



ASSYRIAN ASTROLOGY ABOUT ELAM

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Except for a Neo-Elamite omen (V. Scheil, *Déchiffrement d'un document anzanite relatif au présages*, *Revue d'Assyriology* XIV, Paris 1917, 35-36), almost every astrological information about Elam comes from Assyria in its last epoch, i.e., the Neo-Assyrian Period. So we don't really know Elamite astrology, but the way Elam is regarded by Assyrian astrologers, whose students went to Elam to learn and practice astrology; so says a report by astrologer Marduk-shapik-zeri sent to the Assyrian king, commenting that twenty Assyrian astrology apprentices have returned from Elam, now being capable experts, suitable for royal service (SAA X 160: 20).

In fact the Assyrian kings consulted the **oracles** for everything. As far as Elam was concerned, the consultations were directed to the Sun god. Thus, we can mention that the Assyrian king Esarhaddon asks whether he should make a peace pact with the Elamite king Urtaku, and if he is honest in his proposal (SAA IV 74). For his part, the famous Assyrian king Ashurbanipal wants to know if the Elamite Tammaritu will attack Assyria (SAA IV 289), or if the Elamites will go to war with him (SAA IV 281).

We also know certain **astrological** predictions concerning Elam explicitly, or implicitly (it is some times called "the land of the East"). For example, if an eclipse occurs on the 14th, refers to Elam (SAA X 26) or if the first of Jupiter in Simanu (III) occurs in the morning, the path of the stars of Anu means Elam (SAA X 362); if in the month of Kislimu (IX) with lunar eclipse, the sun is surrounded with a halo, there will be an eclipse at Elam (SAA VIII 382); with New Moon on the 1st, Elam will fall in combat (SAA VIII 303), but if Adad thunders at the door of the Moon, Elam will not only be defeated in combat, but his possessions will be taken to another country (SAA VIII 119); if the Crab approaches the Plough there will be dispersion of Elam (SAA VIII 452).

The profecies can refer equally to a danger for Assyria, for instance, an attack of Elam, which will starts:

If Mars and Saturn confront each other and stand in the Moon halo during the full Moon, this means that Elam will attack (SAA VIII 168);

If Mars and another planet are confronted each other (Enuma Anu Enlil 56);

If a planet stands in the South (Enuma Anu Enlil 56).

The dead of the king of Elam will occur according to different astrological aspects:

If in Ayaru the 26th day, during an eclipse of the Sun, Mars lights up faintly and its glow is yellowish, the king of the Elam will die in that year, (that is Mars in the path of Enlil, at the feet of Perseo) (SAA X 100);

The same in the Month Duzu (IV) (SAA VIII 114);

An eclipse of the Moon in Addaru (XII), will make to die also the king of Elam (SAA VIII 250) or in Ululu (VI) (SAA VIII 251);

If the appearance of the Moon in Scorpius stands by its right horn, the king of Elam will be killed in that year, his reign will be brought to an end, and an enemy will attack and plunder the interior of his country (SAA X 364); variant: he will die during a rebellion of servants or simply he will be slaughtered (CTN 4, 14).

If Jupiter enters the Moon, the king of Elam will fall in battle (SAA VIII 100) or simply he will die (SAA VIII 438);

If the Moon is surrounded by a halo, and the Yoke star stands in it, the king of Elam will die (SAA VIII 383);

If there is a solar eclipse in Ayaru (II) on the 29th day, the king of Elam will die (SAA VIII 384);

If a planet comes close to Aldebaran, the king of Elam will die (SAA VIII 503).

If a planet comes close to the jaws of the bull, the king of Elam will die (Enuma Anu Enlil 56);

In some other cases we are informed of an **event, different to the dead**, which will affect the king of Elam, for instance:

On the 28th day, at 2 1/2 'double-hours' of the day, if the day becomes covered with clouds on the north side, there will be famine for the king of Elam. (SAA VIII 104);

If a comet becomes visible in the path of the stars of Anu, [...] the king of Elam [...] his days are near to their end (SAA VIII 339);

If the Moon makes an eclipse in Simanu (III) on the 15th day, if the eclipse is in the evening watch, and it finishes the watch, and the south wind blows: fall of the king of Elam (SAA VIII 535);

If the planet called Mercury (or) Mars is covered with bright: the king of Elam will become strong (Enuma Anu Enlil 56);

If a planet and Venus move parallele (one towards the other) and the Moon stands untherneath: in that Month an eclipse of the king of Elam will take place (Enuma Anu Enlil 56).

The fall of Elam in general, meaning with this the defeat of his army, will occur also in the following cases:

If in Abu (V) a storm [blows] from the west (SAA VIII 31),

If a fog rolls in on a cloudy day (SAA VIII 34, 353),

If in Nisanu (I) Venus descends darkly to the horizon and sets (SAA VIII 56),

Or if Venus descends darkly to the horizon and sets in Abu (V) (SAA VIII 96),

If there is an eclipse in Nisanu (I) on the 28th day (SAA VIII 104),

If a comet becomes visible in the path of the stars of Anu (SAA VIII 339, 456).

Destruction of Elam and its people, if on the 14th day the full Moon a planet comes close to Taurus (SAA VIII 459).

A more complex text arranges Elam in a series of diverse negative prophecies, except the last one, which is positive for Elam:

"3) When the country rise in Nisanu (I), but in the Est is not visible, in the land Elam [the cultivated field will not produce and the men will eat the price of their sons] ... 11) when the lowest stars collide with each other Elam and Akad [will be devastated]... 13) [When the lowest stars] gather together, Elam and [Akad will be devastated during 5 years]... 14) [when the highest stars become black] and the lowest stars appear [normal] [in] Elam [during 5 years, the gods Erra and Adad will eat its men]. 15) When the lowest stars [become dark and the highest stars appear normal, in Elam] and Akad [during 5 years, the gods Erra and Adad will eat its men]... 17) When the lowest stars appear green and the highest stars [appear normal, during 5 years in the land Akad] and Elam [the cultivated field will not produce, there will be famine in the land]. 18) When the highest stars will be seen extremely red, in Elam and Amurru the market will prosper. 19) When the lowest stars will be seen extremely red [in Elam and Akad the cultivated field will produce grain] (Enuma Anu Enlil 51).

In summarizing the exact astronomical and astrological information, the **main features of Elam** that we obtain from the Assyrian documents is as follows:

“The Month Tebetu (X) means Elam” (SAA VIII 120, 472), exceptionally is Ayaru (II) the Month mentioned (SAA VIII 487),

“The morning watch means Elam” (SAA VIII 4, 103, 308, 351, 487),

“The left side of the Moon means Elam” (SAA VIII 316),

“Venus is the star of Elam” (SAA VIII 302)

And that, “the 14th day means Elam” (SAA VIII 4, 300, 316, 336, 487).

So That, if there are negative aspects in such features, then that is **bad for Elam**; for instance:

An eclipse of the Moon on the 14th day (SAA VIII 388),

An eclipse of the Moon in the morning (SAA VIII 4),

The radiance of the sun diminishing in the path of the Anu stars¹, but if the sun rises in the path of the Anu stars and there is a reduction of its radiance, misfortune will fell over Elam in the morning (SAA X 79);

If Venus in Ab (V) descends darkly to the horizon and sets (SAA VIII 246),

If Venus disappears in the east in Nisanu (I) from the 1st to the 30th day: there will be wailings and weepings in the land (SAA VIII 145);

If the Moon becomes visible on the 1st day (SAA VIII 57, 86, 105, 188, 372, 373),

If the full Moon is seen on the 14th day (SAA VIII 293, 520),

And Mercury is sighted in Scorpius (SAA VIII 371),

If the full Moon is seen on the 28th day (SAA VIII 63);

If the Moon pulled the amount of its eclipse to the south and west (SAA VIII 316);

¹ The path of the Anu stars means the walk of Anu through the stars of the Equator (23 stars), in the manner of Enlil waked through the North (33 stars) and Ea through the South (15 stars). That is, Anu represents the equatorial path, Enlil the North path and Ea the South path.

If the Moon is surrounded by a halo and the Yoke star stands in it (SAA VIII 383).

However, if the features are positives, then it is **good for Elam**; for instance:

Fool Moon the 12th day (SAA VIII 88),

Full Moon the 15th day: If the opposition Moon-Sun is observed on the 15th day instead of the 14th day (SAA X 94),

Or, if Scorpius appears at the side of the Moon, this means rise for Elam (CTN 4, 14).

In conclusion, from the Assyrian documentation we can notice that in the Neo-Assyrian Period, Elam was an essential part of its astrological studies, being a fundamental academic matter for scribes and astrologers.

ANEXE

Some Babylonian Astrology about Elam (Seleucid texts from Uruk)

The little Babylonian astrological information about Elam, is limited to texts of the Seleucid Period from Uruk, although as one of them says: these are tablets that the Neo-Babylonian king Nabopolassar king of the Sea Land took from Uruk and were copied in Elam and brought back to Uruk by a high priest, during the reign of Seleucus and Antiochus (TCL 6, 38).

They treat basically with prophecies about Elam or the king of Elam.

With respect to the king of Elam, the text TCL 6, 16 is in some manner a duplicate of Enuma Anu Enlil 56 previously cited. Another text mentions in addition that if in 15th day rains fall from the sky and there is underwater flooding, the king of Elam will die (UCP 9, 9).

The prophecies about Elam are either good and bad.

As for the bad prophecies:

If Mercury appears in the zodiac sign of Elam and ... stands: there will be terror in Elam (SpTU 1, 93).

If (an eclipse takes place and) Venus becomes dark: famine in the land Elam (SpTU 1, 94).

If Jupiter goes from the Crabe to the Lion: ... famine in Elam (SpTU 1, 94).

If Mars glows and enters into the Farrow: an enemy will attack Elam. If Venus becomes dark: (the enemy) will carry booty (TCL 6, 13).

In reference to the good prophecies:

(Text broken)... in the land Elam the market will prosper... (SpTU 1, 94).

If Marduk, being in Esagil, turn to the left: the gods will become reconciled with Elam (SpTU 2, 35).

If Marduk leaves the Esagil at the beginning of the year and turns to the left: the land Elam will be angry (SpTU 2, 35).

If Marduk leaves the Esagil at the beginning of the year and go backwards to the left: the foundtions of Elam will be solid (SpTU 2, 35).

If Mars comes close to the Crabe, Elam will rise (SpTU 3, 101).

There are some other texts that may be cited and mentioned, but they don't shed much light to the exemples presented in this paper. Of course a more detailed study is on the frontier.

ASSYRIAN MONTHS

- I Nisanu (Mars-April)
- II Ayaru (April-Mai)
- III Simanu (Mai-June)
- IV Duzu (June-July)
- V Abu (July-August)
- VI Ululu (August-September)
- VII Tashritu (September-October)
- VIII Arahsamna (October-November)
- IX Kislimu (November-December)
- X Tebetu (December-January)
- XI Shabatu (January-February)
- XII Addaru (February-Mars)

DOCUMENTATION CITED

INDEX

ORACLES:

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ASTROLOGICAL REPORTS to assyrian kings:

SAA VIII:

Assyrian Reports:

4, 31, 34, 56, 57, 63, 84, 86, 88, 96, 100, 103, 104, 105, 114,
119, 120, 145, 168, 188,

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316, 336, 339, 351, 353, 371, 372, 373, 382, 383, 384, 388, 438, 452,
456, 459, 472, 487, 503, 520, 535.

OTHER TEXTS:

Serie Enuma Anu Enlil 51 and 56.

Texts from Kalaj (Nimrud): CTN 4, 14.

SpTU 1, 93 y 94

SpTU 2, 35

SpTU 3, 101

TCL 6, 13, 16 and 38

UCP 9, 9

ASTROLOGICAL PREDICTIONS:

SAA X 26, 79, 94, 100, 160, 362, 364.

ABBREVIATIONS

CTN: Cuneiform Texts from Nimrud.

Volume 4: D.J. Wisement-J.A. Black, *Literary Texts from the Temple of Nabu*, British Institute for the Study of Iraq (BISI), 1996.

SAA: State Archives of Assyria.

SAA IV: I. Starr, *Queries to the SunGod. Divination and Politics in Sargonid Assyria*. Helsinki University Press 1990.

SAA VIII: H. Hunger, *Astrological reports to Assyrian Kings*, Winona Lake, Indiana, Eisenbrauns 2014.

SAA X: S. Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars*. Helsinki University Press 1993.

SpTU: Spätbabylonische Texte aus Uruk, Berlin:

Part 1: H. Hunger, 1976.

Part 2: E. von Weiher, 1983.

Part 3: E. von Weiher, 1988.

Part 4: E. von Weiher, 1993.

TCL: Textes cuneiformes du Louvre:

Tome 6: P. Geuthner, *Tablettes d'Uruk*, Paris 1922.

UCP: University of California Publications. In *Semitic Philology*. Berkeley:

H.F. Lutz, *A fragment of the Anu-Enlil Series*, 1931, vol. 9, n° 9.