

The use of Akkadian lišānu "tongue," and of ša lišāni "the one of the tongue," to describe an informer is well known.¹ It should be clear, however, that the lišānu or ša lišāni need not be translated "agent" or "spy." Thureau-Dangin was perhaps more accurate when he referred to those designated by this term as "des hommes qu'on puisse faire parler sur la situation de l'ennemi."² This interpretation gains support from the association of the phrase with dābibu, which CAD renders "talkative, gossip person."³ For example, part of a Mari letter published in RÉS 1937, 110:10 reads as follows: 1 LÚ ša lišānim lilqūnimma pēm dābibam bēlī lišta'al "let them bring (to the king) an informer so that my lord may interrogate a speaker willing to talk."⁴

¹ See A. L. Oppenheim, "The Archives of the Palace of Mari," JNES 11 (1952), p. 113, and AHw., p. 556. The equation of Akkadian ša lišāni with Hebrew לִשְׁאֵן לִשְׁאֵן has already been made by H. Holma, Die Namen der Körperteile im Assyrisch-Babylonischen (Leipzig, 1911), p. 27. For further references to Hebrew לִשְׁאֵן לִשְׁאֵן (=slanderer), see G. A. Cooke, A Textbook of North-Semitic Inscriptions (Oxford, 1903), p. 166, and N. H. Tur-Sinai, The Book of Job: A New Commentary (Jerusalem, 1967), p. 105.

² F. Thureau-Dangin, "Textes de Mâri," RA 33 (1936), p. 175.

³ CAD, D, p. 16. For the feminine dābibtu, see M. Held, "A Faithful Lover in an Old Babylonian Dialogue," JCS 15 (1961), p. 19.

⁴ Cf., CAD, D, p. 16.

While this phrase is well attested in Akkadian literature⁵ it has, however, been overlooked in ABL 262,⁶ the pertinent lines of which read as follows: ina libbišunu ana niši qīpānu altakan ardāni ša šarri miqitti ina libbi yānu utēra⁷ u 7 ina libbišunu lišānu kī ašbata⁸ ana šarri bēliya altapra LÚ rīmi ša PN mār PN₂ LÚ šangū ša dšamaš šunū šarru liš'alšunūti (Rev. 11. 7-11) "In their midst I appointed servants of the king as governors over the people. There is no breakdown in the city. I returned and when I seized seven informers among them, I sent them to the king my lord. (Among them) are the friend of PN and the son of PN₂ the šangū-priest of šamaš. Let the king interrogate them!"

The above should be compared with the following passage in a Mari letter: ina bāb Mankisim ša lišānim ilqūnim anumma ištēn ša lišānim ana šēr bēliya uterri bēli lištālšu (RA 33, 174) "(Sixty of my lord's men along with sixty men of Babylon) have gone and taken an informer for me in the gate of Babylon. I am bringing him to my lord. Let my lord interrogate him!"

A comparison of both passages shows that the same state of affairs is being described. Captives who can be relied upon to reveal pertinent information when interrogated are forwarded to the king for that purpose.

The second case of lišānu to be discussed is more problematic. It is found in a kudurru dating from the reign of Nabû-šum-iškun.⁹ This particular kudurru confers certain privileges on a priest. It concludes with a series of curses on anyone who would profane the kudurru in various ways. Among the possibilities suggested is lū lišān limuttim ana muḫḫi uma'aruma anāku lā īdi iqabbū ilānu mala ina muḫḫi narī annī šuršudū nanzazu liḫalliq pirī'šu.¹⁰ Thureau-Dangin translated: "Celui qui...enverrait (à sa place) pour cela quelque malandrin ('mot à mot: une mauvaise langue') puis dirait: 'Moi je n'en sais rien' que tous les dieux presents

⁵ See AHW., p. 556.

⁶ As translated by L. Waterman in Royal Correspondence of the Assyrian Empire, I (Ann Arbor, 1930), p. 177.

⁷ For tāru-turru, see GAG, #184d.

⁸ Note ṣabātu for leqū. Cf., Late Hebrew צַוָּת for Biblical מַלְאָכִים. Note Rashi's identification in his commentary to Isaiah 6:6.

⁹ VAS 1, No. 36. Translated by Thureau-Dangin in "Un acte de donation de Marduk-zākir-šumi," RA 16 (1919), pp. 141ff.

¹⁰ With pir'u-pirḫu meaning "offspring, progeny," compare Rabbinic כְּהוֹנָה Mishnah Yoma 7:1, Sanhedrin 9:6, Middot 3:8, Tamid 1:1, and Sukkah 8:2.

sur cette stèle perdent sa postérité."¹¹ He thus saw in lišān lemuttim a person sent to do the dirty work of destroying the kudurru.

An argument for this interpretation here could be made by appealing to a somewhat similar statement in an inscription of Adad-Nirari I:¹² aššum errēti šinātina nakara aḥa ayāba lemna lišāna nakirta...uma'aruma ušāḥazu "if, on account of these curses, he instigates and sends an enemy, a foe, a hostile adversary or a scoundrel (to destroy the inscription)."¹³ In this latter example, the lišāna nakirta is obviously a person. This is clear from his being sent (w/mu'uru) along with the nakaru, the aḥū and the ayābu.

The following should be noted, however, as regards our passage. The verb w/mu'uru is not restricted to the sending of concrete objects but may be used for directing orders, messages and the like.¹⁴ Secondly, the phrase lā īdi iqabbū seems to be a direct quotation of the speaker rather than that of any "malandrin" sent by him. Bearing these in mind, we turn to two statements of Aššurnāširpal: (1) u ša mamma amat limutti iḥassasma ana epšētiya u šalmiya uma'aru anāku lā īdi iqabbū (AKA 251:80-83) "or whoever contrives and directs an evil plot against my works and against my stela and says 'I know nothing.'" (2) ša narā emmaruma annā mīna iqabbū (AKA 172:18-19) "whoever shall see this stela and shall say 'What is this?'"

Both of Aššurnāširpal's warnings are directed against a person who would seek to avoid the effects of the curse placed on the stela by the subterfuge of feigned ignorance. The lā īdi of the kudurru passage should be placed in the same category. This hypothesis gains in probability when we compare the passage with one in the Aramaic of Sefîre:¹⁵

¹¹ Cf., the translation in CAD, A², p. 320: "or sends a false witness."

¹² E. Ebeling, B. Meissner, and E. Weidner, Die Inschriften der altassyrischen Könige (Leipzig, 1926), p. 64. For a later personification of the tongue, note אִל לִישָׁנָא בִישָׁא "a slanderer went" (TP Nazir 5:3).

¹³ Cf., CAD, A¹, p. 222.

¹⁴ See CAD, A², p. 319ff.

¹⁵ Text of J. A. Fitzmyer, The Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefîre (Rome, 1967), pp. 98-100.

והן ירב בר[י] זי ישב על כהסאי¹⁶
 חד אחוה או יעברנה לתשלח לשנך
 בניהם ותאמר לה קחל אחך...
 ולתשלח לשן בביתי ובני בני...
 ותאמר להם קתלו מראכם¹⁷ והוי
 חלפה

"If one of my sons who succeeds me quarrels with one of his brothers and would remove him, you shall not intrigue between them saying to him (the one in power) 'kill your brother' You shall not intrigue in my household nor with my grandsons ...saying to them 'kill your lord and be his successor.'"¹⁸

The Aramaic שלח לשן is the exact equivalent of the Akkadian lišāna w/mu'uru. Both literally mean "to send, to direct, a tongue."¹⁹ The idiom as used in both of these cases means "to intrigue, to plot cunningly." Accordingly, the phrase in the kudurru in question should be translated "...if he evilly intrigues against it and says 'I did not know.'"

¹⁶ For this form of the word for "throne," see Fitzmyer, p. 115. The idiom employed here corresponds to the well known Akkadian idiom ina kussî ašābu. In addition to occurrences listed in CAD, A², pp. 391-92, add RA 33, p. 177; OIP 2 41, Col. V:14-16; D. J. Wiseman, Chronicles of Chaldean Kings (London, 1961), p. 50:14-15. Note that the preposition employed here is על rather than ב, which corresponds to Akkadian ina. This is in keeping with Hebrew ישב על כסא (e.g., Deuteronomy 17:18, I Kings 1:20, 27, 46; 2:12, 24; 8:20; Jeremiah 22:2 etc.), Phoenician ישב על כסא (KAI 24:9), Yaudi ישב על משב (KAI 214:8) (on which see H. L. Ginsberg, "Aramaic Studies Today," JAOS 62 [1942], p. 233, n. 24) and Amarna ašbāta eli kussî abīka (EA 33:10-11).

¹⁷ Cf., the similar statement attributed to Abdi-Asirta in EA 81: 12 dūkūmi bēlkunu.

¹⁸ See Fitzmyer, "A Further Note on the Aramaic Inscription Sefîre III 22," JSS 14 (1969), p. 200.

¹⁹ With Fitzmyer, Sefîre, p. 116, cf., Hebrew שלח פה (Psalm 50: 19). In addition to his biblical examples in which "tongue" is figuratively used as an instrument of slander, note the Rabbinic statement לשון קטיל חליהאי, "The slanderous tongue kills three people" (TB Arakin 15a).