Authority and Persuasion: Repetition and Paronomasia in the Mari Letter ARM 26.5

Adam E. Miglio*

Abstract

This essay explores rhetorically significant uses of repetition in the Mari letter ARM 26.5. After briefly introducing the intent of ARM 26.5 and overviewing selected uses of repetition in this missive, it treats the verbal form ŠU-UḪ-ḪU and considers its meaning as well as its significance as an instance of paronomasia. It also briefly reflects on the larger issue of persuasion and its relationship to authority during the period documented by the archives from Mari.
Key-Words: Mari; ARM 26.5; rhetoric; persuasion; repetition; paronomasia

Autoridad y persuasion: repetición y paronomasia en la carta de Mari ARM 26.5

Resumen

Este artículo explora los usos retóricos significantes de la repetición en la carta de Mari 26.5. Luego de presentar la intención de ARM 26.5 y revisar algunos usos de la repetición en esta misiva, se estudia la forma verbal ŠU-UḪ-ḪU y se considera su significado así como también su relevancia como instancia de paronomasia. Finalmente, el artículo reflexiona brevemente sobre el uso más amplio de la persuasión y su relación con la autoridad durante el periodo documentado por los archivos de Mari..
Palabras claves: Mari; ARM 26.5; retórica; persuasión; repetición; paronomasia

When reading long and vivid political correspondences from ancient Mari, one is periodically forced to pause and reflect on the relationship between the aspirations, or even pretenses to authority that letter-writers often evinced and the means of persuasion these individuals used in their missives[1]. That a relationship exists between political authority and the art of persuasion is intuitive. For example, at present, the barrage of competing efforts to 'spin' political behavior in mass media ceaselessly reminds us that authority is, in some sense, dependent on the ability to persuade. And authority and persuasion are not only interdependent realities in the present-day, but they were also enmeshed in the ancient world as well. For this reason, the nature of the relationship between authority and persuasion has been a perennial point of discussion among political philosophers– from Aristotle's interest in rhetoric to Antonio Gramsci's reflections on cultural hegemony.

In the ancient Near East, the letters from Mari provide an extraordinary corpus for exploring the art of persuasion and how it was used to (re)construct and maintain political authority. As Jack Sasson observed nearly twenty years ago, many of the communiques from the Mari archives exhibited a "gift of gab" and "contain dozens of long lines and, in rhetoric, can match the best of biblical prose, full of vivid phrasing, lively pacing, and a terrific sense of structure"[2]. The present contribution, then, takes its cue from Sasson, and focuses on rhetorically significant uses of repetition in ARM 26.5 (= A.999), and in particular an instance of paronomasia in which a largely unexplained word, ŠU-UḪ-ḪU, plays on the common lemma

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[1]I do not mean to suggest that the named dispatchers of letters were the same persons who wrote them. Instead, letters may be thought of as having an 'implied author' (Booth 1993: 347–76). An 'implied author' is a literary construct that results from a conflation of 'voices' in a narrative that may, or may not, be consonant with other 'voices' in a narrative, such as the author, narrator, etc. The concept of an 'implied author' derives from literary studies of fiction, where it was intended to offer sufficient flexibility for the analysis of narrative without necessarily making claims about authorial intent and, at the same time, was able to explore the contours of a narrative beyond the 'voice' of the narrator. I find the analytic of 'implied author' helpful for addressing the issue of letter-production in the ancient world where a related problem exists due to issues of text production. That is, the influence of a scribe, a stated dispatcher(s) of a letter, or even someone else (cf. n. 4, below) may be irretrievable in many letters or, alternately, may be highly differentiated within other missives. Working with a notion of 'implied author' does not forestall ever-important questions about scribal practices and processes of letter-production (e.g., see Béranger 2018) or efforts to recover other 'voice(s)' in letters– such as those of the stated dispatcher(s)– and also permits the investigation of letters as narrative artefacts.

[2]Sasson 1998: 108.

šaḫûm, ("pig"). After briefly introducing the rhetorical intent of ARM 26.5 and overviewing selected uses of repetition in this missive, I will turn to the verbal form ŠU-UḪ-ḪU and consider its meaning as well as its significance as an instance of paronomasia. Then, by way of conclusion, I will briefly return to the larger issue of the relationship between authority and persuasion as exemplified in ARM 26.5.

Rhetoric, repetition, and paronomasia

ARM 26.5 was sent by a *merḫûm*-leader named Bannum and contains one of the most striking pretenses to authority among the letters recovered from Mari. As a *merḫûm*-leader, Bannum helped to manage mobile pastoralist populations (*hanûm*) who traversed the steppe (*nawûm*) and in this capacity he seems to have felt remarkably free to undo and alter palace directives. Moreover, Bannum, perhaps in a unique way among the *merḫûm*-leaders[3], assumed for himself an authority that could rival that of the sovereign and was, therefore, not easily categorized in a hierarchical relationship vis-à-vis the palace. And yet despite the fact that Bannum's authority could not be easily classified in every way as subsidiary to the king, or perhaps because of this, his missives were crafted with rhetorical care in an effort to persuade the sovereign.

The rhetorical intent of ARM 26.5 is plainly stated at the outset of the missive. Bannum insists that the king, Zimri-Lim, should not trust the diviner Asqudum but instead should trust Bannum and others who share the palace's interests: "Is it right (*damqa*) that Asqudum constantly provides you with inappro[priate] (things) (*lā šināti*) and that you repeatedly listen

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[3] As a *merḫûm*-leader who traveled among mobile populations, Bannum operated with substantial autonomy from the king (*šarrum*). His position was not one which had been created by and for the palace bureaucracy; the *merḫûm*-leader, instead, was a role that seems to have organically arisen from the socio-cultural realities of mobile subsistence patterns that were more widely practiced during the first half of the second millennium in these regions. The *merḫûm*-leader's complex and varied connections to the palace authority structures is evinced by the fact that are no extant loyalty oaths for a *merḫûm*-leader; by comparison, several other officials were required to swear their fidelity to the king in such oaths, which are preserved among the sources from Mari. Moreover, it is even the case that at least one oath explicitly abjured oath-takers to swear that their loyalty to the king will not be compromised by fidelity to the *merḫûm*-leader, Bannum. This overtly stated concern about the authority of the *merḫûm*-leader, Bannum, is a striking testimony to at least one aspect of the complex and heterarchic structures of authority during the period. See further Durand 2019: 57-62, 113-191.

(to) his words?" One way in which the opening question develops a case against Asqudum is through the presentation of the timeline of events. Repeated epistolary perfects recount a timeline of events that raise suspicions about Asqudum's character (Pardee and Whiting 1987; Hasselbach-Andee 2015), especially that he was deliberately behaving with impropriety (*lā šināti*)[4]. A series of perfect verbal forms present a situation in which Bannum was detained (*at-ta-ak-la-ma* [line 12]) only to have heard (*eš-[t]e-em-me-ma* [line 18]) that Asqudum had appointed (*iš-ta-k[a-an-š]u-nu-ti* [line 37]) questionable individuals to important positions. According to Bannum's account, he had written ARM 26.5 because Asqudum had taken advantage of Bannum's delay by deliberately counseling the king to make decisions that were contrary to both the tribe's and sovereign's interests.

The nature of Asqudum's impropriety (*lā šināti*), which is introduced in the letter's opening lines, is clarified and developed through the repetition of this crucial phrase four additional times in the missive (lines 13, 29, 34, 69)[5]. Each repetition of *lā šināti* further characterizes an aspect of Asqudum's behavior by focusing on how it was *lā šināti*. The opening question posed by Bannum plainly indicated that Asqudum was responsible for inappropriate (things) before the king (*lā šināti* [line 3]), but the nature of this inappropriate behavior was not fully developed. The missive, however, goes on to explicitly identify Asqudum's inappropriate behavior as speech (*awātim lā šināti* [line 13])[6]; Asqudum improperly spoke to the king about Bannum. And Bannum's accusation is even more explicit in his subsequent use of the phrase *lā šināti*, which alleges not only that Asqudum libeled him but that he did so intentionally because his motives were malicious. Bannum developed his accusation against Asqudum that he was devious (*lā šināti libbīšu ṣabitma*, [line 29]) and motivated by evil intentions (*ina idat lemuntim* [line 34]). Bannum's charge left no room for Asqudum's improprieties to be seen as a potential misunderstanding, but rather he constructed a case that Asqudum was aggressively defamatory and malicious.

Bannum's attack against Asqudum in ARM 26.5 is reinforced by an innovative instance of paronomasia. In the Classical tradition paronomasia is understood as a specific case of repetition. Repetition, as may even

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[4]See also ARM 26.6, in which Bannum implied that the king was not ultimately responsible for what was being written in his own letters.

[5]This phrase was also used by Bannum in another letter sent to the king about Asqudum, ARM 26.6.

[6]This phrase is typically associated with speech, see CAD Š/3 40 *šināti ina la šinati* mng. b.

be illustrated from the repetition of perfect verbal forms or the phrase *lā šināti* above, was a rhetorical device that is most sophisticated when it is not merely a matter of repeating. That is, clever repetition is always repetition with (subtle) innovation. Such repetition facilitates intra-textual connections, while also helping to advance arguments through noteworthy difference(s). And paronomasia, too, is a type of repetition in which words' forms and sounds are *similar*, yet lexically distinct (Lausberg 1998: §637-639). The similarity in the words' sounds and forms invite reflection on the differing semantics of the words involved; the reader is expected to compare and contrast the semantic relationships of the words used in the wordplay.

In ARM 26.5 the use of paronomasia punctuates Bannum's claim that he and his associates are trustworthy, because they share the king's tribal interests, whereas Asqudum and his colleagues are dishonest and unreliable. The first word in the paronomastic wordplay is found in Bannum's account of how he had replaced Enlil-Epush, whom Asqudum had appointed major-domo (*abbu bītim*) at the city of Hishamta, with a man named Bel-shunu (lines 15-27). Bannum gives a curious rationale for his selection of Bel-shunu, namely that "he (Bel-shunu) is fat like a pig that you would slaughter (and) no one will negotiate with you [Zimri-Lim] about him" (lines 24-27). Crucial to Bannum's unusual comparison of Bel-shunu to a fatted pig is the following statement that "no one will negotiate with you about him" (*ma-am-ma-an qa-at-ka la i-ṣa-ab-ba-tu-[šu-um]*). The expression *ṣabātum qātam* often conveys the idea of to do a favor for someone, to treat someone kindly[7]. And in the context of ARM 26.5, this statement seems to indicate that Bel-shunu is someone who is able to fulfill the office of majordomo without the king needing to lend him support or do a favor for him. According to Bannum, Bel-shunu was capable of doing the job by means of his own substantial assets, he was like a fatted pig (*šaḫûm*).

The reliable nature of Bannum's appointment, *šaḫûm* ("pig"), then, provides the basis for a paronomastic wordplay in line 45 that attacked Asqudum's character. Lines 28-52, in particular, focus on Asqudum as deceptive (*daṣātum*), evil (*lemuntum*, which is repeated three separate times [lines 32, 34, 68]), and in line 45, ŠU-UḪ-ḪU. Bannum's use of ŠU-UḪ-ḪU in line 45 is syntactically straightforward: lú *šu-ú* ŠU-UḪ-ḪU. Yet the word ŠU-UḪ-ḪU has not been satisfactorily considered and, as a result, the rhetorical importance of this form to paronomastic wordplay has been overlooked. The form ŠU-UḪ-ḪU has been translated ad sensum, "Cet individu

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[7]CAD Ṣ 24 *ṣabātu* mng. 7c; see also Durand 1989: 85, note g; Heimpel, 177, n 11.

est *fondamentalement hostile*" (Durand 1989: 85) or not at all, "That man is...." (Heimpel 2003: 177).

Two solutions seem possible for this word. First, as J.-M. Durand, who edited the text, commented, "Il est possible que l'on ait ici la forme II du verbe *šêhum/šehûm* posé à la forme IV par *AHw* p. 1209b : «*nišû iš-še-ha-a-ma* (bezichtigen einander)». Notre texte fournirait le sens d'«être très hostile» (Durand, 1989: 85)[8]. Durand's solution is certainly reasonable. The Akkadian form listed in *AHw* (p. 1209b) could simply be understood as a rare example of the verb *sehû* spelled with a /š/ (as suggested by the CAD S 208 *sehû*)[9], in which case the form ŠU-UH-HU in ARM 26.5, like the Akkadian verb *sehûm* ("to revolt, rebel"), could be cognate with the Syriac root S-'-Y ("to attack rashly, assault;" Sokoloff, 2009: 1026-27)[10] and convey the idea of "to be intensely hostile, rebellious".

There is, however, another root to which the form ŠU-UH-HU in ARM 26.5 may be compared, which is better known in Syriac. Landsberger long ago suggested that Akkadian had a productive root cognate with the Syriac Š-'-Y (Landsberger 1960: 119-20, n. 30). He identified what would be an Akkadian root Š-'-Y (i.e. Š-'3-'7) as the root in the nominal form *mušta''ûtum*, meaning "leisure, pleasure," and typically describing kings' rationales for royal building projects and other regal activities (see CAD M/2 192 *multa'ûtu*). Following Landsberger, von Soden identified the Old Babylonian verbal form *šuta''ûm*, meaning "to trifle (with), treat lightly," as tD-stem from this same root (*AHw* 1291)[11]. The solutions offered by Landsberger and von Soden only seem more appealing in light of more recent work in Aramaic lexicography that indicates the verb Š-'-Y in the tD-stem had the meaning "to tell, recount, narrate a (false) story" (Sokoloff 1990: 562; Sokoloff 2002: 1167)[12]. Furthermore, in Syriac in particular, this verbal root

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[8]Durand also indicated the epigraphic certainty of the reading: "Les signes ŠU, UH & HU semblent assez nets. Il n'y a rien après le «HU»" (Durand 1989: 85, note r). More recently, Durand has commented that "Le verbe est employé pour désigner la technique sexuelle prêtée à la prêtresse.... [L]e verbe est clairement un dénominatif sur *šuhhum* «fesse», dont un équivalent lexical est *qinnatu* «anus»" (Durand 2019:165, note j)

[9]Cf. Von Soden, who opined: "Die Adjektive *suhhû* (s.*AHw.* 1054a) und *šuhhû* sind vorläufig m. W. nur je einmal belegt. Wegen des nicht ganz gleichartigen Gebrauchs haben wir vorläufig keinen Anlaß, in ihnen nur lautliche Spielformen eines Wortes zu sehen" (1977: 44).

[10]Brockelmann suggests as much, comparing the Syriac Š-'-Y to Akkadian "*si'ū*", which he glosses as "*aggredi*" (487).

[11]Cf. CAD Š/3 399-400 *šuta'û*, where the verb is indicated to be exclusively conjugated as Št-stem, presumably from a triply-weak root.

[12]Cf. the tD-stem in Syriac (Sokoloff 2009: 1583), but note the related quadriliteral

is highly productive, it is closely connected to speech and frequently to deceptive speech. For example, in the G-stem, the Syriac verb Š-'-Y means "to overcome by flattery," and in the tD-stem "to tell a (false) story" (Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon, lemma Š-'-Y Dt, mng. 1). And in Syriac as well as other Aramaic dialects, related nominal forms conveyed pejorative connotations such as *šw'y(t)*, meaning "tale, mockery, derision, complaint" or *š'ywt'* (Jastrow 1903:1538), attested in Syriac, meaning "deceit, mockery" (Sokoloff 2009: 1583).

If the form in ARM 26.5 is understood as a D-stem predicate adjective, or stative (*šuḫḫû*) and is related to the Syriac root Š-'-Y, a contextual meaning of "deceptive" would be fitting. In fact, a translation of the Akkadian phrase lú *šū šuḫḫû* as "that man is deceptive" would draw further support from its close conformity with the rhetorical intent of ARM 26.5, namely the emphasis on Asqudum's devious character. The proposed relationship of the word ŠU-UḪ-ḪU to the Syriac root Š-'-Y as well as the contextual clues to its meaning would, then, would accentuate the comparison between Bannum's appointment of Bel-shunu at Hishamta and Asqudum, a comparison which is invited by the paronomasitic wordplay between *šaḫûm* ("pig") and *šuḫḫû* ("deceptive"). In other words, Bannum draws a stark contrast between his appointée, who was like a fatted pig (*šaḫûm*) and therefore would be loyal to Zimri-Lim and the Sim'al tribe, and Asqudum, who was deceptive (*šuḫḫû*) and thereby served the interests of the king's enemies.

Authority and Persuasion: Paronomasia as Repetition

In ARM 26.5 Bannum used the rhetorical technique of repetition with meaningful variation(s)– the most striking being an instance of paronomasia– to offer an explanation for why the king should trust him and not Asqudum. Yet the persuasive arts used in ARM 26.5, provide an opportunity to briefly conclude with reflections on the relationship between persuasion and authority in the Mari letters, more generally. The Mari letters document a dynamic and heterarchical political world; ARM 26.5 is but one example from these letters that contain narratives crafted with rhetorical care in order to efficiently attain, maintain, or exercise authority within this political landscape. Attempts at persuasion in the letters from Mari, like those in

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root in Syriac, *tš'y*, meaning "to contrive stories" (Sokoloff 2009: 1675).

ARM 26.5, were a frequent response to an implicit or explicit questioning of or uncertainty about authority; persuasion was a necessary, perhaps even the most natural means to (re)establish legitimate authority. As a result, the attempts at persuasion in many of the Mari letters may be thought of as latent, yet constitutive facets of authority in so far as they arise from the need to give a rational account of their perceived or aspirational authority[13]. As such, how something was communicated during the Mari period could be as important as what was communicated. And, the striking infrequency of missives that contain authoritarian and coercive demands for compliance only seem to lend support to the generalization about the dynamic relationship between authority and persuasion in the political missives from this period[14].

Appendix

1 *a-na be-lí-ia qí-bí-m[a]*
2 *um-ma ba-an-nu-um* ìr-*ka-[a-ma]*
3 *an-né-ta-an da-am-qa-a ša às-qú-du-um la š[i-na-ti]*
4 *a-na qa-ti-ka iš-ta-na-ka-nu-ma*
5 *a-wa-ti-šu te-eš-te-né-me-ú*
6 *i-nu-ma a-na ḫa-ar-ra-nim pa-né-ka ta-aš-ku-nu*
7 *ù* u₄ 7-kam *un-qa-tim i-na é* ᵈ*da-gan tu-úš-bu*
8 *i-ia-t[i] i-na ma-ri te-zi-ba-an-ni-ma*
9 *ki-a-⌈em⌉ tu-wa-e-ra-an-ni um-ma at-ta-ma*
10 *u₄-um a-na-ku i-na un-qa-tim e-t[e]-eb-b[u]-⌈ú⌉*
11 *at-ta a-na ter-qa ku-uš-da-an-ni*
12 *an-ni-tam ta-aq-bé-e-em-ma i-na ma-ri at-ta-ak-la-ma*
13 ᵐ*às-qu-du-um a-wa-ti[m] la ši-na-ti id-bu-ba-ku-um-ma*
14 *a-na su-ga-gu-ut ḫi-ša-am-ta ⌈ta⌉-[aš]-ku-un-šu*
15 *[š]a-ni-iš i-na a-wa-tim i-da-aṣ-ka-ma*
16 ᵐᵈ*en-líl-i-pu-úš a-na a-bu-ut é ša ḫi-ša-am-ta ⌈ta-aš⌉-ku-un*
17 *a-[n]a-ku a-na sa-ga-ra-tim ak-šu-dam-ma*
18 *a-wa-tim ši-na-ti eš-[t]e-em-me-ma ḫa-ab-ta-ku ás-si-ma*
19 *a-w[a-ta]m ke-em aṣ-ba-ta-ku-um um-ma a-na-ku-ma*

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[13]The relationship between authority and persuasion presented above is indebted to the work of Bruce Lincoln (Lincoln 1994: 5-6).

[14]The striking exceptions from the letters at Mari are found in the authoritarian memoranda of the Elamite sukkal-maḫ when writing to his vassals (see Durand 1994 and Charpin 2013).

20 *ki-i* dumu *é-kál-la-tim*
21 *a-na su-ga-gu-ut ḫi-ša-am-ta ta-ša-ka-an*
22 *ú* ᵈ*en-líl-i-pu-úš a-na a-bu-ut é ta-aš-ku-un*
23 *an-ni-tam aq-bi-ku-um-ma lú ša-a-ti ú-da-pí-ir-m[a]*
24 ᵐ*be-el-šu-nu* ìr-*ka ša ki-ma ša-ḫi-im*
25 *i-ka-bi-ru-ma ta-ṭà-ab-ba-ḫu-šu*
26 *ma-am-ma-an qa-at-ka la i-ṣa-ab-ba-tu-[šu-um]*
27 *a-na a-bu-ut é ú-wa-e-er-šu*
28 ᵐ*às-qú-du-um ki-ši-id qa-ti-ia*
29 *la ši-na-ti i-na l[i]-ib-bi-šu ṣa-bi-it-ma*
30 ìr-*meš ša a-na ši-ir be-lí-ia ù* dumu *si-im-a-al*
31 *la ta-mar-ra-ṣú a-na te-re-tim t[a-š]a-ka-an*
32 *a-mu-ur ki-ma lú šu-ú a-na le-mu-un-tim*
33 *ú-zu-un-šu ša-ak-na-at-ma*
34 *la ši-na-ti i-na i-da-at le-mu-un-ti[m]*
35 *it-ti be-lí-ia i-da-bu-ub-ma*
36 ìr-meš *pa-nu-ut-tim-ma ša iš-me-*ᵈ[*d*]*a-gan*
37 *a-na te-re-tim iš-ta-k[a-an-š]u-nu-ti*
38 *ṭe₄-ma-am an-né-em iš-me-*ᵈ*da-gan i-[še-me-m]a*
39 *ma-di-iš i-ḫa-ad-du um-ma š[u-ú-ma]*
40 ìr-meš-*ia pa-nu-ut-tum te-re-tim [i-ip-pé-šu-ma]*
41 *sú-uḫ-ḫ[u]-ur ma-tim an-ni-tim i-i[p-pé-šu]*
42 1 ninda *ú-ul ub-b[a-lam]*
43 *a-wa-a-at lú ša-a-ti be-lí-ma* ⌈*ú*⌉-[*u*]*l im-[ḫa-ar]*
44 *ki-ma* lú *šu-ú a-na é-kál-lim pa-ra-ki-im i-i[g?-ge-/e]*[15]
45 lú *ša-a-ti be-lí la i-ḫa-aš-ši-iḫ-šu* lú *šu-ú šu-uḫ-ḫu*
46 lú-meš *máš-šu-su₁₃-su₁₃ ta-ak-lu-tum*
47 *i-na re-eš be-lí-ia iz-za-az-zu*
48 lú-meš *šu-nu* dumu *si-im-a-al a-na ši-ir be-lí-ia ma-aq-t[u]*
49 lú *ša-a-ti be-lí a-na ṣe-ri-ia li-ša-re-eš-šu*
50 *ù-la-šu-ma é-šu ù é ḫa-li-ḫa-du-un*
51 *a-na e-kál-lim u-še-er-re-eb*
52 lú *šu-ú ar-ḫi-iš li-ik-šu-da-am*
53 *ap-pu-na-ma i-nu-ma be-lí i-[n]a sa-ga-r[a]-tim ú-ḍú-ú*
54 *ke-em id-bu-ba-ku-um um-ma šu-ma a-na-[k]u mar-ṣa-ku-ma*

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[15]Durand has offered a more recent rendering of lines 43-44: 43) *a-wa-a-at* lú *ša-a-ti be-lí-ma* ⌈*ú*⌉-[*ba*]-*aḫ*-[*ḫi*] 44) *ki-ma* lú *šu-ú a-na é-kál-lim pa-ra-ki-im la-i-[ú]*. "My lord has looked into the words of that man, that that man is capable of obstructing palace-(interests)". Durand 2019: 162-165.

55 *ba-lum lú ta-ak-lim bi-la-at be-li-ia*
56 *i-na sa-ga-ra-tim it-te-en-zi-ib*
57 *mi-nu-um bi-il-tum ša i-na u₄-mi-šu im-ma-ak*
58 *ṣa-bi-im na-ši-i in-né-ez-bu*
59 *ša-ni-tam dam-qa-a ša su-mu-ḫa-di-i-im*
60 *[š]a a-na ṣé-er be-lí-ia iš-pu-ra-am um-ma-mi*
61 *ṭu[p]-pa-at sa-am-si-*ᵈIM *a-n[a-ku] aṣ-ba-at*
62 *ma-[a]n-nu-um l[ú-tu]r-šu an-nu-um ša [ṭup]-pa-t[im ši-na-t]i iṣ-ba-tam-ma*
63 *a-[n]a ṣe-[ri]-ia ir-de-em-ma a-na-k[u qí-iš-tam] la a-qí-šu-šum*
64 *[ṭup-pa-t]im ši-na-ti lú-tur-meš ša s[u-mu-ḫa-di-i]m?*
65 *[ú-ul il-q]ú-nim-ma qí-ša-tim [u-ul a-qí-sú-nu-ši-i]m*
66 *[š]um-ma da-am₇-da-am m[a-da-am ....]*
67 *šum-ma an-nam ú-ul [...........................]*
68 *a-mu-ur ki-ma* lú *šu-ú le-mu-[un-tam ù a-wa-tim]*
69 *la ši-na-ti a-na ṣe-er be-lí-ia [iṣ-ri-mu/id-bu-bu]*
70 *an-ni-tam be-lí l[u-ú i-de]*
71 *ša-ni-tam 2 me-tim* udu-ḫá *ša zu-ḫa-ad-n[im]*
72 *[š]a nu-bat-tim ša ak-ka-ši-im i-re-d[u-ma]*
73 *lu-ú ú-sà-mi-šu-ši-na-t[i]*
74 udu-ḫá *ši-na-<ti?>aṣ-ba-at a-di a-la-ki-ka*
75 *a[n-na-num] a-na-aṣ-ṣa-ar-ši-na-ti ta-la-ka-a[m- ma]*
76 *ṭe₄-em* udu-ḫá *ši-na-ti te-še-em-m[e-e]*

Lines 1-2 Speak to my lord: thus says Bannum, your servant.
Lines 3-14 Is it right that Asqudum constantly provides you with inapprop[riate] (things) and that you repeatedly listen (to) his words? When you prepared for the campaign and stayed for seven days at the *unqatim*-(ritual)[16] in the temple of Dagan (at Terqa), you left me at Mari and instructed me, saying: "The (very) day I leave the *unqatim*-(ritual) come meet me at Terqa". This is what you said to me. But I was detained at Mari and (when) Asqudum spoke libelous words to you, you appointed him the *sugāgum* of Hishamta.
Lines 15-27 Then, again he deceived you with (his) words and you appointed Enlil-ipush as majordomo of Hishamta. When I arrived at Saggaratum, I heard about this matter and I said "I have been wronged". I discussed the matter with you, saying: "How can you appoint an Ekallatean[17] as *sugāgum*

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[16]For the term *un-qa-tim* (lines 7, 10), see the discussion Durand 1989: 84.
[17]An Ekallatean (DUMU *é-kál-la-tim*) was a designation used to for someone who was loyal to Ishme-Dagan, the son of Shamshi-Adad after the latter's death (Guichard and

of Hishamta? And you (also) have appointed Enlil-ipush to majordomo!" This is what I said to you. Then, I relieved that man (from his post) and I made Bel-shunu, your servant, take the position of majordomo—he is fat like a pig that you would slaughter (and) no one will negotiate with you [about him].

Lines 28-52 Asqudum, (who is) my captive, harbors malice in his heart. You should appoint servants to official positions who will not displease my lord, himself, or the Sim'al. Know that that man's motivation is evil and (that) he spoke libel to my lord with wicked intentions. He has appointed former servants of Ishme-Dagan to official positions. Ishme-Dagan will hear this news and be very pleased, (thinking): "My former servants [hold] offices and will a[ct] to return this land (to me)– I do not (need to) spend (even) one morsel of bread!" My lord should ⌜not⌝ co[nsent to] the word of that man because that man will not [*hesitate*] to obstruct the palace. My lord must not depend on that man; he is deceptive. Trustworthy diviners are in the service of my lord; those men are Simalites. They are devoted to my lord, alone. Let my lord have that man sent to me. If not, I will bring Asqudum's household and Hali-hadun's household into the palace. Let that man arrive quickly!

Lines 53-58 Additionally, when my lord left Saggaratum, (Asqudum) said to you: "I am ill. Without a trusted person, the possessions of my lord are delayed in Saggaratum"[18] What possessions were left on that day for a lack of porters?

Lines 59-70 On another matter, is it appropriate that Sumu-hadum wrote to my lord, saying: "I intercepted the tablets of Shamshi-Adad?" Who is this [mess]enger of his who intercepted [thos]e tablets and conducted (them) to me? And to whom, (then), I did not give [a reward]? The messengers of S[umu-hadu]m did [not ac]quire those [table]ts and so [I did not give] them a reward. If a defeat [. . .], if yes [. . .]. Know that this man [spoke e]vil [and] libelous [words] to my lord. My lord should [know]!

Lines 71-76 Finally, they indeed hid the 200 sheep of Zu-Hadnim which they con[veyed] to you in the evening. I, (however), seized those sheep. I will guard them until you arrive here. You will hear (more) about those sheep when you arrive.

Ziegler 2004: 242-4).

[18]The quotation of Asqudum is understood to continue from lines 54 through line 56 (Durand, 1989: 84). Accordingly, I understand that Bannum was questioning Asqudum's claim to be a reliable (*taklum*) servant of the king (cf. Heimpel 2003: 178).

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