse formula (lines 9-11) are without parallel in all of Akkadian literature. While the scribe was probably familiar with boundary stones in general outline, he was ignorant of the precise legal formulae and phraseology. Moreover, the syntax of line 7 is obscure; that of lines 9-11, unusual. It may well be that Akkadian was not the native language of the scribe. We may add that the lapidary, if different from the scribe, was inconsistent. He used a few cursive signs in the predominately monumental script.

Agaptaḥa, the Ḥaligalbatian fugitive, fled to King Kaštiliaš and made *bridles* for King Kaštiliaš, and so they [the officials] gave him as a grant ten *kor* of arable land [ca. 79.4 hectares or 195 acres], measured according to the great cubit, in the city of Padan. They wrote a stela *with* the land and gave it to Agaptaḥa, the leatherworker. The gods of the king shall curse the one who rises to make a claim, or to the claimant who shall take this field.

- ^PA-ga-ap-ta-ḥa mu-un-na-bi-it-tu₄
 Ha-li-gal-ba-tu-ú a-na mu-uh-ḥi lugal
 Kaš-ti-li-ia-a-šu in-na-bi-tam-ma
 5 pa-gu-mi a-na lugal ^PKaš-ti-li-ia-a-šu
 ig-mu-ur-ma 10 numun.meš i-na am-ma-ti
 ra-bi-i-ti i-na ^{uru}Pa-da-an i-ri-mu-šu
 ù ^{na}4 na.ḫ.á.a it-ti a.šā il-tú-ru-ú-ma
 a-na ^PA-ga-ap-ta-ḥa lú ašgab i-din-nu
 10 a-na e-li ù pa-qi-ri ša a.šā
 an-na-a i-le-eq-qu-ú
 dingir.meš ša lugal i-ra-ru-šu

Howard Wohl is a candidate for the Ph.D. degree in the Department of Middle East Languages and Cultures.

Agaptaḥa munnabittu
 Ḥaligalbatû ana muḥḥi šarri
 Kaštilyašu innabitamma
 pāgumî ana šarri Kaštilyašu
 5 igmurma ešeret (kur) zērî ina ammati
 rabiti ina Padan irimmūšu
 u narâ itti eqli iṭturūma
 ana Agaptaḥa aškāpi iddin(n)û
 ana ʿlî û pāqiri ša eqli
 10 annâ ileqqû
 ilû ša šarri irrarūšu

COMMENTARY:

1. *Agaptaḥa*. *Agaptaḥa* is a good Hurrian name made up of the two elements **akap* (Gelb, *NPN*, 198) and **taḥ* (ibid., 261). The first element is also found in Ugaritic alphabetic script. Thus, *agptn*, *agptr* and also *agbr* (F. Gröndahl, *Die Personennamen der Texte aus Ugarit* [Rome, 1967], 361–62). For other occurrences of *Agaptaḥa* in Kassite texts, see Clay, *PN*, 34ff.

mun nabittu. This is the typical MB form of *mun nabtu(m)* (*AHw.*, 673b). It should be noted that *mun nab(it)tu* is synonymous with *ḥapiru*. Thus, *mun nabittu* is found in Kassite and Hittite texts, while *ḥapiru* is found at Nuzi and in the Amarna letters. Both words mean ‘refugee, displaced person, foreigner’ but were used in different areas.²

2. *Ḥaligalbatû*. The name of this state is usually written *Ḥa-NI-gal-bat* (e.g., KAH I, 13 ii 18 and cf. Parpola, *Neo-Assyrian Toponyms*, *AOAT* 6: 148-49). The orthography of our text was rejected by Winckler (*OLZ* 4 [1901], 451) and Schroeder (*OLZ* 21 [1918], 175) as either a scribal error or merely the result of ignorance. The evidence which Schroeder gave to support this view was EA 255: 10, 20, where we have *Ḥa-na-galḡ-bat*. This would seem to exclude a reading of *Ḥaligalbat*. However, in *Esaḥaddon Nin. A i 70* (Borger, *Esaḥ.*, 44) and *Nin. H 13+x* (ibid., 67), we find *Ḥal-li-gal-bat*. Although the phoneme underlying the *n/l* alternation may be dubious, it seems quite probable that the Akkadians pronounced the name as *Ḥa(l)ligalbat*.

3. *Kaštilyašu*. On the orthography, see K. Balkan, *Kassitenstudien I*, AOS 37:67.

4. *pāgumî*. The normalization, *pāgumu*, is based on the writing *kušpa-a-gu-mu* (EA 22, I:48). Von Soden normalizes this word *pagūmu* (*AHw.*, 810a) as if it were an Akkadian primitive noun of the form *parūs* (cf. *GAG* 55i, 11, a, I). As the word is a rarely attested foreign loanword—a Hurrian origin being not unlikely—assimilation to Akkadian forms should be avoided until more evidence is found.

¹Published by V. Scheil, *MDP* 2, plate 20, with his transliteration and translation, pp. 95-96.

²Landsberger in Bottéro, *Ḥabiru*, 159-61. It might be noted in passing that Goetze was certainly correct that the roots of *ḥapiru* and *epēru* are identical, i.e., ‘*pr*’ (ibid., 161-63). For *epēru* ‘to provide food’ compare Egyptian ‘*pr*’ ‘to provide [food, men]’. Von Soden’s Arabic etymology *wafara* ‘to be plentiful’ must be rejected. Despite the identity of roots, *epēru* is hardly the etymology of *ḥapiru*.

The word *pāgumu* has both a masculine plural, as here, and a feminine plural, *pa-gu-ma-ti*, attested in a Kassite letter (H.F. Lutz, *PBS* 1/2, 30: 16, 18). The existence of a separate feminine form, **pāgumtu*, is as yet unattested.

Its meaning is still quite uncertain. From context, we know that it is a leather object (determinative *kuš*) of sufficient size to permit adornment by gems (EA 22, I:48-54), and that it is part of the trappings of (chariot?) horses (E. Ebeling, *Wagenpferde* [=BVW], 1: 10-11). A closer approximation can only be achieved by indirect methods.

A lexical text equates *pāgumu* with *daššu* (Hg; MSL 7, 151: 17). Now, *daššu* is a gazelle or goat buck (*CAD*, D, 120; *AHw.*, 165b). A possible connection may be in bits excavated at Surkh Dum, Luristan, which have animal-shaped cheek-pieces.³ Thus, *pāgumu* might be a bridle or bit; *daššu*, a specific variety.

A similar conclusion may be reached by examining the possibility of *pāgumu* becoming itself a loanword in Syriac, Hebrew, and Arabic. Jensen (in C. Brockelmann, *Lexicon Syriacum*², 555b) assumed that Syriac *p^oguddā* (≠*p^ogudtā*) 'bridle'⁴ was derived from a **pagumtu*. This etymology may be supported by the following considerations: (1) *pāgumu* has a feminine plural, although a feminine singular is still not attested. (2) *p^oguddā* has a form typical of loanwords in Syriac (T. Nöldeke, *Syrische Grammatik*³, 72). (3) A phonetic shift of final Akkadian *mt* to Syriac *d* is attested in *š^oladā* 'corpse' from Akkadian *šalamtu*.⁵ It should be noted that *p^oguddā* is a double feminine (only **p^ogudā* being expected). In *Or.* 37 (1968), 263, von Soden hesitatingly accepted this etymology, but he ignored it in *AHw.*, 810a.

Ebeling (*BVW*, 10-11; *ZA* 50 [1952], 205, n. 1) saw a connection with Mishnaic Hebrew *pāqam* 'to direct [as with a bridle]'. The meaning is most clearly evident in *Numbers Rabbah* 20:20: "Just as a man places a bridle in the mouth of an animal and directs it (*w^o.fōqmāh*) to wherever he wishes, so did the Holy One, praised be He, direct (*pōqēm*) his mouth." If the connection propounded by Ebeling is valid, then we might add evidence from Arabic: *faqmun/fuqmun* "the lateral portion of the lower jaw; the upper part (of the interior) of the mouth"; *fuqumun* "mouth"; *faqama l-kalbi* "he took hold (of the muzzle) of the dog" (all from Lane, *Lexicon*, I, 2429).

The evidence presented points strongly to a definition 'bridle', which does fit the use of *pāgumu* in context. Nevertheless, the inherent weakness of the evidence cannot be overlooked. On the other hand, the definitions offered by the dictionaries are more unlikely. Von Soden (*AHw.*, 810a) suggests with some uncertainty 'halter-reins'. This suffers from the objection that reins are less likely to be gem-studded than a bridle. Bezold (*Glossar*, 219b) and the *CAD* (A², 443 [s.v. "aškapu"]); *H.* 227 [s.v. "ḥulūlu"])

³See A. Parrot, *The Arts of Assyria* (New York, 1961), 129-30 and illustrations 148-50.

⁴*Lexicon Syriacum auctore Hassano Bar Bahlule*, ed. R. Duval (Paris, 1901), 1487a; *The Syriac-Arabic Glosses of Išō' bar 'alī, Part II*, ed. R. Gottheil (Rome, 1908), 241. In these two works *p^oguddā* is translated by Arabic *liḡāmun* 'bridle', and in the Peshitta it is used to translate Hebrew *resen* (Isa. 30:28, Ps. 32:9, Job 30:11).

⁵According to Haupt, quoted in C. Brockelmann, *Lexicon Syriacum*², 779b. This etymology, if valid, seems to be the only attestation of such an assimilation. A strong argument against such an assimilation in *p^oguddā* is that its Imperial Aramaic counterpart (unattested) was borrowed into Akkadian as *pugudātu* (*AHw.*, 875a). It seems unlikely that an Aramaic form would show full assimilation at the same time that its Akkadian original shows only partial. Thus, *šalamtu* becomes *šalandu* and *nakkamtu* becomes *nakkandu*, never **šaladdu* or **nakaddu*. Therefore, a Late Babylonian form of **pāgumtu* would be **pagundu*. One would expect a contemporary Aramaic loanword to mirror this.

translate 'saddle'. This is impossible, for riding saddles were unknown to the Babylonians, Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans. Only the Scythians used a true saddle with a wooden tree. In its place, a pannel or saddlecloth (Latin *stragulum*) was used.⁶ The packsaddle, the *kussû*, was, however, well known. A translation 'pannel' is remotely possible. The *CAD* (*G*, 28 [s.v. "*gamāru*") offers a third, and rather amazing translation: "*pagūmu*-leather coat"! In conclusion, a definition such as 'bridle' seems the best on the evidence we have at the present moment.

5. *igmurma*. The elliptical use of *gamāru* in this sense is well attested; see *AHw.*, 277a, 5b. The translation of the *CAD* in volume *A*² (443) "he delivered some saddles" is strange, because neither the *CAD*, nor *AHw.*, cite a meaning 'deliver' for the verb.

10 numun.meš *ina ammati rabūi*. This is not the formula attested in boundary stones, which regularly have: X (še).numun aš.iku baneš diš.kuš gal (X *kor* arable land, in the ratio of three *seahs* seed per acre, measured according to the large cubit).⁷ The discrepancy in formulae makes it quite likely that this is not a legally valid document and certainly not the stela referred to in line six. The scribe who wrote this tablet either was unfamiliar with the precise wording or was deliberately avoiding it. The former seems more likely.

6. *Padan*. Jensen located it (*KB* 3/1, 137n.) opposite the Jebel Hamrin. While this identification is by no means certain, a location north of the Tigris is quite likely. It should be noted that most of the identifiable place-names in Kassite boundary stones are names of locations which are between the Tigris and the Luristan mountain range, as well as in the Diyala valley. It would seem that the Kassite kings encouraged, by means of land grants, settlements along the Babylonian-Elamite border as a bulwark against invasion.

irimmūšu. Von Soden gives the infinitive as **rāmu*/**riāmu*, separating it from *rāmu* 'to love' and *rēmu* 'to have mercy', which may well be so. As Steinmetzer has shown, **rāmu* usually indicates an original grant by the king to an individual, while *nadānu*, *šarāku*, *turru*, and *šudgulu* are used in other instances.⁸

7. *narā itti eqli ilturūma*. While the meaning of this sentence is clear, the construction is difficult. Various solutions can be offered, none satisfactory. Thus, *itti* may have a weakened sense here, such as 'and'. In Old Babylonian we have the phrase *ina tuppim eqlam šaṭārum* (= *eqlam kanākum*) 'to register a field'.⁹ Combining both items, the sentence would then be extremely concise and elliptical, meaning: "They wrote a stela and registered the field." Another possibility along the same lines is to read *id-di* for *it-ti*. We would then translate: "He erected a stela; they registered the field." This interpretation, however, faces three major objections. One, the subject pronoun changes abruptly from singular to plural. Two, the value *di* is difficult to justify for this text.¹⁰ Three, the phrase *narā nadū* usually means 'to cast away a stela',

⁶See the discussion in J.K. Anderson, *Ancient Greek Horsemanship* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1961), chapter 6. A close examination of Assyrian wall paintings and reliefs makes this fact abundantly clear.

⁷See W.J. Hinke, *NBS.*, 158 and F.X. Steinmetzer, *Kudurru*, 220-21.

⁸F.X. Steinmetzer, *Kudurru*, 232.

⁹Cf. A. Ungnad, *BB*, 384; M. Schorr, *UAZP*, 553.

¹⁰The first objection can be met only if one could prove that boundary stelae were erected by private individuals and not by order of the king or his officials. This is not true of the period of the last Kassite kings.

while the meaning 'to erect' is attested only with words like *uššū*, *temennu* 'foundation', and *šubtu* 'dwelling'. A third possibility is that *it-ti* is either a scribal error for *itâti* or an anomalous form, *itû*, of the plural of *itû* 'boundary'. This would indicate a translation: "They wrote a stela [describing] the borders of the field." These three seem to be the only ways in which to read the text as it stands. None, however, can be seriously defended. Most likely, the scribe hesitated between two different constructions and produced this faulty line.

ilturūma. The shift of *š* before dentals to *l* is not common in the Kassite boundary stones, a notable exception being BBS 3 iv 39 (*il-tû-ra-âš-šu-nu-tim-ma*) and v 16 (*il-tû-ra-âš-šu-um-ma*).

8. *ašškāpi*. Scheil misread the *ašgab* sign as IR. Note that *ašgab* should be kept separate from the *sa* sign which has a different origin.¹¹

9. *ana . . . irrarūšu*. The scribe construes *arāru* with an indirect object, rather than with a direct object which is expected. It is possible that the scribe intended *ana muḫḫi* 'with regard to, concerning'.

elī. Von Soden corrects the text to read *e-li-ḫi* (AHw., 210a). The use of this participle to indicate someone who raises a claim is unique in Akkadian. It is merely a nonce word, invented by a scribe unfamiliar with correct legal terminology. One would have expected something like *bēl dabābi* or *dābibu*.

pāqiri. This form is especially common at Nuzi (C.H. Gordon, *Babl.* 16 [1936], 111). In Old Babylonian *bāqiru* is preferred.¹² The verb *baqāru* means 'to bring an action of detinue', i.e., to raise a claim that possessions or property are wrongfully held, not merely to raise a claim against a person, or to sue someone, which would be *ragāmu*.¹³

11. *ilū ša šarri*. In virtually all other inscriptions bearing curse formulae, the name of at least one god is mentioned by name. Here, however, the gods remain anonymous. The gods referred to are seemingly Šuqamuna and Šumalya (cf. *BBS*. 3 vi 15f.), the favorite gods of the Kassite kings. A rural scribe may have been unaware of their names; or else, he avoided mentioning them in a private inscription.

irrarūšu. The use of the present in a curse formula is unexampled elsewhere in Akkadian literature. The precativē, *līrurūšu*, is the only correct form.

from which almost all Kassite boundary stones stem. We are ill-informed of the earlier period. Note *BBS*. 1 (from the reign of Kadašman-Enlil II), which is called a boundary stone (ii 6), is in the form of a clay nail. Until more evidence is discovered—for example, an archive of tablets recording land grants—the safest course is to assume that the later practice reflects the earlier. The second objection can be disposed of only if it could be proven that the peculiarities of this tablet are typical of those found in peripheral areas, such as Nuzi (cf. W. von Soden and W. Rollig, *Das Akkadische Syllabar*², no. 46 [p. 9]).

¹¹The SA sign was originally a net and the AŠGAB sign was a sack, see Deimel, *ŠL*³, 168, no. 169.

¹²As in *ARM* 8, 1:27.

¹³M. Schorr, *UAZP*, 127 comment on 82:12; M. San Nicolò, *Schlussklauseln*, 155-75.