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GOAT-SKINS, HORSES AND CAMELS: HOW DID DARIUS' ARMY CROSS THE TIGRIS?¹

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Abstract

In the great inscription of Bisotun, King Darius, speaking in the first person, relates how he managed to cross the Tigris with his army before defeating the army of the Babylonian Nidintu-Bel, one of the 'rebel kings'. The short account of this undertaking, however, with its several lexical and syntactic ambiguities, leaves open many questions about how things had actually gone. The author of this paper analyses in detail the three, somehow divergent parallel passages (i.e., Old Persian, Achaemenid Elamite and Achaemenid Babylonian) of this multilingual text and the relationships among them, focusing on the translation strategies and techniques followed by the authors of the royal inscriptions. Since different possible scenarios may be reconstructed from the three versions, the author concludes that the narrative of the Tigris crossing has to be interpreted taking into account the ideological concerns and rhetoric conventions characterizing the Bisotun narrative of the royal deeds, not so different from the epic-heroic conventions characterizing many ancient Near Eastern royal inscriptions.

Keywords

Achaemenid epigraphy, Old Persian, Achaemenid Elamite, Achaemenid Babylonian, Iranian philology

Résumé

Dans la grande inscription de Bisotun, le roi Darius, parlant à la première personne, raconte comment il a réussi à traverser le Tigre avec son armée avant de vaincre l'armée du babylonien Nidintu-Bel, un des « rois rebelles ». Le bref récit de cette entreprise, cependant, avec plusieurs ambiguïtés lexicales et syntaxiques, laisse ouvertes de nombreuses questions sur la façon dont les choses se sont réellement produites. L'auteur de cet article analyse en détail les trois passages (c'est-à-dire, vieux-perse, élamite achéménide et babylonien achéménide) parallèles, en quelque sorte divergents de ce texte multilingue et les relations entre eux, en mettant l'accent sur les stratégies de traduction et les techniques suivies par les auteurs des inscriptions royales. Puisque différents scénarios possibles peuvent être reconstruits à partir de ces trois versions, l'auteur conclut que le récit de la traversée du Tigre doit être interprété en tenant compte des préoccupations idéologiques et des conventions rhétoriques, qui caractérisent le récit des actes royaux de Bisotun, pas si différentes des conventions épiques-héroïques qui caractérisent de nombreuses inscriptions royales du Proche Orient ancien.

1. In 1997, Pierre Lecoq published in Paris (Gallimard) a book entitled *Les inscriptions de la Perse achéménide traduit du vieux perse, de l'élamite, du babylonien et de l'araméen*. After the edition of the Achaemenid trilingual inscriptions by WEISSBACH (1911), always praiseworthy but largely out of date because of new findings and interpretations, Lecoq's work was the first to offer a comprehensive picture of the multilingual Achaemenid documentation. Lecoq provided an original translation of the whole corpus on the basis of the Old Persian texts, without "négliger les autres versions".³ Given the publishing project, the publishing house and the audience to which it is expressly addressed,⁴ the book could not contain original texts in transcription, and bibliographical references and philological remarks were reduced to a minimum. Nevertheless, it marked an important step in the field.

¹ Being *Text Production Strategies and Translation Strategies in the Achaemenid Documentation IV*.

² Tuscia University, Viterbo.

³ LECOQ 1997, 9.

⁴ "Cet ouvrage s'adresse à un large public, et notamment aux lecteurs de culture iranienne"; cf. LECOQ 1997, 9.

Since 1997 the scholarly interest towards the multilingual character of the Achaemenid royal documentation, intended as a strategy for communication and diffusion of the royal ideology, has increased significantly, and different projects have also been planned aimed at a new edition, translation and commentary of the entire Achaemenid multilingual corpus.⁵

To Pierre Lecoq, who has greatly contributed throughout his scientific career to the advancement of Achaemenid studies (as well as Iranian dialectology), I dedicate the present paper where parallel short passages from the great inscription of Bisotun (DB) in the three languages of the Achaemenid royal epigraphy (Old Persian [OP], Achaemenid Elamite [AE] and Achaemenid Babylonian [AB]) have been discussed from an interlinguistic perspective and with a special attention to the translation strategies and techniques followed by the staff of the Achaemenid chancellery to produce their multilingual texts.⁶

2. The story of DB in its narrative part consists of a list of events that followed the defeat of Gaumāta and the taking of power by Darius. This series of events, arranged in the frame of various war campaigns, comes one after the other and intersect according to a relatively fixed plot and with almost the same dynamic, with little descriptive variation and no details on the characteristics of terrain, routes (apart from general directions), military techniques, etc.⁷ One of the peculiarities of the multilingual passage we are going to analyze is the presence of additional clarifications about the ecological environment and military dynamics.⁸

Darius' adversary is in this case Nidintu-Bel, who rose up in Babylon as the King of Babylon under the name of Nebuchadnezzar (III), presenting himself as the son of Nabonidus, and compelled King Darius, who took personal command of the military campaign, to move against him. The Tigris river, well known for its swift waters, was for Darius' army an obstacle to overcome on the route to victory.

This is the background. To know what happened, we may follow the story, as briefly narrated by King Darius:

(1a)

OP i.85	AE i.67-68 ⁹	AB 34
kar : hy : nd'itbirhya : tigram : adary : avda : aištata :	^{DIŠ} taš-šu-íp ap-pa ^{DIŠ} nu-ti-ut-be-ul hu- pír-ri-na ^{AS} A ^{MEŠ} ti-ig-ra hi-še ha-mi pè-sa-ip-ti ^{AS} ti-ig-ra ^{AS} ša-ri-ut mar-ri-iš	ú-qu šá ^{DIŠ} ni-din-tú- ^d EN <ina> GÚ ^{id} di-ig-[lat] ú-šu- uz-zu ÍD ku-ul-lu-'
<i>kāra haya Nadintabairahyā</i> <i>Tigrām adāraya avadā aištata</i>	<i>taššup appa Nutitbel hupirrina A Tigra</i> <i>hiše hami pesapti Tigra šarit marriš</i>	<i>uqu ša Nidintu-Bel <ina></i> <i>aḫi Diglat ušuzzū nāra</i> <i>kullā</i>

Divergences among the three versions are almost irrelevant. They consist of:

(a) the first mention of the Tigris in the AE version presents the 'naming' construction, generally reserved for referents which (i) have proper names (people, places), (ii) are introduced for the first time in the universe of the discourse and, according to the speaker, (iii) cannot be identified by the addressee;¹⁰

⁵ Cf. the Achaemenid Royal Inscriptions Project (ARI) at the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, an early experiment in on-line presentation of multilingual texts, now discontinued, and the still ongoing DARIOSH (Digital Achaemenid Royal Inscription Open Schema Hypertext) Project, based at L'Orientale University, Naples and Tuscia University, Viterbo.

⁶ "Text production strategies and translation strategies in the documentation of Achaemenid Iran" is a research Project funded by the Italian Ministry of Education (PRIN 2009JHSEE7_002); it also benefits from the results of former Projects on Achaemenid epigraphy funded by the MIUR in the past years (PRIN 2005105580_002, 2007ZKPPSM_003) and the DARIOSH Project. The results of the first steps of this research line ("light verb constructions", "personal pronouns and discourse organization", "potential/completive constructions") are in FILIPPONE 2015 and forthcoming a, b.

⁷ Also in the Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions, contrary to what happens in the parallel visual narrative, the description of the physical landscape is usually absent in texts relating to war campaigns; occasional hints serve to highlight the difficulties the king had to overcome when advancing through unusual terrains ("la conquista del 'paesaggio difficile'"; cf. FALES 2006, 184).

⁸ The only other passage which refers to a natural barrier is DB v.23-25 (only OP), where a sea crossing is mentioned. Here the narrative has a less dramatic and heroic tone, but the specification 'all' with reference to the army (*hadā kāra višā* "with all the army") could be understood as an allusion to the complexity of the operation.

⁹ The reading of the AE text is mostly given according to ^cALIYARI 2015, 111-112.

(b) AE and AB agree on the STAND [*pesapti* / *ušuzzū*] > CONTROL [*marriš* / *kullū*] sequence, while OP presents the opposite sequence CONTROL [*adāraya*] > STAND [*aištata*]. This could sound odd, unless we do not attribute to this OP paratactic construction an asymmetrical relation at the semantic-pragmatic level, with the second clause presenting the conditions that had resulted in the event of the first clause:

(1b)

OP i.85	AE i.67-68	AB 34
The army of N-B held the Tigris. They had taken their stand there.	The troops of that N-B – a river, Tigris by name – there had taken their stand (and) held the bank of the Tigris.	The troops of N-B took their stand on the bank of the Tigris (and) held the river.

Note that the senses attributed to AE *pesa* (“to stand”) and *šarit* (“bank”), both hapax, are conjectural, being based upon the OP and/or AB text; for *šarit*, different interpretations have been tentatively suggested by Hallock¹¹ and Grillot-Susini *et al.*¹²

Other armies in the past had to meet with the nuisance of crossing rivers, the usual methods being swimming, fording, boating and bridging.¹³ A natural ford was obviously the best solution, but a ford was not always available, and even when it was, the problems which one had to face could be serious.¹⁴ To make a river fordable, canals could be planned out, but this was a job requiring much time, as experienced by Cyrus on more than one occasion. Bridges of boats were frequently built for river crossings; well known was the propensity of Persians to improvise bridges on rivers on the spot.¹⁵ Which of the strategies could be followed in military campaigns depended on topographic and geographic peculiarities, weather and seasonal conditions, the time available and other possible factors (such as that of having to face the enemy waiting on the other bank).¹⁶

As far as the event narrated in our DB passage is concerned, the spot where the river was crossed and the place of the subsequent battle have not been precisely located; S. Zawadzki suggested that the engagement could have occurred in northern or middle Babylonia.¹⁷ We do not even know from where Darius moved¹⁸ and which route he followed to Babylonia, whether he took the way of Susa or passed through the Zagros Gates;¹⁹ supposedly, if the enemy had taken his stand at a specific spot along the river bank, that spot could have been the most ‘natural’ for the river crossing in that section of the river. But we know something more about the conditions of the river and the strategy Darius adopted in this circumstance. We learn it directly from ‘his own words’.

3. The river conditions are described in the following terms:

(2a)

DB/OP i.85-86	DB/AE i.68	DB/AB 34
uta : abiš : nav ⁱ ya : ah :	ku-ud-da [^{AŠ} A ^{MEŠ} ha?]-ah ^{AŠ} GIŠ-MA ^{MEŠ} -na	^{id} IDIGNA ma-li

¹⁰ Notes on the pragmatic value of the corresponding OP naming constructions are in FILIPPONE 2005, 411ff.

¹¹ HALLOCK 1969, 754 s.v. *šarit* (“reed-thicket (?)”).

¹² GRILLOT-SUSINI *et al.* 1993, 45 (“passage?”).

¹³ Cf. ECHOLS 1953, ROLLINGER 2013.

¹⁴ Having to cross the Tigris while in pursuit of Darius III, Alexander searched for a ford (the fords in the Tigris are very few) and succeeded in finding it. Nevertheless, also in this case the river crossing was a risky venture for him because of the swiftness of the current (Arrian III.7.3). See also Curtius *Historiae* IV.9, 15ff., Diodorus *Bibliotheca* xvii, lv, 2ff.

¹⁵ Cf. Procopius II.21.21-22.

¹⁶ Ancient (written and visual) documentation concerning river crossings in Mesopotamia is very rich; see recently ROLLINGER (2013), to whom I refer for more details.

¹⁷ ZAWADZKI 1994, 132. A document from Uruk dated to Kislimu 29 (= December 16) of the accession year of Nebuchadnezzar (i.e. three days after the battle) would prove, according to Zawadzki, that no news of that battle had arrived in Uruk at that date.

¹⁸ The last topological reference we have (DB/OP i.59, AE i.46, AB 24) shows Darius at Nisaya, in Media, intent on killing Gaumāta. But nothing proves that after the killing of his enemy he stayed there, as it is usually taken for granted.

¹⁹ According to POEBEL 1938, 151, he took the latter, since in this way he “could gather his Persian and especially Mede troops practically within striking distance of Babylonia”.

utā abiš nāviyā āha

kudda A [ha?]jah GIŠ.MÁ-na

Idiglat²⁰ mali

3.1. Let's start with the AB version. To describe the water conditions, the author of this passage resorts to the stative form of *malû* "to be full (of containers, canal, etc.)".²¹ This expression is by no means "too vague" as stated by UTAS (1966, 129), and hardly "this word 'full', when used about rivers and canals, could assume the technical meaning 'navigable'" (ibid.). In fact, to this verbal base belongs *mīlu*, the Akkadian word normally used to denote the river seasonal flooding. The two notions, 'being in spate' and 'being navigable', are independent. When in spate, the river could or could not be crossed by boats; this depended on the actual water conditions at any given moment.²²

3.2. Both OP *abiš* and *nāviyā* have been a matter of discussion since the earliest days of the scholarly interpretation of DB/OP. We owe to Bo Utas a survey of all the solutions proposed by different scholars with regard to these two words up to 1966. I will just mention the main points, referring to UTAS (1966, 118-129) for more details and bibliographical references.

The list of the proposed solutions for *abiš* includes:

(a) preposition theory (*abiš* as a sideform of *abi*, cf. SPIEGEL 1881, 206, "bei, zu"). A variant of this theory is that proposed by Utas himself who suggests considering *abiš(a)* as a combination of the preposition *abi* and *-š(a)*, a suffix pronoun otherwise unattested (a "younger form of the gen.-dat. *-šaiy*") and points to it as "an example of a more 'colloquial' OP";²³

(b) adverb theory (BARTHOLOMAE 1904, 94, "dabei");

(c) "water" theory, with the following variants:

c^a) *abiš* as a miswriting or misreading of *āpiš* (nominative singular of a vowel stem *āpi-*; KÖNIG 1938, 70, "Flut, Strömung");

c^b) instrumental plural (KENT 1942, 270, *abiš* < **abbhiš* < **ap-bhis*, "on account of the waters");

c^c) instrumental plural with nominative function (HOFFMANN 1958, 18). This theory has recently been reinforced by PIRART (2011), with a review of all DB passages – including that under discussion here – in which instrumental plural forms occur instead of the expected nominative/accusative, and which are marked by É. Pirart as "anomalies grammaticales à Bisotun".²⁴

Though the debate about the possible functions of the instrumental case of *abiš* is still open,²⁵ the "water" theory is the most accredited nowadays. The AE passage also strongly supports it. The AE logogram ^{AS}A^{MEŠ} for 'water' – if the reconstruction is correct – is also found in DB/AE I.78 (twice) in correspondence with OP *ap-* "water". This Elamite word is also used with the extended sense of "river" and often precedes river names.²⁶ We cannot exclude that OP *ap-* could also have been used in the same sense.²⁷

²⁰ On the spelling of this river name in DB/AB see below, § 4.1.

²¹ Cf. CAD 1977a, 174 *malû* "1. to be full, to fill up (said of containers, objects, canals, ditches, irrigated fields, parts of the human and animal body), etc."; 1977b, 69 *mīlu* "1. seasonal flooding of the rivers [...] cf. *malû*".

²² Cf. *nārum malīma ebēram ul ile* "the river was high so (the troops) could not cross it" (Mari archives; CAD 1973 (L), 153 [s.v. *le'ū*]); (Neo-Assyrian) *ĪD GN ina mīliša ina elippāte ša dušē lu ēbir* "I crossed the river GN at high water on boats made of (inflated) skins" (CAD 1958 (E), 11 [s.v. *ebēru*]).

²³ UTAS 1966, 126. According to Utas, this suffix pronoun would be coreferent to "the army of Naditabaira", mentioned in the preceding clause.

²⁴ É. Pirart excludes the possibility that this phenomenon could be analyzed as a natural or otherwise predictable linguistic phenomenon and advances the hypothesis of an "emploi diascévastique", similar to that pointed at for similar cases in Avestan. On account of such similarities he concludes that the "anomalie de l'emploi de +*biš* partagée par les inscriptions vieux-perses et les textes avestiques nous conduit à penser que leurs diascévases respectives relèvent d'une seule et même tradition ou école grammaticale" (2011, 159).

²⁵ See SKJÆRVØ 2002, 71: "And it (= the Tigris) was *deep with waters" (or: "had to be crossed by ship because of the waters"). For SKJÆRVØ's more recent positions see below.

²⁶ HINZ and KOCH 1987, 13; see also DB/AE i.67 above.

²⁷ Cf. also PIRART 2011, 158 (translating OP *ap-* in DB/OP i.95 as "river"). 'Water' > 'watercourse, river' is a fairly predictable semantic change due to metonymy. In Iranian one finds, for instance, Pers. *āb* "water; river" (MÖIN 1992; generally used in connection with river names: *āb-e Āmu* "the Amu river", *āb-e Nil* "the Nile river", etc.); Yaghnobi *op*, *ob*, *ow* "water; river, riverlet" (ANDREEV, PEŠČEREVA 1957), Gorani (Zardai) *āw* "water; river" (MAHMOUDVEYSI, BAILEY 2013, 79), and many other attestations. Cf. also SCHMITT 2014, 131 ("Der Plural in DB 185 ist augmentativ als „Wassermassen“ zu verstehen").

In support of the “water” theory also speaks the regular collocation of Av. *nāuuia-* (cognate to OP *nāviya-*; see below) with *āp-* “1) Wasser, in Allgemeinen; 2) von bestimmten Flüssen oder Seen, ‘Gewässer’” (BARTHOLOMAE 1904, 325ff.).²⁸

Since KÖNIG (1938, 70f.) onward, OP *nāviya-* has been almost unanimously taken as an adjectival derivative from **nāv-* “boat, ship” with the meaning of “navigable”.²⁹ Kent, who questioned the adjectival nature of the word and preferred to interpret it as an abstract noun (“navigability”),³⁰ focused his attention on the semantic value one could attribute to this derivative: saying that at that place the Tigris was navigable (or, as he preferred, that there was navigability), Darius would simply mean that the river could not be crossed by fording (KENT 1943). In support of his view, he also quotes a few passages from the Greek literature, in particular Xenophon *Anabasis* 2.2.3, but also Herodotus (*Historiae* 1.189, 5.52), where the Tigris or other rivers are said to be *νησιπέρητος* “navigable”.³¹

From this perspective, OP *nāviya-*, as well as the corresponding Gk. expressions, would not refer to a ‘positive’ situation (“crossable by boats”) but to a ‘negative’ one (“requiring a boat, uncrossable without a boat”), with the possibility of extending its semantic range towards “unfordable”, “full of water” or even “deep”. This has become more or less the current understanding: see lastly *nāviya-* “nur mittels Boot zu überqueren” in SCHMITT (2014, 220).³² Kent’s view has been challenged by Bo Utas, who suggested a widening of the range of possibilities of interpretation. Since, according to its water conditions, the Tigris could in principle be fordable, navigable but also uncrossable, he saw no good reason to depart from the translation “navigable”: “in this ‘navigable’, he suggested that instead of a negative statement ‘not fordable’, a positive one ‘still crossable’” might be perceived (1966, 128).³³ To support his assumption, B. Utas also quoted Av. *nāuuia-*, referring to BARTHOLOMAE (1904, 1064, *nāvaya-* “Schiffbar, Bezeichnung fließenden Wassers von grösserer Breite und Tiefe”). In fact, “navigable” is by no means the best translation one may offer for Av. *nāuuia-* in any of its occurrences, as has already been noted time

²⁸ See also UTAS 1966, 128, fn. 2.

²⁹ For previous interpretations see UTAS 1966, 127.

³⁰ KENT 1942, 271; see also 1953, 193, s.v. Such a claim is also conditioned by Kent’s syntactic analysis of the clause and the need to find an appropriate subject. I subscribe to KENT’s remark on the syntax of this passage (“It is hardly likely that *nāviyā* is pred. nom. to an omitted *Tigrā* ‘the Tigris was navigable (= unfordable)’), as some scholars have tentatively suggested; I find no parallel for such an omission in the OP texts”, 1953, 219 - ADDENDA to 193b.22 - conflicting however with his translation in 1953, 120: “and on account of the waters (the Tigris) was unfordable”). The question may be easily settled taking *abiš* as the subject of the clause (see above).

³¹ So in LIDDELL, SCOTT 1996, 1162. A different interpretation of *νησιπέρητος* in Her. V.52 is in BRIANT 2002: 362 (“which must mean that they were crossed by means of pontoon bridges”). To the Greek documentation, one could also add Lat. *naviger* “carrying ships, navigable” as used by Ammianus Marcellinus in XXIII.6.20. In this passage, the Roman author mentions, contesting it, a folk etymology for the name Adiabene (“formerly called Assyria”), which connects this toponym to the Greek verb *διαβαίνειν* “to cross”: the alleged motivation underlying the name would be that this region is placed between two ‘navigable’ rivers (*navigeros fluvios*) and therefore can never be approached by fording (*adiri vado numquam potuit*).

³² See also SCHMITT 1991, 55 (note to l. 86 “not to be crossed without the help of a boat (i.e. ‘not fordable’”), 2009, 49; LECOQ 1997, 193 (“les eaux étaient navigables”) and 194 n. 2 to § 18 (“Manière de dire que le fleuve n’était pas guéable. La même tournure se retrouve dans l’*Avesta*”), SKJÆRVØ 2002, 61 “deep (so as to require ships, or similar, to cross)”, etc. (for an updated position of this author see below fn. 34) For recent Indo-Europeanist points of view, see MALLORY, ADAMS 1997, 74 (*nāviya-* “[river] passable only with a boat, not wadable”, s.v. *boat*), WODTKO, IRSLINGER, SCHNEIDER 2008, 515f. (s.v. **neh₂-*, **neh₂-y-* “Schiff, Boot”). One should admit that the whole debate on the meaning of OP *nāviya-* has been conditioned too much by an etymological perspective. Once a primary meaning (“navigable”) has been attributed to *nāviya-* in agreement with the lexical forms presumably derived from the same etymon and available in European languages (cf. Lat. *nauigabilis* “suitable for shipping, navigable”, from which Engl. *navigable*, etc. derive, which however contains a derivational morpheme just meaning something like ‘able to’), scholars felt the need to explain in which senses “navigable” was intended in our text. The problem is that Engl. *navigable* etc. does not convey those senses one attributes to OP *nāviya-* and therefore it should not be used at all to render the OP word, even if one agrees on their etymological relation. A good illustration of this attitude is KELLEN’S comment on the matter: “C’est que l’adj. ‘navigable’ a pour nous des suggestions déviées par rapport à celles qu’il avait pour les anciens. Nous y voyons surtout la nuance, positive dans une société industrielle, de ‘qui permet le transport par bateau’ alors qu’eux lui donnaient celle, négative, de ‘qui rend nécessaire le transport par bateau’” (1974, 83, fn. 1). Now, the assumption that in antiquity people could have had problems with river navigation is rather questionable: the Mesopotamian economic system, for instance, largely benefited from river navigability, the water routes being more efficient than land routes, especially for transporting heavy materials.

³³ In fact, the translation suggested by UTAS (“and to it [i.e. the army of Naditabaira] (the Tigris) was navigable” 1966, 129) more than “formally not quite satisfactory”, as admitted by the author himself, is hardly acceptable as far as the general content is concerned.

and again; cf. BENVENISTE, RENOU (1934, 60 and fn. 3, Yt14.39, “non « eau navigable », mais désignation probable des fleuves tumultueux, comme peut-être v.p. *nāviyā*”); KREYENBROEK (1985, 100, Yt11.4 “unfordable waters”, *ibid.*, 60-61) and others.³⁴ Doubts on the current interpretation of OP *nāviya-* and Av. *nāuuia-* as “fordable by boat” have been raised on other occasions by Skjærvø who suggests interpreting the terms as “in spate”.³⁵ Recently WIDMER (2007) has closely investigated the whole set of Indo-Iranian cognates to OP *nāviya-*,³⁶ questioning not only the meanings attributed to some of them but also the etymology on which a general agreement had been reached. According to him, from a phonological, morphological and semantic point of view, OP *nāviya-* and cognates would be better explained as a primary formation directly derived from the Indo-Iranian root *nāy-* “to flow”, and thence meaning “streaming, raging”, rather than as a secondary derivative from Indo-Iranian *nāy-* “boat, ship”. It is worth noting that the proposed connection between OP *nāviya-* and its cognates and the word for “boat” is not a recent idea of European scholars, as proved by the etymological considerations of Pāṇini³⁷ and by the AE rendering of OP *nāviya-* in DB (see § 3.3. below).

As for the actual sense of OP *nāviya-*, etymological and comparative analyses may produce very useful evidence which however are not necessarily conclusive since the directions of possible semantic specializations in any language may be multiple. The context of usage of the only occurrence we have of OP *nāviya-* leaves us with an embarrassment of riches: when in spate, the river is high, full of running water, deep, rushing, unfordable, etc.

3.3. In the AE version, OP *nāviyā* is paralleled by the AE logogram ^{AS}GIŠ-^{MEŠ}MÁ-na (cf. ^{AS}GIŠ-^{MEŠ}MÁ “boat” plus the postposition -na with genitive-dative functions), plausibly modeled on the OP word. According to CAMERON (1960, 64) the logogram ^{AS}A^{MEŠ} would correspond “in position and no doubt also in meaning to OP *abiš*”. As for [ha]ah, the question remains open. George G. Cameron, who is responsible for the reconstruction proposed here, suggests that it be understood as a rendering of OP *āha* (“was/were”) in Elamite garb. Though far from certain, his assumption is possible; however, the position of the alleged verbal form would not be the expected one. An alternative solution has been advanced by François Vallat, who pointed to the Elamite resumptive pronoun M/NE *aha*, N/AE *ah*, AE *ha*, generally appearing before the verb and having a locative meaning.³⁸ Prudently, HINZ and KOCH (1987, 848, s.v. ^{AS}GIŠ-^{MEŠ}MÁ.lg) forbear from reconstructing.

3.4. The chronological aspects of DB reveal a number of serious problems.³⁹ Most of the battles are dated by month and day, but no reference is given to the relevant year. Nevertheless, several times it is emphatically stressed that all the reported undertakings were accomplished within one single year. The main problem is that such one-year period appears overcrowded with events occurring too close in time and in regions too far apart to be able to reconcile the royal statements with a plausible course of events. On this matter, scholars divide among those who strongly defend the veracity of ‘Darius’ account, and others who express reservations about the chronological precision and historical truth contained in DB, putting forward different solutions that discard some of the battles from the events of the year, in order to conveniently fit the one-year schedule. They admit in this way communicative manipulation by the authors

³⁴ According to GERSHEVITCH (1962, 173-174), besides meaning “navigable” (like OP *nāviya-*), Av. *nāuuia-* was also applied to waters running in channels. Independently (quoting Herzfeld but not Gershevitch), GNOLI attributed to Av. *āpō nāuuia-* in V and Yt10 the sense of “acque canalizzate” (and not “acque navigabili”) (1967, 15); on the same lines and with a rich bibliography see also PANAINO 2004.

³⁵ See SKJÆRVØ 2011, 326 (“in the first place, the only thing Darius does not use to cross the Tigris is boats, but rather inflated hides, camels, and horses; in the second place, the same word in Avestan is found in Yašt 8.25, where Ahura Mazda promises to bestow on Tištriia the strength of ten stallions, camels, bulls, mountains, and waters (i.e. rivers) that are *nāuuia-*, where ‘navigable waters’ is much less impressive than ‘rivers in spate’”); see also SKJÆRVØ 2006, 315.

³⁶ On the question of OP *nāviya-* and its possible Iranian cognates I will come back in a separate, forthcoming paper.

³⁷ See WIDMER 2007, 215.

³⁸ “Il s’agit probablement du locatif élamite : *a-ah* ou *a-ah-an*, *a-ha-ar* [...] ou encore le simple *ha* de l’époque achéménide” (VALLAT 1977a, 237). On this form, as well as on many other aspects of Elamite grammar, there is no agreement among scholars. As well summarized in STOLPER 2004, 76-77, one may account for a narrow interpretation (“locative and only locative”); a broad interpretation (“a general oblique resumptive pronoun [...] indicating not only ‘in, at it’ but also ‘to, for, with it’”); an agnostic view (“prefix or particle of uncertain function and meaning”). See also HENKELMAN 2008, 405f.

³⁹ TUPLIN 2005, 232ff.

of the inscriptional texts.⁴⁰ Obviously, we cannot go into all details here. Suffice it to say that the same episode of Nebuchadnezzar has been shown difficult to analyze because too short a time elapsed between the murdering of Gaumāta (September 29) and the first documents known bearing the name of Nebuchadnezzar (= Nidintu-Bel; October, 3, from Sippar; October 6, from Babylon).⁴¹ There can be little doubt that Darius has sacrificed at least the chronological precision to the rhetoric of the “in a single year” topos, according to a literary pattern which has been derived from the Assyrian tradition⁴² and may be simply considered, with TADMOR's (1997, 327) words, “an epic-heroic convention”.

Though I am personally convinced that the DB chronological markers are illusory in the main⁴³ and that any effort at finding the true sequence of events is bound to be pointless, I did not find any decisive argument to argue that the battle on the Tigris between Nidintu-Bel and Darius did occur in a period other than that asserted in DB. In fact, the Babylonian sources could partially corroborate these DB chronological markers: I refer in particular to the last document we have in the name of Nebuchadnezzar, dated Kislimi 29 (= December 16, i.e. three days after the battle on the Tigris). On the other hand, there is no sure evidence of the beginning of Darius' reign prior to February 4, 521.⁴⁴ With this in mind, we may try to give credit to ‘Darius’ words’ on the matter. But if the dating found in DB for the struggle on the Tigris (*Açiyādiya* / *Hašiyatiyaš* / *Kis(i)līmu* 26 = December 13) is the actual one, the river could hardly be in full spate.

For the Mesopotamian rivers, the seasonal flood, i.e., the period of maximum snowmelt and rain from the mountains, generally occurs at the end of the rainy season (mostly in April). In the narrative of their military campaigns, the Neo-Assyrian kings frequently mention their crossing of a river, often also stressing its being in flood. If dated (directly or by inference from an adjacent dated event), the reported crossing of the swollen river is said to have happened in spring; Shalmanassar III, for instance, claims to have crossed the Euphrates in flood in Iyyar 13 (May 2);⁴⁵ Ashurnasirpal II does not date his crossing of the Euphrates in flood, but we may infer that this happened some days after Iyyar 8 (= April 27), the day when he moved from Calah.⁴⁶

However, December is not the period of minimum flow condition either (which is August through October):⁴⁷ winter rains (generally from November to April), often erratic and with variations from one year to the next, might have caused high and running water conditions, as is also proved by the fact that only six days later (*Anāmaka* / *Hanāmakaš* / *Ṭebētu* 2 = December 18) the soldiers of Nidintu-Bel's army, seeking refuge in the river after the defeat inflicted by Darius, were washed away by the strong current of the Euphrates near Babylon.⁴⁸

3.5. The scenario presented in (1)-(2) should not be a rosy scenario. At least, it was not presented as such. For Darius, the well-filled river was a hurdle to face and overcome with the enemy opposition on the other bank,⁴⁹ which is the kind of challenge that enhances the king's greatness, his leadership qualities and

⁴⁰ See VOGELSANG 1986 with bibliography.

⁴¹ See ZAWADZKI 1994, 131. This fact led VOGELSANG 1998 to assume that Nidintu-Bel's revolt (as well as some other revolts described by Darius as occurred ‘after I became king’) was in fact initially directed against King Bardia and not against Darius. Another problem with the Babylonian revolts quoted in DB consists in the actual number of the Babylonian rebels; some scholars assume the existence of one single rebel king, and not two (Nebuchadnezzar III; cf. ROLLINGER 1998, 346, fn. 22).

⁴² Cf. BICKERMAN, TADMOR 1978; HEAD 2010, 120. Note that the notion of the ‘royal first year’ could also be considered as an Indo-Iranian heritage; cf. LECOQ 1997, 95, 167.

⁴³ See TUPLIN 2005, 234.

⁴⁴ The text pointed out by WEISSBACH as the first in the name of Darius (1903, Pl. 15, no. 3) “does not prove conclusively that Darius already held Babylon in December 22, 522” (PARKER, DUBBERSTEIN 1956, 15); see also the doubts advanced in ZAWADZKI's Catalogue (1994, 139). No date for the taking of Babylon and the execution of Nidintu-Bel is provided in DB.

⁴⁵ A.O.102.6:ii,4 (RIMA-3, 36).

⁴⁶ A.O.1010:iii, 64-65 (RIMA-2, 217).

⁴⁷ See also KENT 1942, 270.

⁴⁸ Cf. DB/OP i 95-96, AE 78, AB 38.

⁴⁹ This circumstance cannot be overlooked. From *Anabasis* III, 5.8-18 we learn that the Greek soldiers had to refuse the proposal by a Rhodian, who volunteered to help them cross the Tigris by means of a pontoon bridge: the presence of the

the value of his deeds. In fact, crossing a swollen river is a literary topos. The same epic-heroic convention is found in Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions. As underlined by ROLLINGER (2013, 57), “[n]eben dem technischen Aspekt der Überwindung eines großen Stromes nimmt das ideologische Moment der Zur-Schau-stellung einen wichtigen Stellenwert ein. Die Überwindung des Flusses wird als eine heroische Tat des Königs präsentiert”. The Neo-Assyrian kings used to count how many times they succeeded in crossing rivers during the years of their reign.⁵⁰ In a fit of excitement, Tiglath-pileser III even boasted of being able to jump over the river in spate as if it were a ditch.⁵¹

All things considered, (2a) may have intended to convey the following:

(2b)

DB/OP i.85-86	DB/AE i.68	DB/AB 34
And the river was unfordable. ⁵²	And the river was [or: (was) there] unfordable. ⁵³	The Tigris was in flood. ⁵⁴

4. To the challenging situation depicted in (2a-b), Darius’ reaction was as follows:

(3a)

DB/OP i 86-87	DB/AE i 68-69	DB/AB 34-35
psav : adm : karm :	me-ni ^{Diš} ú ^{Diš} taš-šu-íp mas-ka ₄ -um-	ár-ki ana-ku ú-qu [a-na] ŠÀ
mškauva : avaknm : aniyam :	^l ma ¹ (?) ⁵⁵ zik-ka ap-pa-pa	[^{giš}]MÁ[^{meš}] šá KUŠ ú-se-[li] it-ti
ušbarim : ak ^u unvm :	ANŠE.A.AB.BA ^{MEŠ} -ma ap-pi-in pè-	ANŠE.KUR.RA[^{meš}]
aniyhya : asm : franym :	ip-la ap-pa-pa ANŠE.KUR.RA ^{MEŠ} ir	ANŠE.A.AB.[BA ^{meš}] ^{íd} IDIGNA [ni-
	pè-ip-li-ip-pá	te]-bir
<i>pasāva adam kāram</i>	<i>meni u taššup maskamma zikkaka</i>	<i>arki anāku uqu ana libbi elippāti ša</i>
<i>maškauvā avākanam aniyam</i>	<i>appa ANŠE.A.AB.BA-ma appin</i>	<i>maški ušēli itti sisē ibilī Diglat</i>
<i>ušabārim akunavam</i>	<i>pepla appa ANŠE.KUR.RA ir</i>	<i>nītebir</i>
<i>aniyahyā asam frānayam</i>	<i>peplipa</i>	

The content of the three versions is rather divergent; the AB text, in particular, is shorter on details than the OP and AE corresponding passages. It seems convenient to start again just with AB.

4.1. The peoples of ancient Mesopotamia knew how to cope with and take advantage of the two great rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates, which were well integrated into the regional territorial order and

enemy on the other side, posted and ready to bar the passage, made that undertaking impossible. Similarly in *Anabasis* II 4.6 the Euphrates is said “impossible to cross” in face of resistance.

⁵⁰ In his account, Shalmanassar III does not forget to update the number of times he crossed the Euphrates, the last being the twenty-third time (in the twenty-third year of his reign; cf. RIMA-3, 79; A.O.102.16:181’b-182’); Tiglat-Pileser I claims to have crossed the Euphrates twenty-eight times, twice in one year (RIMA-2, 43, A.O.87.4:34).

⁵¹ RINAP 36:12’-13’ (<http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/rinap/rinap1/pager>).

⁵² KENT 1953, 120: “and on account of the waters (the Tigris) was unfordable”; SCHMITT 1991, 55: “and because of the waters (the river) was passable (only) by boat”, 2009, 49: “und wegen der Wasser(massen) war (der Fluß nur) mittels Boot (zu überqueren, nicht zu durchwaten)”; LECOQ 1997, 193: “et les eaux étaient navigables”; BAE 2001, 110: “and the water was deep”; PIRART 2011, 157: “et les eaux (du Tigre) étaient grosses”, etc.

⁵³ CAMERON 1960, 64: “And the water was for boats (i.e. required or was crossable only by boats)”; VALLAT 1977a, 94: “et le fleuve, là, était navigable”; GRILLOT-SUSINI *et al.* 1993, 45: “et le fleuve [nécessit]ait des embarcations”; BAE 2001, 111: “And the water ^lwas^l (navigable) by boat”, etc.

⁵⁴ VOIGTLANDER 1979, 56: “The Tigris river was in flood”; MALBRAN-LABAT 1994, 111: “Le Tigre était en crue”; LECOQ 1997, 194: “le lit tout entier du Tigre était plein”; BAE 2001, 112: “The Tigris river was full”, etc.

⁵⁵ Gian Pietro BASELLO has kindly informed me (e-mail dated 20 Oct. 2015) that, judging from the new photos of DB/AE by Amin Mirzaee (see below, fn. 89), there could be a space for (and some traces of) one sign after -ma, the (partially visible) last sign in mas-ka₄-um-ma. He very tentatively suggests to reconstruct here the sign <ha> also in consideration of the fact that the verb *zikka* is often preceded by *ha* (see above fn. 38) in its several occurrences in the Persepolis Fortification Tablets. He admits, however, that the question would require further investigation on the stone.

economic dynamics.⁵⁶ They employed several types of crafts of different sizes, shapes, structures and capacities according to their different functions (transport or ferry of goods and passengers; military support in time of war; religious processions, etc.), distance, direction of transport and seasonal water conditions. Besides such vessels, a simple but ingenious device was widely used, consisting of an inflated skin (generally of goat, but also of other animals).⁵⁷ Crossing rivers on inflated goatskins during military campaigns was a common practice in the Assyrian world, well documented for the Neo-Assyrian period by the reliefs on the walls of royal palaces.⁵⁸ More or less wherever in the world the use of inflated skins as swimming floats has been recorded, rafts buoyed by inflated skins have also been in use.⁵⁹ Famous is the buoyed raft used in Mesopotamia that consisted of a wooden platform supported by inflated skins.⁶⁰ This kind of water transport is also documented in Neo-Assyrian inscriptions and reliefs and continued in use unchanged until very recent times.⁶¹ It is nowadays referred to as *kelek*, a well-known cultural, areal word. Inflated skins were also commonly used in the manufacture of pontoon bridges.

All the Akkadian terms that seem to designate a floating skin or a buoyed raft have been recently reviewed in ROLLINGER (2013, 48-57); I refer the reader there for details. In most cases, however, these terms are ambiguous in that it is not clear whether they denote the skin or the raft. Most probably, they may be used for both. The same is possibly true for *elippātu ša maški* which occurs in our AB passage,⁶² a hapax in the whole Babylonian documentation, which however seems to correspond in structure to *elippātu ša dušē*, a very common Akk. expression for “floating skin” and/or “buoyed raft”.⁶³

On the whole, the syntactic analysis of this AB passage seems to be rather unproblematic. Nevertheless, in view of the relative freedom of the prepositional phrase position in AB,⁶⁴ there may be a certain hesitation between attributing the *itti*-phrase (“with camels and horses”) to the first clause, as in BAE (2001, 112, “Then I embarked the troops upon the middle of boats [made] of skin together with horses and camels. We crossed the Tigris river”), or to the second clause, as in VOIGTLANDER (1979, 56, “Then I embarked troops upon boats [made] of skins. We crossed the Tigris river together with horses [and] camels”).⁶⁵

This difference cannot be underestimated: the two options prefigure two different scenarios. In the first case, we are explicitly told that men and animals were ferried all together to the other bank; in the second case, nothing is said about the way camels and horses crossed the river.⁶⁶ We could imagine them swimming across.

A small remark: the name Tigris has been reproduced in DB/AB with two different spellings: ^{id}di-ig-lat, twice in ll. 34 and 35; ^{id}IDIGNA, twice in ll. 34 and 35. This alternation (rather frequent in Akkadian, indeed) has attracted the scholars' attention. VOIGTLANDER implicitly (1979, 56; translation) and BAE explicitly (2001, 111 note to l. 34) assumed a referential discrimination between the syllabic and the logographic spelling (“Tigris canal” vs. “Tigris river”). In my opinion, such a differentiation is hardly demonstrable. If it were so, DB/AB l. 35 would lead to the odd conclusion that Darius' army had crossed

⁵⁶ A preliminary foray into Neo-Assyrian river transport may be found in FALES 1993; on the importance of the Mesopotamian rivers in the Achaemenid communication and trade system see BRIANT 2002, 379-381.

⁵⁷ HORNELL 1946, 6ff.; ROLLINGER 2013 (with updated bibliography).

⁵⁸ Many instances can be seen in the stone reliefs in the throne room of the NW Palace of Ashurnasirpal II at Calah (modern Nimrud); see also ROLLINGER (2013, 34ff.) with photos at the end of the book.

⁵⁹ HORNELL 1946, 20ff.

⁶⁰ HORNELL 1946, 26-30.

⁶¹ The Mesopotamian buoyed raft is mentioned by numerous classical authors and is frequently cited and described by European travellers of the past centuries in their published accounts. A few bibliographical references may be found in WALLIS BUDGE (1920, 199-200 with fn. 3). ROLLINGER (2013, 89-113) provides a small selection of relevant passages from the 19th-(beginning) 20th travel literature. See also ROLLINGER, RUFFING 2013.

⁶² Cf. CAD 1977a, 376ff. *mašku* “1) skin; 2) (raw) hide, leather (tanned); etc.”

⁶³ See also ROLLINGER 2013, 66-67.

⁶⁴ Cf. MALBRAN-LABAT 1994, 66ff.

⁶⁵ See also MALBRAN-LABAT 1994, 111 (“alors je fis monter les troupes sur des embarcations de peau (et) avec des chevaux et des chameaux nous avons franchi le Tigre”).

⁶⁶ Note that DANDAMAEV (1989, 115), though attributing the *itti*-phrase to the second clause, seems to suggest an ‘all-embarked’ interpretation (“In other words, the horsemen were also transported to the other side of the river with the help of boats”).

both the Tigris river (^{id}IDIGNA [ni-te]-bir) and the Tigris canal (^{id}di-ig-lat ni-te-bi-ir)!⁶⁷ On the specific issue, I have however no solution to offer, except the following, apparently trivial note. The syllabic spelling in DB/AB occurs when the Tigris is also mentioned in the OP and AE corresponding passages, while the logographic spelling is found when the Tigris is explicitly mentioned in DB/AB but not in the OP and AE corresponding passages. This is only a detail, which I am not in a position to explain, but which could perhaps be of some significance to anyone interested in strategies of text composition (and translation) in the Achaemenid multilingual documentation.

4.2. From WEISSBACH (1911) onward there has been a general agreement on the interpretation of the OP version of (3a), with small differences in details.

The passage contains four hapax: *maškāuvā*, *avākanam*, *uṣabārim*, *frānayam*. As for *maškāuvā*, locative pl. of the Semitic loanword *maškā* “leather, skin”,⁶⁸ WEISSBACH (1911, 25, fn. e) pointed to two possible interpretations: (1) “inflated rafts (= Ar. *kelek*)” and (2) “inflated skins”. SCHMITT is inclined to adopt the first (2014, 213 s.v. “genauer: „Schlauchflöße“ als Schwimmhilfen”).⁶⁹

The meanings of the prefix-verbs *ava-kan-* and *fra-nay-* have been easily reconstructed on the basis of their elements: prefix *ava-* plus verbal root **kan-* “to throw, place, put; to destroy” (> “put down on, place on”, KENT 1953, 178);⁷⁰ prefix *fra-* plus verbal root *nay-* “to bring, lead” (> “lead forth, provide”, KENT 1953, 193;⁷¹ “herbeibringen”, SCHMITT 2014, 221). One may still wonder whether the semantic range of *fra-nay-* may correspond, at least to some extent, to that of *fra-bar-* (“übertragen, verleihen”, SCHMITT 2014, 152).⁷²

In a paper entitled “Altpersisch /uṣabāri-”, HAEBLER (2001) questioned the current interpretation of this adjectival compound ending in *-i-*, which has generally been compared with OP *asabāra-* “rider” (i.e., “borne-by-horse”) and analyzed as follows: *uša-* “camel” + verbal root *bar-* “bear, take” + *-i-* = “borne-by-camel”, with the prior element standing in the instrumental case related to the second, and the lengthening of the vowel in the verbal element indicating passive meaning.⁷³ Rightly remarking that this analysis had failed to explain the vowel *-i-*, Claus Haebler refers to a special kind of Gothic verbal adjective, characterized by a verbal root with structure CVC, the suffix *-i-*, the lengthening of the root syllable, and “die Bedeutung der Möglichkeit”: on the basis of the striking similarity between this Gothic pattern of nominal building and that of OP **bāri-*, he suggests interpreting the latter as “wer, was getragen werden kann”, the compound *uṣabāri-* as “wer/was mit/von einem Kamel / Kamelen getragen werden kann”⁷⁴ and the whole passage as “Ich tat (das Nötige), dass ein anderer (Teil des Heeres) von Kamelen [über den Tigris] getragen werden können”.⁷⁵ Claus Haebler’s conclusions have been accepted by Rüdiger Schmitt.⁷⁶

The isolation of what would be the only OP representative of this lexical pattern in Iranian⁷⁷ might be considered a weakness of this theory. In fact, Claus Haebler also points to a similar isolated form in Vedic, i.e. **sāci-* only attested in the compound *amadhyam̐dinasāci-* “nicht mit dem Mittag zu tun haben könnend”, and even though it is clear that “gleichartig gebildete Wörter dieses Typs [...] verloren gegangen sind”, he suggests that they could have survived in a modified form: “mit Ersatz des alten Suffixes *-i-* (*-ī-*)

⁶⁷ Cf. VOIGTLANDER 1979, 56 (“We crossed the Tigris river [...] Under the protection of Ahura Mazda we crossed the Tigris canal”).

⁶⁸ Probably from Aramaic (cf. ROLLINGER 2013, 65; SCHMITT 2014, 213). This word is still commonly used in Persian and other Iranian languages as well (cf. Prs. *mašk* “goat-skin, leathern bag; water-skin”).

⁶⁹ See already SCHMITT 1991, 55 “upon rafts of skin”.

⁷⁰ See CHEUNG 2007, 26f.; SCHMITT 2014, 199f.

⁷¹ In HAIG 2008, 56 and 63 (ex. 46), *franay-* is erroneously glossed “buy” in the interlinear glossed text; this is obviously due to a miswriting (“bought” instead of “brought”) in the translation of the passage (“for the rest (I) bought horses”).

⁷² Notably, in a few Modern WIr. languages **bar* provide suppletive forms for **naiH* (CHEUNG 2007, 278-279, s.v.).

⁷³ Cf. KENT 1953, 53 (further references in HAEBLER 2001, 56f.).

⁷⁴ HAEBLER 2001, 58ff.

⁷⁵ HAEBLER 2001, 64.

⁷⁶ SCHMITT 2009, 49; 2014, 267.

⁷⁷ In my opinion, there is no reason to make recourse to OP *-bāri-*, as suggested in HAEBLER 2001, 59-60, fn. 25, instead of OP *-bāra-*, to explain Middle and New Persian *-wār* and *-bār*, etc.

durch -ya- (-yà-)”.⁷⁸ If it were so, however, one should also take into account the Av. verbal adjectives in -*iia-* (expressing “that which should or can be done, what is to be done”)⁷⁹ and the related Khotanese gerundive or participle of necessity formed with (unproductive) -*ya* suffixed to the lengthened verbal root,⁸⁰ and reckon that the sense conveyed by the ending -*i-* in *uṣabāri-* might also have been that of necessity, not only that of possibility. In other words: making them be borne by camels, did Darius give his soldiers an opportunity or rather a task to perform?

Another source of ambiguity in this OP passage is the interpretation of (pronominal) *aniya-*. The OP pronoun *aniya-* means “other, another”. Used in iteration, *aniya-* ... *aniya-* may have a reciprocal (“one other”)⁸¹ or a contrastive function (“the one ... the other”, “some ... others”), similar to Lat. *alius* ... *alius*, pl. *alii* ... *alii*.⁸² The same functions are performed by Av. *aniia-*⁸³ and (Buddhist) Sogdian ‘*ny-*’.⁸⁴ Notably, OP *aniya-* as an indefinite pronoun is only attested in the singular form, even when it does not imply singularity and this behavior agrees with our expectations.⁸⁵ Similarly, *asam* (accus.) “horse” is a singular form, but neuter with regard to number since indefinite.⁸⁶

Most scholars interpret *kāra-* in (3a) as it would not refer in that context to a definite whole, but only to an indefinite part of it, other parts being resumed by *aniya-*, and in doing so they are compelled to integrate their translations of the OP passage with indefinite expressions in parentheses. Consider for instance:

- KENT 1953, 120 “Thereupon (some of) my army I supported on (inflated) skins, others I made camel-borne, for others I brought horses”.
- SCHMITT 2009, 49 “Daraufhin lud ich das Heer (zum einen Teil) auf Schlauchflösse, einen anderen (Teil) machte ich (so, daß er) von Kamelen getragen (werden konnte) (und) für einen anderen (Teil) brachte ich Pferde herbei”.⁸⁷
- SKJÆRVØ 2002, 59 “Then I loaded the army onto inflated hides. Another (part of the army) I mounted on camels, another (still) I brought horses for”.⁸⁸

Such an interpretation of *anya-* leads to the following reconstruction of the event: a part of Darius’ army crossed the Tigris floating on inflated skins or embarked on inflated skins made into rafts; another part crossed it riding camels and another part riding horses brought for them by Darius.

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- LECOQ 1997, 193 “alors, je mis l’armée sur les outres ; j’en mis une partie à dos de chameau ; pour l’autre, j’amenai des chevaux”.

⁷⁸ HAEBLER 2001, 60-61.

⁷⁹ SKJÆRVØ 2007, 878.

⁸⁰ EMMERICK 2009, 393, 398 with bibliographical references.

⁸¹ When conveying a reciprocal sense, the two iterated forms co-occur in a single clause and have different case markers.

⁸² Cf. MEILLET, BENVENISTE 1931, 193 (“Suivant l’usage indo-iranien”; here our DB passage is translated in this way: “je plaçai l’une (= une partie de l’armée) sur des chameaux, pour l’autre j’amenai des chevaux”). See also SCHMITT 1998, 636ff. (focus is upon convergences and divergences in some usage of *anya-* in OP, Avestan and Vedic). On Vedic *anya-* see JAMISON 1997.

⁸³ Cf. BARTHOLOMAE 1904, 136 (“wiederholt ‘der eine ... der andere’”, with references to related passages); SKJÆRVØ 2009, 123.

⁸⁴ GERSHEVITCH 1954, 201, note ¹ to § 1336, gives evidence for the usage of Budd. Sogd. ‘*ny-*’ as a reciprocal pronoun. As for the contrastive sense, cf. *Dhyāna* 222-223 ‘*nyw* ‘*ky* ḍ*sty*’ ‘*sp*’*yt*k ‘*psm*’*k* ḍ’*rt* *ZY* ‘*nyw* *ZKw* ‘*sp*’*yt*’*k* ‘*sprmy*’*y* “one who holds a white fly-whisk and another the white flower” (MACKENZIE 1976, 66-67).

⁸⁵ See FILIPPONE 2010, 67-68.

⁸⁶ From this perspective, SKJÆRVØ’s (2011, 326-327) remarks on Schmitt’s interpretation of *asam* as a collective noun since “grammatically unnecessary” sound irrelevant.

⁸⁷ See also SCHMITT 1991, 55: “Afterwards I embarked (one part) of the army upon rafts of skin, another (part) I made camel-borne, and for another (part) I brought up horses”.

⁸⁸ Note that SKJÆRVØ produces different translations when using parts of this passage to illustrate grammatical descriptions (“I made another (cross the river) riding a camel” 2009, 105; “for another I brought a horse” 2009, 110; “I made the one ‘camel’s borne’ ... for the other I brought a horse” 2011, 327).

Though fairly reliable from a linguistic point of view, this interpretation conflicts with the scenario most scholars generally take for granted. We will return to this point below.

4.3. It remains to analyse the AE passage. As stated above, the AE reading proposed here follows that given in ^cALIYĀRI (2015, 79). It is based on new photos of the AE text which allow emendation of the earlier and gappy reading by WEISSBACH (1911)⁸⁹ and that presented by CAMERON (1960, 64) as one of the “results of a collation of the Official Elamite text at Bisitun” (me-ni ^{DIŠ}ú ^{DIŠ}taš-šu-íp mas-ka₄-um-ma zik-ka₄-ka₄ ap-pa ANŠE.A.AB.BA^{MES}-ma ap-pi-in pè-ip-la a[p]-pa ANŠE.KUR.RA^{MES} ir pè-ip-li-ip-pá). From then on, Cameron’s reading became the standard reference and has conditioned the scholars’ subsequent debate on this passage.

There are a couple of divergences between Cameron’s reading and that proposed here, to which it is worth paying attention. The first is zik-ka₄-ka₄ vs. zik-ka₄. In the new photos, the verb of the first clause is perfectly visible and easily analyzable as a Conjugation I form of *zikka* “to place, set”, a verb frequently found in the Persepolis Fortification texts.⁹⁰

With reference to Cameron’s reading, HALLOCK (1959, 19)⁹¹ suggested considering *zikkaka*, apparently a Conjugation II form, as a dittography, and to interpret it as it would have been *zikka*, “a normal Conjugation I form”: the passive sense generally conveyed by Conjugation II of transitive verbs, he assumed, would be in contrast with the ‘expected’ meaning of the AE wording, if compared with its OP counterpart. His suggestion was rejected by VALLAT (1977a, 237), who attributed an instrumental dative function to the pronoun *u* “I” and interpreted *u taššup maškamma zikkaka* as “par moi, l’armée fut placée sur des outres”. In doing so, he did not take the trouble to explain (1) the anomalous role of *u* as a dative expressing the agent of a Conjugation II form⁹² and (2) the lack of the expected agreement between (plural) *taššup* and (singular) *zikkak*.⁹³ The new reading by ^cAliyāri settles the question definitively.

The second difference in reading is ap-pa vs. ap-pa-pa. The reading ap-pa-pa was already known since the first scholarly editions of DB/AE and is also in WEISSBACH (1911, 24). It is a hapax in the Elamite documentation. The first idea that comes to mind is to explain it as a case of dittography, with the accidental repetition of the last sign <pa>: therefore, it should be interpreted as *appa*. It would have been odd, however, for the engraver to have made the same ‘mistake’ twice. In fact, the two *appapas* could be seen as something other than a simple accident. Another problem is which meaning to attribute to *appa/appapa*.

Elamite *appa* is the inanimate relative pronoun, also used in AE with animate plural antecedents.⁹⁴ The position of the two *appapas* in this passage (generally read *appa* since CAMERON [1960] onward) has suggested attributing to this form a function similar to that of OP *aniya*-. Consequently, VALLAT (1977b, 11, s.v. *appa*) quotes *appa ... appa* with the meaning “les uns ... les autres” and his translation (1977a, 94) is coherent with such an analysis (see below); HINZ and KOCH (1987, 73) have *appapa* “die einen ... die anderen”.⁹⁵ However, other scholars have given to (their) *appa* its ‘usual’ value of a relative pronoun.

The predicates of the two clauses introduced by *appapa*, i.e. *pepla* and *peplipa*, are different forms (I and II Conjugation respectively) from the same (active) verb *pepla*, a reduplicated stem from *pela*- “to put

⁸⁹ WEISSBACH’s reading (1911, 24): me-ni ^lú ^ltaš-šú-fb maš-ka-um-ma -ka ap-pa-pa Anšu.A.Ab.BA^{id}-ma ap-pi-in be-ip-la a[p]-pa-pa Anšu.Kur.Ra^{id} ir be-ip-li-ib-ba. All the new photos of the DB/AE inscriptions (by Amin Mirzaee) have been put at the disposal of the DARIOH group by Salmān ^cAliyāri Babolqāni. A special thank is due to him for his kindness.

⁹⁰ In DB/AE, *zikka* occurs in three other passages, always in the expression (*u*) *katema zikkita* “I put in proper place” (i.47; i.50; i.53), in concomitance with OP (*adam*) *gāθavā avāstāyam* (i.62-63, 66, 69). We also find *zikka* in DSz/AE 23 and the Conjugation II form *zikkak(a)* in DSf/AE 22, 23, 25.

⁹¹ Cameron had made many of his corrections available to other scholars before publishing them in 1960 (CAMERON 1960, 62, fn. 7).

⁹² In AE passive constructions, the agent is generally followed by the postposition *-ikkimar* (mimicking OP *hacā*; see HENKELMAN 2011, 588f., who points to it as a “structural interference from Old Persian”) and occasionally by the posposition *-na*, more commonly expressing possession.

⁹³ AE *taššup* normally requires a plural agreement (see also SCHMITT 1986, in particular 123 and fn. 13).

⁹⁴ Not only as the accusative of the animate, as stated in STOLPER 2004, 76. See HALLOCK 1969, 668; on the common usage of the relative *appa* with *taššup* as its antecedent see also SCHMITT 1986, 123ff.

⁹⁵ See also FOY 1898, 578 (“Als Indefinitum in der Bedeutung „welches, einiges“ erscheint *appapa*, eine Erweiterung oder Reduplikation von *appa*”).

(in place)".⁹⁶ In the first clause *pepla* is preceded by the resumptive pronoun *appin* which refers to the animate plural object, in the second *peplipa* is preceded by *ir*, generally functioning as a resumptive pronoun, the marked accusative form of the 3rd singular animate personal pronoun. But what would *ir* resume in this passage? According to KHAČIKJAN (1998, 35), "[t]he conjugation II [...] forms are usually preceded by the elements (V)*n* in locutive and allocutive and (V)*r* in delocutive, fulfilling the function of resumptive pronouns and reflecting the person of the subject". That the same pronominal forms would mark both the object of transitive Conjugation I verbs and ("often but not always") the agents of Conjugation II and III forms⁹⁷ is explained by STOLPER (2004, 87) in the light of "a typically ergative fashion". In fact, the presence of *ir* before Conjugation II verbs (or after the noun preceding the verb) cannot be considered "usual": it is only found in connection with a small set of verbs, most of which have been discussed on different occasions by Florence Malbran-Labat.⁹⁸ Furthermore, we cannot speak in our case of identity of the object / agent marker typical of an ergative environment, since *ir* is singular and the context would require a plural agent marker. The same is true for DB/AE *sap taššup hupipe Mištašpaikki ir parip* "when this army had gone to Hystaspes ..." and DB/AE ii 24⁹⁹ *petip pirru ir šarrapa* "the rebels assembled".¹⁰⁰ A more plausible explanation is that of "réduction d'actance" and different degrees of transitivity advanced by Malbran-Labat¹⁰¹ according to whom the Conjugation II form "à valeur d'état résultatif, exprime la position à laquelle aboutit le mouvement; elle a pour complément la localisation"; in our passage *ir* would mark this kind of spatial relationship and resume nothing.¹⁰²

The combination of the different views on the mentioned points, strongly affected by the different proposed readings (i.e., *zikka/zikkaka* and *appal/appapa*), has resulted in a multiplicity of interpretations of the AE passage under discussion:

WEISSBACH 1911, 25	... [...] andere setzte ich auf Kamele, andere wurden auf Rosse gesetzt
HINZ, KOCH 1987, 73	[...] die einen setzte ich auf Kamele, die anderen sind auf Pferde gesetzt worden
VALLAT 1977a, 94	Alors, par moi, les troupes furent placées sur des outres. Je plaçai les uns sur des chameaux. D'autres furent placées sur des chevaux
GRILLOT-SUSINI <i>et al.</i> 1993, 45f.	alors j'installai des troupes sur des peaux que j'attachai sur des chameaux, qui se rattachaient à un cheval
BAE 2001, 111	Then I set the troops on the skins, (some of) which I placed on camels, (and some of) which were placed on horses
ROMAGNUOLO 2014, 121	Allora le truppe, quelle che erano su cammello e quelle che erano a cavallo, sono state messe da me su pelli gonfiate ¹⁰³
^c ALIYĀRI 2015, 79	pas man goruh rā maškāvā (= bar maškhā, bar kalakhā-ye maški) nehādam. <goruh-e> digar (?) rā bar šotor nešādam, <goruh-e> digar (?) <bar> asb nešānde šodand

The reconstruction of the events as they emerge from these interpretations appears in some cases to be so extravagant as to demand a clarification. GRILLOT-SUSINI *et al.* (1993, 46, fn. 125), for instance,

⁹⁶ The semantic features of *pela-* and *pepla-* have been a matter of discussion; see HERRENSCHMIDT 1984, 152f. For the sense of *pepla* in this specific context see also the comments in MALBRAN-LABAT 1990, 87, fn. 59.

⁹⁷ See also TAVERNIER 2011, 327.

⁹⁸ Cf. MALBRAN-LABAT 1990, 83-89 and 1993, 154-159; see also HALLOCK 1959, 9-11. One of the most notable among these forms is *pari-*, which occurs both in the Conj. I and II (in this case preceded by *ir*). KHAČIKJAN (1998, 40) connects the difference of conjugation to an alleged difference in meaning ("to come, to reach" vs. "to go, to start").

⁹⁹ Also DB/AE ii 28, 32, 40, 44.

¹⁰⁰ To AE *pirru* the conjectural sense of "together" has been attributed. A Conj. I form of the same verb occurs in PF 1974.13-14 *taššuppe ikkimar inni pirru šarrašta* "from the officials (?) they did not collect (?) (anything)" and 1974.7-8 *taššup ikkimar inni pirru šarrašta* "from the officials (?) he did not collect (?) (anything)"; see also PF 1975.9-10 (HALLOCK 1969, 580f.).

¹⁰¹ Cf. MALBRAN-LABAT 1990, 82ff. (and specifically p. 87, fn. 59).

¹⁰² In the corresponding 'active' *pepla*-clause, the same spatial relationship is marked by the posposition *-ma*.

¹⁰³ See also ROMAGNUOLO's comments at pp. 122-123.

concede that the mechanism they suggest is rather fuzzy and try to explain the general sense of this passage as follows:

Darius décrit ici un exploit technique, difficilement concevable et prévisible par ses ennemis : faire traverser à ses troupes un fleuve en eaux, sans embarcations. Le dispositif technique ne nous est pas clair : les troupes ont pu être divisées en deux groupes, l'un porté par des chameaux, l'autre par des chevaux. On peut aussi imaginer un dispositif en V le cheval dirigeant les chameaux tirant les autres ou bien les chameaux étant utilisés comme point d'ancrage auxquels étaient amarrées les outres tirées par un cheval.

But one finds it hard to understand how such a difficult task could be performed. Similarly, it is difficult to accept the picture painted by the translation of BAE (2001), that the inflated goat-skins supporting the soldiers were placed on horse- or camelback!

^cALIYARI (2015) tentatively suggests the existence of three different *taššup* (three 'goruh'),¹⁰⁴ each of them crossing the river in a different way. Horses and camels loaded on rafts together with the soldiers mounted upon them is the image that emerges from Romagnuolo's reconstruction. This is the same scenario which would emerge from VALLAT's (1977a, 237) translation, but in fact the French scholar comes back to this point in the final commentary making his position clearer: "Il faut donc comprendre ce passage comme: À cet endroit, le Tigre n'ayant pas de gué, l'infanterie a traversé sur des outres tandis que la cavalerie a passé sur des chevaux". This explanation, however, does not match with his translation,¹⁰⁵ which VALLAT (2010, 494) also maintained in his more recent treatment of DB/AE.

Notwithstanding the several divergences in constructions and lexical choices, I think it is more convenient to assume that the OP and AE versions of (3a) are to some extent equivalent as far as the structure and the general content are concerned and that the author of the AE version used *appapa* ... *appapa* in the same sense and with the same grammatical function as OP *aniya*- ... *aniya*-.¹⁰⁶ In support of this, one may cite another passage in DB (DB/OP i. 95 = DB/AE i.78) where AE *appa* parallels OP *aniya*-; the use of *appa* as an indefinite pronoun might be supported by the use of *akka* in the sense of "someone", generally coupled with the class marker *-ra*.¹⁰⁷ In the absence of substantial documentation we cannot exclude the possibility that the form *appapa* was not due to chance (dittography) but was an *ad hoc* construction (*appa* + plural animate nominal marker) modeled on *akkara*, in order to distinguish it from the common relative pronoun *appa*.

4.4. Though it is not possible to resolve satisfactorily all the doubts listed above, I think we may accept with some confidence the following interpretation of (3a):

(3b)

DB/OP i 86-87	DB/AE i 68-69	DB/AB 34-35
Then I loaded the army onto (rafts made of) inflated skins. I made some of them be borne by camels; to others I gave horses.	Then I loaded the army onto (rafts made of) inflated hides. Some of them I placed on camels, others were placed on horses.	Then I loaded the army onto (rafts made of) inflated skins. With camels and horses we crossed the Tigris.

5. There is something unconvincing in the DB account and in the common reconstruction of the narrated event. The linguistic documentation seems to be at odds with possible actual facts. If our interpretation of OP *nāviyā* and AB *mali* is correct, the river was probably too deep for horses and camels to just walk over,

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Prs. *goruh* "groop, unit, etc."

¹⁰⁵ Nothing proves that different bodies of the army (infantry vs. cavalry) are taken into account in this passage of the royal discourse; on the contrary, the way in which Darius relates the delivery of horses suggests that *aniya*- does not refer to riders, who are usually already equipped with horses.

¹⁰⁶ See also ^cALIYARI 2015, 132f. I had a chance to check the drafts of ^cAliyari's book when the present paper was almost completed and I found that the results of our analyses often converged.

¹⁰⁷ GRILLOT-SUSINI 1987, 19; KHAČIKJAN 1998, 29, etc. According to KREBERNIK 2005, 168, "[s]ehr häufig sind *akka* and *appa* als Relativ- und Indefinitpronomina bezeugt"; however, no evidence of the usage of *appa* as indefinite pronoun is given.

mounted by soldiers. Therefore, we have to imagine them swimming over, with people clinging on their backs. Maybe that is why some scholars have also thought of a possible ford, as is the case of JUNKER (1944, 53), who described in this way Darius' undertaking: "Es gelang Dareios [...], seine Truppen teils auf Ziegenschläuchen, teils mit requirierten Kamelen und Pferden durch ein Furt zu bringen".¹⁰⁸

Camels and horses can definitely swim, although in abundant and fast-moving waters they may run the risk of being carried away by the water, especially horses. This is what one of the white horses of Cyrus experienced, when trying to cross the Gyndes, a river described as "νηυσί πέριητον" (accus.) by Herodotus.¹⁰⁹

Swimming horses are documented in Assyrian iconography. We may see some of them swimming next to soldiers floating across a river on inflated skins in one of the Throne Room reliefs in the NW Palace of Ashurnasirpal II at Nimrud.¹¹⁰ There is also literary evidence (in particular in the *Šāhnāme*) that inflated skins could be tied to horses' sides when they had to be taken across a large river (HORN 1907, 845). The same phenomenon has been documented by photos of more recent times: however, horses crossing large rivers with skins at their sides never have riders on their backs.

It is well known that camels were used as pack animals in Achaemenid military campaigns. Soldiers could also ride camels;¹¹¹ but this seems to have happened only occasionally.¹¹²

Camels are well represented in the Assyrian bas-reliefs¹¹³ but no evidence is given in Akkadian visual and textual documentation on the way they were used to cross rivers. A.V. Williams-Jackson, who first disputed the interpretation of OP *uša-* as "camel" in DB¹¹⁴ preferring instead "water-buffalo", picked up the point some years later, but consenting this time on the interpretation of *uša-* as "camel". He attributed his change of mind to several factors; foremost of all was a conversation he had had with Sir Percy Sykes, who informed him *inter alia* that camels were also used as a means of water transport on occasions:¹¹⁵ in these cases, "[t]he animal doubles his legs under him, a man leads at the beast's head, another grasps it by the tail as a rudder, and thus the ferrying across the stream is accomplished, the camel taking a long time to unfold his legs upon reaching the other side".¹¹⁶

In a chapter entitled "Marching with Camels" in *Animal Management* (1933, 301),¹¹⁷ one may read as follows about the camel's ability to swim: "If obliged, he is a good, strong swimmer, but will not enter the water unless compelled. When out of his depth, only the head is above water, and if not interfered with he can swim a considerable distance, and has been seen to cross the Nile at Wady Halfa, where the stream is very broad, and the current powerful".

The image evoked by these descriptions is far from that of men riding camels and swimming them across rivers.

An 'all-embarked' solution for (3a) is possible in principle: there would be nothing from the linguistic point of view to preclude it; obviously, in the AB text one should attribute the *itti*-phrase to the first clause (see above § 4.1).

We know that in Ancient Mesopotamia boats, coracles and rafts were also used to transport cattle, goats and sheep in the hundreds along or across the Tigris and the Euphrates. Horses could be loaded as well.

¹⁰⁸ Also quoted by HAEBLER, who plainly agrees with this interpretation, and claims that the meaning of the whole passage is "deutlich" (2001, 55 and fn. 2).

¹⁰⁹ *Hist.* I.189.1.

¹¹⁰ See ROLLINGER 2013, 35 (with photos at the end of the book).

¹¹¹ SEKUNDA, CHEW 1992, 51 (*non vidi*, quoted in KUHRT 2007, 153 n. 38).

¹¹² Cf. Herodotus, *Hist.* I.80.

¹¹³ See MITCHELL 2000.

¹¹⁴ The correct interpretation of *uša-* and its identification as the OP word (or a sideform of the OP word) for 'camel' have been matter of a long debate; see WEISSBACH 1907, 725.

¹¹⁵ In fact, the acknowledgement of the swimming capacity of camels was for Williams-Jackson an extra confirmation. What had definitely convinced him was the objection raised by Sykes to the assumed presence of water-buffalos in Mesopotamia at Darius' time (and in general, before the 8th c. CE). But in this, Sykes was certainly wrong: water-buffalos were already known in Mesopotamia from the third millennium BCE (MITCHELL 2000, 189).

¹¹⁶ WILLIAMS-JACKSON 1925, 18-20.

¹¹⁷ Issued by the Veterinary Department of the British War Office. *Non vidi*; the quotation has been taken from <http://www.straightdope.com/columns/read/1838/is-the-camel-the-only-animal-that-cant-swim>.

Sennacherib, for example, “made the warriors embark in boats and gave them travel provisions”, and also “loaded barley and straw for the steeds [*mūr nisqi*] with them”.¹¹⁸ Horses carried on boats and quffas are documented both by the ancient iconography (Neo-Assyrian reliefs)¹¹⁹ and modern photos.¹²⁰

But there is no ancient visual evidence showing that rafts made of inflated skins could be used to transport horses, and travellers of the last centuries have given witness on the fact that such kind of rafts were not capable at all of bearing horses (let alone camels!). This is what Gertrude Bell wrote in a letter dated 3rd May 1911:¹²¹

The first thing we learned was that there would be no crossing of the Tigris till it had run down. The ferry boat is a raft on skins on which you can't put horses [emphasis mine - EF], and neither the raft nor the horses could cross in that flood.

In fact, we cannot exclude that Darius' horses and camels were not ridden, but guided by some soldiers, either floating on skins, or embarked on rafts, tethered with a rope. Similar scenes are depicted on wall panels from the NW Palace of Ashurnasirpal II¹²² and are also documented in literature since ancient times up to more recent times. Consider for instance the episode of the Roman soldiers of Jovian's army, attempting to cross the river Tigris with varying success, floating on skins and pulling their horses which swam at random, as narrated by Ammianus Marcellinus (XXV 8). Or the description by Gertrude Bell of the procedure followed in crossing the Tigris in full flood, which consisted of tying two horses to the *kelek* and using them as pivot:

we tied two of them [horses] to the raft, which was loaded with the pack saddles and drove the rest in again. They, seeing the raft swirling down the streams, and two of their companions with it, swam after it, all but two who again were swept back to our bank [...] I shall long remember the rather too exhilarating sensations of that ferrying, the raft darting down the flood and the two horses panting and groaning in the water beside it.¹²³

Reporting on his travels in the Mosul area, Rev. Marsh, an American missionary, wrote as follows:¹²⁴

we crossed the Hhager and the Zab. We forded the former, but we were ferried over the latter on a raft of inflated skins, our horses being made to swim under the guidance of a person swimming upon a single inflated skin, exactly as I have seen similar scenes represented on slabs in the mounds of Niniveh.

The above considerations, however, make sense if, and only if, our interpretation of *nāviyā* and *mali* is correct. In fact, there is another possibility one may take into account: *nāviyā* and *mali* could have been used instrumentally by the authors of the texts in order to amplify and give a greater emphasis on the heroic action of the king. If so, these words would not match the actual situation they describe, and the Tigris could have been low enough to have been forded by simply riding on horses and camels.

6. As is well known, the three versions of DB carved on the rock (OP, AE and AB) differ in content and detail in many points. The differences may be of various types: adaptation, change, addition, subtraction. But the differences we find in the passages under examination above are somewhat peculiar. Some scholars, from KÖNIG (1938, 41) onwards, have suggested that the divergences between the AB ‘more intelligible’ version on one side and the OP and AE somehow abstruse versions on the other could be explained by taking into account an alleged greater knowledge of the geographical context and cultural life of Mesopotamia possessed by the author of the AB version.¹²⁵ According to DANDAMAEV (1989, 115),

¹¹⁸ Quoted in CAD 1962, 173 s.v. *šidttu*.

¹¹⁹ See for instance ROLLINGER 2013, 59, 172 (Abb. 60).

¹²⁰ Cf. for instance BELL archive N 140-143 ‘men loading horses onto ferry’ (http://www.gerty.ncl.ac.uk/search_photos_results.php); see also Wallis Budge's account in WALLIS BUDGE 1920, 396-397.

¹²¹ BELL 1927, 195 (also http://www.gerty.ncl.ac.uk/letter_details.php?letter_id=1820).

¹²² See for instance ROLLINGER 2013, 143 (Abb. 8).

¹²³ BELL 1927, 195. Images of this adventure (photos S 081-087) are available online in the Bell Photograph Archive [http://www.gerty.ncl.ac.uk/search_photos_results.php].

¹²⁴ Quoted in COHEN, KANGAS 2010, 14.

¹²⁵ Cf. VOIGTLANDER 1979, 21.

“[t]he editors of the Old Persian and Elamite versions of the text apparently did not clearly comprehend the military activities in Babylonia, and were of the opinion that the army had crossed the river on inflated skins and camel back”. Such statements seem to be based on the simplistic assumption that the author of DB/AB was a Mesopotamian native; the linguistic variety he used in writing the text would assure his ethnic affiliation and life experiences. These statements are questionable and in fact have already been questioned, though on different grounds.¹²⁶ Scholars have frequently pointed to a direct link between language and ethnic identity. To explain the fact that the variety of the AB inscriptions was not quite the same Akkadian variety of the Mesopotamian royal inscriptions, nor the standard Babylonian used for literary purposes, for instance, Paul-Alain Beaulieu claims that “Achaemenid Akkadian was a translation language artificially contrived by *Babylonian scribes* in the service of the Achaemenids”.¹²⁷ In fact, the scribes who were responsible for writing and/or translating the royal Achaemenid inscriptions, working in highly developed and organized offices in the royal chancellery, were not necessarily native speakers of the language into which they wrote or translated and could also be competent in more than one language.¹²⁸ We cannot dwell on this complex point here; rather we must limit ourselves to consider only the relationships among the three somehow different stories, which seem to point to different authors / translators who decided to adopt different narrative solutions. The author of the DB/AB passage refrained from providing particulars concerning horses and camels, but in order to maintain the same approximate length of the text as the AE and OP versions, was forced to repeat at a short distance the same statement “we crossed the Tigris”.¹²⁹ Using different forms (I and II Conjugation) of the same verb (*pepla-*) the author of the DB/AE passage seemingly endeavoured to reproduce, at least to a small extent, the different ‘treatments’ reserved to camels and horses in DB/OP or in another, unknown source text. One may even wonder why the author of DB/OP differentiated the expressions concerning the camels and horses, if they all were simply given to soldiers as means of transport. In fact, the authors of these texts give the slight impression of being uncertain about the real course of events.

Let us come back to the question of the title: how did Darius’ army cross the Tigris? The royal Achaemenid inscriptions in general, and Bisotun inscriptions in particular, may certainly be considered by scholars as a source for reconstructing Achaemenid history, but their value as historical source material must always be gauged in the light of distortion of the truth and incompleteness – a limitation conditioned especially by ideological concerns, even when we are convinced we have found allusions to those pieces of information that we, as modern historians, are most interested in. In the specific case of the river crossing, many scenarios are equally possible and reconstructable from the three accounts. If the river was really in flood, we may imagine that some of the soldiers crossed on inflated skins made into a raft, that others used single or double skins and guided the animals (horses and camels) in their charge, that some of the animals swam free and others were guided by ropes. In these conditions in no way could horses and camels have been considered a simple means for crossing. If the river was not really high, we may imagine that some of the soldiers crossed on inflated skins or inflated skins made into a raft, while others reached the other side riding horses and camels, which were not swimming, but rather walking on the river bed.

Be that as it may, the aim of the authors of our DB parallel passages, with their ideological background and structure, was to make known that Darius, showing his usual extraordinary bravery and leadership abilities, thanks to the support of Ahuramazda and notwithstanding the challenging environmental conditions, managed to cross the Tigris successfully and succeeded in routing the opposing troops. To achieve this aim, a faithful account of the way things really happened was not required.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ See UTAS 1966, 119 (“Let us leave it an open question whether the Babylonian text could be considered to possess a greater ‘knowledge of the locality’”), HAEBLER 2001, 57, fn. 5 (“Es ist mir einsichtig, dass der ‘Babylonian scribe’ ‘a more intelligible version’ biete, wie von Voigtländer meint”).

¹²⁷ BEAULIEU 2007, 203; emphasis in the quotation is mine, EF.

¹²⁸ Cf. recently DANESHMAND 2015. The presence of multilingual scribes in the Achaemenid administration is also confirmed by the Persepolis Fortification and Treasury Archives; see TAVERNIER 2008, HENKELMAN 2011. On the several issues concerning multilingualism within Achaemenid Empire and administration see ROSSI 1981, updated by ROSSI forthcoming.

¹²⁹ DB/AB 35 ^{id}di-ig-lat ni-te-bi-ir, paralleling DB/OP 88 tigram : v’iytryama and DB/AE 70 ^{As}ti-ig-ra-an la-ki-ú-ut-tá.

¹³⁰ Several people have kindly contributed in different way to the present work (giving information, suggestions, bibliographical references, reading the draft, etc.). They are (in alphabetical order): Salmān °Aliyāri Babolqāni, Gian Pietro Basello, Fulvia Maniori, Adriano V. Rossi, Velizar Sadovski, and all the persons who organised and attended the

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lecture on the same subject I held in Naples on 6th June 2013 in the frame of the Workshop "Fusi e asce, mattoni e chiglie: Aspetti e problemi della cultura materiale nel Vicino Oriente Antico" (Doctoral Programmes for Ancient Near East Studies, L'Orientale University). To all of them, a friendly, heartfelt thanks!

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