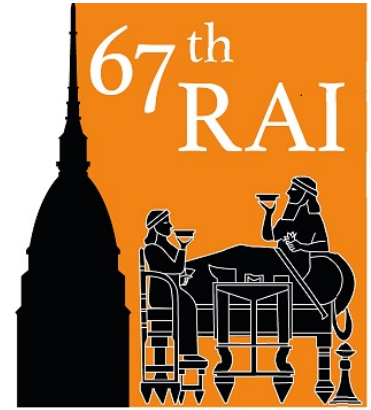




67<sup>th</sup> Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale  
Eating and Drinking in the Ancient Near East  
Turin, July 12-16 2021

*"Don't let the boats pass!"*

Elamite tips and tricks for Assyrian grain  
procurement

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# Introduction

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8<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> century BC

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Harvest failures > shortage of  
grain > famines > economic crisis

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Lowland Susiana

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2 registered Neo-Elamite famines  
in Assyrian texts

# First famine in the Neo-Elamite kingdom

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On my sixth campaign, I marched against Urtaku, the king of the land Elam who did not remember the kindness of the father who had engendered me (nor) did he respect my friendship.

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After famine occurred in the land Elam (and) hunger had set in, I sent to him grain, (which) sustains the live(s) of people, and (thus) held him by the hand.

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(As for) his people, who had fled on account of the famine and settled in Assyria until it rained (again) in his land (and) harvests grew — I sent those people who had stayed alive in my land (back) to him.

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2 measures taken by king Assurbanipal:

- 1) Temporary settlement on Assyrian territory
- 2) Grain export to Elam

# First famine in the Neo-Elamite kingdom

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2 measures taken by king Assurbanipal:

1) Temporary settlement on Assyrian territory

- Thanks to peace treaty Esarhaddon & Urtak
- Honoured by Assurbanipal until 664 BC
- Cause of famine: lack of rain
- Affected region: Rashi (SAA 21 53)

2) Grain export to Elam

- Letter from Shamash-shumu-ukin to Assurbanipal (SAA 21 104)
  - Elamites tricks to procure grain in Babylonia
  - Development of interregional political relations

# First famine in the Neo-Elamite kingdom

SAA 21 104

Obv.

1. a-na LUGAL ŠEŠ-ia
2. IM 1 <sup>d</sup>GIŠ.NU<sub>11</sub>—MU—GI.NA
3. lu-u DI-mu a-na ŠEŠ-ia
4. <sup>d</sup>AMAR.UTU <sup>d</sup>zar-pa-ni-tum <sup>d</sup>PA
5. <sup>d</sup>taš-me-tu<sub>2</sub> <sup>d</sup>na-na-a a-na
6. ŠEŠ-ia lik-ru-bu
7. ina UGU <sup>GIŠ</sup>MA<sub>2</sub>-MEŠ ša <sup>LU</sup>ši-i-ri
8. am-mi<sub>3</sub>-i ša aš<sub>2</sub>-pur-an-ni
9. a-na ŠEŠ-ia mu-uk a-sap-ra
10. u<sub>2</sub>-ra-am-mu-u ne<sub>2</sub>-me-el
11. 01 02-šu<sub>2</sub> a-na ŠEŠ-ia aš<sub>2</sub>-pur-an-ni
12. gab-ri di-ib-bi la iš-pur-ni-ni
13. a-na-ku ap-ta-lah<sub>3</sub> <sup>LU</sup>um-man-ni-gaš
14. am-mi<sub>3</sub>-i **DUMU—MAN LUGAL** u<sub>2</sub>-da
15. ra-as-mu šu-u mu-uk
16. pi-iq-ta-a-te ina ŠA<sub>3</sub> it-tu-sa-te
17. ša <sup>ŠE</sup>PAD-MEŠ an-ni-ti

Rev.

1. me-me-ni e-pa-ša<sub>2</sub>
2. su-ma-me-tu<sub>2</sub> i-kar-ra-ar<sub>2</sub> \*
3. u<sub>3</sub> LUGAL u<sub>2</sub>-da a-ni-nu
4. am—mar ša<sub>2</sub> a-ni-nu-ni
5. am—mar it-us-si am—mar
6. me-me-ni la ma-ša-an-ni
7. a-sap-ra mu-uk <sup>GIŠ</sup>MA<sub>2</sub>-MEŠ
8. ra-am-me-ia lu-še-ti-qu
9. u<sub>2</sub>-ma-a e-gir<sub>2</sub>-tu<sub>2</sub>
10. ša <sup>LU</sup>EN—BA-ša<sub>2</sub> \* a-ta-mar
11. a-šap-par mu-uk <sup>GIŠ</sup>MA<sub>2</sub>-MEŠ
12. lu la e-te-qa
13. ki-il-a e-gir<sub>2</sub>-tu<sub>2</sub>
14. ša <sup>LU</sup>EN—BA-ša<sub>2</sub> a-na LUGAL
15. us-se-bi-la ki-i
16. ša MAN i-la-'u-u-ni
17. le-pu-uš

(1-6) A tablet of Šamaš-šumu-ukin to the king, my brother: Good health to my brother! May Mārduḫ, Zarpanitu, Nabû, Tašmetu and Nanaya bless my brother.

(7-9) Concerning the ships of that **envoy** about which I wrote to my brother, saying, "I have ordered that they be released" —

(10-13) Since I had repeatedly written to my brother without getting an answer, I became afraid.

(14-r.2) The king knows that Ummanigaš, that **crown prince**, is hot-headed. I thought, "Perhaps he will put something in the sacks holding this grain and cause poisoning."

(r.3-r.6) The king also knows that we — any of us — are not able to do anything at all about any ..

(r.7-r.12) (So) I ordered: "Release the boats, let them pass!" Now, having seen a letter of Bel-iquša, I'm giving the order: "Don't let the boats pass, hold them back!"

(r.13-r.17) I am here with sending the letter of Bel-iquša to the king. May the king act as he deems best.

# First famine in the Neo-Elamite kingdom

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- SAA 21 104: Analysis
  - Officials in the letter > dating
    - Shamash-shumu-ukin: 668-648 BC
    - Ummanigash or Huban-nikash II:
      - Elamite crown prince under Urtak (675-664 BC)
      - Connected to upheavals in the Assyrian borderlands and Babylonia
        - 671 BC: riots in Der
        - Pre-664 BC: scouting mission to Uruk
      - Aggressive personality
      - LÚ *ṣīri* = foreign official in Assyria representing his state
  - Bel-iqisha
    - Tribal leader Gambulu tribe
    - Loyal to Assurbanipal
    - Sided with Urtak for attack on Babylon in 664 BC

# First famine in the Neo- Elamite kingdom

- SAA 21 104: dating based on officials
    - Written between 668 and 665 BC
      - 668 BC: appointment Shamash-shumu-ukin
      - 665 BC: year prior Elamite attack on Elam, when Bel-Iqisha was still loyal to Assurbanipal
- = time frame of 3 years, coincides with first regnal years of Assurbanipal

# First famine in the Neo-Elamite kingdom

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- Elamite grain procurement in Babylonia
    - = mix regional diplomacy and trade
  - Did Shamash-shumu-ukin conspire with Huban-nikash II?
    - Notorious bad temper as excuse?
    - Pro-active commercial approach of Elamites
    - Elamite threats to spoil the grain
- => the Assyrians and Babylonians lost control over the situation
- => Assurbanipal turned a commercial disadvantage into propaganda opportunity

# First famine in the Neo- Elamite kingdom

- Elamite trade mechanisms with Babylonia for grain
  - Elamite fleet of vessels
  - Trade via waterways: riverine - maritime
    - Achaemenid period:
      - Babylonia to Susa via nar-Kabari & Royal Canal of Elam
      - Babylonians: construction and maintenance of canals
    - Neo-Elamite period (early to mid-first millennium BC)
      - Is fluvial route a transport option? No
      - Combined river & maritime venture

# First famine in the Neo- Elamite kingdom

- 3 stages of the Babylonia – Elam route:
  1. stage: Babylonia to Sealand by Euphrates
    - Cf. 6<sup>th</sup> campaign of Sennacherib
    - Bab-salimenti & Bab-marrati
  2. stage: Sealand to Elamite shore via Persian Gulf
    - Crossing via open sea or northern lagoon
  3. stage: river journey to Susa via Karun
    - Access Susian hinterland via Mahmiti or Nagitu
- Assyrian official involved: the *rab k̄āru*

# Second famine in the Neo-Elamite kingdom

SAA 21 160

14' <sup>md</sup>+AG—MU—BA-šá **LÚ.GAL—ka-a-ru**

b.e. 15' *ul-tu* KUR.NIM.MA.KI

b.e. 16' *ki-i iḥ-ḥi-su*

b.e. 17' <sup>1</sup>še<sup>\*</sup>-du *ina* KUR

r 1 [x] <sup>1</sup>x <sup>1</sup>x<sup>1</sup> *um-ma*

r 2 [LÚ].<sup>1</sup>NIM<sup>?</sup>.KI *it-te-bu-nu*

r 3 [pu]-*ul-lu-ḥu*

r 4 [**LÚ**].**EN—ḤAR-MEŠ** *ù a-na-ku*

r 5 [x a]-<sup>1</sup>na<sup>1</sup> KUR.NIM.MA.KI *ki-i áš-pu-ra r*

r 6 [šá iḥ]-*ru-ṣu-nu*

r 7 [*i-na*] <sup>1</sup>KUR<sup>1</sup>.NIM.MA.KI *ia-a-<sup>1</sup>nu<sup>1</sup>*

r 8 [*lu*]-<sup>1</sup>ú<sup>1</sup> *ú-šu-uz-zak<sup>\*</sup>*

r 9 [LÚ].*ma-aṣ-ṣar-ti ša* URU 0<sup>\*</sup>

r 10 [x] <sup>1</sup>42<sup>?</sup> **LÚ.GAL—ŠU.DU<sub>8</sub>.A-MEŠ**

r 11 [šá TIN].TIR.KI 03-*me* GIŠ.BAN

r 12 [ù x] <sup>1</sup>ANŠE<sup>1</sup>.KUR.RA-MEŠ

r 13 [x (x) x] <sup>m</sup>šu-*la-a*

r 14 [x x x] <sup>1</sup>it<sup>\*</sup>-*ti-šú-nu*

15 [x x x] <sup>1</sup>x<sup>1</sup>-*nu*

When Nabû-šumu-iqiša, the chief of trade, returned from Elam, a person possessed by a demon [appeared] in the land, saying:

“[The Elamites] have attacked!”

The torc-owners were frightened. But when I sent [... to] Elam, there was nothing [to find out in] Elam. You may stand still.

[The] garrison of the city: [1]42 (men of) the chief cupbearer of Ba]bylon, 300 archers, [and x] horses [... of] Sulaya [... w]ith them.

# Second famine in the Neo- Elamite kingdom

- the *rab kāru*:
  - “chief of trade” or “quay inspector”
  - receiving point for taxes, duties and customs often found in the harbour area
  - Office attested in Babylon and Sealand (LÚ.GAL *kāru* šá KUR *tam-tim*: ABL 1106 r. 20')
  - Monitoring of trade between Babylonia and Elam during Shamash-shumu-ukin revolt (652-648 BC)

# Second famine in the Neo- Elamite kingdom

Shamash-shumu-ukin revolt (652-648 BC)

- large-scale military campaigns in Southern Mesopotamia & Elam
- destruction of harvest
- broad scale humanitarian crisis in the Upper Gulf area

= 2<sup>nd</sup> registered famine in Elam

# Second famine in the Neo-Elamite kingdom

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- Dating the second famine in the Neo-Elamite kingdom
  - Start: letter to Sîn-tabni-u<sup>2</sup>ur, governor of Ur (SAA 21 37)
    - Dated to 650 BC, suffered already 2 years of famine => 652 BC
  - End: reign Huban-haltash III (c. 645 BC)
    - ABL 280, ABL 521
- Initially cause for shortage of grain in Elamite-Babylonian border region and Susiana (ABL 1010): war
- Secondary cause: spread of famine to Elamite highlands due to bureaucratic corruption

# Second famine in the Neo-Elamite kingdom

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- Methods for Elamite grain provisions during second famine:
  - Last rulers of Hubanid dynasty: grain from highland regions
  - Elamite Rebel kings: lost control over grain revenue system
    - Huban-haltash III dealt with complaints of
      - famine of the highland people of Dašer and Šullake due to corrupt officials
      - Elamite *šarnuppu* officials who were left unpaid for their services (ABL 281, ABL 462)
- remaining option for grain procurement: raids on Assyrian controlled Sealand region (ABL 1000)

# Conclusion

- a variety of methods to procure grain in Assyria
  - sailing to Babylonia in order to buy grain
  - putting Babylonian official under pressure by using aggressive threats
  - violent raids on Southern Mesopotamia
- Water transportation for the shipment of grain from Assyria to Elam
- regional diplomacy in the Chaldean and Aramean tribes secured a safe passage for the Elamite boats to pass