

14) Cyrus defeat of Nabonidus – The final defeat of Nabonidus by Cyrus occurred when Sippar fell to Cyrus without a battle and Nabonidus fled: A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* (TCS 5) p. 109 14-15. The preceding passage has caused translators no problems, but there are serious difficulties when the context is studied. Grayson reads and renders:

- 12 ... ina ^{iti}Tašrīti ^mku-raš ṣal-tum ina Upê^{ki} ina muhhi [...]
 13 ^ídī-dīq-lat ana libbi ummāniⁿⁱ ^{kur}Akkad^{ki} ki īpušū^{šú} (erasure) nišu^{meš}
^{kur}Akkad^{ki}
 14 BALA.KI hubta (SAR) ihbut (SAR) niše^{meš} idūk ...

“In the month Tishri when Cyrus (II) did battle at Opis on the [bank of] the Tigris against the army of Akkad, the people of Akkad retreated. He carried off the plunder (and) slaughtered the people.”

J.-J. Glassner, *Chroniques mésopotamiennes* (Paris, 1993) p. 204 agrees:

“Au mois de Tešrit, Cyrus ayant livré bataille à l’armée d’Akkad à Upû, sur la [rive] du Tigre, le peuple d’Akkad reflua. Il se livra au pillage et massacra la population.”

The problems of this passage were brought to my attention by Shabrokh Razmjou, who was advising Cyrus Kar, an American filmmaker preparing a documentary film about Cyrus II. The main problem is that according to the accepted translation Cyrus defeated the Babylonian army at Opis, whereupon the people of the town withdrew, Cyrus plundered (presumably the town Opis) and slaughtered the population.

The difficulty is that after defeating the Babylonian army it appears that nothing more was done about that army, but instead the local town was looted and the population slaughtered. “Akkad” means “Babylonia,” but while “the army of Akkad” is an appropriate designation for Nabonidus’ troops, “the people of Akkad” should then mean “the people of Babylonia,” which is absurd. There was no non-Babylonian population around Opis or Sippar. A solution which makes perfect sense is to take *nišū* in the common meaning “men” to refer to the Babylonian army. Cyrus did battle with the Babylonian army at Opis, that army retreated, Cyrus looted their camp, then he caught up with them and defeated them.

The verb *dāku* for “defeat” is well known, and while it also has a sense “kill,” “slaughtered” and “massacra” are exaggerations. *CAD N/II* p. 286 accepts the meaning “workmen, soldiers” for *nišū*, but the more concise *CDA* p. 255 stays with “people” and does not specify.

Thus the translation of the passage should read:

“In Tishri when Cyrus did battle with the army of Akkad at Opis, on the [bank] of the Tigris, the soldiers of Akkad withdrew. He (Cyrus) took plunder and defeated the soldiers (of Akkad).”

The brevity of the last sentence is characteristic of the style of these late Babylonian chronicles.

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