Two New Neo-Elamite inscriptions on Silver Rhytons

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A large number of silver objects (rhytons, bowls, plates, figurines etc.) were found in 1934 in a cave near Khorramabad in Southern Luristan (Mahboubian, 1995), and a similar hoard was found 1989 in Kalmakarra cave, near Pol-e Dokhtar, also in the Luristan province (Khosravi, Kouhpar, Neyestani, Nobari, 2010). The objects belong to the so-called 'Median style,' with both hoards to be dated to the late 7th–early 6th centuries BCE. Many objects bear Neo-Assyrian, Aramaic and Neo-Elamite inscriptions (Lambert at Mahboubian, 1995; Khosravi, Kouhpar, Neyestani, Nobari, 2010). Only three of these Neo-Elamite inscriptions have so far been fully published (Donbaz, 1996; Vallat, 2000). The two inscriptions published by Donbaz are identical: one on a silver rhyton and a second on a silver vase, both written in the name of Ampirish son of Dabala, king of Samati. The third inscription, published by Vallat, is an inscription of Lalintash son of Ayaunukash (for this reading see Cifuentes, 2006) on a silver rhyton.

Two more silver rhytons with golden lion heads from this group, are now to be found in the private collection of David Sofer, one of which is on display at The Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem. Both vessels bear identical Neo-Elamite inscriptions written on the inner upper edge of the rhytons, this also bearing the same text as that published by Donbaz. The language of the inscriptions is Royal Achaemenid Elamite.

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Below transliterations of the the rython inscriptions of Donbaz (Inscriptions A and B, with the David Sofer rhytons as C and D, inscription C being the rhyton now at The Bible Lands Museum, photos pls. 1-2, drawings by Leah Uchitel pl. 3):

A. "am-pi-ri-iš SUNKI sa-ma-tur-ra [DUMU] da-ba-[la-na]
B. "am-pi-ri-iš SUNKI sa-ma-tur-ra DUMU da-ba-la-na
C. "am-pi-ri-iš SUNKI sa-ma-tur-ra DUMU da-ba-la-na
D. "am-pi-ri-iš SUNKI sa-<ma>-tur-ra DUMU da-ba-la-na

A composite edition in normalized Elamite transcription with English translation reads as follows:

Ampiriš sunki Samatu-r(a) šak Dabala-na

Ampirish, king of Samatu, son of Dabala.

The Bible Lands inscription (C) is executed with neat cuneiform characters of the Royal Achaemenid Elamite form, but the inscription D was made by an illiterate artist: most of its signs are very distorted and some of them are hardly recognizable, and the sign ma in Samaturra is omitted.

**Commentary**

The name Ampirish is Iranian, and can be analyzed as Old Persian "hamfriya- - "love
exchanger" (Hinz, 1975).

The sign *SUNKI* is the Sumerian numeral 200, realized in cuneiform according to the sexagesimal system \((60 \times 3 + 10 \times 2)\), which for some unknown reason was used in the Elamite as a logogram *sunki* – "king".

The ending *-rra* in *Samaturra* is the Elamite animate singular delocutive *-r*, which was regularly used in Middle Elamite for the formation of the possessive construction. In Royal Achaemenid Elamite it was usually replaced by the genitive, but occasionally was still used with place-names, for example in an expression *sunki Parsinikka* – "king of Persia" in the Behistun Inscription (I.1), where the locutive *–k* appears, since the sentence is in the 1\textsuperscript{st} person singular.

The place-name Samatu- is identified by Vallat as the Neo-Elamite kingdom of Samati otherwise attested in two Elamite inscriptions (Vallat, 1996a).

Sumerian logogram *DUMU* – "son" has an Elamite phonetic reading *šak*.

The name Dabala is also probably Iranian, but its derivation is uncertain, and its ending – *na* is the Neo-Elamite genitive. Vallat dated the reign of Dabala and his descendants to 585-539 BCE (Vallat, 1996b). Their Iranian names testify the pre-Achaemenid penetration of Iranians into North-Western Elam (see Henkelman, 2003).
Bibliography:


Vallat, 2000: F. Vallat, "Une inscription élamite sur rhyton en argent à tête de bélier",

Photographs

1. Rhyton C, The David Sofer Collection, The Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem ©
2. Rhyton D, The David Sofer Collection

Hand copies of Sofer Rhytons C and D

C

D