

35) A Greek substitute *šatammu* (temple dean) in Babylon in 125 BC — The constitution of Babylon in the Hellenistic and Parthian periods has been subject of debate since several decades. Cuneiform sources and in particular astronomical diaries and chronicles increasingly gave new input to the discussion. In his dissertation, Van der Spek (1986: 68-78; summarized in 1987) defended the idea of Antiochus' IV installation of a Greek community in Babylon with its own institutions next to the traditional Babylonian government structures. The Greeks were indicated as *pulišē* or *pulišānu*, probably representing the Greek word *polītai*, “citizens”, and they were first attested in the Astronomical Diaries under the reign of Antiochus IV (169 BC). Afterwards, more evidence concerning the *polītai* appeared. Tom Boiy (2004: 208) observed that one diary from the time of Antiochus III may mention the *polītai* in a break already in 187 BC. One Babylonian chronicle, BHP 14, even expressly says that a king Antiochus settled “Greek” *pulišānu*, in Babylon. Apparently these *polītai* were considered an ethnic group, though it might well be that some of these *polītai* were Hellenized Babylonians, who thus assumed a multiple identity (Van der Spek 2005 and 2009). These citizens had their meetings (assemblies) in the theatre (Van der Spek 2001). In important matters the king communicated with both communities. Letters were sent both to the *šatammu* and the *kiništu* and to the *pahātu* (‘governor’, Greek *epistatēs*) and the *polītai*.

However, as was observed by Roberto Sciandra (2012), we see that these citizens, headed by a governor, gradually became the main addressees of royal messages at the expense of the traditional Babylonian local authorities. So it seems that gradually the *epistatēs* and the *polītai* were considered the main authorities in Babylon. The temple was thus robbed of its political function.

This idea was further elaborated by Philippe Clancier (2012), who rightly criticized the use of the term “apartheid” by Van der Spek, as Hellenized Babylonians might belong to the group of “citizens”. Clancier called this community (or the entire city – in this he is not always consistent) *polis*. This is a term used by classicists to define the Greek independent city-state and as such it is established in the classical discourse. I have always found this confusing as a cursory reading of ancient Greek authors like Herodotus, Xenophon, Aristotle and Polybius shows that they used the word *polis* indiscriminately for all kinds of city: dependent, independent, Greek, Phoenician, Mesopotamian, with every conceivable constitution.¹⁾ Another objection is that it suggests that the Seleucid administration recognized “city status” of certain cities. This is a Medieval concept, not applicable to the Hellenistic kingdoms.²⁾ What the kings did in some cases is grant a new *politeia*, “citizenship; constitution”, with registered citizens, but these constitutions could differ widely and sometimes were hardly Greek, as is exemplified by Jerusalem, where the main authority remained with the high priest and the temple board (*gerousia*, *sanhedrin*), and by Babylon where the new citizens might be of Greek descent, but probably also comprised Hellenized Babylonians, where the council had a Macedonian name (*peliganes* – see BHP 18B:³⁾) and where Esagila remained the city’s main sanctuary. The foundation of a new Greek temple is not recorded, neither in excavations, nor in texts, and that is probably not accidental. The temple may indeed have been used by both *polītai* and indigenous Babylonians, esp. after 125 BC, when a Greek was appointed substitute *šatammu* of Esagila (Sachs & Hunger 1996: 270-1, No. -124A rev. 21).

We propose a new edition of the relevant passage in the diary:

-124A Abu (V) = August 12th – September 10th, 125 BC

- r18' ...ITU BI U₄ X^{kam} (?)¹ lú mu²-ma²-ir² KUR² URI²ki² U₄ x¹ [...]
- r19' [... 1-en x x x-a-a] U₄ šá² 1 ú-še-pe-eš² lú GAL.ERÍN^{mes} KUR URI^{ki} šá É 4 lú GAL.ERÍN^{mes} TA uru[S]e-
[lu-ke]-'a-'a¹ [šá ana muh-hi^{id} IDIGNA ana E^{ki} KU₄-ub lú ŠÁ.TAM É.SAG.GÍL]
- r20' [u^{luE}ki¹.MEŠ lú UKKIN šá É.SAG.GÍL 1-en GU₄ ú X (UDU.NITÁ) SISKÚR ma²]-ru-ú²-tú² ana NIDBA ana
tar-ša KÁ.^dLAMA-ra-bi U₄ GUB-zu-niš-šú¹ ana^d EN^d GAŠAN-ia DINGIR^{mes} GAL^{mes}? [ana bul-tu šá LUGAL
ú a-na bul-ti-šú GAR-an // DÚ-uš (uš-kin-nu)]
- r21' [ITU BI U₄ X^{kam} SAR.MEŠ šá LUGAL ina É IGI.DUH.A] šá-su-ú šá mun-nu-ú šá 1-en i-a '-man-ma-na-a³)
ina lú ŠÁ.TAM.MEŠ É.SAG.GÍL ku-um U₄ IGI² [...]
- r22' [...U₄ BI^{kam} SAR^{mes} šá LUGAL ina a-šar] MU-a-ti šá-su-ú um-ma ITU BAR² U₄ 25^{kam} uru Am-ma-ri-da^{ki} un²
[...]
- r23' [... U₄ ha-an-tiš ina UGU² la ta x x x KA x x^{mes}1 ú GIG^{mes} U₄ [...]
- r24' [ITU BI U₄ X^{kam} ... T]A² uru Se-lu-ke-'a-a šá ana muh-hi^{id} IDIGNA ana URU^{mes} šá KUR
Ma-da-a-a U₄ x¹ [...]

Translation

- r18' That month, /on the Xth day\ the satrap of Babylonia ? [...]
- r19' [...a certain X-aya (or: PN)] who represented⁴⁾ the general (*stratēgos*) of Babylonia of the province of⁵⁾ the four
generals, from Seleucia [which is on the Tigris entered Babylon. The *šatammu* of Esagila]

- r20' [and the Babylonians (of) the Assembly of Esagila] provided [1 bull and X] fattened? [sacrificial sheep] for him opposite the Gate of Lamassu-rabi [and he performed offerings] to Bēl, Bēltia and the great gods, [for the life of the king and for his (*own*) life (and prostrated himself).]
- r21' [That month, on day X, a parchment message of the king in the theatre⁶] was read about the appointment of a certain Greek to the office of *šatammu* of Esagila as substitute of /Bēl-lumur\ [the *šatammu*...]
- r22' [*That month, that day* a parchment message of the king] in this place (i.e. the theatre) was read as follows: “In the month Nisannu (I), on the 25th [day] (= May 10), the city Ammarida [...]
- r23' [...] quickly on [...] and sick? [...]
- r24' [In that month, on the Xth day, *the satrap (or general) of Babylonia*] from Seleucia which is on the Tigris to the province⁷) of Media x x [went out...]

At first sight it seems that the *šatammu* was replaced by the Greek person, but that is not the case. He took over duties of the *šatammu*, while the latter remained in office. We happen to know the name of this *šatammu*: Bēl-lumur. He is mentioned as *šatammu* in the famous Hyspaosines text (BOR 4, 132: 7, Schuol 2000: 31-34 [^{md}EN.IGI]) dated to 127 BC and in Astronomical Diary concerning 120 BC (ADART No. -119B1: 11 [^{mu}U.IGI]).⁸ Our document is dated in between, so it must concern Bēl-lumur and the traces indeed allow a reading ^{mu}U.IGI. Substitutes of *šatammus* are attested on other occasions as well. *Šatammu* Bēl-bullissu was represented at times by his brother Bēl-tabtan-bullit in the 80s BC. 9) A well-known example from the time of Antiochus IV (169 BC) is a Babylonian jeweller, who was the substitute of his brother in the office of *šatammu*, and was appointed *zazakku* by order of the king (cf. n. 4). In our case it is not a brother, but “a Greek”, apparently one of the *polītai*, probably of Greek descent indeed (why else would the diarist stress this?), possibly one of the Hellenized Babylonians. One might speculate that it was his duty to see to it that *polītai* could use the temple as their sanctuary. Whether they did offerings “in the Greek fashion” (as is mentioned on occasion in cuneiform sources since Antiochus I 10)) is difficult to say. A similar phenomenon is attested in Greek cities and villages in the Fayyum oasis and other places in Egypt, where Greeks and Egyptians alike worshipped indigenous Egyptian gods (Bowman 1986: 166-90).

Notes

1. Elaborately discussed in Van der Spek 1986: 45-54; summarily in 1987: 57-9 and 2012.
2. In the Roman period it is perhaps viable, as it is the Greek equivalent of the *municipium* or *civitas*. The Romans liked juridical distinctions between cities.
3. Suggestion Roberto Scandra, collated and so confirmed by Caroline Waerzeggers november 2008.
4. Same person mentioned in a diary of a year earlier: ADART -126B r2' [...lú x x]-⁷ -a-a šá ú-še-piš 4 ^{lu}GAL ERÍN.[MEŠ...]. For the construction *šá ú-še-piš ku-um*, ‘who acted as representative/substitute of’: ADART -141C: 11', -107C r16'; CT 49, 160: 2; Kessler 2000: 223, No. 17:4 (read *ku-um* instead of *dul-lu* in the break); a brother of the *šatammu šá ana ku-um-mi-šu* ^{lu}ŠA.TAM-ú-tu 'ú¹-[še-piš], ADART -168A r13'.
5. Lit.: ‘the general of Babylonia of the house (É, *bītu*) of the four generals’. For the meaning “area, region, province” see CAD B 292-3, s.v. *bītu* 5. However, the function occurs more often and in nearly all other cases the function is written: ^{lu}GAL.ERÍN^{mes} KUR URI^{ki} *šá ina muh-hi* 4 ^{lu}GAL.ERÍN^{mes}, ‘the general of Babylonia who is in charge of the four generals’. The construction with É occurs once more: ADART -229B obv. 9'. Mitsuma (2007) assumes that he was the supervisor of Upper Satrapies. This seems to be contradicted by AD -140A, r8: [...*m*]uh-hi 4 LÚ GAL ú-qu-tu šá KUR URI^{ki}, ‘in charge of the four generals of Akkad’. Whatever the case, the expressions are apparently synonymous.
6. For the theatre in Babylon see Van der Spek 2001.
7. For this translation consult Van der Spek 2016.
8. More information on the names of the *šatammus*: Van der Spek 2000.
9. CT 49, 160: 1-2; Kessler 2000: 223 No. 17: 4; Van der Spek 2000: 440 (cf. n. 4 above). The interpretation of the name, written ^{md}EN-tab-tan-TIN-it, is controversial. In van der Spek 2000 I read Bēl-tabtan-uballit, but the better reading is: Bēl-tabtani-bullit (‘Bēl, keep alive (whom) you have created’ - so an imperative (rather than *uballit*) for TIN is necessary; cf. CAD B 88, s.v. *banū* 3a-3'). The reading of AHW, Bēl-taptan(u)-bullit (from a supposed *taptānu*, derived from *patānu*, ‘to make strong’; AHW 1323a), is less convincing. Jursa writes the similar name ^{md}BE-tab-tan-TIN-it, as Ea-tabtanā-bullit (Jursa 2006: 145 (CT 49, 126:2) et *passim*). Whatever the case: final vowels were not pronounced anymore in Late Babylonian; the scribes consistently write *tab-tan*, so to avoid problems. I follow the scribes: Bēl-tabtan-bullit.
10. BCHP 6; other references mentioned in the commentary.

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- 2016. 'Madinatu = URU.MEŠ, "satrapy, province, district, country", in Late Babylonian.' *AfO* 53: 110-116.

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