



NIPPUR IN LATE
ASSYRIAN TIMES
c. 755-612 BC

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INTRODUCTION

In the middle of the eighth century BC, Mesopotamia emerged from a dark age and entered a period of major development. Assyria climbed rapidly to a position of imperial ascendancy in southwest Asia that would last for more than a century; and Babylonia, politically fragmented by ethnic and regional particularism, began a slow economic recovery. Between 745 and 612, Assyria's political ambitions brought the two countries in constant contact. Also during this period Nippur, Babylonia's ancient religious capital, reached its largest size in almost 1400 years.

⁶³ Nippur was connected to the Euphrates system by a navigable river branch or canal, as indicated by Cole, *Early NB Archive*, No. 17:35-41, in which a man named Nabû-nāšir (who is probably identical with the king of this name who reigned from 747-734 BC) is requested to have a boat-load of offerings sent to Nippur's temple. That the canal system around Nippur was being extended is perhaps evidenced by *ibid.*, No. 92, which mentions 300 laborers, who were apparently being employed to "dig" canals (though the term can also mean to "dredge" existing canals).

⁸⁹ Ibid., No. 46 (Appendix) is about a trip by two such agents to search out the best-quality wool for the best price. They found it in Laḥīru, east of the Tigris, after having searched among the Puqūdu. In *ibid.*, No. 1 (Appendix), Kudurru informed one Nabû-nāšir that he had searched all over Chaldea in vain for good-quality purple wools (*arḡamannu* and *takiltu*) with which to weave the textile that Nabû-nāšir had requested.

rights to pastoral groups to move into and out of Nippur territory and had these rights inscribed on stone stelae.⁴⁷ And Kudurru once requested his “brother” Nabû-nāšir to speak about an alliance with the leader of a large kin group and to provide them with rations in the household of one Āli-lūmur.⁴⁸

The *šandabakku* was also a prominent Babylonian businessman. Kudurru, for example, sold purple textiles⁴⁹ and slaves;⁵⁰ while the lord of Nippur sold slaves, and bought wool, iron, and mules.⁵¹

Finally, the *šandabakku*'s realm also included one of ancient Mesopotamia's holiest shrines, the Ekur, and he acted piously towards it. Thus, Kudurru once requested that a boatload of offerings be sent for the sacrificial table in the temple.⁵² And he seems also to have conscripted labor to maintain it.⁵³ By doing so, he maintained the tradition of his predecessors.

Evidence from the Correspondence of the Assyrian Kings

The *šandabakku* of Nippur also figures occasionally in the correspondence of the Assyrian kings Tiglath-pileser III (744-727) and Sargon II (721-705). During the reign of Tiglath-pileser, he may have brought chariots and cavalry to aid the Assyrian king during his campaigns against Mukīn-zēri,⁵⁴ the *šandabakku*'s neighbor and one-time treaty partner who usurped the throne of Babylon in 732 and three years later relinquished it in defeat. Then some time probably in the early part of the final decade of the eighth century, the *šandabakku* joined in an anti-Assyrian alliance with Merodach-baladan, king of Babylonia, Nabû-lē'i, governor of Borsippa, the officials of Bit-Dakkūri,

⁴⁷ Ibid., No. 12 (Appendix); also No. 7 (Appendix).

⁴⁸ Ibid., No. 1:8-28 (Appendix).

⁴⁹ Ibid., No. 1:28-45 (Appendix).

⁵⁰ Ibid., No. 82:9-14 (Kudurru to Nāširiya): [āš-šú] SAL a-¹mi¹-[tu] šá ŠEŠ-ú¹-[a] [iš-pur¹ a-na-ku āš-¹pur] a¹-na šá-a-šú a-di LÚ.DA[M.GAR] āš-pur-ma ul-¹tu¹ U[RUBAR]A.DUMU a-bu¹-kaš, “[Concerning] the slave wo[man] about whom m[y] brother wrote—I myself se[nt] a letter to him. I sent (it) along with the mer[chant], and I then led her(?) from [Par]jak-māri” Cf. No. 76:11-25 (Dādiya to Kudurru): mi-¹na-a¹ KASKAL^{II} [šá DAM.GAR-ni¹] [il-la-ku] LÚ¹.M[ES] i-na-¹āš-šú GIR^{III} a-na-ku [ú at-ta¹] a-na muḥ-h[i-šá] nu-šal-lam a-na LÚ.TUR.MEŠ ŠEŠ-ú-a liq-bi-ma lil-li-ku-nim-ma LÚ a-me-lu-tu li-bu-uk [KÚ.BABBAR] šá ŠEŠ-á a-¹šap-pa¹-[ra] KASKAL^{II} a-na GIR^{III} LÚ.TUR.MEŠ šu-ku[ṇ], “Whatever caravan journey that our merchant [makes] that brings along slav[es], we—both you and I—will guarantee safe conduct(?) fo[r] it. Let my brother speak to the agents, and let them come and conduct the slaves. I am sendi[ng] my brother's [silver]. Se[nt] the agents on the road.”

⁵¹ Wool: ibid., No. 46 (Appendix). Iron: No. 41 (Appendix). Mules: Nos. 56 (Appendix), 57 (Appendix), 58 (Appendix), and 59 (Appendix). Slaves: Nos. 83 (Appendix) and 101 (Appendix). It remains unclear, however, whether the *šandabakku* was acting for himself or the central government in Babylon in these trading ventures. Because the material bearing on the commercial activities of the *šandabakku*, his agents, and his trading partners is extensive, the topic will be taken up separately in the next chapter.

⁵² Writing to Nabû-nāšir, whom he addressed as “brother,” Kudurru said: ma-la a-gan-ni-i UD.MEŠ mam-ma tab-ni-tu ina E.DINGIR ul ú-ban-¹nu¹ en-na a-¹na¹ mMar-duk ŠEŠ-ú-a liq-bi-ma U⁶ GIŠ.MÁ šá [ID¹] lu-še-bi-lam-ma [tab-ne-e¹-tu i-na lib-bi lu-bé-en-¹nu], “For a long time no one has arranged the sacrificial table in the temple. My brother should now speak to (the man) Marduk to have a riverboat transport a flock here so that they may arrange the sacrificial tables therewith” (ibid., No. 17:35-41 [Appendix]). For the meaning “arrangement of the sacrificial table” for *tabnitū*, see Oppenheim, *ArOr* 17/2 (1949) 231 n. 7.

⁵³ Cote, *Early NB Archive*, No. 3:5-10 (*dul-la-a-ti ša* DINGIR.MEŠ; see Appendix). Yada¹-li, the sender of this letter and the person to whom work had been assigned, was apparently a local chief who had entered into a treaty with Kudurru, the *šandabakku* (No. 23). *dullāti ša ili* might also refer to rituals performed for the gods; if so, the tribal chiefs under the *šandabakku* may have had the responsibility to send offerings to the cultic centers of the region.

⁵⁴ Saggs, *Iraq* 17 (1955) 27 and pl. V after p. 50 (NL II) r. 16'-19' (however, the reading LÚ.GU¹.EN.NA in line 16' is uncertain).

APPENDIX

SELECTED LETTERS FROM THE GOVERNOR'S ARCHIVE

Note: an asterisk (*) after a sign indicates that it was written over an erasure or with a split stylus.

No. 1

(12 N 130 // IM 77107)

⁽¹⁾*a-na* ^{md}AG-ŠEŠ-ir *qí-bi-ma* ⁽²⁾*um-ma* ^mNÍG.DU ŠEŠ-kám ⁽³⁾*a-na ka-a-ša lu-u šul-mu* ⁽⁴⁾DINGIR. MEŠ *šu-ut É.KU[R] u EN.LÍL.KI* ⁽⁵⁾ZI.MEŠ *ša ŠEŠ-íá¹ li-iš-šu-ru* ⁽⁶⁾*um-ma-a a-n[a] ŠEŠ-íá-a-ma* ⁽⁷⁾*tup-pi a-na šul-mu šá ŠEŠ-íá* ⁽⁸⁾*al-tap-r[a] áš-šú ÉRIN.MEŠ šá* ⁽⁹⁾*ŠEŠ-ú-a iš-pur 40 šú-nu* ⁽¹⁰⁾*na-pul-tu* ^r*a¹-du-ú* ^mZum-bu-ta-a-nu ⁽¹¹⁾*ra-bu-šú-nu ù LÚ.ŠÁMAN.LÁ šú-ú* ⁽¹²⁾*a-na pa-an ŠEŠ-íá a-šap-pa-raš-šú* ⁽¹³⁾*ŠEŠ-ú-a dib-ba ta-bu-tu* ⁽¹⁴⁾*it-ti-í¹šú¹ [I]id-bu-ub ŠEŠ.MEŠ-šú-nu* ⁽¹⁵⁾*ki-i pi-i an-ni-i i-qab-bu-ú* ⁽¹⁶⁾*um-ma ŠEŠ.MEŠ-ú-nu a-šar* ⁽¹⁷⁾*il-li-ku ul iš-lim-áš-šú-nu-tu* ⁽¹⁸⁾*en-na ki-i ŠUKU.ĤLA ina É* ⁽¹⁹⁾^mURU-lu-mur *ia-a-nu ŠUKU.ĤLA* ⁽²⁰⁾*lid-da-áš-šú li-ru-ub-ma* ⁽²¹⁾*É-su li-mur-ma lil-lik-ma* ⁽²²⁾*liq-ba-áš-šú-nu-tu a-í¹na¹* ⁽²³⁾*pa-an ITL.BÁRA 2 LI[M⁷]* ⁽²⁴⁾*LÚ qin-na-a-ti a-í¹na¹* ⁽²⁵⁾*pa-an ŠEŠ-íá il-la-ka* ⁽²⁶⁾*ù sít-tu-ti-šú-nu* ⁽²⁷⁾*ul im-me-rik-ku-ú* ⁽²⁸⁾*il-la-ku-ú-nu šá ŠEŠ-ú-a* ⁽²⁹⁾*a-na* ^mMu-ri *i-qab-bu-ú* ⁽³⁰⁾*um-ma le-mut-ta-na-tu-nu* ⁽³¹⁾*mí-nam-ma šá 1 MA.* ^rNA KÙ.BABBAR¹ *taš-pur-a-nu* ⁽³²⁾*kit-tu an-na-a ĥi-tu-ú-a am-me-ni* ⁽³³⁾*a-na ŠEŠ-ia la áš-pur um-ma šá* ⁽³⁴⁾*š MA.NA KÙ.BABBAR «š MA.NA KÙ.BABBAR» SÍG ta-kil-tu* ⁽³⁵⁾*ù SÍG ár-ga-man-nu muḥ-ram-ma* ⁽³⁶⁾*r šú¹-bil ina* ^rLÚ¹ *Kal-du gab-bi-šú* ⁽³⁷⁾*ki-í¹ ú-ba-ru-ú SÍG ta-kil-tu* ⁽³⁸⁾*ba-ni-ti ù SÍG ár-ga-man-nu* ⁽³⁹⁾*bab-ba-nu-ú i[a]-a¹-nu ár-ka a-na* ⁽⁴⁰⁾*ŠEŠ-íá al-t[ap]-ra en-na SÍG ta-kil-ti* ⁽⁴¹⁾*bab-ba-n[i]-t[a] SÍG ár-ga-man-nu* ⁽⁴²⁾*bab-ba-nu-í¹ ù SÍG ta-kil-tu* ⁽⁴³⁾*lib-bu-ú šá a-na TÚG mu-šip-tu* ⁽⁴⁴⁾*šá ŠEŠ-íá i-maḥ-ḥa-šu ina ŠU^{II}* ⁽⁴⁵⁾^mMu-ru *ŠEŠ-ú-a lu-še-bil* ⁽⁴⁶⁾*ù mi-nu-ú ši-bu-tu* ⁽⁴⁷⁾*šá ŠEŠ-íá ŠEŠ-ú-a lu-mas-si-ma liš-pur*

⁽¹⁻²⁾Sa[y] to Nabû-nāšir, thus says Kudurru your brother: ⁽³⁾May you be well. ⁽⁴⁻⁵⁾May the gods of Eku[r] and Nippur guard my brother's life. ⁽⁶⁾Say t[o] my brother: ^(7-8a)I have written and sen[t] my tablet to inquire about the well-being of my brother. ^(8b-10a)Concerning the men about whom my brother wrote—forty of them are dependent(s). ^(10b-11)Now, Zumbutānu is their chief and an apprentice scribe. ⁽¹²⁾I am sending him to my brother. ^(13-14a)My brother [sh]ould speak with him about an alliance. ^(14b-15)Their brothers are saying as follows: ⁽¹⁶⁻¹⁷⁾“Wherever our brothers went, it wasn't safe for them.” ^(18-20a)Now, if there are no rations in the House of Ālī-lūmur, let him (my brother?) give him (Ālī-lūmur?) rations. ^(20b-22a)Let him go in and inspect his house and go and speak to them. ^(22b-25)Before the month of Nisannu, two thous[and?] families will be coming to my brother. ⁽²⁶⁻²⁷⁾And should the rest of them not stay behind?—^(28a)should they come also?

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(28b-29) About what my brother is saying to Murru: ⁽³⁰⁾“You are all repro-
 bates.” ⁽³¹⁾What about this one mina of silver you sent me? ^(32a)In truth, it’s
 my fault. ^(32b-36a)Why didn’t I just write to my brother and say: “Buy and send
 me blue-purple and red-purple wool worth five minas of silver”? ^(36b-39a)When
 I searched the length of Chaldea, there w[as]n’t any good-quality blue-purple
 wool or any fine-quality red-purple wool. ^(39b-40a)Afterwards, I wr[ot]e to my
 brother. ^(40b-45)My brother should now send in the hands of Murru some f[i]n[e]
 blue-purple and red-purple wool and also some blue-purple wool out of which
 they can weave my brother’s *muṣīptu*-textile. ⁽⁴⁶⁻⁴⁷⁾And whatever my brother’s
 desire, let my brother specify in writing and send it.

(12 N 159 // IM 77136)

(¹)*a-na* ^{md}AG-ŠEŠ¹-ir q[*i-bi-ma*] (²)*um-ma* ^mŃG.DU [ŠEŠ-*kám*] (³)*a-na ka-a-ša lu-ú* ¹ [šul-mu]
 (⁴)*[u]m-ma-a a-na ŠEŠ-ia-a-[m]a* (⁵)*áš-šú* DUMU.KIN *ša* DUMU ^mŠil-a-nu *ša ŠEŠ-ú-a* (⁶)*iš-pur*
a-na-ku ina URU Šá-pi-ia (⁷)*ul-tu ka-lu-ú* 1+en lib-bu-ú¹ (⁸)*LÚ-su ak-tar-a-ta at-tu-ú-a* (⁹)*ul-tu*
a-na-ku ^ú ^mMu¹-še-zib (¹⁰)*ir-ti a-ḥa-meš* [šab-ta]-a-nu (¹¹)*ki-i ḥar-pu-tú dul-li* [i-n]a
 (¹²)*[URU] In-du-ul [i-pu]-uš* (¹³)*ul-tu URU Šá-pi-ia* [ki]-ir (¹⁴)*iḥ*-li-qa ^mIna-qí-bi-[^{dE}N-TIN]¹
 (¹⁵)*iš-ša-bat-su a-du-ú* 5 MU.AN.NA.MEŠ (¹⁶)*a-ga-a ul-tu i-na* (¹⁷)*ṣib*-te-e-tu *šab-tu* (¹⁸)*a-na*
^mDU-NUMUN *ki-i aq-bu-ú* (¹⁹)*um-ma* ^rul¹ *i-du e-ka-me* (²⁰)*šú-ú* ^a-na¹-ku *um-ma u* [I] (²¹)*[i-n]a*
 É.AD-š[ú] (²²)*lu*-ú *mi-šú*-[ú] (²³)*[a-di]* ŠEŠ¹.MEŠ-e-šú [lu[?]-šib[?]] (²⁴⁻²⁶) (broken) (²⁷) [] x A
 [] x x [(DN)] (²⁸)*lu-ú i-du ki-i la lib-b[u-ú]* (²⁹)*LÚ-su lu ak-ta-ra-t[a]* (³⁰)*šú-ú* ^ú LÚ.DUMU
šip-ri-šú (³¹)*la il-la-kám-ma la*-pa-an¹ (³²)*sa-ar-ta-at-tu* LÚ-a 1+en (³³)*la am-ḥu-ru* ^ršú¹-ú-ma
 (³⁴)KASKAL^{II} *a-na GİR*^{II}-šú *al-tak-nu* (³⁵)*ma-la a-gan-ni-i* UD.MEŠ (³⁶)*mam-ma tab-ni-tu ina*
 É.DINGIR (³⁷)*ul ú-ban*-nu¹ *en-na a*-na¹ (³⁸)^mMar-duk ŠEŠ-ú-a *liq-bi-ma* (³⁹)U₈ GIŠ.MÁ *ša* ^rID¹
 (⁴⁰)*lu-še-bi-lam-ma* ^rtab-ne-e¹-tu (⁴¹)*i-na lib-bi lu-bé-en*-nu¹

(¹⁻²)S[ay] to Nabû-nāšir, thus says Kudurru [your brother]. (³)May you be [well]. (⁴)[S]ay to my brother: (⁵⁻⁸)Concerning the messenger of the son of Šilānu about whom my brother wrote—Would I, in Šapiya, after he had been detained, have detached(?) one slave of his as my own? (⁹⁻¹⁰)After Mušēzib and I [ban]ded(?) together, (¹¹⁻¹²)he promptly [perfor]med service for me [i]n

the town of Indul. ^(13-15a)(But) [wh]en he escaped from Šapiya, Ina-qībi-[B]ēl-abluṭ captured him. ^(15b-17)Now it has been five years since he was bound in fetters. ⁽¹⁸⁾When I spoke to Mukīn-zēri, ^(19-20a)he said: “I don’t know where he is.” ^(20b-22)I said: “Are there [n]ot already too few(?) [i]n hi[s] clan? ⁽²³⁾[Let him live together with] his brothers.” ^(24-27a)[...]. ^(27b-29)May [DN] know that I in fact did not detac[h](?) one slave o[f] his, ^(30-31a)that he and his messenger were not coming here, ^(31b-33a)that I did not accept even a single slave by deceptive means, ^(33b-34)and that I would have set *him* on the road.

^(35-37a)For a long time no one has arranged the sacrificial table in the temple. ^(37b-41)My brother should now speak to (the man) Marduk to have a riverboat transport a flock here so that they may arrange the sacrificial tables therewith.

No. 18

(12 N 164 // IM 77141)

⁽¹⁾ṛa-na¹ mDU-NUMUN qī-bi-ma ⁽²⁾um-ma mNIG.DU ŠEŠ-kám ⁽³⁾um-ma-a a-na ŠEŠ-ia-a-ma ⁽⁴⁾LÚ gu-du-du šá É mIa-a-ki-nu ⁽⁵⁾ki-i il-lik-ú-nu ⁽⁶⁾4 ÉRIN.MEŠ 5 ANŠE.MEŠ ⁽⁷⁾iḥ-tab-tu ni-i-nu ⁽⁸⁾a-na lib-bi LÚ A-ram ⁽⁹⁾ni-šap-par ár-ki-šú ⁽¹⁰⁾LÚ.UNUG.KI-a-a ki-i ⁽¹¹⁾il-lik-ú-nu um-ma ⁽¹²⁾ḥu-bu-ut-ku-nu šá ḥab-tu ⁽¹³⁾a-du-ú LÚ si-lul-lu ⁽¹⁴⁾ina UNUG.KI i-pa-áš-šá-ru¹ ⁽¹⁵⁾a-du-ú LÚ.EN.LÍL. KI.ṛMEŠ¹ ⁽¹⁶⁾šá ŠEŠ.MEŠ-šú-nu DUMU.MEŠ¹ ⁽¹⁷⁾ḥab-tu il-tap-rak-[ka] ⁽¹⁸⁾ṛLÚ.DUMU¹.KIN-ka lil-[[ik-ma] ⁽¹⁹⁾ul²-tu x (x) x [] ⁽²⁰⁾ṛUNUG¹.KI x x (x) [] ⁽²¹⁾ṛù ig-de-ru-ú-k[a] ⁽²²⁾šup-ram-ma ra-ma-na-ṛni¹ ⁽²³⁾ni-iš-šur at-ta ⁽²⁴⁾ù šú-ú it-ti a-ḥa-ṛmeš¹ ⁽²⁵⁾sa-al-ma-tu-nu ⁽²⁶⁾ù at-ṛtu¹-nu ⁽²⁷⁾ḥu¹-ub-t[a]-ni ⁽²⁸⁾i-ḥab-bat

⁽¹⁻²⁾Say to Mukīn-zēri, thus says Kudurru your brother. ⁽³⁾Say to my brother: ⁽⁴⁻⁵⁾When the Bit-Yakin patrol came, ^(6-7a)they stole four men, five donkeys. ^(7b-9)We were going to write to the Arameans, but after that, ⁽¹⁰⁻¹¹⁾when the Urukians came, they said: ⁽¹²⁻¹⁴⁾“Now, in Uruk, petty dealers are selling the plunder which they took from you.” ⁽¹⁵⁻¹⁷⁾Now the people of Nippur—those whose brothers are the citizens who have been plundered—have written to y[ou]. ⁽¹⁸⁾Let your messenger g[o, and] ⁽¹⁹⁻²⁰⁾from(?) [... to(?)] Uruk [...]. ⁽²¹⁾But (if) they have turned hostile towards yo[u], ^(22-23a)write to me so that we may protect ourselves. ^(23b-25)You and he are on friendly terms with each other; ⁽²⁶⁻²⁸⁾yet he is making captiv[e]s of our people.