

“They embraced his feet, saying ...”
***ša’pēn aḫāzum* and *ša’pēn ezēbum* as idioms of loyalty**
and defiance in Sargonic

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In his recent contribution to the Aage Westenholz anniversary volume, Andrew George has offered a highly persuasive interpretation of Erridupizir A ii 13–26¹. According to George, the passage in question features an idiomatic expression *ša’pam in napaštim šakānum* “to place a foot at one’s throat”, describing a triumph over a defeated enemy.

It seems that this is not the only *ša’pum*-based idiom found in Erridupizir’s inscriptions², as the passage from the second monumental inscription of this ruler³ shows:

Erridu-pizir B vi 1–16	RIME 2.2.1.2 vi 1–16	FAOS 7, Gutium C 2 99–115
¹ <i>u-ša-a[m]-qi₄-it</i>	he struck down.	hat er niedergestreckt.
² <i>a-ar-^f nam¹</i>	As for ...	Ihre Flüchtlinge
^{3r} <i>ū¹</i>	and	und
⁴ <i>ba-al-ū-šú-nu</i>	their <i>survivors</i> ,	ihre (Über)lebenden haben
⁵ <i>NIDBA-šu-^f nu¹</i>	their offerings	ihre Zuteilung(en)
⁶ <i>il-qá-ū-ni[m]</i>	they took,	erhalten.
⁷ <i>ANŠE sí-s[i]-šu-nu</i>	their horses,	Esel, Pferde,
⁸ <i>GU₄-šu-^f nu¹</i>	their large cattle	Rinder
⁹ <i>ū UDU-šu-nu</i>	and their sheep ...	und ...-Schafe
¹⁰ <i>ša-pí</i>		...

¹ A. George, Erridupizir’s triumph and Old Akkadian *ša’pum* “foot”, in: G. Barjamovich et al. (eds.), *Akkad is king*. Fs. Westenholz (in press). I would like to express my deepest gratitude to A. George for making his article available to me and as well as for commenting on an earlier version of this note. My warmest thanks also go to L. Kogan, W. Sommerfeld and W. Sallaberger, whose help I greatly appreciate. This article was prepared with financial support from the Russian foundation for the Humanities (RFH, project no. 09-04-00235a).

² His inscriptions were first published by R. Kutscher in *The Brockmon tablets at the University of Haifa: Royal inscriptions* (Haifa 1989) 49–69. The most recent editions of the texts are found in B. Kienast/I. J. Gelb, *Die altakkadischen Königsinschriften des dritten Jahrtausends v. Chr.* FAOS 7 (Stuttgart 1990) 300–316, and D. Frayne, *Sargonic and Gutian Periods*. RIME 2 (Toronto 1993) 220–228. In the present article these editions are referred to as FAOS 7 and RIME 2 respectively.

Erridu-pizir B vi 1–16	RIME 2.2.1.2 vi 1–16	FAOS 7, Gutium C 2 99–115
¹¹ DINGIR <i>gu-ti-im</i>	the god of Gutium	die/der Götter von Gutium
¹² ù	and	und
¹³ <i>en-ri-da-pi-zi-ir</i>	Enrida-pizir	Enridapizir
¹⁴ <i>è-ḫu-zu</i>	took hold of (them)
¹⁵ BAD- <i>al-ni-me</i>		...
¹⁶ <i>li</i> [...]		...
(rest broken)	Lacuna	

As found in the standard editions of the Old Akkadian royal inscriptions, this passage yields no plausible sense. However, its meaning becomes more apparent if we separate lines 1–2 from the rest of the text and take line 3 as a beginning of a new syntagma. This division seems reasonable in view of a parallel from Erridu-pizir C x 11'–14', which runs ¹*Am-ni-li àr*(ḪAR)-*nam in ra-si-šu u-[ša-a]m-[qi₄-it]* “Amnili – he (Erridu-pizir) has inflicted punishment on him (lit. ‘on his head’).”⁴

The expression *arnam šumqutum* is not attested elsewhere in Sargonic or any of the later dialects. The closest Akkadian parallel one might think of is the well-known *arnam emēdum* “to impose punishment” (CAD A 2 298).

Lines 3–14 describe the fate of those who survived the conflict between Erridu-pizir and the ruler of Madga. The survivors take their offerings to the god of Gutium and Erridu-pizir (NIDBA-*šu-¹nu¹ il-qá-ù-ni[m]*) and embrace their feet⁵ (*ša-pí ... è-ḫu-zu*), thus expressing obedience to their new ruler and his god. The particle *-me* in the end of l. 15 marks BAD-*al-ni* “our lord” as direct speech, so it is tempting to identify LI in the beginning of the following line as the prefix of 3 m. s. precativ form addressed to Erridu-pizir. Taken together, these considerations allow us to propose the following translation:

³ RIME 2.2.1.2, quoted here as Erridu-pizir B.

⁴ It should be noted that ḪAR is not attested as /àr/ elsewhere in Sargonic Akkadian. However, this phonetic value is commonly found in the early Semitic syllabary of Ebla (see M. Krebernik, *Zu Syllabar und Orthographie der lexikalischen Texte aus Ebla. Teil 1*, ZA 72, 178–236).

⁵ For the etymology of the Old Akkadian *ša⁷pum* see A. Militarev/L. Kogan, *Semitic Etymological Dictionary*, Vol. 1. AOAT 278/1 (Münster 2000) 241 and George op.cit. The lexeme is normally spelled with *sá /ša⁷/* in Sargonic (cf. B. Kienast/K. Volk, *Die sumerischen und akkadischen Briefe des dritten Jahrtausends aus der Zeit vor der III. Dynastie von Ur*. FAOS 19 [Stuttgart 1995], Gir 37:4), which is plausibly explained by the presence of ⁷ in the root. The sign BI (reserved for /be/ and /pe/ in Sargonic) is expectedly used in this form to render the 3 m. pl. obl. ending -ē.

[*Upon his enemy*] he inflicted punishment. Their survivors delivered (lit. “took here”) their offerings – their donkeys, their horses, their large and small cattle. They embraced the feet of the god of Gutium and Erridu-pizir, (saying): “Let our lord ... (rest broken)” (Erridu-pizir B vi 1–16).

A Sargonic letter from Girsu offers a parallel to *śa’pēn aḥāzum* “to embrace one’s feet”⁶. The sender of this letter is pleased with the good news that reached him (*aś-má-ma aḥ-tá-du*). The news is likely about an ally of his, who by some reason decided to act on his own (*’á-wa-at-śu i-di-ís i-tá-ḥa-az*) and turned hostile (*i-na-kir*), but now is willing to restore their alliance (cf. r. 4’ ff.). It is about this ally that the sender of the letter exclaims: “I thought, ‘He is holding my feet’” (*en-ma a-na-ku₈-ma śá-pí-i-a-me u-kà-al*). As one can deduce from the context, *śa’pēn kullum* “to hold one’s feet” must be a gesture of obedience here too⁷.

The interpretation of *śa’pēn aḥāzum* as a gesture of loyalty to a ruler has important implications with regard to another passage from Erridu-pizir’s inscription, where an idiom with the opposite meaning is found:

[*śa*]-*pí En-ri-da-pi-zi-ir da-nim LUGAL gu-ti-im ú ki-ib-ra-tim ar-ba-im è-zi-bu śa-dú-e ú IRI^{ki}IRI^{ki} u-uš-ba-al-ki-tu*

When he (KA-Nišba) rejected the feet of mighty Erridu-pizir, king of Gutium and the four quarters, and caused the mountain regions and cities to revolt (Erridu-pizir B iv 2–10).

In both RIME 2 and FAOS 7 the form in l. 1 is restored as [*a*]-*bi* “my father” and interpreted as the object of *ezēbum*:

[*a*]-*bi En-ri-da-pi-zi-ir da-nim LUGAL gu-ti-im ú ki-ib-ra-tim ar-ba-im è-zi-bu*
 (When KA-Nišba) ignored (the orders of) my father, Enrida-pizir, the mighty, king of Gutium and of the four quarters (RIME 2.2.1.2 iv 2–10).
 (da) er meinen (sic!) Vater Enrida-pizir, den Mächtigen, den König von Gutium und der vier Weltgegenden, im Stich gelassen hatte (FAOS 7, Gutium C 2 12f).

Such a reading creates problems with the genitive form as the “object” of the verb and with the rendering of the Suff. 1 c. sg. /-ī/ with the sign BI

⁶ An allusion to this understanding can be found in Westenholz’ translation of Gir 37 in A. Westenholz, The world view of Sargonic officials. Differences in mentality between Sumerians and Akkadians, in: M. Liverani (ed.). Akkad. The first world empire: structure, ideology, traditions. History of the Ancient Near East Studies 5 (Padova 1993) 158: “I thought, ‘He will cling to my feet.’”

⁷ It should be noted that the expression *śa’pēn aḥāzum* is not found outside the Sargonic corpus. In later dialects (from OB on) the most frequently attested idiom of submission is *šēpam šabātum* (see CAD Š/II 297).

(reserved for /be/ in Sargonic)⁸. The restoration of [śa]-*pí* in this line not only allows us to resolve the grammatical problems, but also yields a much better sense. The resulting expression *śa'pēn ezēbum* “to reject one’s feet” (i. e. “to refuse submission”; “to defy”) makes beautiful contrast to *śa'pēn ahāzum* “to embrace one’s feet” (i. e. “to demonstrate loyalty”)⁹.

⁸ In addition to this, such a restoration implies that both Erridu-pizir and his father bore the same name, which does not seem likely.

⁹ L. Kogan drew my attention to another probable attestation of *śa'pum* (this time with a regular Sargonic spelling) from an inscription of Narām-Sîn: *e-ni i-tá-kir, śa-pí-a* “Now he (Iḫur-Kiši) *rebelled against* me (?)” (RIME 2.1.4.6). The passage is difficult to interpret, but the context suggests that the expression *śa'pēn nakārum* must mean something like “to disobey” (cf. *śa'pēn ezēbum* “to refuse submission” above).