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CHAPTER SIXTEEN

ELAM AND ASSYRIA

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THE HISTORY OF ASSYRIAN-ELAMITE RELATIONS

Traditionally the history of the Neo-Elamite kingdom has been divided into three periods (Waters 2000: 3–4; Gorris and Wicks, Chapter 13 in this volume). If we consider Elam from an Assyrian point of view, however, four phases and one interlude may be distinguished as outlined below.

PHASE I (BEFORE 823 BCE) – NO RECORDS

In this phase, Elam is completely absent from the extant Assyrian sources. While this silence is understandable for the greater part of the Middle Assyrian period, it becomes surprising in view of the well-documented campaigns conducted in the east by several Neo-Assyrian kings, such as Tiglath-pileser I (1115–1076) and Tukulti-ninurta II (891–884). Even more striking is the absence of Elam in the inscriptions of Ashurnasirpal II (884–859) and Shalmaneser III (859–824), which detail their campaigns in zones bordering on Elamite territory. From these sources it can be inferred that Elam was virtually non-existent for Assyria, presenting no serious opposition to Assyrian expansionistic interests.

PHASE II (823–745 BCE) – ON THE ASSYRIAN RADAR SCREEN

Elam appears for the first time in inscriptions dated to the reign of Shamshi-Adad V (823–811). When this monarch conducted his fourth and most important campaign against Babylonia in the year 819, the Babylonian king Marduk-balatsu-iqbi mustered troops from various countries, among them Elam, to halt the Assyrian expansion to the south. This anti-Assyrian coalition was defeated (RIMA 3 A.o.103.1 iv 37–45), and a letter from the god Aššur mentions that the people from along Assyria's eastern frontier subsequently escaped to Elam (SAA III 41 r.5–8; cf. RIMA 3 A.o.103.4 2r.34').

PHASE III (745–695 BCE) – A BARKING DOG

With Tiglath-pileser III began a new phase of Elamite-Assyrian relations that lasted until Sennacherib's invasions of Elam in 694–689. Assyrian kings expanding their territory eastwards invaded Babylonia and occupied the Elamite-Babylonian buffer zone. In this phase Elam engaged in various subversive activities, welcoming Babylonian political refugees, offering military support to Babylonian rebels, and even directly engaging in military conflicts with Assyria.

Tiglath-pileser III

Tiglath-pileser III's (745–727) royal inscriptions mention Elam twice (RINAP I 47:14; 51:17), and an additional three references are found in letters dated to his reign (SAA XIX 82; 127; 140). Tiglath-pileser III's expansion eastwards in 731–729 met with the strong resistance of both Aramaean and Chaldean tribes led by Mukinzeri of the Bit-Amukani tribe. Tiglath-pileser employed a strategy of isolating the center of the rebellion from its allies; one that had proved efficient in his campaigns against Damascus and Samaria (Dubovský 2006b: 161–164). Thus, he conquered the tribe Puqudu and the cities Lahru, Hilimmu and Pillatu along the Elamite western frontier and placed them under the authority of the provincial governor of Arrapha (RINAP I 47:14).

Even though Tiglath-pileser III's royal inscriptions do not mention the direct involvement of the Elamite king Humban-nikaš I (743–717) in the anti-Assyrian revolt, certain Neo-Assyrian letters report that he was partly involved in the Babylonian-Assyrian confrontation. SAA XIX 82, dated probably to 731, illustrates the nature of the Elamite-Assyrian conflicts in this period. The letter reports on a dispute over control of a strategic bridge, most likely on the river Tubliš. We learn that the governor of Arrapha had turned the anti-Assyrian military commander Zinemi away from the bridge. Upon hearing this news, the Elamite king and his troops travelled to the bridge and crossed it, facilitating Zinemi's crossing behind, and then camped in the forest among the Aramaeans. Soon afterwards, control of the bridge passed again into Assyrian hands. Letter SAA XIX 127 mentions subversive activity on the part of the Elamite king and Mukin-zeri's son, who had killed a number of soldiers and carried out deportations. These Elamite efforts to sustain the rebels militarily and diplomatically (SAA XIX 140) would ultimately fail to prevent Tiglath-pileser III from conquering Babylonia.

Sargon II

Three important conflicts between Elam and Assyria are dated to the reign of Sargon II (722–705). The first clash of arms took place in 720 at Der. Sargon II claimed to have defeated the Elamite-Babylonian coalition (Fuchs 1994: 88–89, 197), but in fact the outcome was much more ambiguous than described in his annals (Pots 1999: 264). On the contrary, ABC I 133–37 reports that the Elamite king Humban-nikaš I inflicted a crushing defeat on Sargon II (Grayson 1965: 340–342). This battle not only established a balance of power between Assyria and Elam but confirmed Elam's new policy of openly siding with Babylonia and engaging in war with Assyria.

Ten years later (710–709) Sargon II conducted a massive offensive against the Babylonian rebel Marduk-aplu-iddina (722–710, 703), known also as Merdoch-baladan (Waters 2000: 16–24). Sargon opted for a strategy used earlier by Tiglath-pileser III: before attacking the city of Babylon, he led his troops along the western frontier of Elam on the east of the Tigris (Fuchs 1994: 399–405, 431–432), a region occupied by Aramaean tribes under Elamite influence. Sargon conquered the fortress of Dur-Athara in Gambulu and the territory of the Aramaean tribes Puqudu, Ru'na and Hindaru, permitting Assyrian troops to enter territories directly controlled by Elam for the first time. The territory between the Tubliš and Ulaia rivers occupied by the Aramaean tribe Iadburu belonged to the Elamite sphere of influence, having been secured by the Elamite king Šurruk-Nahunte II (717–699), who established and manned fortresses Sam'una and Bab-duri. Sargon II crossed the Tubliš river, stormed both fortresses and deported two Elamite fortress commanders, Singamsibu and Sal. . . . jna, together with 7,520 Elamite soldiers. This was the first major defeat of the Elamite troops described in detail in the Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions. Sargon attacked the Iadburu region to the Gambulu province (Fuchs 1994: 150–151, 1295–301), and Elam lost control over all of the Aramaean territories east of the Tigris (Dubovský 2006a: 84–87), which were incorporated into the newly established Assyrian Gambulu province just a few kilometers from the Elamite capital, Susa. Finally, Sargon conquered the Raši territory which bordered on Der, and Šurruk-Nahunte retreated to avoid direct military confrontation. The Assyrian king subsequently secured the city of Der, opening access to Ellipi, another Elamite-controlled territory.

The third open military clash between Assyria and Elam arose over control of Ellipi in 708–707 (Fuchs 1998: 112–123; Dubovský 2006a: 75–83). After the death of Ellipi's pro-Assyrian king, Dalta, his nephews Nibe and Ašpa-bara involved the Ellipian kingdom in a civil war. Šurruk-Nahunte took advantage of the succession war by offering military aid to Nibe, and after having installed him on the throne, sending 4,500 Elamite bowmen to protect the Ellipian capital Murabištu. Sargon immediately responded by sending his troops in support of Ašpa-bara. Murabištu was conquered, Nibe was expelled and Ašpa-bara became the Assyrian vassal in Ellipi. By the end of Sargon II's reign, Elam's direct control in the Zagros area had shrunk to the territories along the Ulaia river.

Sennacherib

Similarly to the pattern of hostility observed during the reign of Sargon II, the military confrontation between Elam and Assyria during Sennacherib's reign (705–681) was intrinsically connected with the rebellions in Babylonia. Sennacherib conducted three major assaults in the east amounting to a total of six campaigns.

The first involvement in the region dates to 704–702 (first campaign; RINAP 3/1 1:5–62). Marduk-apla-iddina returned from Elam and, taking advantage of Sargon II's death, seized the city of Babylon. Without hesitation, Sennacherib marched against Babylonia. In return for a large sum of money, Šurruk-Nahunte offered military support to the Babylonian rebels, dispatching his generals and ten commanders together with 80,000 archers, [850] wagons and horses. An element of the coalition was defeated by Sennacherib at Cutha in 703, whereupon the Elamite military

hero Nergal-nasir was captured together with other unit commanders, and Elamite archers, horses and wagons were taken as war booty. The Assyrians then defeated the forces of Sutruk-Nahhunte's third man Tannanu, who was commanding a unit composed of Elamites, Chaldeans and Aramaean soldiers. As a result, the coalition dissolved, Marduk-apla-idišna escaped, and Sennacherib looted his palace in Babylon. The following year Sennacherib's officials suppressed a rebellion, and Babylonia was left in the hands of Bel-bni.

The peace did not last long, and in 700 (fourth campaign) Sennacherib was forced to intervene for a second time against Marduk-apla-idišna. RINAP 3/1 16 iv 63–64 mentions that Elam again offered support to the Babylonian rebels. Once again the coalition was defeated, Marduk-apla-idišna and his supporters escaped to Elam, and Sennacherib put his first-born son Aššur-nadin-šumi on the Babylonian throne.

PHASE IV (694–631 BCE) – THE CONQUEST OF ELAM

The second part of Sennacherib's reign opens a new phase of Elamite-Assyrian relations in which Elam is no longer a distant kingdom supporting the Assyrian enemy but becomes the direct target of Assyrian campaigns. This phase commences with Sennacherib's sixth campaign in 694 and lasts until Ashurbanipal's conquest of Elam and his suppression of the last rebellions in 645.

Sennacherib's first invasions of Elam

The most important confrontation between Elam and Assyria took place between 694 and 689 (RINAP 3/1 22 iv 32-vi 35). Sennacherib decided to invade Elam (sixth campaign; 694) and break the backbone of Babylonian resistance. He mounted a naval operation that sailed down the Tigris in Phoenician ships to reach the Elamite regions in the marshes of the Persian Gulf (^{1b}*marrati*; RINAP 3/2 46:51), which had been offering shelter to Babylonian refugees. After landing, Sennacherib reached the Ulaia river and defeated the Elamite-Babylonian army, stormed the Elamite cities and deported the runaways (RINAP 3/2 46:101–102). This victory in southern Elam, however, turned out to be a disaster for Assyria. While the Assyrian troops were busy in the south, the Babylonians invaded the Elamite king Hallišu (699–693) directly in the battle, literally “dragging” him to Babylon (*idudunima*; RINAP 3/1 34:28). ABC 1 ii 32–45 offers a detail conveniently omitted from the Assyrian sources: Hallišu attacked Assyria from the rear by assaulting the city of Sippar. With the help of the Babylonian rebels, he captured Sennacherib's son Aššur-nadin-šumi, brought him to Elam and placed Nergal-ušezib on the Babylonian throne. Nergal-ušezib's army, sustained by the Elamite troops, advanced southwards and captured Nippur. The rebels now, therefore, controlled northern and central Babylonia from Sippar to Nippur. When the Assyrian army sailed back from Elam, it found itself deadlocked between the Persian Gulf and the Elamite-Babylonian coalition, cut off from its homeland. Sennacherib sent more troops who defeated the coalition army supported by Hallišu and killed his son, captured the city of Uruk and advanced westwards to seize the Babylonian king Nergal-ušezib near Nippur. Sennacherib deported Nergal-ušezib to Nineveh and bound him at the Citadel Gate of Nineveh (RINAP 3/1 34:19b–36a).

Furious that his son was taken hostage and probably executed in Elam (cf. RINAP 4, 2), Sennacherib seized upon the opportunity of an insurrection against Hallišu to invade Elam for the second time (ABC 1 iii 7–12). He conquered and devastated its western regions, laying siege for the first time to the Elamite capital Madaknu (seventh campaign; 693), but the harsh winter conditions forced him to abandon the campaign. The new Elamite king Kutur-Nahhunte II (693–692) who had escaped to the mountains, returned to reconstruct the destroyed regions and brought back the survivors (RINAP 3/1 35:25^a, 27^a).

The retreat of the Assyrian army served as an encouragement to the Babylonian rebels and Mušezib-Marduk took the throne at Babylon. Faced with Sennacherib's troops, he again sought refuge in Elam but this time was not welcomed. Upon his return, he managed to retake the kingship at Babylon and sent a large gift to the newly appointed Elamite king Humban-menana (692–689): “Gather your army, muster your forces, hurry to Babylon, and stand on our side! You are our hope.” (RINAP 3/1 22 v 35–37). The Elamite king accepted the gift and gave his military support to the rebels. A decisive battle took place at the city of Halule on the bank of the Tigris in 691 (eighth campaign), in which the Elamite army commanded by Humban-undaš was defeated. Humban-menana avoided direct battle, escaping from the battlefield, but Elamite magnates were captured alive and their possessions taken as booty. The defeat was described in detail:

“Like a flood in full spate after a seasonal rainstorm, I made their blood flow over the broad earth. The swift thoroughbreds harnessed to my chariot plunged into floods of their blood (just) like the river ordeal. The wheels of my war chariot, which lays criminals and villains low, were bared in blood and gore. I filled the plain with the corpses of their warriors like grass.” (RINAP 3/1 22 vi 3–10).

The battles in Babylonia lasted until 689 when Sennacherib finally conquered the city of Babylon and utterly destroyed it.

Esarhaddon

The assassination of Sennacherib in 681 gave rise to a wave of insurrections. At the outset of his reign, Esarhaddon (681–669) faced the same problem as his predecessors: Elamite involvement in anti-Assyrian activities at Babylon are first mentioned in relation to a conspiracy of a minor scale orchestrated by Nabu-ahbe-iddin, who sent gifts to obtain Elamite military support (Weidner 1954/55: 5–9). More serious was a rebellion centered on the city of Ur: in 680 Marduk-apla-idišna's son Nabu-zer-kitti-lišir, labelled “rebel” and “insurgent” (RINAP 4 i ii 54), emerged as the leader of anti-Assyrian insurgency and conquered the city. Esarhaddon responded by force and Nabu-zer-kitti-lišir, together with his brother Nā'id-Marduk, escaped to Elam. Unexpectedly, Nabu-zer-kitti-lišir was executed here by the Elamite king Humban-hataš II (681–675). Seeing the fate of his brother, Nā'id-Marduk escaped and fled to Nineveh, begging for mercy and was named by Esarhaddon the king of the Sealand (Waters 2000: 37–40).

This policy of Esarhaddon calmed down tensions in Babylonia but failed to eradicate the anti-Assyrian sentiment, which the Elamite king Humban-hataš willingly nourished. ABC 1 iv 9–10 reports that Humban-hataš invaded Assyrian territory and raided the city of Sippar. The Elamites, who supported the insurrection of

Marduk-apla-iddina's son, Nabu-ušallim, aimed to take the Sealand and overthrow Na'id-Marduk. Letters SAA XVIII 86 and 87 report Elam's attempt to transfer some of the frontier territories to Nabu-ušallim, pressuring the Aramean tribes in the Sealand, but the tribes remained loyal to Esarhaddon.

Esarhaddon's interlude: a non-aggression treaty

Relations between Assyria and Elam started changing in 676. In this year Bel-iqša of the Gambulu tribe submitted to Assyria. In order to bring to an end to the instability in the Elamite-Assyrian frontier region, Esarhaddon reports that: "I strengthened the city Ša-pi-Bel, the city (which is) his strong fortress, and I put him together with his archers therein as a garrison and (thus) locked it (the fortress) up like a door against the land Elam" (RINAP 4 i iii: 80–83).

The situation in Babylonia also changed. Esarhaddon's support of the legitimate Babylonian king Na'id-Marduk was backed up by a sophisticated intelligence network. To help calm local tensions, the Assyrian king reinstated property that Babylonians had given to Elam in exchange for military aid (Frame 1992: 71) and further boasts of having carried out significant reconstructions of Babylonian temples.

These factors paved the way for a new phase of relations between Elam and Assyria. The new Elamite king Utrak (675–664) concluded a bilateral treaty of non-aggression with Esarhaddon dated to 674: "So that there would be no trespassing on the borders of their countries they (the Elamites and Gutians) sent their messengers (with messages) of friendship and peace to Nineveh, before me, and they swore an oath by the great gods." (RINAP 4 i v 30–33; cf. also SAA IV 74:2–4). The extant documents do not report any Assyrian campaign against Elam in the later period of Esarhaddon's reign, and it seems that this treaty transformed Assyrian-Elamite relations from open war to a situation of relative peace, as a letter sent by Esarhaddon to Utrak shows: "May Utrak, king of Elam, my brother, be well!" (SAA XVI 1:6). In sum, the decade 674–664 represents a short interlude of peaceful relations between Assyria and Elam regulated by the treaty of non-aggression, which according to the extant documents, is the only treaty concluded between both kingdoms.

Ashurbanipal's conquest of Elam

The relative calm in Babylonia and the non-aggression treaty with Elam enabled Ashurbanipal (669–631) to resume the campaigns against Egypt that his predecessor Esarhaddon had started. With the Assyrians engaged in Egypt, Elam became involved again in an anti-Assyrian revolt (Gerardi 1987: 120–214). Bringing to an end ten years of peace, the Elamite king Utrak transgressed the treaty, enticed by his general Marduk-šumu-ibni into joining a coalition composed of Bel-iqša, the chief of the Gambulu tribe, and Nabu-šumu-ereš, the governor of Nippur. A messenger of Ashurbanipal returning from Babylon reported that it had been taken by the rebels. In 664 Ashurbanipal marched to Babylonia (the first campaign against Elam; *BIWA B* §28–30). Utrak retreated with his troops, but Ashurbanipal pursued them, defeating the troops and driving Utrak back to the Elamite frontier. Utrak then died prematurely in Elam, and the country fell into anarchy, out of which emerged a new Elamite king: Te-umman (Waters 2000: 42–5).

Whereas Utrak's involvement in the anti-Assyrian revolt, as well as his retreat, followed the typical pattern of the previous Elamite kings, Te-umman (664–653) opened a new last chapter of Assyrian-Elamite interaction by involving Elam directly in the war against Assyria (the second campaign against Elam; *BIWA B* §31–35; SAA III 31), and ultimately bringing the destruction of Elam (the end of the Neo-Elamite II period). After ascending to power in 664, Te-umman began to eliminate any pretenders to the throne. The remaining members of the royal family, among whom were Utrak's sons Humban-nikaš and Tammartu, and numerous dignitaries sought asylum in Assyria, bringing a great gift to Ashurbanipal. Ashurbanipal's refusal to return the runaways at Te-umman's behest resulted in the exchange of a series of angry messages, and in 653 Te-umman began to mobilize his troops. After having received the confirmation from the gods, Ashurbanipal attacked Te-umman's troops at Til-Tuba, on the banks of the river Ulaia. Being better equipped, as depicted on the reliefs, the Assyrian troops trounced the Elamite army; Te-umman was captured and beheaded and his son Tammartu killed. Immediately after the defeat Ashurbanipal attacked Te-umman's ally Dunanu, chief of the Gambulu tribe (*BIWA B* §36–41). The Assyrian troops returned with immense booty to Nineveh, and Dunanu entered the city with Te-umman's head hanging around his neck. In contrast to the treaty concluded between Utrak and Esarhaddon, described as an agreement of friendship and peace (*mār šiprātišūnu ša fibi u salimnē*, literally "messengers of good and peace") and oath-taking (*šar . . . izkurū*, literally "they swore") (RINAP 4 i v 31, 33), Ashurbanipal's victory transformed Elam into one more fully-fledged vassal state bound to Assyria by means of an *adē*-treaty (*BIWA B* vii 6).

Ashurbanipal entrusted Elam to the sons of Utrak who had been living in exile in Assyria. The oldest, Humban-nikaš II, was installed on the throne of Madaktu and Tammartu I on the throne of Hidalu. This arrangement proved to be short-lived, and Elam was soon immersed in a series of insurrections and wars that ravaged the country for five years. Shortly after being installed on the throne, Humban-nikaš II (653–652) received a bribe from Ashurbanipal's brother Šamaš-šumu-ukin and joined the anti-Assyrian revolt in Babylonia. He not only helped mobilize troops in Babylonia but also urged Undasi, Te-umman's son who had survived the battle at Til-Tuba, to avenge his father's death by joining the anti-Assyrian campaign (*BIWA B* vii 23–24). Ashurbanipal assaulted the rebels in a battle in 652 at Hirru in the Diyala region (the third campaign against Elam; *BIWA B* §42–50) and the Babylonian-Elamite coalition was once again defeated. Undasi and his generals were decapitated. After the crushing defeat of the coalition, Ashurbanipal sent messengers to Humban-nikaš II, but received no answer. The defeat, coupled with the Assyrian pressure on Elam, triggered an internal insurrection in which Humban-nikaš II was murdered by his nephew Tammartu II (Potts 1999: 281). Tammartu continued the support of Šamaš-šumu-ukin in the bloody civil war against Ashurbanipal, but when Šamaš-šumu-ukin was overthrown by Indabibi in 650, Tammartu and his courtiers escaped to Assyria and kissed Ashurbanipal's feet, seeking mercy. Indabibi opted for peaceful relations with Assyria, releasing some Assyrian prisoners and paying tribute. When Ashurbanipal's appeals for the return of all runaways went unheeded, he determined to march against Elam. The approaching Assyrian army provoked the murder of Indabibi and installation of Humban-haltaš III (648–647), who continued the anti-Assyrian policy of his predecessors.

Meanwhile Babylon fell into Ashurbanipal's hands after two years of siege (650–648), and Šamaš-šumu-ukin died. After the conquest of Babylon, Ashurbanipal turned his full attention to Elam and conducted what was his fourth campaign to eradicate the remaining *nuclei* of resistance in Elam (BIWA F§18–24). Marching towards Elam, the Aramaean tribes surrendered, and he easily conquered the Elamite outpost of Bit-imbī. The fortress commander was beheaded and the remaining members of Te-umman's family who had survived the bloodshed at Til-Tuba were deported to Assyria. This campaign made the situation in Elam even less stable. Humbar-haltaš III residing in Madaktu was challenged by his rival Humban-habua residing in Babilu. Seeing the approaching Assyrian army both Humbar-haltaš III and Humban-habua fled. Ashurbanipal entered the city of Susa and made his last attempt to reorganize Elam by appointing the former king Tammartu II as king of Elam. However, his priming period at Nineveh proved insufficient, and shortly after his installation on the throne Tammartu betrayed Assyria. The annals attribute his removal from the throne to the gods Aššur and Ištar. Even though Tammartu humiliated himself and submitted to Assyria, Ashurbanipal did not reinstall him on the throne and Elam was left kingless.

Humbar-haltaš III took advantage of the anarchy in Elam after the departure of the Assyrian troops and returned from his concealment to Madaktu, forcing Ashurbanipal to organize his fifth campaign against Elam in 647 (BIWA F§25–35). Humbar-haltaš once again escaped from Madaktu as the advancing Assyrian army conquered one Elamite city after the other, including the royal residences Madaktu, Babilu, Kabnak, Susa and Dur-undasi. Humbar-haltaš fortified the fords of the river Idle in an attempt to stop the advancing Assyrian army, but after Ištar had appeared to his troops, Ashurbanipal crossed the river and Humbar-haltaš III again fled. On his way back, Ashurbanipal returned to Susa, destroyed the ziggurat, looted the royal palaces and brought enormous booty to Nineveh.

Even though Prism F describes the conquest of Susa as the definitive conquest of Elam, the Assyrians needed two more years to set Elam in order. After the departure of Ashurbanipal's army, Humbar-haltaš III returned from the mountains and again settled in Madaktu. The crucial role in suppressing the remaining opposition was played by Bel-ibni, the Assyrian general and governor of the Sealand, who made several minor invasions and raids aimed at disrupting the anti-Assyrian resistance in Elam (ABL 280, 281, 462, 792). Heavy Assyrian diplomatic pressure, combined with natural disasters (ABL 1000:5–11) and Bel-ibni's raids, provoked a revolt against Humbar-haltaš III (ABL 281:20; 460:7). Meanwhile, Assyria sought the extradition of the former governor of the Sealand, Nabu-bel-šumati, the grandson of Merodach-Baladan – called prostitute, the reject of Bel, one cursed by the gods – who since 651 had been encouraging anti-Assyrian rebellions siding with Šamaš-šumu-ukin and imprisoning Ashurbanipal's soldiers. He made several incursions into Assyrian territory, capturing the brother of general Bel-ibni. Ashurbanipal made it clear that the suffering of the Elamites was due to their support for Nabu-bel-šumati. As a result of Assyrian pressure, Nabu-bel-šumati committed suicide or was murdered (PNAE 2/II, 81–814). Humbar-haltaš III sent his corpse to Nineveh and then escaped to the mountains (BIWA A§61–63). Around 645 Humbar-haltaš was captured, probably in Ellipi (BM 124794), and together with other rebels brought to Nineveh where he was

publicly humiliated. His capture and the death of Nabu-bel-šumati marked the end of Elamite resistance (Dubovsky 2013). Ashurbanipal's final eradication of Elamite resistance and the looting of the capitals is presented as the end of Elam.

SUMMARY

Assyrian kings expanding their control over eastern territories inevitably clashed with Elamite interests. The royal inscriptions report at least 17 military encounters between Assyria and Elam (Table 16.1), which can be divided into three groups: pitched battles, Assyrian invasions of Elam and battles against anti-Assyrian coalitions.

Table 16.1 Reports on military encounters between Assyria and Elam in the royal inscriptions

No. Year	Assyrian King	Elamite King	Events	Type of conflict
1. 819	Shamshi-Adad V	unknown	Elam supported Babylonian king Marduk-balatsu-iqbi; the refugees went to Elam.	Elam part of anti-Assyrian coalition
2. 731–729	Tiglath-pileser III	Humbar-nikaš I	Assyrians controlled Elamite western frontier.	No resistance mentioned in the NA inscriptions.
3. 720	Sargon II	Humbar-nikaš I	According Assyrian sources Sargon won, according to ABCI Sargon lost.	Direct confrontation; Elam defeated according to NA sources.
4. 710	Sargon II	Šutruk-Nahhunte II	Assyrians captured Elamite fortresses and regained the control over Elamite western frontier. Šutruk-Nahhunte II avoided a direct battle in the Raši region.	Elam part of anti-Assyrian coalition
5. 708–707	Sargon II	Šutruk-Nahhunte II	Elam provided soldiers to protect Elliptian capital Murabištu. Assyrians captured the city.	Elam part of anti-Assyrian coalition

(Continued)

Table 16.1 (Continued)

No. Year	Assyrian King	Elamite King	Events	Type of conflict
6. 704-702	Sennacherib	Šutruk-Nahhunte II	Elam supported Marduk-apla-iddina's revolt by providing soldiers. Assyrians defeated the troops under the Elamite command at Cutha.	Elam part of anti-Assyrian coalition
7. 700	Sennacherib	Šutruk-Nahhunte II	Elam offered military support to Marduk-apla-iddina.	Elam part of anti-Assyrian coalition
8. 694	Sennacherib	Hallušu	Assyria stormed southern Elam; counter-attack of the Elamites; Sennacherib's reconquering of Babylonia.	Invasion
9. 693	Sennacherib	Kutur-Nahhunte II	Invasion of Elam, Kutur-Nahhunte II escaped, the first siege of the Elamite capital Madaktu.	Invasion
10. 691	Sennacherib	Humban-menana	Babylonian-Elamite coalition defeated at Halule.	Elam part of anti-Assyrian coalition
11. 680	Esarhaddon	Humban-haltaš II	Supporting Babylonian rebels (minor skirmishes); Humban-haltaš II executed Nabu-zer-kitti-lišir.	Elam part of anti-Assyrian coalition
12. 676	Esarhaddon	Humban-haltaš II	Assyria secured Elamite frontier by setting up the fortress Sa-pi-Bel.	Invasion
675	Esarhaddon	Urak	Non-aggression treaty	
13. 664	Ashurbanipal	Urak	Assyria defeated Babylonian-Elamite coalition.	Elam part of anti-Assyrian coalition
14. 653	Ashurbanipal	Te-umman	Elam was defeated at Til-Tuba, Te-umman was executed.	Direct confrontation

No. Year	Assyrian King	Elamite King	Events	Type of conflict
15. 652	Ashurbanipal	Humban-nikaš II	Assyria defeated Elamite-Babylonian coalition led by Šamaš-šumu-ukin at Hiritu.	Elam part of anti-Assyrian coalition
16. 648	Ashurbanipal	Indabibi	Peace with Assyria	
	Ashurbanipal	Humban-haltaš III and Humban-habua	Conquest of Bir-Ihbi; the Elamite kings escaped; Ashurbanipal entered Susa.	Invasion
17. 647	Ashurbanipal	Humban-haltaš III	The Elamite king escaped, Assyrians looted Susa and other cities.	Invasion

According to the royal inscriptions, the Assyrian and Elamite armies met in pitched battles only twice: in 720 Sargon II fought against Humban-nikaš I at Der and in 653 Ashurbanipal faced Te-umman at Til-Tuba. Whereas the results of the former were more than ambiguous, the latter represented the striking defeat of the Elamite royal army (BIWA B§31-35).

The second group of Assyrian-Elamite clashes is represented by the Assyrian invasions and conquests of the territories directly or indirectly controlled by Elam. The first Assyrian interference in Elamite affairs took place when Tiglath-pileser III took control over the western frontier that was under the Elamite sphere of influence (Brinkman 1986). This frontier, in fact, moved back and forth between Assyria and Elam a number of times (cf. RINAP 3/1 22 iv 55-61). A more serious interfering episode was the invasion of southern Elam by Sennacherib. The most severe intrusions were Assyrian invasions into the heartland of Elam resulting in conquest of the Elamite capitals Madaktu and Susa.

The above survey of Elamite-Assyrian relations pointed out that the most important characteristic of Elam through phases II-IV was its continuous support of anti-Assyrian rebels, in particular the Babylonians. Elam's siding with Babylonia was indeed a shift in Elamite international policy. Whereas in the second millennium, Babylonia and Elam had been often on antagonist terms, the rise of a common enemy Assyria - caused the two arch-enemies to become allies (Brinkman 1968: 315-318). Elamite support for the rebels came in the form of military help and in the providing of safe haven to political asylum seekers.

The first indication of Elamite military support to the Babylonian rebels is documented in the annals of Šamši-Adad V. The Babylonian king Marduk-balatsu-iqibi rallied the lands of Chaldea, Elam, Narni and Aram, employing the verb *deka* "to call up, levy" (RIMA 3 A.o.103.1 iv 40). The capacity of the Babylonian king to

muster Elamite troops changed and in the later period Elamite support was not given for free. Thus when Marduk-apla-iddina approached Šutruk-Nahhunte II for help against Sargon II's invading troops in 710–709, he sent a gift (*kadāni*), that is, a bribe (*ta'ana*) to buy the Elamite king's assistance (Ann. I. 309). Sennacherib's scribes also underlined that in order to seal their friendship (*ibritū*), Marduk-apla-iddina gave Šutruk-Nahhunte II gold, silver and precious gems (RINAP 3/I 1:7). In exchange for these gifts, the Elamite kings provided the Babylonians with archers, horses, wagons, commanders and even their best warriors. On some occasions, the Elamite kings even accompanied their troops in person. Elamite military support significantly amplified the effectiveness of the anti-Assyrian resistance. The deployment of the troops of local governors was nowhere near sufficient to defeat it, necessitating the involvement of the Assyrian royal army.

The second characteristic of Elam was its willingness to offer safe haven to anti-Assyrian rebels, welcoming them since Shamshi-Adad V's reign (RIMA 3 A.o. 103-4 21'3-4'). The most glaring example was Marduk-apla-iddina, who escaped to Elam in 709 after Sargon II's conquest of Dur-Ladina (Ann. I. 305–307) and would flee repeatedly to Elam and return to Babylon until his death. During Sennacherib's assault of Babylonia, there was a massive exodus and the fugitives settled down in southern Elam. However, the rebels were not welcome in all cases. When Mušezib-Marduk escaped to Elam during Sennacherib's eighth campaign, there was a conspiracy against him and he managed to return to Babylon (RINAP 3/I 22 v 26–30).

ELAM ACCORDING TO ASSYRIAN WRITINGS

Elam according to Assyrian royal propaganda

The previous section pointed out the complex relations between both kingdoms. Based on the nature of the evidence, it is only natural that the presentation of Elam in Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions was highly charged with royal propaganda.

Not even Elam could resist Assyria!

According to the royal inscriptions, Assyria was always the victor and Elam always the defeated (see Table 16.1), illustrating that not even one of the most powerful kingdoms was able to resist Assyria. The image of Elam as the overcome was enhanced by the reported effects of the Assyrian victories. Thus, for example, Sargon II claimed that his conquest of the Elliplian capital manned by the Elamite archers "poured out upon the entirety of the land of Elam deathly silence (*šabryta*)" (Fuchs 1994: 181). Similarly, Sennacherib's inscriptions comment: "I poured out awe-inspiring brilliance upon his ally, the king of the land Elam (Šutruk-Nahhunte II)" (RINAP 3/I 16 iv 63–64). Esarhaddon claimed that even the obstinate rulers, including those of Elam, were filled with fear and terror (RINAP 4 I v 26–29). In his letter to king Ashurbanipal, the god Aššur states that the Elamites trembled and shook before the king (SAA III 45:6').

Positive interpretation

In order to emphasize the overwhelming superiority and bravery of the Assyrians, the royal scribes always lay a positive stress upon Assyrian campaigns. For this reason

they did not hesitate to "adjust" the data (Laato 1995: 203–213). Thus Sargon's scribes attributed victory at Der in 720 to Assyria, while according to Babylonian chronicles Sargon II had instead lost (ABC I i 33–37). Similarly, according to Tiglath-pileser III's inscriptions, Elam had merely observed the Assyrian army marching along the border, whereas the letters point to a much less passive response, with incursions of the Elamite king into Assyrian-controlled territory.

Moreover, to interpret military campaigns positively, the Assyrian scribes presented each one as a definitive victory over their enemies. Yet the reconstruction of Ashurbanipal's campaigns against Elam, for example, showed that this was not always the case, and after five campaigns Assyria still needed two more years to track down the Elamite rebels.

Exceptionally, the royal inscriptions also reported cases when Assyria did not win, but did so only to demonstrate how difficult the battle was. The report on a partial defeat of Sennacherib's troops at Kish gave prominence to Sennacherib's bravery, even after Assyrian magnates had lost this battle, he was able to mobilize his troops and went on to defeat the rebels at Cutha. Thus, the Assyrians lost the battle but won the war (RINAP 3/I 1:21–33). In some cases, the Assyrian scribes also admitted that the bravery of Elam instilled fear among the Assyrians. By allowing Sennacherib to confess his fear of a harsh winter and opt for a retreat instead of continuing the siege of the Elamite capital Madaktu (de Miroschedi 1986), the royal scribes laid stress on the dangers of the campaign and on Sennacherib's wisdom and discernment (RINAP 3/I 35:23'–24').

The difficulties encountered in the campaigns in Elam are also used to highlight the Assyrian kings' bravery. For example, during campaigns against Babylonia in 704–702, Assyria had to face the coalition organized by the Elamite king. The scribes' descriptions give the impression of a massive and well-organized Elamite army with excellent commanders: "To the land of Sumer and Akkad, he (Šutruk-Nahhunte II) sent to his (Marduk-apla-iddina's) assistant [ance] Imbappa, [his] field marshal, [together with the massed body of] his [troops], Tannanu, [his] third man, ten unit commanders, including Nergal-nasir, a Sutan who is fearless in battle, 80,000 archers (and) [lancers, (and) the 850] wagons (and) horses that were with them." (RINAP 3/I 1:8–9). The bravery of ten Elamite commanders sent to fight against Assyria is highly valued "they did not know death", that is, they did not fear to die (RINAP 3/I 1:17). The positive evaluation of the enemy served to underline the invincibility of the Assyrian army and Sennacherib's fearlessness. Similarly, the description of Elamite troops and the fear of Ashurbanipal in facing Te-umman's army was intended to underline Ashurbanipal's piety: he received confirmation by Ishtar and the inscriptions report his long prayer (BIWA B533).

BELITTLEMENT AND VILIFICATION

Assyrian royal inscriptions not only overemphasized Assyrian victories but also intentionally belittled and vilified their enemies. In the case of Elam, it is possible to observe a gradually worsening presentation of Elamite troops and their kings.

Belittlement of the Elamite army

A neutral description of the Elamite army and warriors changed with Sennacherib's inscriptions. The first level of belittling was achieved by means of irony when

Sennacherib's scribes described the Elamite hero Humban-undāš and his magnates: "who . . . have reddish gold sling straps fastened to their forearms, like fattened bulls restrained with fetters." (RINAP 3/1 22 v 82-vi 1).

A higher level of belittling was achieved by means of metaphors describing Sennacherib's victory: "I slit their throats like sheep (and thus) cut off their precious lives like thread . . . I cut off (their) lips and (thus) destroyed their pride. I cut off their hands like the stems of cucumbers in season." (RINAP 3/1 22 vi 2-13). Even more naturalistic is the metaphoric description of soldiers' fear: "Their hearts throbbled like the pursued young of pigeons, they passed their urine hotly, (and) released their excrement inside their chariots." (RINAP 3/1 22 vi 30-32).

Belittlement of Elamite kings

The first negative comments on the Elamite king Šutruk-Nahhunte II appeared in Sargon II's annals. Sargon's scribes called him "enemy" (*nakru*; l. 382). A more negative evaluation represented Šutruk-Nahhunte II's failure to observe war ethics. When Marduk-apla-iddina sent him a bribe to obtain his support against Assyria, Šutruk-Nahhunte accepted money but out of fear did not come to help the Babylonians. Because of this, he was branded "evil, malevolent" (*šēnu*; Ann. l. 308-310).

Another way of belittling Elamite kings was to present them as cowards, who in order to save their own lives abandoned their people and cities and escaped to the mountains. The cowardice of the Elamite kings was a constant feature in Assyrian royal inscriptions. Thus, for example, Šutruk-Nahhunte II avoided confronting Sargon II in a pitched battle and left the Raši region in the hands of the Assyrian troops; Kurur-Nahhunte II, seeing Sennacherib's army, abandoned the capital Madaktu and escaped to save his life; Humban-haltaš III and Humban-habua disappeared like fish in the water (*BIWA F* iii 69) and escaped to the mountains avoiding the battle against Ashurbanipal (*BIWA F* §20-21).

According to Assyrian scribes the Elamite kings were not only cowards but, as Sennacherib's inscription illustrates, they did everything to save their own lives: "(As for) him, Umman-menanu (Humman-menana III), the king of the land Elam, along with the king of Babylon (and) the sheikhs of Chaldea who marched at his side, terror of doing battle with me overwhelmed them like *alā*-demons. They abandoned their tents and, in order to save their lives, they trampled the corpses of their troops as they pushed on." (RINAP 3/1 22 vi 24-29).

The scribes belittled the person of the king and commented on his judgment and behavior. Thus Sennacherib's scribes added spiteful notes on Humban-menana III: "After him, Umman-menanu, who does not have sense or insight, his younger brother, sat on his throne. (RINAP 3/1 22 v 14-16, cf. v 33-4); "That Elamite . . . accepted the bribe from them without thinking." (RINAP 3/1 22 v 40); "He . . . was a rash fellow who does not have sense or insight." (RINAP 3/2 230:1-16). Esarhaddon's scribes called Humban-haltaš II an obstinate ruler (RINAP 4 i v 26), while the scribes of Ashurbanipal considered Utrak an ingrate who did not appreciate what the Assyrian kings did for him (*BIWA B* iv 18-26; cf. also *BIWA B* vii 3-7), and Tammartu II was labelled a "dangerous rebel" (*BIWA F* iii 76).

The royal propaganda reported Te-umman's arrogant speeches (*BIWA B* v 2) and his obstinacy: "I will not [sleep until] I have come and din[le]d in the center of

Nineveh!" (SAA III 311:2-13). But the scribes did not stop at presenting Te-umman's arrogance; they indeed represented him as the apex of evil. Te-umman was the image of the *galla*-demons (*BIWA B* iv 74); he reflected evil (*BIWA B* iv 78). The gods punished his evil deeds by disfiguring his body, and Ishtar confused his mind. Yet despite all the signs and portents, he did not change his mind (*BIWA B* §32).

LETTERS

Evidently the image of Elam reconstructed from the royal inscriptions is only one side of the coin. Other extant Assyrian documents, in particular letters, help to expose the other side of the coin, that is, what Elam meant for the local governors, merchants, soldiers and so on.

Diplomatic and military background

The Assyrian letters, above all, enable one to reconstruct the background to military conflicts and diplomatic tensions that preceded, accompanied and followed the royal campaigns (Waters 1999). These letters resemble modern intelligence reports (Hong-geng 2004). The Assyrian agents reported on the movements of the Elamite kings, their army and magnates. For example, letters from Sargon II's reign give details of where the Elamite army was at a given time (SAA XV 111-115), report on Elamite efforts to mobilize troops and raise provisions for the army (SAA XV 129-130) and reveal the fear among Assyrian troops when they heard that the Elamite army was close to their camp: "You [know] that this pass [leading to] Urammu is [very] difficult [to march through]; there is absolutely no way the Elamite [troops] will be able to get at you. Don't be afraid; at the city of Urammu where you are to pitch the camp [there is] a plain which is [very] good for encamping; it is also [very] good for reconnaissance expeditions; there is [much] grass there, and it is a [good] place to rest." (SAA I 135-139).

Besides military intelligence, Assyrian letters bear witness to intricate diplomatic relations full of false or true accusations. Bel-ibni reported that he was falsely accused by Elamite emissaries and was afraid to come to the king (SAA XVII 52). In a similar way, the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal urged the Elamite elders to realize that their support of Nabu-bel-šumani was the root of Elamite destruction (Waters 2002). Similar reports have been preserved from Phases III and IV.

The royal inscriptions describe both military invasions and periods of peace between the kingdoms. Letters provide insights into the periods not mentioned in the royal inscriptions, demonstrating there were political tensions and even military clashes. For example, while royal inscriptions suggested that Elam's non-aggression treaty with Assyria ushered in a period of peace in 674-664, the letters point out that the peace was only relative. First, there were members of the Elamite royal family who did not agree with the treaty. They not only tried to incite the Elamite king to participate in another Babylonian rebellion but some also travelled to Babylonia to support the anti-Assyrian currents: "Last year after the palace supervisor and the magnates went down to Chaldea, the brothers of the king of Elam kept pushing and inciting the king (Utrak), their brother: 'Let's muster a camp and cross over to Chaldea and remove Chaldea from Assyria's control'. The king of Elam did not do wrong; he did not listen to them and did not [c]omply, but said, 'I will not disregard

the treaty? He [r]estrained them, (and) up to now he has not [...] but has stayed awake. They have been waiting for] their brother (to yield), however" (SAA XVIII 202-9-17). Moreover, the problems of fugitives who found their asylum in Elamite territory continued during the period of interlude (SAA XVIII 7).

These reports combined with queries to the gods (SAA IV 74, 139, 142, 144, 271, 273, 280, 281, 282, 289, 290) and prophecies about Elam (SAA IX 8) show that Elam represented a serious threat for the Assyrian Empire (Cooley 2015).

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Whereas the royal inscriptions and numerous letters focus mainly on military tensions, some letters show other aspects of Elamite-Assyrian relations. People (SAA XVIII 80), princesses (SAA XVIII 102), emissaries (SAA X 185), specialists (SAA X 160), sheiks (SAA XVII 154), and so on moved from one kingdom to the other, and the exchange of gifts, booty and goods between Assyria and Elam was conducted on a large scale (SAA VII 60; X 160; XVIII 112). Contracts even mention that Elamites were living in Assyria (SAA VI 287); they served in the Assyrian army (SAA XI 139) and court (SAA VII 149; 152). These examples illustrate that the military conflicts were only one side of the coin.

ABBREVIATIONS

- ABC Grayson, A.K. 1975. *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*. Locust Valley: Augustin.
- ABL Harper, R.F. 1892–1924. *Assyrian and Babylonian Letters belonging to the Kionymitik Collection(s) of the British Museum*, 14 vol. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ann Annals of Assyria.
- BIWA Borger, R. 1996. *Beiträge zum Inschriftenwerk Assurbanipals. Die Prismenklassen A, B, C, K, D, E, F, G, H, J und T sowie andere Inschriften*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- PNAE The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, Helsinki.
- RIMA The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian Period, Toronto.
- RINAP The Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period, Toronto.
- SAA State Archives of Assyria, Helsinki.

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