

THE ELAMITE GOD *d.GAL*

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As early as in 1892, P. Jensen¹ had assumed that the Elamite god written with the sumerogram DINGIR.GAL meaning "God-Great" was *Humban* and that, therefore, the name of the Elamite king Untash.d.GAL (of the thirteenth century B.C.) should be read Untash-Humban. In 1916 G. Hüsing² discussed the problem in some detail reaching the same conclusion. The same position was held by F. W. König³ in 1924 as against E. F. Weidner,⁴ who had proposed to equate the logogram d.GAL with god *Hutran*, yet leaving the decision to the Elamologists. G. G. Cameron in his *History of Early Iran*, which was first published in 1936, had at that time without any misgivings accepted Jensens' and Hüsing's proposition.⁵

Yet this was recently called in question by Père M.-J. Steve.⁶ The French Archaeological Mission in Iran had unearthed in Chogha Zanbil (25 miles SSE. from Susa) a few bricks mentioning king Untash.d.GAL as the founder of a temple dedicated to the god d.*hu-um-ban*, although the main building in Chogha Zanbil, the *ziqurrat* itself, had later been dedicated by the same king Untash.d.GAL to the gods Inshushinak and *d.GAL*. "From this, one could suppose that there was one temple (or several) of *GAL* and a temple of *Khumban*," wrote R. Labat in one of his recent contributions to the revised edition of *The Cambridge Ancient History*.⁷ "It should also be noted that in [the personal name] *Khumban-numena*, *Khumban* is always written syllabically whereas in the names of his successors Untash-(*d*)*GAL* and Unpatar-(*d*)*GAL*, the divine element is always written with the logogram *GAL*." Nevertheless, R. Labat holds: "Despite this, Hüsing's arguments still seem conclusive, until a more definite reason can be brought against them, that *GAL* and *Khumban* represent one and the same god."

In fact, we have to cope with a two-sided problem. One side of the problem is the question: who *was* the Elamite god meant by the sumerogram DINGIR.GAL? On the other hand we must ask: how did the Elamites pronounce this sumerogram?

Since DINGIR.GAL means "God-Great", it stands to reason that one has to look out for the dominant figure in the Elamite pantheon in order to equate this figure with the god meant by our logogram. From the oldest document of Elamite history, viz., the treaty concluded between the king of Akkade Narām-Sîn and an Elamite king of Awan (possibly Hita), which can be dated approximately 2260 B.C., there results an Elamite pantheon of more than thirty gods and goddesses.⁸ In this pantheon the foremost male godhead is *Humban*. After more than fifteen centuries, towards 710 B.C., prince Hanne

¹ *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, VI (Vienna, 1892), p. 61.

² *Die einheimischen Quellen zur Geschichte Elams*, (Leipzig, 1916), p. 95.

³ *Archiv für Orientforschung*, II (Berlin, 1924-1925), 130-31.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁵ The author consistently wrote Untash-Huban (p. 100 ff.).

⁶ *Iranica Antiqua*, II (Leiden, 1962), 57.

⁷ "Elam c. 1600-1200 B.C." (Cambridge, 1963), p. 28.

⁸ Cf. my contribution "Persia c. 2400-1800 B.C." to *The Cambridge Ancient History*, rev. ed. of Volume I, Chapter xxiii (Cambridge, 1963), p. 21 f., and my *Das Reich Elam* (Stuttgart, 1964), p. 35 ff.

of Ayapir/Mālamir (Izeh) still calls Humban "the greatest of the gods."⁹ It was and is, therefore, logical to assume that Elam's Great God was no other than Humban.

This reasoning is corroborated by certain Elamite administrative documents from Susa published by Père V. Scheil.¹⁰ They contain eight personal names in which *hu-ban* interchanges with d.GAL:

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|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Tablet No. 259, obv. line 7: | d.šá-ti.d.GAL |
| Tablet No. 108, rev. line 9: | šá-ti-hu-ban |
| Tablet No. 281, lines 7-8: | d.GAL.a-h-[pi]-ri šá-ak-ri |
| Tablet No. 37, obv. line 9: | DUMU hu-ban-a-h-pi |
| Tablet No. 282, line 6: | d.GAL.nu-kaš |
| Tablet No. 4, line 2: | hu-ban-nu-kaš |
| Tablet No. 280, line 4: | d.GAL.taš |
| Tablet No. 138, obv. line 9: | hu-ban-taš |

Since no similar combinations happen to occur with regard to names of gods other than Humban, it seems safe to infer that the logogram d.GAL actually *means* god Humban.

And now to our second question: how did the Elamites *pronounce* the said logogram?

Curiously enough syllabic writings of Humban's name appear more or less confined to the beginning and to the end of Elam's history. During the second millennium B.C. the name of the highest Elamite male godhead has evidently been tabooed. Exceptions to this taboo are: a few personal names, three from Old Babylonian times (first half of the second millennium), viz., Kuk-Humban, Simut-Humban, and Humban-...,¹¹ and one from the thirteenth century, Humban-numena, the father of king Untash.d.GAL. The taboo was again violated when the last-mentioned king started his building activities at Chogha Zanbil. From the remnants of the first, provisional sanctuary dedicated to Humban, which was later superseded by an elaborate temple adjoining the inner wall of the *ziqurrat*, the French Mission recovered four bricks giving the full name of the god: d.hu-um-ba-an.⁶ But this was an exception. A century later, King Shilhak-Inshushinak mentions a d.hu-ban-e-lu,¹² whoever this god may have been. Barring these exceptions, the taboo was strictly observed, until it was, by the end of the eighth century B.C., more or less disregarded.

Until some time ago I held that this tabooing of Humban was restricted to the *writing* DINGIR.GAL only and that the Elamites *spoke* of their king Untash.d.GAL simply as of Untash-Humban. G. G. Cameron, however, strongly doubted this in several letters, and I now think that he is right. He kindly referred me to an immunity grant delivered by the Elamite Grand-Regent Kuk-Nashur, a contemporary of Ammišaduqa of Babylon. The tablet in question, found at Dilbat in Mesopotamia, was autographed and transliterated by A. Ungnad.¹³ V. Scheil¹⁴ improved on the reading of lines 20-21, which

⁹ Cf. my contribution "Die elamischen Inschriften des Hanne" to *A Locust's Leg—Studies in Honour of S. H. Taqizadeh* (London, 1962), p. 107.

¹⁰ *Mémoires de la Délégation en Perse*, Vol. IX (Paris, 1907).

¹¹ *Mémoires*, Vol. XXVIII (Paris, 1939), No. 396:4 and No. 471:11; Vol. XXIII (Paris, 1932), No. 285, rev. line 4.

¹² F. W. König, *Corpus Inscriptionum Elamitarum* (Hannover, 1923), No. 47:64. In his recently pub-

lished book, *Die elamischen Königsinschriften* (= *AFO*, Beiheft 16 [Graz, 1965]), F. W. König says (p. 39, n. 10): "Wie der Name des Gottes 'GAL ('der Grosse') ausgesprochen wurde, ist noch unbekannt, aber nicht Humban, s.S.118, Anm.6"

¹³ *Vorderasiatische Schriftdenkmäler*, Heft VII (Leipzig, 1909), No. 67; *Beiträge zur Assyriologie*, VI Heft 5 (Leipzig, 1909), p. 3.

¹⁴ *Mémoires*, Vol. XXIII (Paris, 1932), 150.

run: *i-na a-ma-at ili*(DINGIR) *ra-bi-'i'.*[*im*] *ù d.Inšušinak*. This provides an important parallel to the immunity grant from Susa published by V. Scheil,¹⁵ which reads in line 24: *i-na a-wa-at d.GAL ù d.Inšušinak*. In a letter dated May 19, 1964, G. G. Cameron wrote: "It seems to me that this is just as positive (if not more so) evidence that *d.GAL* was interpreted as 'the great god' in Elam as the same writing would be in Mesopotamia."

My former reluctance to accept this inference stemmed from the fact that no *Elamite* parallel to Akkadian *ilu rabû* (= Sumerian DINGIR.GAL) seemed to be available. In the Elamite language "great god" would be composed of *nap* or *napir*, "god," and *riša* or *rišarra*, "great." These two words occur combined for the first time under Darius the Great, e.g. in the first lines of the Elamite version of his two tomb inscriptions at Naqš-e Rostam near Persepolis: there *d.na-ap-ir-šá-ir-ra* renders Old Persian *baga wazrka*, "the Great God," with reference to Ahuramazdā, the god of Zarathuštra. In Elamite texts proper no such term has shown up until the present day. I may safely say so having just finished the manuscript of my *Elamischer Wortschatz*, which contains every single Elamite word published so far.

While collecting, however, as an addition to my dictionary, the Elamite personal names contained in the Akkadian documents from Susa, I came across an individual whose name is liable to settle the dispute.

The name referred to is one of the frequent compounds of the Elamite element *kuk* (meaning probably something like "cover, protection" = Akkadian *puzur*), with the name of a godhead, e.g. Kuk-Simut, Kuk-Kirwesh, Kuk-Nashur, Kuk-Nahhunte, Kuk-Inshushinak. The name occurs in two tablets from Susa which are to be dated in the early *Sukkal-mah* period (eighteenth century B.C.); it reads *ku-uk.na-pi-ri-ša*.¹⁶ On this evidence it seems necessary to read *d.GAL* as *napiriša* and to call King Untash.*d.GAL* from now on Untash-napirisha, i.e. "Me-helped-the-great-God."

Keeping this in mind, I should like to refer to an Assyrian text published in 1936 by W. von Soden.¹⁷ In line 65 there occur several Elamite gods whose names he transliterated as follows: "ilu[*I*]a-ab-ru ilu^{11u}Hum-ba ilu^{11u}Nap-ru-šú." Yet one might suggest a slightly different transliteration, viz., ilu^{11u}Hum-ba-an nap-ru-šú. The same transliteration is given by Erica Reiner, who reads in Tablet II, line 163 of the *Šurpu* series:¹⁸ ^aHum-ba-'an' ^rNap¹-ru-šú. The sign AN cannot be the DINGIR sign since Commentary C of her edition¹⁹ omits in line 52 the AN sign altogether, reading ^aHum-ba Nap-ru-ši. Thus Naprušu finds himself reduced from the rank of a self-supporting godhead to a mere qualification of god Humban. But *which* qualification?

As W. von Soden had already surmised,²⁰ Naprušu may be identical with Nap-ri-iš, Na-ap-riš, and Na-ap-ri-si. My Assyriological colleague in the University of Göttingen, R. Borger, has kindly supplied me with the following appraisal of the relevant Akkadian sources:

"For ^aNap-ri-iš see R. Frankena (*Tākkultu* [Leiden, 1954], p. 8, IX:10, cf. p. 105), for ^aNa-ap-riš and ^aNa-ap-ri-si see L. W. King (*Cuneiform Texts*, Part XXV [London, 1909], plate 7, K 7662, lines 1 and 2, cf. C. Frank, *ZA* 28, p. 327). Since none of these

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, No. 282.

¹⁶ *Mémoires*, Vol. X (Paris, 1908), No. 100, Pl. 8, obv. line 8; No. 122, rev. line 8.

¹⁷ *ZA*, XLIII (Berlin/Leipzig, 1936), 1-31.

¹⁸ *Šurpu—A Collection of Sumerian and Akkadian*

Incantations = AfO, Beiheft 11 (Graz, 1958), p. 17, line 163.

¹⁹ Published by Gerhard Meier in *AfO*, XII (Berlin, 1937-1939), 242.

²⁰ *ZA*, XLIII, 30.

texts hints at an Elamite god being meant, it is an open question whether they belong here at all. Yet if so, they would show that the Akkadians took Napriš for a separate godhead, distinct from Humban.

“The situation is different as regards those Akkadian sources which mention definitely Elamite gods. For the sake of clarity I here again give the relevant quotations:

- 1) W. von Soden, *ZA* 43, p. 18, line 65: ^d[I]a-ab-ru ^dḪum-ba ^dNap-ru-šú;
- 2a) E. Reiner, *Šurpu*, plate II:163 (p. 17, cf. p. 55): ^dIa-ab-ru ^dḪum-ba-^{an} ^{an}Nap-ru-šú;
- 2b) G. Meier, *Afo* 12, p. 242:52 = E. Reiner, *loc. cit.*, p. 51:52: ^dIa-ab-ru ^dḪum-ba Nap-ru-ši.

“Since in 2b) *Nap-ru-ši* clearly lacks the divine determinative DINGIR (AN), E. Reiner drew in 2a) [a quotation to which 2b) gives an Assyrian commentary] justly the AN sign to the preceding word, reading it *-an*, not ^d. This is perfectly legitimate as both writings—Ḫumban and Ḫumba—are vouchsafed for. In 1) one has correspondingly to read *-ba-an Nap-* instead of *-ba ^dNap-*. Thus all of the three quotations make Naprušu/i follow, without the divine determinative, immediately after Ḫumba(n). The conclusion seems, therefore, inevitable that the sources in question mention no separate godhead Naprušu, but add only an epitheton to the name Ḫumba(n), viz., Ḫumban-Naprušu/i. One may, of course, object that the Assyrian author of the text mentioned under 2b) was of a different opinion, for in his comments he equated Iabru with Anu, Ḫumba with Ellil, and Nap-ru-šá (*sic*—but again without the divine determinative) with Ea. Yet I hold that the commenting ‘wisdom’ of the Assyrian priests should be outweighed by the original text they quote.”

So far my colleague R. Borger. Summing up all the available evidence, it seems safe to see in *naprušu* merely a qualification of Humban. Erica Reiner had justly remarked that “the name may be Elamite, meaning ‘great god,’”²¹ in correct Elamite: *napiriša*. Seen from this angle, the Akkadian quotation ^d*Humban Naprušu* turns out to be in reality an Elamite compound, viz., *d.Humban-napiriša*, being the plain but important statement: “Humban, the ‘Great God.’”

The solution to our problem would thus be that the Elamites wrote DINGIR.GAL; that they pronounced it *napiriša*; and that they meant by it Humban, their Great God.

²¹ *Šurpu*, p. 55.