

UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI NAPOLI “L’ORIENTALE”
DIPARTIMENTO ASIA, AFRICA E MEDITERRANEO

Series Minor

XCIX

Ana šulmāni
Ancient Near Eastern Studies
in Honour of Simonetta Graziani

Edited by
Noemi Borrelli



UniorPress
Napoli 2022

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Dipartimento Asia, Africa e Mediterraneo
Università degli Studi di Napoli “L’Orientale”

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Simonetta Graziani at Jerwan, October 2013 (Ph. Mattia Raccidi)

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Prefazione

Travolti dai difficili eventi di questi ultimi anni, sarà forse passato inosservato ai più il fatto che all'Università di Napoli "L'Orientale" stesse per concludersi un ciclo significativo, tanto nella ricerca quanto nella didattica, negli studi italiani sul Vicino Oriente antico, iniziato nell'antica sede di Palazzo Giusso poco più di cinquant'anni or sono.

Proprio nel periodo più critico della pandemia, Simonetta Graziani ha tenuto infatti le sue ultime lezioni di Assiriologia e di Storia del Vicino Oriente antico, con la professionalità e la passione di sempre, entusiasmando gli studenti, ultima classe di una lunga serie. Chi oggi redige queste note, inevitabilmente inadeguate, ricorda bene quanto fosse sovente necessaria una dura lotta per accaparrarsi un posto a sedere, o anche sul pavimento, nelle aule ormai scomparse al terzo piano di Palazzo Corigliano, dove il pomeriggio del giorno designato si sarebbe dovuto svolgere, senza eccezione, il corso di Epigrafia sumero-accadica: l'insegnamento cui Simonetta ha dedicato, nel corso di una infaticabile attività accademica, le sue migliori energie.

Contare studenti e allievi che si sono avvicendati in quelle aule è impossibile, così come sarebbe difficile menzionare le decine di dottorandi seguiti nel corso degli anni: consigliando e ispirando, più che seguendo in termini strettamente accademici, giovani studiosi afferenti non solo al settore filologico vicino-orientale, ma anche agli ambiti immediatamente connessi della storia, dell'arte e degli studi storico-religiosi, dall'Egitto al Golfo Persico, Penisola Arabica inclusa, senza perdersi un solo brandello dell'amata "Mezzaluna Fertile", e più di essa.

Dall'altro lato della barricata, ossia presso il corpo docente, pochi sono stati i colleghi che a loro volta non abbiano avuto modo di godere della collaborazione scientifica, della generosità e del sostegno di Simonetta Graziani; nonché della calorosa accoglienza sempre ricevuta in Ateneo, e spesso sotto forma di squisita ospitalità nelle sue dimore napoletane.

Studentessa del corso di Lingue e Civiltà Orientali dell'allora Istituto Universitario Orientale, Simonetta è entrata presto a contatto con un mondo a dir poco straordinario, avendo modo di specializzarsi subito nelle discipline assiriologiche, preparando e poi discutendo nel 1975 la sua tesi di laurea su *I Sibitti nella letteratura e nell'arte mesopotamiche*, sotto la guida del suo maestro e mentore Luigi Cagni: della cui scuola Simonetta è stata principale erede, memoria storica e instancabile sostenitrice. Di lì a poco, l'ex studentessa iniziava con Grazia Giovinazzo la collaborazione con Luigi Cagni presso la cattedra di Assiriologia e di Storia del Vicino Oriente preislamico – "SVOP" per gli studenti di allora – iniziando una serie di soggiorni di studio e di formazione presso alcune delle maggiori sedi universitarie e museali per lo studio del Vicino Oriente antico: la Universität Heidelberg, il Musée du Louvre, il British Museum, gli Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. Testimonianza principale delle ricerche di quegli anni, sono le due monografie: *Testi mesopotamici datati al regno di Serse (485-465 a.C.)* del 1986; e *Testi editi ed inediti datati al regno di Bardiya (522 a.C.)* del 1992; ma anche i vari articoli che, anticipando parte dei suoi crescenti interessi e curiosità di ricerca, spaziavano dalla glittica, alle pratiche mesopotamiche di sigillatura, agli dèi del pantheon achemenide.

Di lì a poco Simonetta iniziava anche la sua attività didattica, dapprima ricercatrice presso gli stessi insegnamenti già menzionati (1976-1994), quindi come professore associato di Epigrafia sumero-accadica (1992-2011). Al carico didattico principale si sarebbero poi aggiunte le docenze di Assiriologia (2011-2020) e di Storia del Vicino Oriente antico (2011-2020), attività intensificate dopo il pensionamento di Carlo Zaccagnini e presso il nuovo Dipartimento Asia, Africa e Mediterraneo.

Sospinta da una molteplicità d'interessi, tutt'altro che dispersivi, com'è manifesto dalla colleganza dei temi nella sua produ-

zione scientifica, Simonetta ha però sempre mantenuto ininterrotto nel tempo lo studio della cultura materiale nella Babilonia caldeo-achemenide, tema costante della sua ricerca di Ateneo; prendendo anche parte, per questa sua specificità e anche come responsabile locale, a vari programmi di ricerca nazionali e internazionali, fra i quali si possono ricordare, non di rado al fianco dei sodali coordinatori Carlo Zaccagnini e Lucio Milano, quelli su “La storia e l’economia della Mesopotamia achemenide (539-330 a.C.)” (CNR - Istituto Universitario Orientale); “L’alimentazione nel Vicino Oriente antico” (PRIN 2003); “Lessico dell’alimentazione nel Vicino Oriente antico” (PRIN 2006); “Mangiare divinamente. Cerimonialità e simbologia del banchetto nel Vicino Oriente antico” (PRIN 2008); “Les mots de la paix” (CNRS, UMR 8167 Paris - Università “L’Orientale”). Ha coltivato, nel frattempo, innumerevoli collaborazioni scientifiche con altri centri d’insegnamento dell’Assiriologia, dell’Ittitologia e della Storia del Vicino Oriente antico, che hanno dato luogo a seminari, conferenze, convegni nazionali e internazionali, lezioni per corsi di specializzazione, master e dottorati: invitando a Napoli numerosi colleghi dall’Italia e dall’estero, e ricambiando spesso, a sua volta, come apprezzata relatrice.

Fra le partecipazioni alle attività istituzionali dell’Ateneo, che l’hanno vista impegnata, sempre con esemplare assiduità, in molteplici ruoli – dalle più piccole e onerose commissioni fino alle sedute del Consiglio di Amministrazione – un impegno certamente fra i più graditi e scientificamente gratificanti è stato il contributo fondamentale all’organizzazione della sezione dedicata al Vicino Oriente antico nel Museo Orientale “Umberto Scerrato”, redigendo con acribia le complesse schede descrittive della collezione glittica mesopotamica. Proprio presso le sale del Museo, ma anche altrove, Simonetta ha peraltro profuso ampiamente la sua passione per la divulgazione accademica, promuovendo memorabili laboratori di scrittura cuneiforme e di cultura mesopotamica, portati anche in varie edizioni di *Futuro Remoto*, la prima manifestazione europea di diffusione della cultura scientifica e tecnologica, promossa dalla Fondazione Idis - Città della Scienza.

Sempre con lo stesso spirito, e al culmine della sua maturità scientifica, nel 2019 Simonetta è stata poi curatrice, presso il Mu-

seo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli, dell'importante mostra *Gli Assiri all'ombra del Vesuvio*: esposizione interamente dedicata alla conoscenza della Terra fra i due Fiumi; in cui fra l'altro erano pienamente valorizzati, con supporti multimediali e ricostruzioni di monumenti e contesti, i calchi dei rilievi rinvenuti nelle capitali assire, realizzati nella seconda metà dell'Ottocento e rimasti a lungo nei depositi dell'ex Palazzo degli Studi.

Fra le ultime fatiche universitarie, sempre nel 2019, il coordinamento organizzativo della seconda edizione del convegno *Egitto e Vicino Oriente antico: tra passato e futuro* (EVOA), intitolato, con espressione ispirata a A. Leo Oppenheim, "The Stream of Tradition" e dedicato a "La genesi e il perpetuarsi delle tradizioni in Egitto e nel Vicino Oriente antico". Gli Atti di quel convegno sono ora in uscita e molti ricorderanno la professionalità e la partecipazione dell'impeccabile padrona di casa e di tutti i suoi più giovani e meno giovani collaboratori.

Per tutte le ragioni fin qui solo sommariamente elencate, e per altre che sarebbe lungo ma non inutile, per molti, ricordare, separare la storia accademica e personale di Simonetta Graziani dalla definitiva affermazione nell'Ateneo napoletano degli studi sul Vicino Oriente antico, non è solo difficile, ma impossibile. Come esponente di una generazione di studiosi di cui fanno, o hanno fatto parte alcuni degli autori presenti in questo stesso volume, a Simonetta va il merito di aver tenuto viva, talora non senza difficoltà, una tradizione di studio che le generazioni successive porteranno avanti poggiandosi davvero sulle "spalle dei giganti": come lei stessa ha amato spesso dire, parlando dei suoi predecessori.

Queste pagine nascono dunque come dovuto e sentito omaggio, *ana šulmāni*, alla sua lunga carriera: una vita intera dedicata allo studio, all'insegnamento e alla conoscenza. E ci auguriamo noi tutti, autori e curatori, che vorrà accettarle come espressione non solo di sincera ammirazione, ma anche e soprattutto di amicizia e gratitudine.

Bologna, maggio 2022
Noemi Borrelli

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*Emblemi arborei tra geni alati:
la Sala I e le sue installazioni nel palazzo
di Assurnasirpal II a Nimrud**

GIAN PIETRO BASELLO

La Sala I (fig. 1) del Palazzo Nord-Ovest di Assurnasirpal II (regno 884–859 a.C.) a Nimrud, l'antica città di Kalkhu, fu messa in luce da Austen Henry Layard (1817–1894) nel 1847 e poi riscavata e risistemata dalla soprintendenza irachena nei primi anni 1970.¹ È stata definita come 'il giacimento che forse più di qualsiasi altra parte di una rovina assira ha rifornito varie località in tutto il mondo con i suoi ortostati distaccati e con singole figure

* La realizzazione della mostra *Gli Assiri all'ombra del Vesuvio* (3 luglio-16 settembre 2019) presso il Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli (MANN) è stata una delle grandi sfide, allo stesso tempo scientifica e organizzativa, in cui sono stato coinvolto da Simonetta Graziani. Prima e durante la mostra Simonetta, come curatrice insieme al direttore del MANN Paolo Giulierini, e lo staff dei curatori scientifici (Noemi Borrelli, Francesca D'Alonzo, Rita Di Maria, Romolo Loreto e il sottoscritto, con la collaborazione di Marta Iommelli) hanno svolto un cospicuo lavoro di ricerca che solo in piccola parte è confluito nel catalogo e in altre pubblicazioni più o meno estemporanee. Colgo questa occasione per divulgare la ricerca sulla Sala I del Palazzo di Assurnasirpal II a Nimrud, da cui fu estrapolata (con una bibliografia ridotta) la scheda no. 6 del catalogo (Basello 2019a) e che servi come base per ricreare la sala nell'allestimento espositivo (fig. 6).

¹ 1970–1973 secondo Meuszyński, Abdul-Hamid 1974, con un utile ripasso dei lavori nell'area.

a rilievo'.² Sono trenta i musei o le collezioni che in Iraq, India, Giappone, Europa e Nordamerica hanno esemplari integri e frammenti dei trentacinque ortostati che ne rivestivano le pareti. Alcuni sono rimasti in situ a Nimrud (almeno lo erano precedentemente alla distruzione del palazzo nel marzo del 2015 a opera dell'autoproclamato Stato Islamico) mentre di molti altri non si ha notizia. Purtroppo al momento attuale la sala non può che essere ricostruita virtualmente,³ operazione resa difficile anche dalla ripetitività delle figurazioni per cui non è facile assegnare singoli frammenti a uno specifico ortostato. Gli ortostati erano alti ca. 2,70 m, di cui ca. 2,20-2,30 m al di sopra del pavimento,⁴ mentre la parte inferiore, non scolpita, era infissa nel terreno. Uno dei sette ortostati completi, almeno nella parte figurativa, tra quelli ritrovati in questa sala, è il rilievo I-30 oggi esposto al Metropolitan Museum di New York (sala 401) che misura 2,30 × 2,15 × 0,15 m (altezza × larghezza × profondità).⁵

Gli ortostati sono in calcare alabastrino di varietà traslucida per la preminenza di calcite e aragonite, che danno alla pietra una notevole lucentezza, quasi vetrosa,⁶ che ne mette in risalto la figurazione per chi li osserva dal vivo in buona luce mentre non appare nelle riproduzioni fotografiche.

Il programma figurativo, organizzato su due registri figurati di altezza diseguale⁷ separati da un registro centrale iscritto, era fondato sulla ripetizione di un albero stilizzato (comunemente detto 'albero sacro' negli studi moderni)⁸ affiancato da una cop-

² Gadd 1936: 211: «This room was the mine which has supplied perhaps more of its detached panels and single figures to various destinations throughout the world than any other part of an Assyrian ruin».

³ Si veda la pagina dedicata alla sala (<<https://cdli.ucla.edu/projects/nimrud/rooms/i.html>>) all'interno del progetto *The Northwest Palace at Nimrud* curato da Klaudia Englund (<<https://cdli.ucla.edu/projects/nimrud/index.html>>), da usare anche come riferimento per la numerazione degli ortostati.

⁴ Meuszyński, Abdul-Hamid 1974: 111.

⁵ Numero di accessione 32.143.3, <www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/322610>.

⁶ Dolce in Dolce, Nota Santi 1995: 92, nota 2.

⁷ Quello superiore era circa $\frac{2}{3}$ di quello inferiore.

⁸ Wilfred G. Lambert (2002: 321) raccomandava di non chiamarlo 'albero della vita', un termine che rimanderebbe in modo inappropriato all'omonimo albero di *Genesi* 2,9 (si veda più sotto).

pia di figure alate (comunemente dette ‘geni’), a volto umano e inginocchiate nel registro superiore, a testa d’uccello e incendenti nel registro inferiore. La successione regolare degli alberi era ritmata in modo tale che a un albero a cui i geni si rivolgevano ne seguiva un altro a cui davano le spalle. Mentre l’iscrizione era ripetuta (con variazioni nella lunghezza dovute alla disponibilità di spazio)⁹ su ciascun ortostata, i registri figurati si sviluppavano in modo continuo, anche se la disposizione dei geni fu studiata in modo da non doverli scolpire a cavallo di due ortostati.

L’iscrizione, redatta in caratteri cuneiformi e lingua babilonese, è correntemente identificata come ‘iscrizione standard’ in 21 o 22 righe.¹⁰ Il testo comincia con le parole ‘Palazzo (É.GAL) di Assurnasirpal’ e prosegue per cinque righe con la titolatura e la genealogia del sovrano. Il testo passa alla prima persona, un espediente utilizzato dalla cancelleria reale per dare l’impressione che sia lo stesso sovrano a parlare, raccontando prima le sue vittorie in battaglia (sei righe) e, dopo un’ulteriore sezione di epiteti in terza persona (tre righe), il ripopolamento e la ricostruzione di Kalkhu (tre righe), che culmina con la costruzione del palazzo di ‘cedro, cipresso, ginepro, bosso, legno *meskannu*, terebinto e tamarisco’ decorato riccamente e al cui interno sono stati depositati i proventi dei paesi conquistati (cinque righe).

Nel registro inferiore, la scansione di alberi sacri intervallati dai geni alati con testa di uccello (come nel frammento dell’ortostata I-18 oggi all’Ashmolean Museum di Oxford;¹¹ fig. 2) era interrotta solo nell’ortostata I-16, posto in una posizione focale della sala (si veda più sotto), dove i geni hanno un volto umano sbarbato. Nel registro superiore si ripeteva la stessa scansione, tranne che i geni alati sono inginocchiati (come nel frammento dell’ortostata I-4 oggi al Museo di Scultura Antica Giovanni Barracco di Roma;¹² fig. 3) per via del minor spazio verticale. Ciascun genio regge una situla nella mano sinistra e uno strumento (si veda più sotto) nella mano destra; questa con-

⁹ Grayson 1991: 268.

¹⁰ Grayson 1991 (= RINAP 2) A.0.101.23.

¹¹ AN1950.241, esposto alla mostra *Gli Assiri all’ombra del Vesuvio* come no. 6 del catalogo (Basello 2019a).

¹² MB 47, esposto alla mostra *Gli Assiri all’ombra del Vesuvio* come no. 7 del catalogo (Basello 2019b).

figurazione è mantenuta a dispetto di una perfetta simmetria rispetto all'albero sacro e si presenta come una variazione, consapevole per l'ideatore ma meno appariscente per l'osservatore, che ottiene l'effetto di movimentare la scansione ritmica. Nel registro superiore diverse coppie di geni non hanno le mani impegnate pur mantenendo la stessa postura degli altri, come se si stessero prendendo cura in qualche modo dell'albero, anche se forse era semplicemente una scelta dettata da fini di economicità rispetto alla quantità di dettagli da scolpire.

Figurine di terracotta¹³ (fig. 4) riproducenti in tre dimensioni esseri alati molto simili a quelli dei rilievi, dotati anch'essi dello stesso strumento e della situla, sono state ritrovate archeologicamente dentro cassette di mattoni interrato agli angoli¹⁴ di diverse sale dei palazzi di Nimrud o Ninive.¹⁵ Per capire il ruolo del genio e il significato dell'atto che compie dobbiamo rifarci alla documentazione testuale¹⁶ che riporta il rituale da usare al momento dell'interramento, a scopo evidentemente apotropaiico, di queste figurine. Grazie a questi testi è stato possibile associare ai geni alati, sia quelli a testa umana che di uccello, il termine *apkallu*, il cui significato è genericamente 'saggio' e può essere applicato anche a divinità o usato per indicare una categoria di sacerdoti.¹⁷ Il seguente passo fa riferimento a figurine da interrare contro il muro vicino alla testata del letto¹⁸ e conferma la non secondarietà del dettaglio figurativo per cui lo strumento e la situla non possono essere scambiati tra le mani sinistra e destra:

¹³ Ad es. ME 90989-92, 90998 e 91839, esposte al British Museum, piano superiore, sala 55 (Rittig 1977, fig. 20).

¹⁴ Ovvero i punti che, evidentemente, richiedevano più protezione, forse perché, essendo meno illuminati, potevano celare insidie (Basello 2021: 20-21); allo stesso tempo, da un punto di vista strutturale, avevano un ruolo statico rilevante.

¹⁵ Oates, Oates 2001: 253-256.

¹⁶ Reade 1979: 35-39.

¹⁷ CAD A/II: 173, s.v. *apkallu* 3.

¹⁸ Wiggermann 1992: 65.

7 *šalmē apkallē ša tīdi, pan iššūri kappē šaknu, ina qāti imittišunu mullila, ina qāti šumēlišunu* GIS.BA.AN.DU₈.DU₈-ú *našû*¹⁹

sette figurine *apkallu* di argilla, esse hanno volti e ali d'uccello, nella loro mano destra portano lo strumento purificatore (*mullilu*), nella loro sinistra la situla (*banduddû*).

La 'situla' altro non è che un secchio.²⁰ Il seguente esempio, tratto da un testo medico, fa capire l'importanza di un secchio come strumento in un mondo in cui l'acqua corrente non era disponibile in casa:

littumi, bēlī, šupsuqat alāda; bēlī, mē BA.AN.DU₈.DU₈-ka *ana muhhiša idīma*²¹

la mucca, o Signore, sta facendo grande fatica a partorire; o Signore, versa acqua dal tuo secchio su di lei.

Lo 'strumento purificatore' sarebbe proprio l'oggetto che i geni dei rilievi tengono nella mano destra. Il termine accadico è *mullilu*, una forma derivata dal verbo *elēlu* che ha il significato di 'purificare, preservare puro, consacrare (a una divinità), rendere libero';²² non fornisce quindi indicazioni sulla natura dell'oggetto ma sulla sua funzione. Da alcuni è stato identificato con una pigna, per altri è il fiore maschile della palma da dattero. Quale che sia la sua natura, è evidente che la funzione era quella di raccogliere e trattenere quanto più liquido possibile dalla situla per poterlo rilasciare spruzzandolo su determinati oggetti o persone.²³ Svolge lo stesso compito dell'aspersorio in vari rituali cristiani. In altri contesti figurativi i geni alati con situla e aspersorio benedicono il re,²⁴ oltre che, quando disposti ai lati di un

¹⁹ CAD B: 80, s.v. *banduddû* c. Da un testo ('Text II' in Wiggermann 1992) identificato come *šēp lemutti ina bīt amēli parāsu* ('(per) impedire l'ingresso del nemico nella casa di qualcuno') in Wiggermann 1992: 91.

²⁰ Gaspa 2014: 169-173, §1.6.2.

²¹ CAD B: 80, s.v. *banduddû* b. Da una tavoletta di periodo neo-assiro (Vorderasiatisches Museum VAT 8869) con trattamenti e incantesimi da usare nel caso di un parto difficile.

²² CAD E: 81-82, s.v. *elēlu* 2 (forma D).

²³ Russell 1998: 674-675.

²⁴ Si vedano, a esempio, gli ortostati BM 124564 e BM 124565 dalla Sala G (rispettivamente G-2 e G-3) esposti in calco alla mostra *Gli Assiri all'ombra del*

passaggio, le persone in carne e ossa che entravano.²⁵ Il focus dell'azione non era tanto il genio quanto l'elemento benedetto, nella Sala I l'albero sacro. In un inno di benedizione sulla città di Assur,²⁶ gli dèi devono benedire (*karābu*) la città riempiendo i secchi (*banduddû*). Situla e aspersorio rimandano quindi a un elemento non rappresentato o non facilmente rappresentabile ma focale, l'acqua lustrale dell'*apsû*, l'elemento primordiale da cui gli *apkallu* provengono, che ha la funzione di 'sciogliere, liberare' (tale è il significato del verbo accadico *paṭāru* usato in questi contesti) dalle minacce maligne.

Gli studiosi hanno fatto diverse ipotesi sulla natura dell'albero raffigurato in modo stilizzato²⁷ nei rilievi della Sala I e ben noto nell'iconografia neo-assira. Le prime speculazioni facevano riferimento all'"albero della vita" (ebraico *etz ha-khayim*) posto nel mezzo del giardino dell'Eden insieme all'"albero della conoscenza del bene e del male" (*Genesi* 2,9). Si è quindi ipotizzato che fosse una palma da dattero e che il gesto dei geni avesse la valenza pratica di fertilizzare la palma a simboleggiare la fertilità del Paese posta nelle mani degli dèi e del re. Più recentemente, Mariana Giovino ha rivalutato l'ipotesi che l'albero sacro dei rilievi non sia la riproduzione stilizzata di un albero ma la rappresentazione accurata di un albero artificiale, un arredo culturale posto forse nel tempio di Assur che aveva inevitabilmente acquisito una valenza sacra in se stesso divenendo oggetto di venerazione indipendente.²⁸ Che l'albero sacro non sia una stilizzazione della palma potrebbe risultare evidente dalla loro concomitanza sulla faccia superiore del prisma di pietra di Esarhaddon²⁹ (regno 681–669 a.C.) o sulla coppia di gioielli intarsiati³⁰ dal sar-

Vesuvio come no. 1 del catalogo (D'Alonzo 2019). L'*apkallu* di destra è nell'ortostata G-4, non in mostra.

²⁵ Wiggermann 1992: 67, sub e.

²⁶ Livingstone 1993 (= SAA 3), no. 10: 11-12.

²⁷ Per un catalogo delle diverse realizzazioni grafiche dell'albero sacro, si vedano Madhloom 1970 e Albenda 1994.

²⁸ Giovino 2007, in particolare p. 201.

²⁹ British Museum BM 91027.

³⁰ Albero sacro: numero di scavo ND 1989.32b. Palma: ND 1989.32a. Ambedue sono raffigurati sulla copertina di Oates, Oates 2001.

cofago della tomba della regina Yaba,³¹ chiaramente parte di uno stesso oggetto, forse un diadema.³² Commentando il prisma di pietra di Esarhaddon, Irving L. Finkel e Julian E. Reade hanno suggerito che la parola accadica usata per indicare questo tipo di albero sia *urigallu*,³³ un termine generalmente tradotto come ‘standardo’, con attestazioni sia in contesto rituale che militare.³⁴ Si tratterebbe quindi di un simbolo identificativo, usato dai re neo-assiri sui loro standardi, raffigurante un albero in maniera non naturalistica ma trasfigurata e simmetrica, come di solito avviene nell’araldica, forse lo stemma dell’Assiria, se la palma è quello della Babilonia.³⁵ In questo caso, più che di albero sacro dovremmo parlare di emblema regale la cui sacralità non sarebbe da intendere in senso intrinseco, ma come auspicabile o acquisita per trasposizione simbolica.

Un’ulteriore ipotesi è stata proposta da Seth Richardson,³⁶ secondo il quale la ripetizione dell’albero nella Sala I avrebbe avuto una valenza non meramente iterativa per fini decorativi ma realistica, al fine di riprodurre una specie di bosco o giardino sacro. La stessa disposizione su due registri, rara nel Palazzo Nord-Ovest, sarebbe stata legata alla volontà di massimizzare il numero di alberi. Richardson contestualizza il giardino con il culto dinastico dei re predecessori, simboleggiati dagli alberi, considerando la Sala I come il luogo in cui si svolgevano rituali di commemorazione o più specificamente funerari.

Ulteriori elementi per l’interpretazione dei rilievi sono infatti forniti non solo dal programma figurativo della Sala I ma anche dalle installazioni ritrovate nel pavimento. Innanzitutto il seg-

³¹ Tomba II del Palazzo Nord-Ovest. Yaba fu moglie di Tiglat-Pileser III (regno 745–727 a.C.).

³² Mahmoud Hussein 2016: 15.

³³ Finkel, Reade 1996: 259: «We take the tree to reflect the sign ŠEŠ/URI, assuming that URI stands for *urigallu*, a kind of sacred pole and perhaps a likely name for the Sacred Tree».

³⁴ CAD U/W: 223-225, s.v. *uriggallu*, in particolare l b (‘(divine) standard ... in rituals’), c (‘as military standards placed on chariots accompanying the army’), d (‘deified and worshipped’).

³⁵ Finkel, Reade 1996: 260. Sul significato del segno GIŠ (logogramma per ‘albero, legno’) sul fusto dell’albero sacro nel rilievo B-23 del Palazzo Nord-Ovest, si veda Morello 2016.

³⁶ Richardson 1999-2001; si veda anche Brown 2010.

mento settentrionale della sala, probabilmente la stanza vera e propria a cui si arrivava attraverso il segmento meridionale a mo' di corridoio, era pavimentato con mattoni quadrati impermeabilizzati con bitume, di cui restano tracce, accorgimento che suggerisce un uso intensivo di acqua.

Nel pavimento in mattoni sono inserite tre lastre di pietra: una ($0,73 \times 1,13$ m) con quattro incavi quadrati, disposti a formare un quadrato e separati da ca. 30 cm, è posizionata davanti all'ortostata I-17; le altre due³⁷ hanno un incavo a forma di rettangolo con un lato corto incurvato (risultante in una forma a 'U') e sono di dimensioni leggermente diverse. Quella più grande ($0,88 \times 1,56$ m) era posta longitudinalmente proprio di fronte all'ortostata I-18 (da cui proviene il suddetto frammento dell'Ashmolean) mentre la più piccola ($0,60 \times 1,35$ m) davanti all'ortostata I-13. Queste installazioni sono comuni nei palazzi neo-assiri³⁸ e sono state interpretate come basi per vasche³⁹ in ambienti destinati alla funzione di bagno a uso della famiglia reale,⁴⁰ dalla duplice funzione igienica e rituale,⁴¹ essendo chiaro che tutto ciò che coinvolgeva il re, anche l'atto più umano e banale, assumeva una dimensione inevitabilmente rituale.

Una quarta lastra, rotta, si trova davanti alla nicchia dell'ortostata I-16 (l'unico con geni sbarbati, benedicienti ma senza aspersorio e situla, nel registro inferiore) e secondo John Malcolm Russell⁴² probabilmente aveva un foro per lo scolo, come è stato effettivamente trovato nella simmetrica Sala L.⁴³

Tra i vari confronti, spicca quello con la cosiddetta Camera delle Abluzioni (Ablution Room; fig. 5) nel Palazzo del Governatore a Nimrud nel cui pavimento, in prossimità di una nicchia, è stato ritrovato un foro con una conduttura collegata al canale di

³⁷ Menzionate già in Layard 1849: 343.

³⁸ Kertai 2015: 190-195, § 9.2.

³⁹ In alcuni casi dotate di uno spazio laterale su cui il bagnante poteva appoggiarsi all'ingresso e all'uscita della vasca.

⁴⁰ Cf. Oates, Oates 2001: 56, dove è ipotizzata la funzione di tesoreria ('treasury', cioè un deposito di beni preziosi) sia per la Sala I che per la Sala L. Sembra certo che la Sala I fu poi usata come magazzino ai tempi di Sargon II (regno 722-705 a.C.) (Russell 1998: 672).

⁴¹ Tra gli altri Turner 1970: 193.

⁴² Russell 1998: 672.

⁴³ Brown 2010: 29. Foto della sala in Meuszyński, Abdul-Hamid 1974, fig. 5.

drenaggio principale, circondato da quattro incavi circolari,⁴⁴ forse gli incastrati per un mobile o una sedia defecatoria.⁴⁵ Il pavimento circostante era impermeabilizzato con bitume. Nell'ambito dell'ipotesi di Richardson, le basi sagomate avrebbero accolto per un determinato periodo di tempo rituale i sarcofagi dei re, simili a quelli effettivamente ritrovati nelle tombe delle principesse assire, che sono un po' più lunghi (ca. 1,5 m) e in genere più stretti (ca. 0,5 m).⁴⁶ Secondo Yasmina Wicks, è possibile che le vasche a forma di 'U' siano passate dall'uso rituale legato all'acqua dell'*apsû* a quello funerario.⁴⁷

La comprensione funzionale della Sala I deve prendere in considerazione anche il contesto in cui è inserita nell'ambito della cosiddetta suite orientale (East Suite) del palazzo. La forma a 'L' della Sala I è simmetrica a quella della Sala L, da cui è separata dalla piccola Camera K. Tutte e tre queste stanze hanno un accesso dal lato lungo della Sala H, collegata al cortile attraverso la Sala G. Dai due lati corti della Sala H si poteva accedere alle Sale M e J (i due accessi sono sfalsati, non simmetrici), che potevano essere usate anche come passaggi rispettivamente verso le Sale L e I. Tuttavia, i passaggi con la Sala H furono ritrovati chiusi dalle lastre H-10 e H-27,⁴⁸ eliminando la permeabilità di questi ambienti. Il programma figurativo di tutti questi ambienti, apparentemente simile per l'onnipresente rappresentazione di alberi sacri e geni alati, a ben vedere si distingue per la figura del re, presente (con armi) nelle Sale G e H, assente nelle Sale L e I. Da un punto di vista formale, gli ortostati della Sala I si distinguono, anche rispetto a quelli della simmetrica Sala L, per la decorazione su tre registri (quello centrale con l'iscrizione) invece che ad altezza piena (con l'iscrizione in una fascia sovrapposta alle figure).

La convergenza tra caratteristiche architettoniche e programma figurativo suggerisce quindi che tutta la suite orientale

⁴⁴ Mallowan 1950: 165-166 e tav. XXXI.

⁴⁵ Turner 1970: 192 (con rimando a una proposta già avanzata da François Thureau-Dangin); Kertai 2015: 192.

⁴⁶ Catalogo in Wicks 2015: 144-146; si veda anche la sezione 4.3.1, pp. 100-111, specialmente pp. 105 sgg.

⁴⁷ Wicks 2016: 288.

⁴⁸ Russell 1998: 672, nota 48.

possa essere considerata come uno spazio in cui avevano luogo riti di purificazione che coinvolgevano il sovrano e i simboli del potere reale (in particolare le sue armi, forse anche il suo emblema arboreo), spazio suddiviso in due aree caratterizzate da un diverso grado di accessibilità, fino ad arrivare alla Sala I dove era lo stesso corpo del re a essere purificato.⁴⁹

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⁴⁹ Brown 2010: 12-13 con rimando a Russel 1998: 671-697.

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Figure

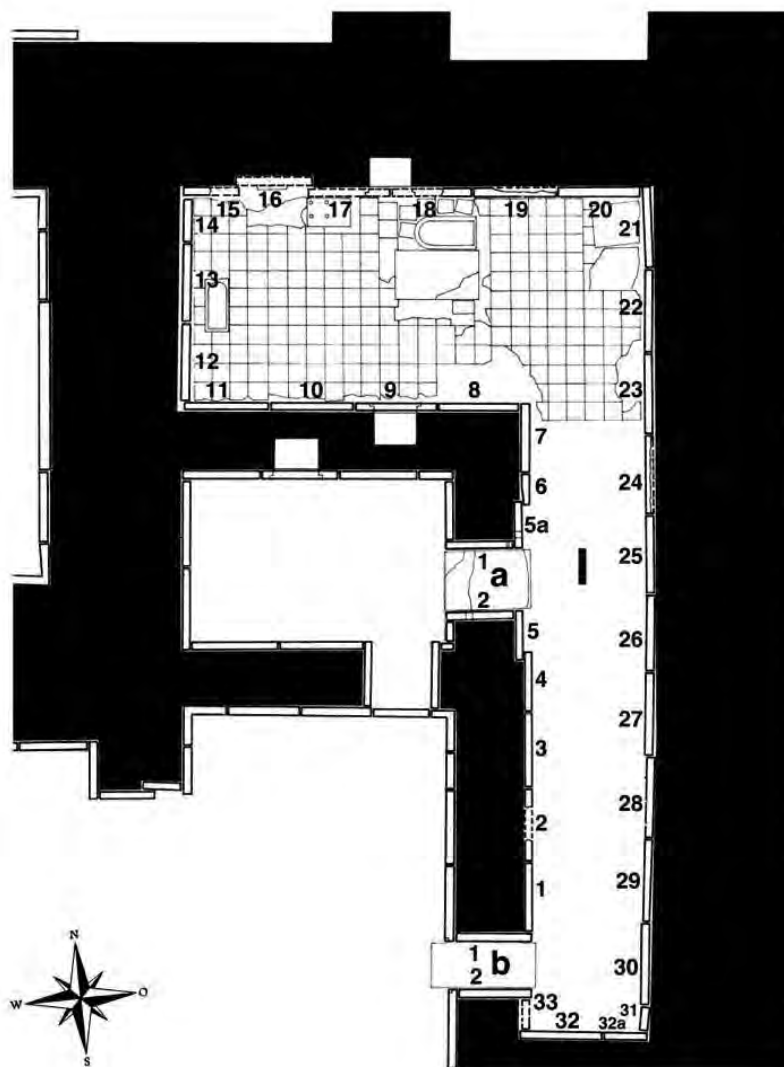


Fig. 1 - Planimetria della Sala I (da <https://cdli.ucla.edu/projects/nimrud/rooms/i.html>, adattata da Paley-Sobolewski 1987, planimetria 2).

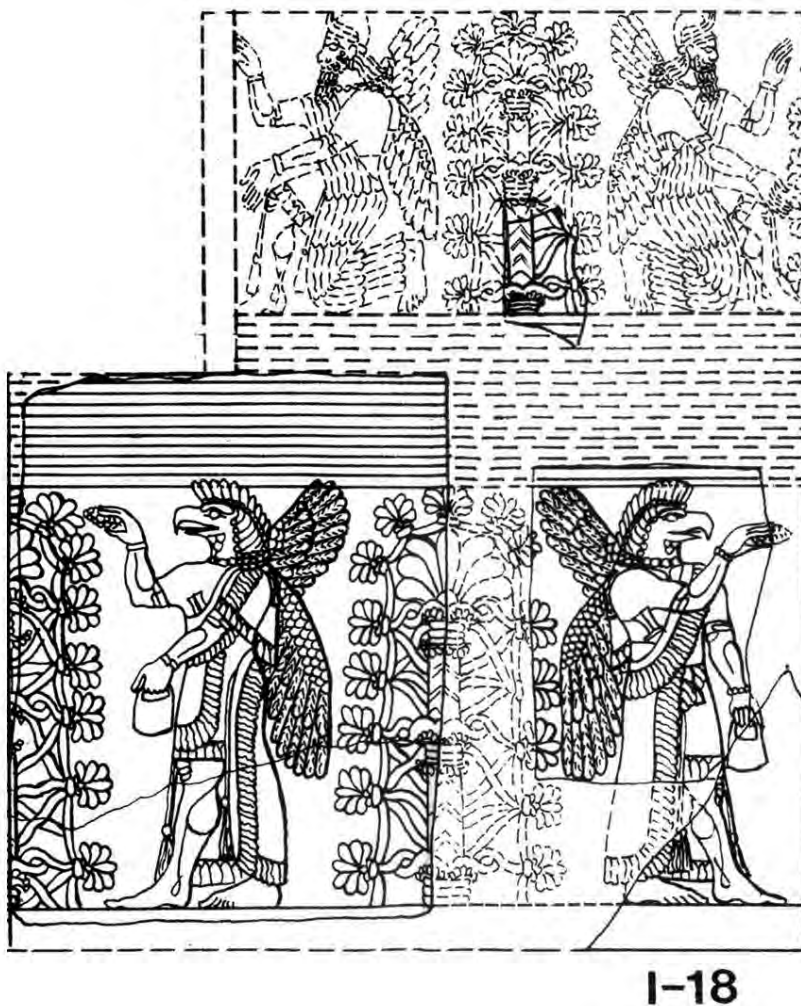
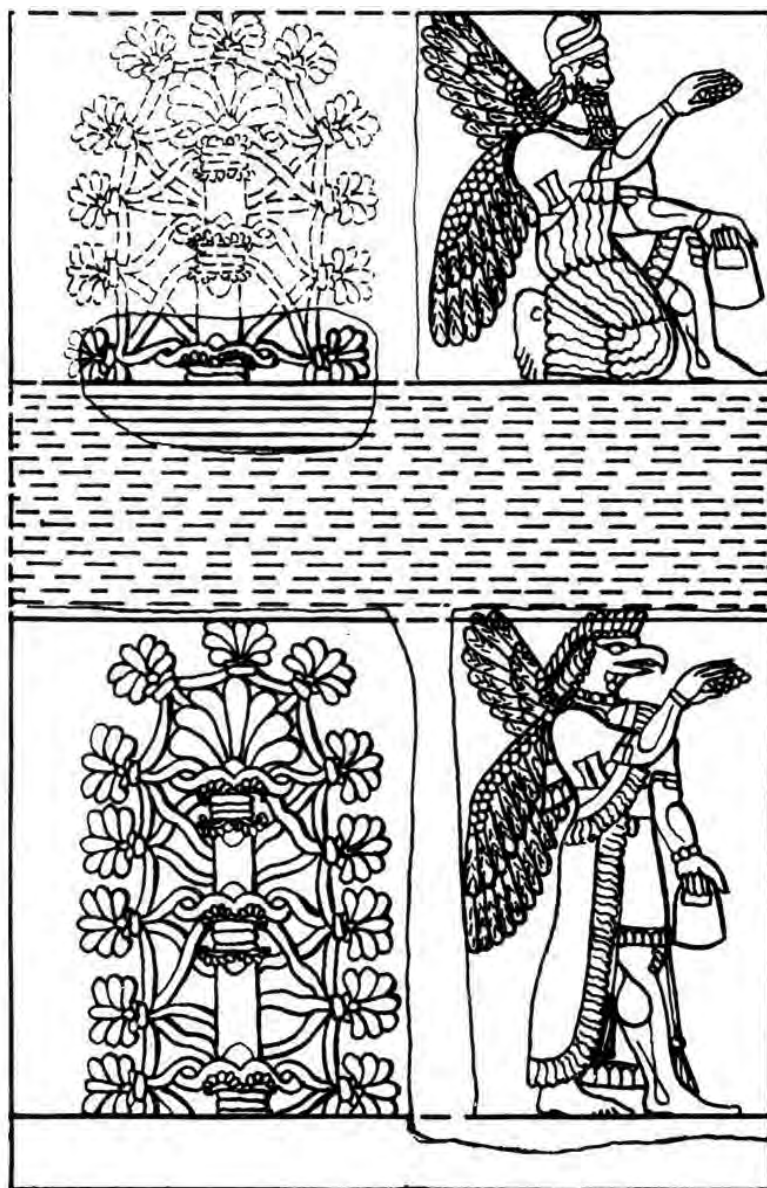


Fig. 2 - Disegno dell'ortostata I-18 con il frammento (in basso a destra) AN1950.241 dell'Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (Paley - Sobolewski 1987, tav. 1).



I-4

Fig. 3 - Disegno dell'ortostata I-04 con il frammento (in alto a destra) MB 47 del Museo di Scultura Antica Giovanni Barracco (Paley - Sobolewski 1987, tav. 1).



Fig. 4a- Statuette apkallu sotterrate nei palazzi assiri in esposizione al British Museum (ME 90989-92, ME 90998, ME 91839).



Fig. 4b - Disegno di una delle statuette apkallu sotterrate nei palazzi assiri (Rittig 1977, fig. 20).



Fig. 5a-b - La Camera delle Abluzioni (Ablution Room) nel Palazzo del Governatore a Nimrud con il foro di drenaggio circondato da quattro incavi circolari (Mallowan 1950, tav. XXXI).



Fig. 6 - *La prima sala della mostra Gli Assiri all'ombra del Vesuvio con l'allestimento dei rilievi dalla Sala I (foto di Giorgio Albano).*

*Feste, musica e danze in una corte di Siria nel III millennio a.C.**

MARIA GIOVANNA BIGA

* A Simonetta Graziani, amica carissima e magnifica collega, non posso dedicare altro che uno scritto su feste, musica, danze perché pensare a lei mi fa pensare a occasioni festose, cioè a tutte le volte, per me sempre festosissime, nelle quali sono andata a Napoli invitata da lei e da Carlo Zaccagnini, per lungo tempo direttore del dottorato di ricerca Vicino Oriente antico, e da altri amici docenti del dottorato quali Riccardo Contini, Giancarlo Lacerenza, Rosanna Pirelli, Andrea Manzo. Che gioia prendere il treno al mattino, con Carlo Zaccagnini, raggiungere Napoli, città per me splendida, poi la passeggiata per quartieri pittoreschi fino ad arrivare a Piazza San Domenico dove c'è l'elegante Palazzo Corigliano che ospita l'Università "L'Orientale" di Napoli, fare subito una tappa alla pasticceria Scaturchio per ordinare pastiera e babà e ministeriali da portare a casa a Roma alla sera... oppure andare sul lungomare Caracciolo nel Palazzo Du Mesnil, altra prestigiosa sede de "L'Orientale", da dove mentre si teneva lezione si godeva della vista del mare... Per molti anni sono stata invitata regolarmente a tenere una lezione per gli studenti di dottorato de "L'Orientale" oppure per discutere le tesi; il livello dei dottorandi de "L'Orientale" era altissimo. Molte tesi erano già pronte per la pubblicazione al momento della discussione. E come non ricordare le feste nella stupenda casa di Simonetta con terrazzo con vista a 360 gradi sul golfo di Napoli e la *Fest ohne Schrift* organizzata per Carlo Zaccagnini per i suoi 70 anni... E infine Simonetta ha studiato danza come ci ha ricordato in un suo bellissimo articolo sulla danza in Mesopotamia (Graziani 2014-15). Questo mio articolo riprende il testo dal titolo: "Feasting and Entertaining at the Royal Palace of Ebla: Dancers, Acrobats and Monkeys", presentato da Biga e Steinkeller alla recente 67th *Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale* tenutasi all'Università degli Studi di Torino (12-16 luglio 2021).

Le tavolette d'argilla in scrittura cuneiforme degli archivi ritrovati negli anni 1974-1976 nel palazzo della città di Ebla, attuale Tell Mardikh a 60 km a sud-ovest di Aleppo, nella Siria del nord, documentano, nella più antica lingua semitica finora attestata, circa 45 anni della vita di un prospero regno del XXIV secolo a.C.

Anche se Ebla non poteva disporre di particolari risorse naturali, era un crocevia di commerci da e per il Mediterraneo e l'Egitto e per questo era diventata un centro estremamente ricco e una tappa fondamentale di commerci di metalli, legname da costruzione, lapislazzuli ecc. nella Siria della seconda metà del III millennio a.C.

Mercanti di Ebla arrivavano in Anatolia, sulle rive del Mediterraneo nei vari porti tra cui il principale era Biblo, e poi da lì arrivavano in Egitto, andavano a Mari sul medio Eufrate, città alla quale giungevano i beni di Babilonia, arrivavano a Nagar, attuale Tell Brak nella Gezira siriana, dalla quale si approvvigionavano di beni dall'est. L'importanza di Ebla al centro di commerci fu subito evidente al primo epigrafista, G. Pettinato, che riconobbe l'estensione dei commerci di Ebla anche alla costa del Mediterraneo fino a Biblo, all'Anatolia e ad est fino ad Assur e Gasur e oltre con Hamazi.¹ Negli ultimi 10 anni una serie di studi ha dimostrato che Ebla era un grande centro di commercio di pregiato legname da costruzione, soprattutto di abete cilicico, che dalla Cilicia e dalla Siria occidentale arrivava ad Ebla che lo spediva poi verso Mari e la Babilonia.² La città era anche un grande centro di commercio di lapislazzuli, pregiatissima pietra richiesta dagli egiziani; essa arrivava dal lontano Badachshan in Afghanistan e da lì per tappe successive arrivava alla città di Mari che lo inviava ad Ebla,³ grezzo, da lavorare, in blocchetti che variavano come peso dai 100 gr fino ad un kg.⁴ E da Ebla il lapislazzuli veniva inviato come pregiato dono alla corte egiziana di Pepi I, il terzo faraone della VI Dinastia.⁵ Del resto questo farao-

¹ Pettinato 1983; 1986.

² Steinkeller 2016; 2021.

³ Archi 1999.

⁴ Peyronel, Vacca 2013; Pinnock 1985; 1986; 1988; 2006.

⁵ Per l'identificazione del regno di Dugurasu con l'Egitto vd. Biga 2012; 2016; 2017; 2021; Roccati 2012 e 2015a; Biga, Steinkeller 2021. Per una voce contraria che pone Dugurasu in Iran vd. Archi 2016.

ne e i suoi successori, Merenra e Pepi II, hanno inviato anche a Biblo, l'importante porto sulla costa del Mediterraneo, il loro funzionario Iny a cercare lapislazzuli, stagno e argento.⁶ E stagno e argento, che Ebla si procurava con commerci con città nelle montagne del Tauro e in Anatolia, erano mandati da Ebla in dono all'Egitto.



Fig. 1 - Ebla. Il quadro geografico.

I pregiati equidi kunga (BAR.AN) che arrivavano da est ad Ebla, dallo stato di Nagar (Tell Brak), venivano poi da Ebla inviati ad altri regni siriani. Quindi il regno di Ebla era molto prospero e la corte viveva con sfarzo. Appena dall'Egitto arrivavano pregiati tessuti di lino venivano distribuiti ai più importanti personaggi. Anche le pietre colorate quali cornalina, turchese, quarzo ed altre che l'Egitto inviava alla corte di Ebla servivano per collane che venivano donate in varie occasioni alle donne della famiglia reale eblaita.⁷

Alla corte di questa antica città siriana nel XXIV secolo a.C. si svolgevano feste che non erano molto diverse dalle feste in corti di epoca ben più recente. Anche se i documenti di Ebla sono relativi all'amministrazione della città e ai suoi commerci

⁶ Marcolin 2010; Roccati 2015a e 2015b.

⁷ Archi 2002; Biga 2018.

e quindi alla sua vita economico-politica e sono laconici testi con elenchi per lo più di beni in uscita dai magazzini del palazzo per vari scopi, a ben leggere si possono ricostruire molti aspetti della vita quotidiana della corte e anche le feste che vi si svolgevano. Ovviamente si parla sempre della corte dal momento che questi sono gli archivi del palazzo. Ad alcune di queste feste sicuramente doveva partecipare anche la popolazione della città di Ebla.

Dal momento che il calendario dell'epoca non prevedeva la settimana lavorativa e si lavorava dall'alba al tramonto ogni giorno e non vi era il riposo della domenica (o del sabato dato che la settimana è stata definita proprio nella Bibbia), ogni festa era l'occasione per sospendere per un giorno, o più giorni, a seconda della durata della festa, il tempo normale.

Le occasioni di festa erano parecchie e per lo più sempre legate ad una divinità o comunque alla sfera religiosa. Una occasione di festa per la corte tutta erano le visite di re stranieri che arrivavano con un seguito più o meno numeroso per vari motivi: stringere o riconfermare un'alleanza politica e commerciale, prendere accordi per un matrimonio tra le due corti. L'alleanza veniva sancita da un giuramento nel tempio del dio poliade di Ebla, il dio Kura, le cui sfere di azione ancora sfuggono, ma che verosimilmente potrebbe essere stato un dio della tempesta; una offerta di olio nel tempio sanciva la sacralità dell'atto.

Non è chiaro se un re di regni più o meno vicini ad Ebla, appena insediatosi sul trono, venisse a far visita al re di Ebla, quasi a presentare le sue credenziali. Certamente re di stati, la maggior parte dei quali quasi sicuramente da situarsi in alta Siria, sono venuti abbastanza regolarmente ad Ebla. Delegazioni da paesi più lontani come Mari sul Medio Eufrate e da Kish nella Mesopotamia centrale sono arrivate anch'esse sempre con una certa regolarità. Giunti con il loro seguito che consisteva di vari funzionari, portavano al re, alla regina, e alla regina madre doni preziosi, prodotti tipici della terra dalla quale venivano, cibi esotici, animali esotici, vino, uva, vino nuovo, datteri, ma anche lapislazzuli in notevole quantità e oggetti preziosi.⁸ Venivano ricevuti nella Corte delle Udienze dove quasi sicuramente il re di Ebla

⁸ Biga 2008; Archi 2018.

faceva sfoggio della sua ricchezza, seduto su un trono il cui podio si è conservato.

Per citare un esempio si può ricordare l'arrivo di un alto funzionario dalla corte di Biblo, il grande porto sul Mediterraneo al quale arrivavano anche gli egiziani a cercare prodotti della costa siro-palestinese e legname pregiato. Arra-tilu, fratello del re di Biblo, arriva ad Ebla a giurare il patto di alleanza politica con un grande seguito composto da alcuni degli anziani del consiglio di Biblo, dai suoi funzionari-*maškim*, da guardie del corpo (più di venti persone) e porta dei doni per il re e per la regina di Ebla. I doni consistono soprattutto in tessuti di lino, tra i quali i preziosi tessuti-*kirnanu*, avorio d'ippopotamo, un braciere, una scimmia e una serie di pietre semipreziose.⁹

Altri re, come ad esempio il re dello stato di Nagar, sono venuti a intrattenere trattative per un matrimonio con una principessa eblaita. Finora si sono trovati solamente matrimoni di principesse eblaita inviate in altri regni e non risultano principesse straniere mandate ad Ebla. Parecchie principesse eblaita hanno sposato sovrani o figli di sovrani di altri regni e anche se i testi sono laconici testi amministrativi che registrano uscite di tessuti, oggetti in metallo prezioso o derrate alimentari, è possibile capire che i re e il loro seguito che venivano a Ebla erano trattati con grande riguardo, banchetti erano offerti in loro onore e in queste festose occasioni si esibivano cantori, danzatori di vario tipo, saltimbanchi e acrobati.

Delegazioni come quella guidata dal coppiere Šugadu arrivavano regolarmente da Mari con ricchi doni in oggetti ma soprattutto blocchetti del peso di mezzo chilo di preziosissimo lapislazzuli da lavorare. La città di Mari all'epoca di Ebla era chiaramente una tappa del lungo viaggio del lapislazzuli dal lontano Afghanistan fino al Mediterraneo.¹⁰ E da Mari veniva portato in dono al re di Ebla, il quale a sua volta lo inviava come dono cerimoniale al sovrano d'Egitto.

Arrivavano poi sovente mercanti da tutti i numerosissimi centri della Siria, Alta Mesopotamia, costa siro-palestinese, Egitto,

⁹ Biga, Steinkeller 2021: 22.

¹⁰ Archi 1999.

con i quali Ebla aveva rapporti commerciali e politico-diplomatici.

In occasione della festa di una divinità si svolgevano delle fiere durante le quali il palazzo di Ebla e i cittadini si rifornivano di alcuni beni.¹¹

Il re del regno di Dugurasu, che è quasi sicuramente il termine per Egitto usato dagli eblaiti, non è mai venuto a giurare alleanza con Ebla pur inviando alla famiglia reale eblaita preziosi doni di pregiati tessuti di lino, avorio di elefante, avorio di ippopotamo, gemme di vario tipo che, come l'avorio, venivano in parte dalla Nubia in parte da altre miniere del grande territorio egiziano.¹²

La festa più documentata, sia pure da laconici testi amministrativi di uscite mensili di tessuti, è quella in occasione del matrimonio della principessa eblaita Tagriš-damu con Ultum-HU il figlio del re del potente stato di Nagar.

Nagar, situata nella vallata del fiume Khabur, era un importante centro dal quale dipendevano vari altri sovrani (sono conosciuti almeno 17 sovrani alleati con lui) e tra essi vi era pure il re del centro di Nabatium (Tell Beydar).

Da Nagar arrivavano regolarmente ad Ebla, acquistati a caro prezzo, gli importanti equidi kunga (BAR.AN), più resistenti e più veloci degli asini; Nagar sembra abbia soppiantato presto lo stato di Hamazi, più ad est oltre il Tigri, che inviava anch'esso equidi kunga (BAR.AN) al re di Ebla, diventando il centro principale di commercio di questi pregiati equidi.

Il matrimonio della principessa Tagriš-damu è quello meglio documentato. Una tavoletta ricostruita quasi interamente da alcuni frammenti registra i beni e soprattutto i tessuti eblaiti offerti dal re di Ebla al re di Nagar, quando, di ritorno da una campagna militare contro la città di Armi, da situarsi quasi sicuramente ad ovest di Ebla nella regione dove l'abete cilicico veniva tagliato, si ferma ad Ebla per prendere accordi per il matrimonio di suo figlio con la principessa eblaita Tagriš-damu. Alcuni mesi dopo arriva da Nagar una grande delegazione guidata dal prin-

¹¹ Biga 2002; 2003.

¹² Per l'identificazione di Dugurasu con l'Egitto vd. nota 6.

cipe Ultum-HU.HU e con altri membri della sua famiglia e un grande seguito di cantori e danzatori.

In questa occasione si celebra il matrimonio con il versamento dell'olio sul capo della sposa da parte di un membro della famiglia dello sposo, cerimonia a cui fanno seguito festeggiamenti e banchetti allietati da danze e musica, durante i quali si esibiscono danzatori locali e danzatori venuti da Nagar, e si consumò anche molto vino, come registra un testo.

Nei testi amministrativi mensili di uscite di tessuti sono registrati con una certa frequenza anche tessuti distribuiti a cantori e danzatori, sempre menzionati con il loro nome proprio, che danzavano e cantavano nelle varie feste che si svolgevano in città. Cantori e danzatori e cantanti donne e danzatrici vivevano stabilmente a palazzo al servizio del re e della corte.¹³ I gruppi di cantori arrivano fino a 30 cantori tra i quali i cantanti principali (nar-mah) e quelli minori, apprendisti (nar-tur).

Un gruppo di cantori della città di Mari sembra vivere stabilmente alla corte di Ebla. Ci sono anche parecchi danzatori (NE.DI) e danzatrici menzionati in gruppi che arrivano a più di 20 persone. Insieme a questi vengono sovente menzionati gli HÚB.KI, giocolieri, acrobati, ben documentati dai testi di Mari del XVIII secolo a.C. e da quelli ittiti. Ad Ebla come a Nagar sembra che si esibissero in acrobazie saltando sugli equidi kunga (BAR.AN) che arrivavano ad Ebla prima dallo stato di Hamazi ad est del Tigri e poi dal centro di Nagar (Tell Brak).

A Tell Brak gli archeologi guidati da Joan Oates hanno riconosciuto una tomba come quella appartenente ad un HÚB.KI; era giovane, forte, molto muscoloso, con muscoli delle gambe e delle braccia molto sviluppati dato il mestiere che faceva.

¹³ I cantori sono stati studiati a fondo da Maria Vittoria Tonietti (Tonietti 2009; 2018); si rimanda quindi a questi lavori e alla bibliografia in essi citata nei quali l'autrice, grande conoscitrice di musica in quanto lei stessa magnifica cantante, si duole del fatto che non si possa conoscere quali musiche si suonassero ad Ebla. Per la danza e le varie figure di danzatori vd. Graziani 2014-15 e la bibliografia da lei citata; anche Simonetta si duole che non si possano riconoscere i passi di danza eseguiti in antico. Per musica e danza presso i fenici e i punici vd. Fariselli 2007; 2010; 2015; 2017.

A Umm el-Marra, a 47 km a sud est di Aleppo, una missione americana diretta da Glenn Schwartz ha trovato questi equidi intatti sepolti ritualmente in tombe, dopo essere stati ritualmente sacrificati, e quindi i paleozoologi li hanno potuti studiare concludendo che erano equidi particolarmente resistenti, più veloci degli asini. Proprio recentissimamente è stato pubblicato lo studio sul DNA di questi animali estinti circa due secoli fa, nel XIX secolo, e frutto di un'ibridazione compiuta dall'uomo. Vengono alla mente gli atleti che a Creta, nel palazzo di Cnosso, e ad Avaris nel delta egiziano si esibivano sui tori, come ci documentano pitture non solo da questi due centri ma anche da altri centri del Mediterraneo che mostrano così la presenza di botteghe di pittori itineranti che andavano a decorare i palazzi dei grandi centri vicino-orientali ed egei della prima metà del II millennio a.C.¹⁴

C'erano anche due suonatori di flauto, due fratelli di nome Raba e Ibdurni, che suonavano per accompagnare le danze. Stupisce il fatto che siano solo due i flautisti che hanno suonato a corte durante il lungo (36 anni ca.) regno dell'ultimo re di Ebla Išar-damu. Ad un certo punto Raba non viene più menzionato probabilmente perché è morto anche se il testo dove si ricorda la sua morte non è stato ancora identificato. Ibdurni continua a suonare a corte e lo troviamo menzionato ancora nei documenti degli ultimi anni di Ebla. Raba e Ibdurni sono sovente menzionati come danzatori e svolgevano entrambi i compiti.

Normalmente dopo i danzatori sono ricordati i tessuti attribuiti ai nani che erano presenti a corte in numero da 3 a 6 e che sicuramente danzavano e si esibivano per il divertimento della corte e dei suoi ospiti.

Infine, soprattutto in testi del periodo dell'ultimo re e del suo visir Ibbi-zikir, sono registrati tessuti destinati ad un personaggio definito hi-mu-DU 1 KA.MA oppure in alcuni testi hi-mu-DU 2 KA.MA. I due termini hi-mu-DU e KA.MA non sono stati compresi fino all'anno scorso.

È stata infatti una brillante intuizione di Piotr Steinkeller,¹⁵ che ha studiato le liste lessicali eblaite, a consentirgli di leggere il termine KA.MA come KA-pěš, e a tradurlo 'scimmia' e quindi hi-

¹⁴ Bietak, Marinatos, Palivou 2007; Bietak, Prell 2017.

¹⁵ Biga, Steinkeller 2021: 45-46 e nn. 123, 124 e figg. 8, 9.

mu-DU ‘colui che porta una o due scimmie’. Dallo studio delle liste lessicali, Steinkeller ha compreso che KA.MA indicava un animale; da una lista lessicale che equiparava KA.MA a ‘colui che è simile ad Humbaba’ è arrivato a proporre la traduzione ‘scimmia’ del termine, dato che Humbaba, il mostruoso guardiano della Foresta dei cedri, è sovente rappresentato con forme scimmiesche e danzante. Sono menzionati i nomi di alcuni di questi portatori, ammaestratori di scimmie. Due di essi sono menzionati tra i danzatori e chiaramente danzavano e facevano danzare le loro scimmiette. Iram-malik e Zikir-raba sono definiti lú KA.MA, ‘quello che si prende cura della scimmia, l’addetto alla scimmia’, un altro modo per definire l’addestratore di scimmie.

È quindi diventato evidente che ad Ebla nelle feste si esibivano anche personaggi che portavano scimmiette addestrate e le facevano ballare e forse anche suonare qualche strumento musicale quale il flauto.



Fig. 2 - Placchetta paleobabilonese raffigurante ballerine e scimmie (Moortgat 1984: 38, fig.11).

Del resto in Egitto e in tutto il Vicino Oriente antico e nel Mediterraneo sono ben documentate scimmie che danzavano e suonavano.¹⁶ In Egitto scimmie danzanti sono dipinte su alcune

¹⁶ Un articolo con la documentazione sulle scimmie ad Ebla è in preparazione da parte di Biga, Steinkeller. Per una trattazione dell’iconografia delle scimmie nell’arte del Vicino Oriente vd. Spyket 1998. Per l’arte mesopotamica

tombe e in testi della V e VI dinastia egiziana si parla di scimmie e nani che danzano per il dio Bes o per la dea Hathor. Per la dea Hathor sono attestati anche degli acrobati, specialmente donne.

Alcuni testi già pubblicati offrono uno spaccato interessante della vita a corte e della presenza di questi artisti che contribuivano alle attività ludiche che vi si svolgevano. Ad esempio, il testo ARET IV 1 ricorda tessuti dati a 18 persone che non sono definite da una professione ma che sono noti come danzatori e dopo di loro è menzionato un portatore di una scimmia e poi tre nani. Seguono altri danzatori e cantori di Mari.

I documenti mensili di distribuzioni di tessuti non parlano del luogo di origine delle scimmie. Ci sono però degli altri testi, i cosiddetti testi mu-DU, che registrano i beni inviati ad Ebla da una serie di stati alleati e in contatto commerciale. Da questa tipologia di documenti è evidente che le scimmie arrivano ad Ebla inviate come dono al re solo da due stati, quello di Dugurasu e quello di DULu.

È stato recentemente proposto (ed è stato accettato da moltissimi studiosi tranne che da Alfonso Archi, come si è detto) che Dugurasu sia il nome che gli eblaiti hanno dato all'Egitto e DULu sia Biblo, il grande porto al quale arrivavano gli egiziani per cercare dei beni che non avevano in Egitto e che arrivavano là grazie ai commerci.

Il fatto che le scimmie vengano ad Ebla solo da questi due centri è una ulteriore prova che Dugurasu corrisponda all'Egitto e DULu a Biblo.

Del resto, tutti i beni che vengono inviati ad Ebla dal regno di Dugurasu sono beni che provengono dall'Egitto: avorio di elefante, avorio di ippopotamo, oro, gemme di vari colori di provenienza egiziana (e che all'Egitto arrivavano dalla Nubia), tessuti di lino e infine scimmie. Biblo aveva invece un ruolo di intermediario tra l'Egitto e la Siria ed esportava quegli stessi prodotti proprio perché provenienti dall'Egitto.

è da ricordare anche la placchetta rotonda di terracotta databile al periodo paleobabilonese e conservata al Museo di Baghdad sulla quale sono raffigurate ballerine nude (come erano anche in Egitto); a lato delle ballerine e in mezzo ad esse sono raffigurate scimmiette in varie pose e che suonano uno strumento musicale (Moortgat 1984: 38, in particolare illustrazione 11).

Negli scavi di Biblo sono stati trovati molti oggetti a forma di scimmia. Nel tempio della dea Ba'alat Gubal di Biblo erano conservati oggetti e vasi a forma di scimmia, considerevolmente più numerosi che in altri scavi.

Scimmie che ballano al suono di tamburelli e flauti o che suonano il flauto esse stesse sono ben documentate sia nell'arte mesopotamica sia nell'arte egea.

Come mi ha fatto osservare Erika Notti, che ringrazio moltissimo per le preziose osservazioni e indicazioni bibliografiche, anche su affreschi provenienti da Akrotiri sono rappresentate scimmiette:¹⁷ di esse una sicuramente suona uno strumento a corde, probabilmente una lira o una sorta di arpa. Allo stesso modo, gli affreschi di Thera confermano il ruolo delle scimmie nell'ambito dell'intrattenimento a corte.

Nel mondo egeo, le scimmie sono documentate anche a Cnosso, mentre in area micenea sono state ritrovate a Micene e Tirinto e tutte sono state considerate dagli specialisti del mondo egeo come di indubbia provenienza egiziana, precisamente dalla Nubia, osservazione che conferma i dati dei testi di Ebla.¹⁸

Parecchi testi mesopotamici, soprattutto iscrizioni di sovrani del II e I millennio a.C., documentano che tra i tributi che venivano inviati ai sovrani mesopotamici dall'Egitto e da varie città della costa palestinese vi erano anche delle scimmiette.¹⁹

Quindi grazie ai dati dei testi di Ebla del III millennio a.C., di quelli di Mari del II millennio a.C. e poi dall'iconografia successiva anche dall'Egeo, si può concludere che nelle corti di tutto il bacino del Mediterraneo le feste erano allietate da cantori, suonatori di vari strumenti, danzatori, acrobati, nani e scimmiette danzanti anch'esse.

Anche durante diversi rituali si esibivano questi artisti. Un rituale da Mari magnificamente interpretato da Durand e Guichard informa che la musica e le esibizioni dei vari artisti erano presenti nei rituali.²⁰

¹⁷ Doumas 1992: 128.

¹⁸ Per una panoramica sulle scimmie nell'Egeo e nel mondo miceneo vd. Cline 1991.

¹⁹ Dunham 1985.

²⁰ Durand, Guichard 1997.

Probabilmente anche degli orsi, provenienti per lo più dall'Anatolia, venivano utilizzati e fatti esibire e ballare durante alcuni rituali mesopotamici e ittiti, e del resto resti di orsi sono stati ritrovati anche in Siria a Ugarit e Tell Brak, ma il loro utilizzo alla corte di Ebla e in quelle micenee e minoiche non è così evidente, anche se probabile.²¹



Fig. 3 - *Dettaglio della Sala del Carnevale (Giambattista Tiepolo), Villa Valmarana ai Nani - Vicenza* (per gentile concessione di C. Valmarana).

²¹ Stiehler-Alegria 2021: 585-608 con bibliografia precedente.

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*On Some Rarely Attested Ebla Gods**

MARCO BONECHI

Several dozen divine names occur in the Ebla Palace G cuneiform texts (end of the 24th century BC). The majority of the attestations refers to a relatively limited subset consisting of the most popular deities, who are often well known from other sources (*e.g.* Hadda, Išhara, Ištar, Dagan), but sometimes are enigmatically peculiar to the Ebla documentation (*e.g.* KUr, NIdabal). On the other hand, for several other DN's the attestations available are few, and I will discuss some of them in this study friendly dedicated to Simonetta.

1. The healing goddess Ninkarrak / Nikkarratum, protectress of mothers-to-be, is not only referred to as ^dNin-kar(-rá) = ^{<d>}*Ni-ga-*

* This article has been written in the framework of the activities of the Rome research unit of the PRIN 2017 *Big Data and Early Archives (Big-DEA)*. *Measuring Settlement Dynamics and Environmental Exploitation in the Ebla Region during the 3rd Millennium BC: Archaeological Record, Cuneiform Texts, and Remote Sensing*. Note that 75.1322 means TM.75.G.1322 and so on, and that *EbDA* refers to the *Ebla Digital Archives* (online at <http://ebda.cnr.it/>), accessed on January 6, 2022.

ra/-la-du,¹ but also, I suggest, as ^d*In-ga-la-du*.² That ^d*In-ga-la-du* is to be interpreted as a variant spelling (¹Inkarratum) of Nikkarratum is established by the context of its attestation in 75.570 = *ARETIX* 17.³ A long part (from obv. VI:1 to rev. II:8) of this administrative text from the archive L.2712, datable to just before the fire of Palace G, deals with ‘pure breads’ (ninda sikil) associated with seventeen DNs: three gods (^d*Ra-sa-ab* of ¹*À-da-ni*^{ki}, ^d*Gira*_x (IZI), see below, § 3, and ^d*Ša-ma-gan*), six goddesses (^d*In-ga-la-du*, ^d*Išhara*_x (ŠÁRA)^š of *Zi-da-la*^{<ki>}, ^d*Ga-na-na*, ^d*Ti-mu-du*, ^d*Išhara*_x (ŠÁRA)^š of the *ga-wa-nu*^{<ki>}, and ^dTu), five deceased Ebla kings (^d*r*^x-[^x]-*mu*, ^d*Sa-mi-ù*, [^d*Ba-ga-da*]-^r*mu*, [^d*En*]-*àr*-[*da*]-*mu*, and ^d*I-šar-ma-lik*), and three cultic installations or sectors (the dingir-en of the é siki, the dingir-en-ki, and, I think, the stones referred to by means of the expression *si-in* / na₄(UD.NI)-na₄(UD.NI)). The general connection of all these divine entities with the Netherworld, and more particularly the association of the mentioned goddesses with healing practices and obstetrics, look obvious to me, but the present state of the publication of the Ebla Palace G texts from L.2712 advises me to postpone their in-depth study to some point in the future.

2.⁴ In 2006 it was convincingly argued that the DN ^d*Gú-ša-ra-tum* refers to the seven healing goddesses Kuṭārātum who presided

¹ In the Ebla bilingual lexical lists see *VE* 798, ^dNin-kar-rá = ^{<d>}*Ni-ga-ra/-la-du*. On the Ebla goddess see Lambert 1984: 398f.; Archi 1996: 42; Pomponio, Xella 1997: 293f.; Cavigneaux, Krebernik 2000: 440; Mander 2005: 60 («^dNin-kar(-du)»); Lahlouh, Catagnoti 2006: 475; Mander 2008: 21 («^dNin-kar-du = *Ni-kà-ra/la-du*»), 60f., and 77; Goodnick Westenholz 2010: 379, 397; Archi 2017a: 297; Archi 2019a: 23f.; Archi 2019b: 67; Archi 2021: 23f. On the cult of ^dNin-kar-rá at *Da-’à-zu*^{ki}, Archi 2017a: 297 (75.2517). Note that in 75.2590 = *ARETI* 6 rev. VII:28 one must read ^dNin-kar, as rightly noted in Archi 1996: 42 (cf. «^dNIN ERIM.A» in Archi 1985: 65, reading followed e.g. by Pomponio, Xella 1997: 289; Mander 2005: 75; Mander 2008: 79; and *EbDA*). On Nin-karrak in OBab Mari texts, Durand 2008: 262.

² Differently, on ^d*In-ga-la-du* cf. Pomponio, Xella 1997: 199 («Ingaladu [...] théonyme tout à fait énigmatique»); Mander 2005: 74 and Mander 2008: 77 («^d*In-ga-la-tù*»); Archi 2012: 7 («Ingaladu (a hapax)»); Milano, Tonietti 2012: 45 («Ingaladu»).

³ The most important general discussion of this text is Milano, Tonietti 2012: 44-47.

⁴ I thank Amalia Catagnoti, with whom I discussed this paragraph.

over childbirth, later attested at Ugarit under the form *Ktrt*.⁵ In 2018 the unique and peculiar occurrence of the DN ^d*Gú-šar* was made known, and contextually it has been convincingly argued that it must be interpreted as Kutar and identified with the Ugaritic god of technology *Ktr*, ‘The-Skilled-One’.⁶ This latter identification confirms that the very rarely attested Ebla DN ^d*Ga-ša-lu* is, on the other hand, to be interpreted on the basis of Akk. *Gašru(m)* and Ug. *Gtr*, ‘Very-Powerful’,⁷ with reference to the Lord of the Netherworld and/or to the deified (royal) ancestors.⁸

Against this background, I suggest that a close scrutiny of the few attestations of the DN spelled AN-GÚ-NE – often read ^d*Gú-bí* and explained by means of Akk. *Kūbu(m)*, ~ ‘Deified-Foetus’,⁹ but sometimes read ^d*Gú-NE* – permits a reading ^d*Gú-šar*_x and its identification as variant spelling of ^d*Gú-šar*:

[1] 75.2362 (unpublished, quoted in Archi 2018a: 1) rev.
XII:8–11: 5 GÍN.DILMUN kù-sig₁₇ / NU₁₁-za / ba-na-a / ^d*Gú-šar*

⁵ On ^d*Gú-ša-ra-tum* (attested in the administrative texts 75.4565+4586 = *ARET* XII 344, and 75.2622, 75.2462, and 75.10074, all unpublished) see Pasquali 2006; Pasquali 2015; Archi 2018a; Archi 2019a: 27; Archi 2019b: 67. On *Ktrt* see *DUL*³, p. 468, together with Pardee 2010: 26f. and 36-38, with discussion of the extraordinary Ugaritic denominations of the seven Birth-goddesses (*talūhūha wa mulūguhaya tātiqatu ‘immaha bāqi’atu tāqi’atu ‘imma tarabbū hatta damiqatu šaḡiratu kōtarāti*, «Sa-Dot aussi bien que Son-Cadeau-de-Mariage, Celle-qui-Sépare, avec elle Celle-qui-Fend, Celle-qui-Bruit avec Elle-Rassemble-la-Foule, La-Belle, la cadette des *Kōtarātu*»).

⁶ On ^d*Gú-šar* see Archi 2018a: 1f. On *Ktr* see *DUL*³, p. 467f.

⁷ In general, on Akk. *Gašru(m)* and Ug. *Gtr* see Steinkeller 1987: 165f.; Pardee 2000: 237-243; Beaulieu 2003: 339; Durand 2008: 673; *DUL*³, p. 310 (quoting syllabic Ugaritic *ga-ša-ru*).

⁸ On ^d*Ga-ša-lu* (attested in the administrative text 75.2230 = Pettinato 1979a: 161-175 = *MEE* 12 26) cf. Pettinato 1979a: 106 («molto probabilmente il dio Košar della religione ugaritica») with Waetzoldt 2001: 220, Mander 2005: 75, and Mander 2008: 78, but see rightly Archi 1992: 7 with note 6 («perhaps the equivalent of Gašru»); Archi 1993: 471 («*Gašru*»), and also Archi 2018a: 2; same conclusion in Pomponio, Xella 1997: 183. Notice that in the administrative fragment 75.4581 = *ARET* XII 358, V:1’, a PN was surely written (maški[m]-*SŪ* in V:3’), so that an interpretation «^d*G[a-ša]-lu* (?)» of AN-‘x’(-[x])*-lu*(-[x]) is to be ruled out.

⁹ So Pettinato 1979a: 104; Pomponio, Xella 1997: 187f.; Waetzoldt 2001: 593; Mander 2005: 74; Mander 2008: 77 and also Smith 1994: 167, but see Archi 2019c: 67, who rightly takes «^d*Gú-NE*» as a feminine DN (more on this below).

- [2] 75.1764 = Pettinato 1979a: 130-144 = *MEE* 7 44 obv. VI:2-6: 2 [udu] / AN-AMA-ra / ^dGú-šar_x(NE)¹⁰ / *ma-lik-tum* / nídba <*in* ud AN-AMA-ra-SÚ>
- [3] 75.2075 = Pettinato 1979a: 147-159 = *MEE* 12 5 obv. VI:15-17: 1 udu / izi-gar / ^dGú-šar_x(NE)¹¹
- [4] 75.2397 (unpublished, paraphrased in Archi 2017b: 191), *n* udu / ^dGú-šar_x(NE)¹²
- [5] 75.2428 = *MEE* 12 35 rev. XVII:4-8: (... *n* <GÍN.DILMUN> kù:babbar) / 1 (...) / níg-ba / *ma-lik-tum* / ^dGú-šar_x(NE)¹³
- [6] 75.11045 (unpublished, quoted in Pettinato 1979b: 226): *n* udu / ^dGú-šar_x(NE)¹⁴
- [7] 76.533 = *ARET* VIII 533 = *MEE* 15 13 obv. VII:28-VIII:3: 3 aktum^{uig} / *Da-ti*^dGú-šar_x(NE)¹⁵ / *Ha-lu-ut* / *Da-gi*^dUtu / 3 dam / *Ìr-à-ag-da-mu* / *Du-bí-ga-lu* / šu-ba₄-ti
- [8] 75.236 = *ARET* IX 37 obv. VI:2-8: (barley for) *Ha-lu-du* / *Ti-gi*^dUtu / *Da-ti*^dGú-ša / *Ma-nu-mí**-dug₄¹⁶ / *Iš-da-ma*^dKU-ra / 6 dam / *Ìr-ag-da-mu*¹
- [9] 75.241 = *ARET* IX 38 rev. III:1-7 (foodstuffs for) *Si-na-ma-lik* / *Ha-lu-du* / *Da-ti*^dGú-ša / *Ti-gi*^dUtu / *Ma-nu-gi-mul**¹⁶ / *Uš-du*^dKU-ra / lú dam *Ìr-ag-da-mu*
- [10] 75.452 = *ARET* IX 40 rev. III:6-IV:2 (nominative list including the women called) *Hi-lí-du* / *Da-ti*^dGú-ša / *Ti-gi*^dUtu / *Za-i-mu* / *Uš-tum*^dKU-ra

¹⁰ Read «^dGú-bí» in Pettinato 1979a: 133; Archi 2017a: 295; and *EbDA*; «^dGú-NE» in D'Agostino 1996: 231.

¹¹ Read «^dGú-bí» in Pettinato 1979a: 150; Waetzoldt 2001: 90; and *EbDA*.

¹² Read «GuNE» in Archi 2017: 191.

¹³ Read «^dGú-bí» in Waetzoldt 2001: 331, and *EbDA*.

¹⁴ Read «^dGú-bí» in Pettinato 1979b: 226.

¹⁵ Read «*tá-dì*^d*gú-ne*» in Sollberger 1986: 176, «*tá-ti*^d*gú-bí*» in Pettinato 1996: 267, «*da-ti*^d*gú-NE*» in *EbDA*.

¹⁶ The nice alternance of the spellings *Ma-nu-gi-mul* in [9] and *Ma-nu-mí-dug₄* in [8] for the name of the same woman (mí-dug₄ = **gml*, *ma-nu-* from **mnw* or interrogative pronoun; read *Ma-nu-gi*-AN.AN.AN and *Ma-nu-sal-ì-sá* in the *editio princeps*), will be contextualized and discussed in a further study.

While it is in general certain that a Semitic syllabogram $\check{s}ar_x$ (NE) does occur in the Ebla texts,¹⁷ that AN-GÚ-NE is to be read $^dGú-\check{s}ar_x$ is suggested by its variant $^dGú-\check{s}a$ in the PN of one of the ‘women’ (dam) of the Ebla prince $\check{I}r-/ \check{I}l-(\check{a})-ag-da-mu$ ([7-10]). Her name¹⁸ is actually spelled $Da-ti-^dGú-\check{s}ar_x$ (NE) in a text from L.2752 which originally were stored in the archive L.2769 ([7]) and $Da-ti-^dGú-\check{s}a$ in three texts from the archive L.2712 ([8-10]). This peculiar alternance AN-GÚ-NE // AN-GÚ-ŠA recalls the one found in the PN Puzra-Šamaš, borne by a foreign smith, which occurs not only as $Puzur_1-ra-^dUtu$, but also, with another shortened spelling, as $Puzur_1-^{<d>}\check{S}a$.¹⁹ Moreover, $Da-ti-^dGú-\check{s}ar_x$ // $Da-ti-^dGú-\check{s}a$ clearly display the initial Semitic element Taddin- (< **ndn*), ‘She gave’. This clarifies the sex of the deity mentioned in the PN (and also precludes a reference to $Kūbu(m)$, ~ ‘Deified-Foetus’). Unsurprisingly, a goddess also occurs in the only other Ebla PN in $Da-ti$ -known to me, *i.e.* $Da-ti-^dTu$, significantly including the Mother-goddess dTu .²⁰ In general a gynaecological *Sitz im Leben* seems certain, and a specific connection with pregnancy and childbirth is confirmed by one or more further occurrences of the DN spelled AN-GÚ-NE, still unpublished, which have been paraphrased in 2019.²¹ Complementarily, in 2018 the following interpretation of

¹⁷ See Kreberník 1984; Conti 1990: 27; and Catagnoti 2013: 23 (and also the article by Amalia Catagnoti in this same volume). Furthermore, it seems likely to me that the GN spelled EN-NE-KI must be read $En-\check{s}ar_x^{ki}$, variant spelling of $En-\check{s}ar^{ki}$.

¹⁸ The remarks on this PN (with further literature) in Pagan 1998: 115; Mander 2005: 81; and Mander 2008: 87 are unwarranted.

¹⁹ See D’Agostino 1996: 80.

²⁰ Data on dTu in the Ebla texts have been recently collected in Archi 2021: 24.

²¹ For sake of clarity, I fully quote this relevant information concerning *in primis* the debated term $gú-a-tum$, not discussed here (for the moment see its diverging interpretations in Bonechi 2016a: 60-63, with previous literature listed in the note 61; Archi 2018b: 47 and 262; Archi 2019a: 27; Archi 2019b: 67; Bonechi 2020: 341; Archi 2021: 23 and note 57): «*gú-a-tum*. This object is in general related to goddesses, as Adamma and TU [...]. In the wedding ritual it is given to Barama, the spouse of Kura, [...]: “(a decoration) for a *gú-a-ti-iš*”. [...]. Each of the seven Birth-goddesses receives such an object, 75.2622 obv. XV 29-XVI 10: “117 g of silver: sheet (to) cover the face, hands and feet of 7 statues (an-dùl); 4 g of gold: their hairpin(s); 23 g of tin to be melted with 284 g of copper (for) 7 *gú-a-tum* $^dGú-\check{s}a-ra-tum$ ”». In all the twenty-two monthly lists of offerings to the

the unique occurrence of AN-GÚ-ŠAR = ^dGú-šar ([1] above) has been advanced: «a dyad according to the term in the dual, *ba-na-a* /panwā/, which is referred to the name of the deity [...] “39 g of gold: sheet (for covering) the two faces of Gušar”».²²

To sum up, it seems to me that the spellings under inquiry refers to a marital couple formed by a god and a goddess referred to as ^dGú-šar // ^dGú-šar_x(NE) // ^dGu-ša (note the two sheep in [2]; admittedly, 1 sheep in [3]). The rich topic of dyads in the Ebla religion will be discussed elsewhere, but for the moment I can recall that in the Palace G texts one finds marital pairs of gods which are referred to by means of expressions as, e.g. 2 ^dA-gú(m) // ^dA-gú-^dA-gú and 2 dingir 'À-da-ni^{ki} // ^dRa-sa-ap-2²³ (and perhaps also 2 ^dEN.ZU, and ^dUtu-^dUtu).²⁴ Therefore, it seems to me that, even if spellings as *2 ^dGú-šar // *2 ^dGú-šar_x(NE) or *^dGú-šar-^dGú-šar // *^dGú-šar_x(NE)-^dGú-šar_x have not been signalled, the contexts of the occurrences of ^dGú-šar vs. ^dGú-šar_x(NE) // ^dGu-ša are sufficient to assume that both the divine husband and wife could have been indicated in such way (in other words, a DN expressing in turn Mr. Kušar, the Kušars, Mrs. Kušar). If so, the Ebla god testifies that Ktr, ‘The-Skilled-One’, existed one millennium before the Ugarit

deities, the term *gú-a-tum* / (*al*) *gú-a-ti*, is used only when referring to a goddess. These are: Adamma, Ganana, ^dGú-NE, Išhara, Ninkarra, Timudu, Utu. In a single passage, however, this object is attributed to a male deity, Hadda, 75.1504 obv. III 1-2: 1 *gú-a-tum* lú ^d'À-da, Archi 2019b: 67.

²² Archi 2018a: 1.

²³ Taking AN-RA-SA-AB-2 of 75.1764 = Pettinato 1979: 130-144 = MEE 7 44 obv. IX:26 as a rapid way («the Rašap») to indicate husband Rašap and wife 'Adamma (cf. «^dRa-sa-ab mìn» in Pettinato 1979: 135 and D'Agostino 1996: 234, «per Rasap – la seconda volta –» and «a Rasap II (= della città di Atani)»).

²⁴ As for 2 ^dEN.ZU see Pomponio, Xella 1997: 172. As for ^dUtu-^dUtu in the unpublished administrative text 75.2507 Archi 2019a: 25 informs us that «According to [...] 75.2333 rev. ii 10-16 and 75.10149 rev. vii 1-4 (probably concerning the same event), the minister Ibrum gave to the deity two ‘pectorals’, '*à-ra-ma-tum*, of silver and gold, which compels us to deduce also in this case the duality of the deity. More precise is 75.2507 rev. i 10-14, where the Sumerogram ^dUtu is reduplicated: “two necklaces and five clasps of the (two) Sun-deities of the clothing storeroom”, 2 *ma-ḥa-na-gúm* 2 kù-sal lú ^dUtu-^dUtu é ti-TÚG. In these three passages mentioning two Sun-deities, there is a duality of a female deity, because both the jewels belonged to an outfit for ladies»; however, on ^dUtu-nita and ^dUtu-mí, see Pomponio, Xella 1997: 340-342 and Archi 2019a: 26.

texts, while the Ebla goddess should say something important for understanding the long road leading to Ugaritic *ktr* (*w*) *hss*.

It remains to be noted that a conspicuous group of masculine PNs displaying an onomastic element spelled GÚ-NE is attested. They should not be included in the previous dossier. The men to whom I refer are:

<i>A-bar-gú</i> -NE from <i>Sa-ma-du-gú</i> ^{ki}	75.1680 = <i>MEE</i> 7 23 obv. III:3-8
' <i>À-da-gú</i> -NE from <i>Du-ub</i> ^{ki}	75.1869 = <i>ARET</i> XV 37 obv. XI:6-8
	75.1873 = <i>ARET</i> XV 38 obv. X:3-5
' <i>À-la-gú</i> -NE simug	75.1298 = <i>ARET</i> XIX 3 obv. IV:6-8
<i>Ar</i> '(RI)- <i>za-gú</i> -NE from <i>Du-ub</i> ^{ki}	76.522 = <i>ARET</i> VIII 522 = <i>MEE</i> 15 2 obv. IX:9-12
<i>Ar-za-gú</i> -NE from <i>I-bu_{u6}-bu</i> ^{ki}	75.4058+ = <i>ARET</i> III 937+ obv. I':5'-8'
<i>Bù-zu-gú</i> -NE among the maškims of <i>Il_h-su-ub-da-mu</i>	76.525 = <i>ARET</i> VIII 525 = <i>MEE</i> 15 5 obv. VII:20-VIII:1
	76.531 = <i>ARET</i> VIII 531 = <i>MEE</i> 15 11 rev. XII:22'-25'
	76.533 = <i>ARET</i> VIII 533 = <i>MEE</i> 15 13 rev. VII:6-11
<i>Gi-bar-gú</i> -NE from <i>I-bu_{u6}-bu</i> ^{ki}	75.1323 = <i>MEE</i> 2 20 = <i>ARET</i> I 14 obv. VI:1-7
<i>Gi-bar-gú</i> -NE dumu-nita <i>Kùn-ti-su Ur-sá-um</i> ^{ki}	75.2356 (unpublished) rev. IV:6-12 ²⁵
	75.10136 (unpublished) obv. IX:1'-6' ²⁶
<i>Gú</i> -NE-ti from <i>Ur-sá-um</i> ^{ki}	76.522 = <i>ARET</i> VIII 522 = <i>MEE</i> 15 2 obv. X:3-7
<i>Ma-la-gú</i> -NE among the maškims of men from <i>A-du-ú</i> ^{ki}	76.529 = <i>ARET</i> VIII 529 = <i>MEE</i> 15 9 rev. V:10-20
<i>Mar-gú</i> -NE from <i>Du-ub</i> ^{ki}	75.2239 (unpublished), obv. X:2 ²⁷
<i>Mu-mu-uš-gú</i> -NE from <i>Ur-sá-um</i> ^{ki}	75.538 = <i>ARET</i> VIII 538 = <i>MEE</i> 15 18 rev. XI:3'-5'
	75.541 = <i>ARET</i> VIII 541 = <i>MEE</i> 15 21 rev. V:1'-2'

²⁵ Quoted in Biga 2008: 304.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Quoted in Archi 1984: 246.

<i>U₅-du-gú-NE ma-za-^ʿlum^ʿ Du-ub^{ki}</i>	75.10146 = <i>ARET</i> XV 56 rev. VIII:7-9
<i>Uš-du-gú-NE from Sa-ma-du-gú^{ki}</i>	75.538 = <i>ARET</i> VIII 538 = <i>MEE</i> 15 18 rev. V:1'-3'
<i>Zi-ba-gú-NE / [m]aškim / [K]i-ti-ir</i>	76.529 = <i>ARET</i> VIII 529 = <i>MEE</i> 15 9 obv. V:3'-9'
<i>ʿxʿ-[x]-gú-NE^ʿ guruš</i>	75.5225+ = <i>ARET</i> XII 808+, VI:3'-4'

None of these PNs include onomastic elements typical of the PNs borne by Ebla men and none of the onomastic elements attested together with *gú-NE* is transparently Semitic. Unsurprisingly, several of these men are explicitly qualified as foreigners coming from:

<i>Du-ub^{ki}</i>	<i>ʿĀ-da-gú-NE</i> and <i>U₅-du-gú-NE</i> the watchman of the caravan, who possibly were the same man, and <i>Ar-za-gú-NE</i>
<i>Ibu₁₆-bu^{ki}</i>	<i>Ar-za-gú-NE</i> and <i>Gi-bar-gú-NE</i>
<i>Sa-ma-d</i>	<i>A-bar-gú-NE</i> and <i>Uš-du-gú-NE</i>
<i>Ur-sá-um^{ki}</i>	<i>Gi-bar-gú-NE</i> son of <i>Kūn-ti-su</i> and <i>Mu-mu-uš-gú-NE</i>

Ur-sá-um^{ki} was certainly north of Ebla, in the region today in Turkey between the Amanus and the Euphrates, and there are reasons to think that also *Du-ub^{ki}*, *Ibu₁₆-bu^{ki}* and *Sa-ma-du-gú^{ki}* were located north(west) of Ebla (I do not develop here this topic). Furthermore, one *Ma-la-gú-NE* was among the travelling agents of two foreigners engaged in business with Ebla, *Du-bí-ab* and *En-na-ni-NI* from *A-du-úr^{ki}*, again a kingdom to be located, I suggest, north of Ebla (and possibly *Ma-la-gú-NE* and *Mar-gú-NE* are the same PN). As for the men whose origin is unstated, it seems likely to me that they too were foreigners employed by important Ebla men engaged in business with foreign countries, their homelands being those same northwestern areas roughly forming an arc stretching from Birecik to Ras Shamra. I refer to *ʿĀ-la-gú-NE* the smith, *Bū-zu-gú-NE* the traveling agent of *Ih-su-ub-da-mu*, *Zi-ba-gú-NE* the traveling agent of *Ki-ti-ir*, and *ʿxʿ-[x]-gú-NE* the worker. All in all, readings as ^{<D>}*Gú-šar₅*(NE) = Kuṭar or ^{<D>}*Gu-bí* = Kūbu(m) look unlikely in these foreign masculine PNs. They are not Semitic, and most probably an onomastic element spelled *gú-bí* or *gú-ne* belonged to a

northern anthroponomic system (not discussed here) whose precise definition remains a *desideratum*.

3. The Ebla spellings AN-NE, AN-NE-RA, AN-NE-LA and NE-RA are puzzling. It has been stated that the lexical equivalence VE 783, AN-NE = ^{<d>}*Ī-sa-du*,²⁸ provides an early attestation of a Semitic Fire-goddess 'Išātum.²⁹ Actually, the (later) Akkadian substantive for 'fire', 'iṣātu(*m*), is grammatically feminine, and *Išt* is later documented at Ugarit as 'Fire-goddess'.³⁰ This Ebla DN ^d*Ī-sa-du* further occurs in the administrative text 75.1764 = Pettinato 1979a: 130-144 = MEE 7 44, obv. VIII:3-6. Moreover, in the administrative text TM.75.G.1278 = MEE 2 8 = ARETI 16 the record in obv. III:11-IV:4 includes the PN *Ī-sa-tum*, borne by an Ebla smith (also mentioned in 75.1644 = ARET II 2 obv. I:3, 10), which has been convincingly interpreted as 'Fire'.³¹ A part of the administrative text 75.570 = ARET IX 17 includes instead the deity AN-NE, whose sex is not contextually evident. However, there is independent Ebla evidence for assuming that the spelling AN-NE indicates a male fire-god. I refer to the deity whose name is spelled AN-NE-RA in the Ebla ritual 75.756+75.771+75.815 = Biga 2003: 56-60 = Fronzaroli 2012: 168-170 = ARET X 57. This DN, interpreted by the editors as 'Fire-god', occurs together with that of his 'wife' (dam), called ^d*A-ba-sa*. This latter DN, unattested elsewhere, has been

²⁸ On the DNs of this equivalence (unexploited in Fronzaroli 2012), see Pettinato 1979a: 105; Edzard 1980: 123; Krebern timer 1983: 30; Fronzaroli 1984: 152; Lambert 1984: 396f («izi = *Ī-sa-tu* would be unworthy of comment, but AN-izi is unexpected from a Sumerian background. There is of course the Sumerian fire-god Gibil. However, in an Ebla record of offerings [...], one is recorded to as *ī-sa-tū*, so perhaps one should read ^dizi and assume western influence in the presence of the divine determinative»); Pomponio, Xella 1997: 185 and 201 («Gibil», «Isadu»); Biga 2003: 66; Mander 2005: 28 and 74 (AN-NE not indicating Gibil, but rather ^dIzi, thinking to an «influenza occidentale»); Mander 2008: 20 and 78. Notice incidentally that in Pomponio, Xella 1997: 185 the inclusion of the PN «GIBIL-*ma-lik*» in the entry «Gibil ^dGibil [...] divinité du feu» is unwarranted, given that this PN is to be read Gibil-*ma-lik*, < **hdt* + **mlk*, 'new + king'.

²⁹ So Pettinato 1979c: 269; Pettinato 1981: 248; Mander 2005: 28 note 57, and 74; Mander 2008: 20 note 29, and 78.

³⁰ Watson 1999: 331; *DUL*³, pp. 115f. Note that 'ēš, 'fire', in Biblical Hebrew, is a feminine substantive.

³¹ See Pettinato 1980: 80; Archi 1985: 156; Archi 2011: 26 note 32; and Bonechi 2020: 329 note 30.

interpreted as Ḫapaš, ‘(Counter) witchcraft’, using the technical meaning ‘to practice witchcraft’ of Akk. *epēšu(m)*.³²

AN-NE-RA can be read ^dGira_x^{ra}.³³ In fact, RA taken as syllabic complement^{ra} reinforces the idea that the Sumerian name of the Fire-god was not Gibil (AN-NE-GI = ^dGibil₆) but rather Girra or, more likely, Gira (AN-NE-GI = ^dGira_x^{gi}).³⁴ One can also think that Sumerian Gira, ‘Fire-god’, entered Akkadian as a loanword, considering the rare OBab substantive *gīrum* (later *girru*), ‘fire’, ‘Fire-god’. On this basis I suggest ^dGira_x as reading of AN-NE in VE 783 and 75.570 = ARET IX 17 (incidentally, I wonder if the more or less coeval Tell Beydar month name spelled AN-NE:NE-GAR³⁵ can be read izi-gar ^dGira_x). Furthermore, as for the female personnel indicated by dam NE-RA in various Ebla administrative texts I also suggest a reading dam gira_x^{ra}, ‘women in charge of the (domestic) fire (installations)’,³⁶ in alternative to dam izi-ra, where the verb

³² Fronzaroli 2012: 166.

³³ Cf. Biga 2003:59 and 66 («^dNE-ra», «the god NEra»), and Fronzaroli 2012: 166 and 169 («^dNE-ra», «the god Gir(r)a»).

³⁴ For Gira (rather than Gibil) as Sumerian name of the Fire-god I base myself on the data and discussions in Dossin 1934; van Dijk 1967: 249 note 60 (Gibil); Frankena 1968 (Gibil); Krebernik 1986: 194 («^dgibil₆»); George 1987: 360 («^dgibil₆/gira»); Steinkeller 1990: 57 note 11 («^dGibil₆(NE)^{gi}»); Michalowski 1993: 156f. (Gira); Selz 1995: 137 («^dgibil₆(= NE.GI)»); Watson 1999: 331 («gibil or girra»); Conti 2000 (Gibil); Schwemer 2001: 602f. with note 4868 (Gibil); Krebernik 2002: 20 with note 82 («^dGIBIL₆», «Girra»); Selz 2002: 661 (Gibil); Krebernik 2003: 155f (with note 23: «Der Feuergott ^dGibil₄ (Girra zu lesen?)» and 164; Attinger, Krebernik 2005: 67 («la lecture ^dgibil₄^{gi} de ^dNE.GI est possible, mais pas assurée, ^dgirra_x^{gi} étant aussi envisageable»); Such-Gutiérrez 2005-2006: 17 (Gibil); Keetman 2020: 349 («^dgibil₆»); Krebernik, Lisman 2020: 132-134 («^dNE.GI (Girra?)»); Frayne, Stuckey 2021: 115f (“Gibil, Girra (Sum.), Girru (Borrowed into Akkadian)”). See ^dNE.GI = gi-ri, in OBab Nippur Diri 11:02 (*MSL* XV, p. 36). On Ḫendursaga = Išum, the other Mesopotamian Fire-god, and his wife Nin-muga see Poebel 1930: 143-145; Falkenstein 1966: 76; Roberts 1972: 40f; Edzard 1972-1975; Edzard, Wilcke 1976; Edzard 1976-1980; Sauren 1979; Cavigneaux, Krebernik 2001; Attinger, Krebernik 2005; George 2013; Steinert 2014: 136; George 2015; Frayne, Stuckey 2021: 132, 155, 266. Notice gibil = *gibillū*, ‘fire-wood tinder’.

³⁵ Read ^dNE:NE-gar in Sallaberger 1996: 85 and Cohen 2015: 24.

³⁶ On these women see for now Waetzoldt 1987: 371 («NE-ra [...]. Falls das sumerische Verb für “schlagen” ra hier vorliegt, könnte man an Frauen denken, die mit der Verarbeitung von Wolle und Flachs vor dem Spinnen beschäftigt

ra (ráh), ‘to beat’, would be problematic.³⁷ Additionally, one must recall that the Sumerogram *izi* certainly occurs in the Ebla texts of different typologies (its Semitic equivalent is unattested, but probably it was *’išātum*), as a specific noun meaning ‘fire’³⁸ or in compounds such as *izi-gar*, *izi-si-ga* and *ni-izi* (not discussed here).

Coming back to ^d*A-ba-sa*, the wife of ^d*Gira_x^{ra}* in the ritual 75.756+75.771+75.815 = Biga 2003: 56-60 = Fronzaroli 2012: 168-170 = *ARETX* 57, her personality can be elucidated by that of *Nin-irigala*, wife of the Mesopotamian Fire-god.³⁹ Since *Nin-irigala* is never associated with witchcraft, but rather with therapy, and has underworld connections, for ^d*A-ba-sa* I tentatively suggest an alternative interpretation *Yabša*, from non-Akkadian Semitic **ybš*, ‘to

sind»); Biga 1988: 164 («NE-ra»); Milano 1990: 398 («NE-ra [...]. Una categoria di donne»); Conti 1990: 204, «NE-ra», in reference to the bilingual lexical equivalence *VE* 853, *NE-RA* = *sá-lum*, *sa-ru₂-um*, also quoted in *PSD* A/3, p. 95 and discussed in Sjöberg 2003a: 261f («NE-ra»), but the Semitic term remains unexplained; Biga 2003:65f. («NE-ra [...] *ra* could be a phonetic indicator», «the women *NE-ra* would appear to be women in charge of the fire of the palace of the king and of the temple of Kura»). The records of 4 *GÚ-BAR* še / *šu-ba₄-ti* 2 dam / *gira_x^{ra}* / *uru-bar* / 2 *GÚ-BAR* še / <dam> *gira_x^{ra}* / *uru-bar* in the administrative text 75.455 = *ARET IX* 41, rev. VI:1-7, show that these women also acted in the scattered houses owned by the Palace G king in the immediate surroundings of Ebla.

³⁷ To the hostile activity of setting fire to forests refers «*izi ra*» in *Inanna and Ebil*, discussed in Attinger 1988: 191, ‘mettre le feu’. The status of *NE-RA* in *lú sig₄ AL.LÚ.NE.RA* of *OSP* 2 136:22 (Sargonic administrative text) is unclear to me, but certainly the man in charge of the kiln-fired bricks is meant (Westenholz 1987: 151 read *lú-sig₄-a-lu bí-ra*, ‘Man of the Baked Brick’, with *bí-ra* = *bir-ra* ‘baked, fired (clay)’; on *sig₄ alura*, see Steinkeller 1978: 74 note 6; Attinger 2005: 271; Heimpel 2009: 193-195; Attinger 2021: 982 and note 3080, with further literature).

³⁸ Several Ebla occurrences of *izi* are discussed in Biga 2012.

³⁹ On this goddess see Conti 1993; Goodnick Westenholz 1998: 69; Cavigneaux, al-Rawi 2000: 9 note 31; Kreberník 2000; Kreberník 2002: 20 note 82; Beaulieu: 2003: 120f.; Steible, Yıldız 2008: 165; Steinkeller 2013: 468; Frayne, Stuckey 2021: 115 and 257.

be dry, arid'⁴⁰ (attested in the Palace G texts),⁴¹ with a possible meaning 'barren land', actually an epithet.⁴²

To sum up my suggestions, the written sources I used so far include the Sumerogram *izi*, 'fire', likely corresponding to local Semitic *'išātum*, never attested syllabically, but most probably attested in the PN of an Ebla smith, *Ī-sa-tum*, *'Išātum*; this PN is important because it should indicate that the feminine common noun *'išātum* can have formed masculine proper names,⁴³ so that in the learned lexical equivalence ^dGira_x(IZI) = ^{<d>}Ī-sa-du (whose ultimate origin – Mesopotamia? Northern Levant? – remains unclear), the Semitic deity *'Išātum*, also attested in an administrative text, can be a god and not a goddess; thus, one can unitarily translate that lexical equivalence as 'Fire god' (the feminine sex of the Ugarit DN *Išt* being probably a later local development); furthermore, the Sumerian name of the fire god known to the Ebla scribes was *Gira*, spelled ^dGira_x(IZI) and ^dGira_x(IZI)^{ra}, as illustrated by lexical, administrative and ritual sources; lastly, the marital couple of Ebla fire-gods was possibly formed by *Gira* = *'Išātum*, 'Fire god', and *Yabša*, 'Barren land', denominations of deities of telluric and chthonic nature if one considers that the later

⁴⁰ On **ybš*, most probably already documented by 2nd millennium Mari and Emar texts, see *inter alia* Gelb 1980: 21 ("JBŠ"); Leslau 1987: 626; Pentiuc 2001: 87; Durand 2004: 180f. (cf. Lipiński 2004: 502); Kogan 2015: 111 and 221 note 663.

⁴¹ See VE 1270', *ésir-hád* = *ī-da-um a-bī-iš-tum*, *'iṭṭa'um yabištum*, lit. 'dry bitumen', thus probably 'asphalt' (Krebernik 1983: 42; Bonechi 2020: 326, with further literature). Furthermore, **ybš* should also explain the GN *Ib-su^{ki}*, *Yibšum*.

⁴² This of course reminds the interpretation 'Scorched earth' of the DN Erra (< **hrr*, 'to scorch'), suggested in Roberts 1971: 13. Also notice that the name of his son *Šūbula* (Michalowski 2012) should be interpreted as 'Parched land' (see Attinger, Krebernik 2005: 23, «*Šūbula* (*abālum* Š; = *šūbulu*), "desséché" (ou *wabālum* Š "emporter"? »)).

⁴³ Cf. the remarks in Roberts 1971: 13 note 33, Roberts 1972: 40; Fronzaroli 1984: 152 («la glossa eblaita favorisce l'ipotesi che la forma più antica di questo sostantivo fosse **'išāt*, da cui sarebbero state derivate paretimologicamente **'išē*, con geminazione, **'iššē*»); Krebernik 2003: 164 note 110 («Nach einer plausiblen These von Roberts [...] handelt es sich um die maskuline Grundform zu akkadisch *išātum* (das ein erstarrter femininer Plural sein dürfte). Sie liegt z.B. im Hebräischen vor (masoretisch *'ēš* < **iš*)»); Attinger, Krebernik 2005: 22 with note 4 («L'akkadien *išātum* "feu" est un pluriel féminin réinterprété comme un singulier, de même par ex. *šipiltum* "laine"»); George 2015: 4.

Akkadian fire-god Išum preceded as herald his master Erra (Ḫerra), ‘Scorched earth’.

This discussion of the Ebla spellings NE, AN-NE, AN-NE-RA and NE-RA – where NE is to be read or *izi* or *gira_x*, in both cases with reference to the notion of ‘fire’ – would be incomplete without another attestation of the spelling NE-RA. It occurs in the most recent version of the *Ebla Royal Rituals*, 75.1939+ = *ARET XI* 2 rev. V:13-21 (za_x(LAK384) / ^dAš-dar / NE-RA / dumu-nita / Na-zu-mu / KA-KAK-gíd / ^{giš}BANŠUR / in / da). This passage runs parallel to the one in the older version, 75.1823+ = *ARET XI* 1 rev. VI:4-10 (‘za_x(LAK384) / ^dAš-dar / [àr]-’à^r ar’-[SÙ] / dumu-nita / Na-zú-mu / i-da-ga-a / ^{giš}SILIG / mi-in / 1 šu-SÙ). It seems that in them *i-da-ga-a* and NE-RA occupy the same syntactical position. However, their current interpretations are highly speculative, as admitted by the editors themselves (who read *bí-ra*),⁴⁴ and only a careful examination of the general context will perhaps improve them. For the moment, I refrain to offer insights on this rather enigmatic occurrence of the spelling NE-RA.

Considering now the DN spelled AN-NE-LA, it seems very likely to me that it has nothing to do with the fire god ^dGira_x(IZI)^{ra}.⁴⁵ To my knowledge AN-NE-LA only occurs in the administrative text TM.75.G.2075 = Pettinato 1979a: 147-159 = *MEE* 12 5 (as yet no photographs or handcopies of this text have been made available to the scientific community), where in obv. VIII:12-25 one finds this record of three sheep sacrificed to two deities on behalf of *Da-bur-da-mu*, the last Palace G queen:

⁴⁴ They have been translated «il ‘tesoro’ di Aštar spezza il figlio di Nazumu; lo scettro (sul) tavolo al fianco / dalla sua mano» in Pettinato 1992: 128f. (with different reconstruction of the relevant section), and «(Per) il tesoro di Aštar il figlio di Nazumu offre / pone la sua catena sulla coppa / tavola nella sua mano / al suo fianco» in Fronzaroli 1993: 14 and 64. Cf. the remarks in Pettinato 1992: 209f. (presumably thinking to the verb *rāḥ* with the prefix *bí*, as D’Agostino 1990: 88f.) and in Fronzaroli 1993: 43 and 78 (*i-da-ga-a* as «/yittaqqay/, da **nqy*, “offrire”», followed by Catagnoti 2012: 215).

⁴⁵ Differently, on ^d*Bí-la* cf. Pomponio, Xella 1997: 254; Mander 2005: 75f.; Mander 2008: 79; Biga 2003: 66; Fronzaroli 2012: 167; and Archi 2019c: 39 (in all cases read ^dNE-*la*, NE*la*, and taken as a variant spelling of the name of the Fire-god).

[11] 1 udu / izi-gar / ^dWa-da-’à-nu / TE.KAL / 1 udu / izi-gar / ^dWa-da-’à-nu / sikil / 1 udu / *al*₆¹² / ninda-u₉⁴⁶ / ^dBí-la / *ma-lik-tum* / nídba.

My reading ^d*Bí-la* implies an interpretation Bēra and a lexical reference to the term for ‘well’ plus the typical ending /-a/ of several early Levantine gods (as, e.g. Hadda and ʾIšhara). The toponymy of Ebla includes GNs based on *bi’rum*, *bērum*, ‘well’, as Bēr (*Bir*₃^{ki}, *Bí-ir*^{ki}), Bērum (*Bí-lum*^{ki}, *Bí-lu*^{ki}), Bērāt (*Bí-ra-at*^{ki}, *Bí-la-at*^{ki}), and DU-A-*bí-ir*^{ki} (cf. the GN DU-A^{ki}).⁴⁷ In them /r/ is sometimes spelled with signs of the LA series, but this is not problematic in itself, and one can argue that the spelling AN-NE-LA was chosen given that AN-NE-RA was used for the name of the Fire-god, ^dGira_x(IZI)^{ra}. The fact that the name of the deity is not spelled AN-PÚ(-KI) is interesting, and possibly this indicates that the Ebla equivalent of pú(-ki) was not *bi’rum*, *bērum* (actually, important hydraulic structures as *inter alia* wells, cisterns, basins, pools, springs, fountains, pits, and reservoirs should have been carefully distinguished in the Ebla texts by means of terms only partially clear for us today). I suggest that ^d*Bí-la* refers to a goddess, actually the Ebla functional equivalent of the later (OBab) Mari goddess Bēlet bēri, called ‘Divine-(Lady-Of-The-)Well’.⁴⁸

In this connection one can incidentally quote another rarely attested Ebla DN, i.e. ^dBAD *Bù-la-nu*^{ki}, who again only occurs in TM.75.G.2075 = Pettinato 1979a: 147-159 = *MEE* 12 5, rev. VII:11-16.⁴⁹ His name should be interpreted as Ba’al Bu’rān, ‘Divine-Lord-Of-(The-)Reservoir’, if the GN *Bù-la-nu*^{ki} and its variant *Bù-ra-an*^{ki} illustrate a substantive *bu’rānum* < **bu’r*- related to *bu’rum*, ‘pit for drawing water’, the latter attested in the bilingual equivalence VE 520, šu-a = *bu-rúm* (also = *maš-da-bí-núm/-nu-um*, *maštapin-um*, ‘the place to draw water from’).⁵⁰ Sem. **bu’r*-, ‘cistern, pool,

⁴⁶ Read níg-ezen in Pettinato 1979a: 152 («la festa»), but this Sumerogram never occurs in the Ebla texts. The reading ninda-u₉ is provided in Archi 2019c: 39. I cannot be sure that in the previous case *al*₆ (MAH) is written, however, and I do not understand the association of sheep and bread.

⁴⁷ Some data in Bonechi 1993: 79; Bonechi 2000: 101; and Archi 2018c.

⁴⁸ On the Mari goddess see Durand 2008: 220-222.

⁴⁹ On this god see Pomponio, Xella 1997: 90.

⁵⁰ Conti 1990: 146; Bonechi 2016c: 56f.

pit'⁵¹ also occurs in VE 1343', ab-a = *bù-la-tum*, *bu'ratum*, 'reservoir, cistern'.⁵² Furthermore, see the Ebla GNs⁵³ Bu'rānātum (*Bù-la-na-du*^{ki}), unrelated to the name of the Euphrates, and likely cf. the passage of the literary text 75.2192 = *ARET* V 3 rev. I:1-4, nag / a / *bù-la-na-tim* / dūg, if to be translated as '(the deity Kabkab) will drink the sweet water of the reservoirs',⁵⁴ Bu'ri-battim (*Bù-rí-ba-du*^{ki}),⁵⁵ and probably also *Bù-ur-din*^{ki} (not to be read '*Bù-ur-din*^{ki}').

Also the masculine DN ^d*Wa-da-à-nu* of [11] is rarely attested.⁵⁶ The name of this god has not yet been clarified. However, considering the alternate spelling ^d*Wa-da-à-nu*^{ki},⁵⁷ clearly corresponding to a GN *Wa-ad-à-nu*^{ki},⁵⁸ it could be an epithet Waḥhān (< **wṭh*, admittedly only attested in Ge'ez)⁵⁹ of a main god, meaning 'God-(OfThe-Grain/Stone)Heap'. Interestingly, he was the god of Šatap (later Šatappi), an important city not far from Emar,⁶⁰ as indicated by the occurrences of ^d*Wa-da-à-nu Ša-dab*^{ki} (lú *Ì-mar*^{ki}).⁶¹ At least three administrative texts mention a divine pair formed by him and the goddess whose name is spelled ^d*Ša-la-ša* // ^d*Sa-la-sa* // ^d*Sa-a-ša*. In them, twice it is specified that this pair was

⁵¹ D. Cohen *et al.*, *DRSp*. 41; Leslau 1987: 102; *DUL*³, p. 201.

⁵² See Conti 1990: 146, «pozzo, cisterna, sorgente», with literature; cf. Sjöberg 2003b: 558f.

⁵³ Some of them have been discussed in Bonechi 2000: 97.

⁵⁴ Cf. Fronzaroli 1988a: 20, «*egli berrà la buona acqua dell'Eufrate*».

⁵⁵ For the element *-ba-du* in *Bù-rí-ba-du*^{ki} cf. VE 835, *ki-gul = ba-du-um, battum*, 'desert' (Conti 1990: 199f.), and *Ba-du*^{ki}. For the spelling (with *u*) *-ba-du* used for the genitive *battim* cf., e.g. VE 1199, *ùr = za-ra ba-tim*, but also = [*za-r*] *a ba-tum*, and *za-ra ba-tum* in the administrative text 75.11010+ = Pettinato 1979a: 177-186, *šaraḥ baytim*, 'roof of the house' (Fronzaroli 1988b: 20 note 9; Bonechi 1992; Conti 1998: 13; Bonechi 1999: 32f.; Fronzaroli 2012: 167 and note 15; Sallaberger 2018: 118 and note 29).

⁵⁶ On this god see the unsuitable comments in Pomponio, Xella 1997: 343f.; Archi 1998: 41 («a minor god who did not belong to the official pantheon of Ebla»); Mander 2005: 61; Mander 2008: 61f.

⁵⁷ Attested in 75.1467 = *ARET* IV 15 rev. VIII:9.

⁵⁸ Attested in 75.1653 = *MEE* 7 15 rev. I:1.

⁵⁹ This has been suggested in Bonechi 2011-2012: 56 and note 52.

⁶⁰ See Bonechi 1993: 121 and Bonechi 1998: 228 (for Archi 2019a: 22f. it was «a small centre of the kingdom of Imar»).

⁶¹ On ^d*Wa-da-à-nu* [*Ša**]-*dab*^{ki} in 75.1771 = *MEE* 7 47 see Bonechi 2011-2012: 56 note 51 (cf. Pomponio, Xella 1997: 344), tacitly accepted in Archi 2019a: 22 and confirmed by 75.1363 = *ARET* XIX 16 rev. II:7-9, ^d*Wa-da-à-nu* / *Ša-dab*^{ki} / lú *Ì-mar*^{ki}.

worshipped at *Ga-ra-mu*^{ki}, and once that, very likely, the two deities actually formed a marital couple (^d*Ša-la-ša* dam²-*SÛ*).⁶² Since the latter DN clearly refers to the goddess Šalaš (a form of Ninḫur-saga), wife of Dagan,⁶³ and given that a divine pair formed by a father and a daughter or a son and a mother is structurally unlikely in the Ebla texts, one is forced to admit that ^d*Wa-da-’à-an*, ^d*Wa-da-’à-nu*^(ki) was an epithet of Dagan, worshipped under this form Waṭḥān at *Ga-ra-mu*^{ki} and *Ša-dab*^{ki}. Moreover, it seems to me that *Da-bur-da-mu*’s devotion displayed in [11] was addressed to two intimately related deities, but I cannot say if the association between the god ^d*Wa-da-’à-an*, ^d*Wa-da-’à-nu*^(ki) and the goddess ^d*Bí-la* – possibly the ‘god-(Of-The-Grain/Stones-)Heap’ and the ‘Divine-(Lady-Of-The-)Well’ – was due to contingent reasons or to the fact that they actually were hypostases of Dagan and Šalaš.

⁶² The relevant passages are 75.3607 = *ARET* III 540 obv. I:1’-6’ (2 sal^[múg] / ^d*Wa-da-’à-an* / *wa* / ^d*Sa-a-sa* / *lú* / *Ga-ra-mu*^{ki}), 75.2464, unpublished, quoted in Archi 1995: 1, rev. V:4-10 (TAR <GÍN.DILMUN> kù:babbar / NU₁₁-za / ^d*Wa-da-’à-an* / *wa* / ^d*Sa-a-sa* / *lú* / *Ga-ra-mu*^{ki}), and 75.12505, unpublished, quoted in Archi 1995: 1, rev. VII:8’-14’ (2 GÍN.DILMUN kù-sig₁₇ / kin₅-aka / 4 g^{es}geštug-lá ^d*Wa-da-’à-an* / *wa* / ^d*Ša-la-ša* / dam²-*SÛ*). Archi 2019a: 22 emphasizes that dam²-*SÛ* «is not certain», but, if -*SÛ* is certain, there are not many alternatives for a goddess who is ‘her ...’ of a god (‘mother’ would be ama(-gal), ‘sister’ nin-ni, and ‘daughter’ dumu-mí, but I am unable to quote attestations of Ebla divine pairs with the goddess qualified as ama-gal-*SÛ*, nin-ni-*SÛ*, or dumu-mí-*SÛ*, while it is well known that ^d*Ra-sa-ab* ... (*wa*) ... ^d*A-dam-ma-SÛ* refers to Rašap and his wife ‘Adamma, see Xella 1995).

⁶³ On Šalaš in the Ebla texts see Archi 1995; Pomponio, Xella 1997: 316f.; Archi 1998: 41f. («Šalaš is connected three times with ^d*Wa-da-’à-an*, a minor god who did not belong to the official pantheon of Ebla, while in another text she is connected with Dagan of Tuttul»); Feliu 2003: 288; Mander 2005: 76; Mander 2008: 79; Schwemer 2008: 566; Archi 2018b: 253; Archi 2019a: 22f. («a goddess of the Middle Euphrates, and spouse of Dagan. In a small centre of the kingdom of Imar [*i.e.* *Ša-dab*^{ki}] she was considered instead (and strangely enough) the spouse of Wada’anu»).

4. The meaning of the two surely etymologically related DN^s ^dŠu-gu⁶⁴ and ^dŠu-ga-du⁶⁵ has so far not been clarified.⁶⁶ Very interesting is the paraphrased context of the unpublished text 75.2424+4724 (written under king *Îr-kab-da-mu*) in which this pair of deities occurs: «470 g de cuivre et 63 g d'étain est destinée à deux têtes de divinités, celles du couple Sugu et Sugadu».⁶⁷ The use of -gu in the name of the god clearly indicates /q/. I suggest Šuqûm and Šuqāy-tum, therefore *Iu2ā3-(t)-* formations (substantivized adjectives)⁶⁸ from *šqy, Akk. *šūqû(m)* III, 'to give to drink, irrigate', in reference to two bronze palatial statues of a main Ebla divine couple, contextually called ~ 'The-God(ddess)-Who-Makes-The-Water-Flow-Out' (if so, the celebrated Mari statue of the *Déesse aux eaux jaillissantes* of course comes to mind).

5. Three short punctual remarks follow. A passage of the administrative text 75.1322 + 4578+4585 (= *ARET* XII 355) = *ARET* XIX 8, obv. IX:24-X:2 (1 [sal³]^{uig} // ^dBAD-mí / Na-gàr^{ki}), provides a second early attestation – slightly later than that in the Pre-Sargonic Mari text M.5390+5391 (obv. II:3f., 1 ^{gis}banšur 1 dug / ^dNIN N[a]-gà[r^k]ⁱ)⁶⁹ – of the Upper Mesopotamia goddess Ba'lat Nagar, later known as Bēlet Nagar.⁷⁰ The unpublished administrative text

⁶⁴ On ^dŠu-gu, see Pomponio, Xella 1997: 328; Archi 2019a: 23

⁶⁵ On ^dŠu-ga-du, see Pomponio, Xella 1997: 327; Archi 2019a: 23. The Ebla spelling *šu-ga-tum* attested in the lexical list 75.2395 = *MEE* 4 116 obv. II 4 most probably refers to an unidentified rodent (see Sjöberg 1996: 13) and hardly can explain this theonym; instead, this common noun *šu-ga-tum* can explain the PN *Šu-ga-du*, borne by an important man from Mari (cf. differently Pagan 1998: 367 and Archi 2019a: 23 note 13).

⁶⁶ Cf. the unlikely connections of the two DN^s with Akk. *šūgû* and *šūgītu* in Pomponio, Xella 1997: 327.

⁶⁷ Archi 1990: 102; also Archi 2005: 89 («The statue of a divine couple: Sugu and Sugadu required 533 g of bronze») and Archi 2019a: 23 («(468 g. of bronze) to make the head of Šugu (and) the head of Šugadu»).

⁶⁸ Its occurrence in the Ebla bilingual lexical lists is certain, see Bonechi 2006: 85.

⁶⁹ See Charpin 1987: 79.

⁷⁰ On this Middle Bronze goddess cf. Guichard 1994 and Durand 2008: 310-312 («Toute une partie de la région à l'ouest du Balih semble avoir vénéré une figure du dieu de l'Orage, uniformément appelée Addu, qui formait couple avec la «Dame de Nagar». On a vu [...] la possibilité que ce dieu de l'Orage ait été de

75.1560, rev. VI:14-VII:3, does not document a god “^dBAD *Ha-su-wa-an*^{ki}”.⁷¹ The record in the administrative text 75.1660 = *ARET* VII 88 (4 <GÍN.DILMUN> 3 NI kù:babbar / lú dingir ká / *al*₆ / *Ne-zi-ma-NI*) most probably refers to silver used for the decoration of divine image(s) located near the lower gate of the ‘Upper Apartments’ (é(-é) maḥ) of Palace G.⁷²

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façon précise le «dieu de l’Orage des Oueds»»). See also, in an Ebla perspective, Catagnoti 2015: 136. Steinkeller 2019: 981 with note 16 and 1003-1006 suggests that Bēlet Nagar was a form of the mother goddess Ninḫursaga. See also the discussion, with further references, in Asher-Greve, Goodnick Westenholz 2013: 71 and note 285.

⁷¹ As instead for Pomponio, Xella 1997: 97. This passage has been paraphrased in Archi 2008: 90f. as follows: «TM.75.G.1560 records a delivery of garments to a person from Hassuwan (obv. iv 7-9), and another to the son of the king of this city (rev. III 1-3); two young workers (guruš) from Hassuwan are sent to Ebla (obv. VI 9-11). According to rev. VI 14-VII 3, garments were delivered to two people from Armium (a city probably north-east of Karkemış), in relation to a defeat suffered by Hassuwan at the hands of Armium (?) (2 + 2 garments Armium^{ki} til H.)». Therefore, the alleged ^dBAD turns out to be read til (to me this record does not refer to a ‘defeat’, however, but rather to the arrival at *Ha-su-wa-an*^{ki} of two men from *Ar-mi-um*^{ki}).

⁷² As for dingir ká cf. Pomponio, Xella 1997: 157 («Divinité qui présidait à un des quartiers (“porte”) d’Ebla [...] dont l’identité reste mystérieuse. [...] on pourrait songer à Rasap (gunu)»); Mander 2005: 72 («letteralmente “Divinità (della?) porta urbana / quartiere”»); and Mander 2008: 76 («Il n’est pas possible d’établir l’identité de cette divinité»). On the é(-é) maḥ, see Bonechi 2016b: 20-22.

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*Perfume Making and High Culture in Early Bronze Age Babylonia**

NOEMI BORRELLI

*The barber groomed his body so hairy,
he anointed himself with oil and became a man.*

The Pennsylvania Tablet OB II, col. iii 108-109
(George 2003: 177)

1. Scents of wealth

Every civilization constructs its own identity on a set of values and meanings that form a unique world order, within which they perceived alterity not only towards the outside but also among their own constituents. In highly stratified societies, such as Mesopotamia, order consisted in making sense of the bonds that regulated the relations between rulers and ruled (Baines, Yoffee 1998; 2000).

Order required both an ideology that justified its establishment and the material manifestations that made it real and palpable, and thereby acknowledged by all the members of the so-

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ciety that followed this hierarchical model, whose source of legitimacy lay outside the constraints of time and space, within the realm of the gods. The ruling elites styled themselves as the heirs and protectors of this order and passed this vision on to the rest of the society, whose participation was essential to the maintenance of this power structure.¹ Such values might have not been accepted by everyone, nonetheless they were perceived as markers of a cultural identity to which society tended to adhere.

Inequality arose as a direct consequence of the institutionalization of the surplus, which led to the accumulation of wealth by a small percentage of people. However, wealth – especially in the form of access to elite goods – does not rest on purely economic factors, but rather on precise social and cultural distinctions, capable of creating divisions within the society as much as bridges with outside parties considered as peers.

Objects were esteemed and selected not only for their market value, but mainly by virtue of their limited accessibility, their power to create a narrative of exclusivity from which others were barred: through this selection, people and objects reciprocally acquired meaning and identity (Thomason 2005: 1-8; Feldman 2006: 113-114). These dynamics, whose material counterpart is the artefacts as much as the artisanship that such civilizations produced, permeate human relations, and often persist beyond the discontinuity of the socio-economic structures.

Early Bronze Age Mesopotamian societies certainly differed from their first millennium successors, who were exposed to a more diverse stream of new materials, people, and traditions. Nevertheless, a common high culture – characterized by the quest for and display of a prestigious lifestyle, the consumption of delicacies, and the pursuit of entertainment – persisted in the Mesopotamian civilization throughout its evolution and some of the social practices connected to this high culture can be observed without interruption across three millennia. The use of perfumed oils is one of them.

Acknowledged as an essential step towards civilization, a threshold between the worlds of the living and the dead, scented

¹ For a very recent discussion of the notion of elite in Early Bronze Age Mesopotamia, see Sallaberger 2019.

oils were used at royal and priestly installations, in cleansing rituals, as precious gifts, while travelling, or in athletic contests. The simple and daily gesture of anointing one's body with oils united the diverse components of the Mesopotamian society. Representative of this point is the taming of Enkidu. The wild alter ego of the Mesopotamian hero turns into a proper man by eating bread and drinking beer; only after having tasted the fruits of men's labour could Enkidu, now a man himself, anoint his body with fine oil and dress into fine garments.²

2. Traditions of crafts, traditions of texts

Towards the end of the 2nd millennium BCE, Mesopotamian scribal culture experienced the blossoming of the procedural texts, which were aimed at providing technical instructions. These texts, frequently labelled as "recipes", show very consistent stylistic features that appear regardless of the technical knowledge transmitted by the text.³ From glassmaking to textile dyeing, from horse training to perfume making, crafts finally entered the realm of scribal lore through this textual typology.

It has been often acknowledged that one of the reasons scribal communities suddenly turned their attention to committing technical knowledge to a literary genre might have been the increased mobility of new materials, people, and techniques in the Mediterranean and the Near East in the Late Bronze Age.⁴ The access to new resources – material and human – might have impelled the codification of knowledge, possibly with the aim of establishing a canonical training for the apprenticeship of new craftsmen.

² Parallel to this scene is Enkidu's descent to the netherworld: unmindful of the advice imparted to him by Gilgameš, he enters the realm of the dead anointed in scented oil, and remains trapped there forever (Gilgameš XII, 10-16, see George 2003: 728-729). For an overview of the literary evidence for perfumed oils, see Graziani 2012: 118-121.

³ For a discussion of procedural texts, see Escobar forthcoming a.

⁴ Note that both the manual for training horses (Kammenhuber 1961) and the recipes for producing Elamite carnelian glass (Thavapalan 2021) reveal the foreign origin of these crafts.

Crucial to this topic is the Middle Assyrian collection of recipes (13th century BCE) for the manufacturing of perfumed oils, a profession that at that time was dominated by women, such as Tappūtī-bēlet-ekallē and Tukultī-ša-šāmē, who knew how to produce a scent ‘worthy of royalty’.⁵ The artisans’ participation in codifying their expertise cannot be disregarded, though their precise role in the composition of the written recipes remains vague (Thavapalan 2021: 155-161).

However, if the production of glass-like substances and purple-dyed textiles were brand-new interests in this era, Mesopotamians had been connoisseurs of the art of perfumery for a very long time, well before the appearance of a technical literature; the first stages of this enduring industry can be traced back at least to the Presargonic (2475–2300 BCE) and Ur III (2112–2004 BCE) periods.⁶

3. *The production of perfumed oils in Ur III Babylonia*

Despite the differences from their Middle Assyrian counterparts in terms of stylistic features and intellectual milieu, a group of seven tablets coming from the Ur III Umma archive attests to a flourishing Sumerian tradition of perfume making, which already appears to be firmly established towards the end of the third millennium BCE.⁷ Though administrative in nature, these documents are clearly distinct from other contemporary economic records dealing with batches of scented oils or deliveries of aromatics, which note either the final quantity of the products or random amounts of ingredients in no specific ratio among themselves. Instead, the Umma tablets make use of a recognizable formulary, which starts with the desired quantity of scented oil, followed by the list of ingredients needed to produce that batch, and finally a colophon addressing the whole procedure as

⁵ KAR 220 records the recipe for a cane-based oil ‘fit for the king’ (ša₂ UGU LUGAL) prepared under the care of Tappūtī-bēlet-ekallē. For a recent discussion of Tappūtī-bēlet-ekallē, see Escobar forthcoming b.

⁶ For evidence dated to Uruk IV, see Graziani 2012: 116.

⁷ Santag 6, 47 (Š 42); MVN 4 61 (Š 43), BCT 2 120 (Š 48), Tablet Relating to Perfumed Oil, p. 3 (AS 3), AAICAB 1/3, Bod. S 304 (ŠS 3), AAICAB 1/2, Ashm. 1971-406 (ŠS 3), TCL 5 6042 (date broken).

‘the flavouring of the oil with aromatics’ (šim i₃-a ra₂-a; see Brunke, Sallaberger 2010: 54).

It should be noted that these texts were lists of expenditures written exclusively for internal accounting and not imagined by their authors as recipes. Administrative labels identifying these goods as contributions (mu-ku_x) or receipts (šu ba-ti, i₃-dab₅) are lacking entirely, whereas the formulas found in the colophons categorize these texts as the balanced accounts (niĝ₂ kas₇-ak) of prefects or other high-ranking administrators, who reported the goods their office used to aromatize oils. The account of the expended items shows a clear focus on the fragrances (šim), thus suggesting that these goods were economically relevant to provincial administrators, who exercised a tight control over their allocation. One colophon (AAICAB 1/2, Ashm. 1971-406, r. II 3) confirms that the volume of ingredients, and consequently the volume of scented oils, corresponded to an entire year’s production (mu l-a-kam). Since two recipes are dated to the same year, we may assume that various bureaus across the province commissioned scented oils and, therefore, had to account for the allocation of these valuable goods.⁸

Five of these recipes have recently been studied by Brunke and Sallaberger (2010), who also discussed the ingredients and their costs as well as the possible steps in their production techniques. The Ur III texts, in fact, despite specifying the quantity of each ingredient with remarkable precision, lack explicit procedural instructions. Since they do not provide overt details about the ingredients’ extraction techniques, these can only be inferred from indirect evidence or complementary sources, such as lists of tools, inspections of equipment, or the administrative lexicon.

While no conclusive textual evidence is yet available on distillation in Bronze Age (Joannès 1993: 261), it is acknowledged that perfumed oils were produced by *enfleurage*, a technique ex-

⁸ AAICAB 1/2, Ashm. 1971-406 and AAICAB 1/3, Bod. S 304 are both dated to Šu-Suen 3 but issued from two separate bureaus. Summing up the quantities recorded in the two texts, ca. 195 litres of scented oils were commissioned by these two provincial offices. In comparison, the annual delivery of scented and refined oil from Nur-ilī, one of the perfumers working at the palace of Mari, was ca. 1010 litres (Joannès 1993: 262).

ploiting the power of fatty substances to absorb fragrances (Jursa 2004: 335). The *enfleurage à froid* involved a steeping phase of variable duration during which the ingredients were immersed into softened animal fats or vegetable oils and changed daily until the fat base was saturated with their fragrances. The result of the process was a very rich scent-infused ointment, commonly known as *pommade*.

To achieve a more liquid and concentrated scented product, the balm had to be treated with an alcoholic wash aimed at separating the fat from the odorous molecules to obtain – after evaporation – the precious *absolute de pommade*. However, no clue of this phase can be gleaned from textual records of the time. The disadvantages of the cold *enfleurage* were basically two: the long duration and the low yield.⁹

The steeping phase could also be carried out through heating (*enfleurage à chaud* or *macération*). In this case, the fat was warmed up to obtain a fluid into which ingredients were poured, stirred, and periodically changed until the saturation was complete. The scented oil was then recovered by draining the solution through strainers and then filtering it through cloths. While this method certainly reduced the preparation time, it might not have been suitable for some ingredients, whose fragrance could be damaged by heat.

Both types of procedures find indirect support in the Ur III documents. The Umma recipes always include an oily base to which different blends of scented substances were attached after having soaked in a liquid component. Oil carriers were chosen on the basis of their odourless capacity and could vary from butter¹⁰ and animal fats to vegetable oil – primarily sesame oil. An alcoholic medium was added to release the scents from the ingredients and carry the fragrances. The soaking liquor was made exclusively of beer and its volume always corresponded to the final quantity of the scented oil. Among the ingredients – used in the form of powder, grains, oils, and leaves – resins were added as fixatives to trap more volatile scents and hold the fragrances

⁹ It is usually calculated that, by this method, 1 kilogram of fat could absorb the fragrance of 3 kilograms of herbs.

¹⁰ No conclusive evidence for the large-scale manufacturing of ghee and clarified butter is yet available (Paoletti 2022c; Paoletti forthcoming).

together. Like beeswax in modern-day formulas, ingredients like dates (zu₂-lum) and malt (ba-ba munu₄) may have been used as thickening agents, whose addition resulted in a final denser product, more akin to unguents and balms (Brunke, Sallaberger 2010: 61-62).¹¹

Oils, resins, woods, and other components were mixed in different proportions and combinations resulting in two distinct products: scented oils obtained from ‘big woods’ (i₃ du₁₀-ga ġiš gal-gal) and oils obtained from ‘small aromatics’ (i₃ du₁₀-ga šim tur-tur). The first recipe shows a predominance of wooden components like cedar, cypress, juniper, and myrtle, whereas figs, juniper berries or pine seeds, incense, sweet cane, and terebinth occur alongside various unidentified resins and plants in both recipes.¹² The more variegated array of ingredients used in the recipe dealing with ‘big woods’ might have entailed a higher complexity in terms of both olfactory notes and the artisanal expertise required to process and combine the different fragrances into pleasant products.

Semantic classifiers may help to identify the form in which these substances were used, since they are addressed as either pieces of wood or resins; further, specific units of measurement distinguish ingredients measured by weight from those measured by volume or by number of units.

The sequence of ingredients in the Ur III recipes follows a precise tradition that can be traced back to the perfume series found in Early Dynastic administrative texts.¹³ The use of quasi-fixed patterns of terms originates in lexical lists¹⁴ and bears witness to how scribal learning affected and revealed itself in ordinary practical compositions. The point of scribal training was not just to learn things, but to learn them in a specific way. The motivation behind the precise arrangement of ingredients in the

¹¹ The time required for manufacturing scented oils during the Ur III period cannot be inferred from the available evidence. At Mari, the procedure lasted ten or fifteen days, against the three months attested in the Assyrian recipes. The jump in the duration testifies to the increased complexity of the techniques adopted by the Assyrian perfumers (Joannès 1993: 260).

¹² For a discussion of these ingredients, see Brunke, Sallaberger 2010: 49-51.

¹³ *E.g.* Nik 1 301. On this topic, see *ibid.*: 58 and table 1.

¹⁴ On the perfumes in Early Dynastic lists, see Civil 2008: 102-106.

textual sequences, which does not follow either a graphical or a phonetic order,¹⁵ is difficult to guess, and it may involve epistemological reasons as much as practical considerations. One technical motive could be that the wooden components are listed first because such an order reflects the general procedure that requires base notes to be added first in the steeping process.¹⁶ If this speculation proves correct, it will imply that the scholarly knowledge seen through the transmission of a fixed sequence of lexical entries might have entailed a technical knowledge of which we lack a written procedural source.

As had already been pointed out by Brunke and Sallaberger, administrative documents betray the existence of diverse local traditions in the craft of perfume making, which are discernible in the choice of different ingredients and in the adoption of a distinctive taxonomy for quality. The labels adopted at Umma could be clues to an innovation process that had occurred in the province at a certain point, which could have been due to the introduction of new fragrances as well as new extraction procedures. In fact, in the first decades of Šulgi's reign, the quality of scented oils in the Umma records followed a more intuitive classification, which was usually applied to other commodities as well, including unscented oils and fats. The highest quality of scented oils, known as 'royal' quality (i₃-nun du₁₀-ga lugal),¹⁷ was followed by the ordinary quality (i₃-nun du₁₀-ga), and then by the 'next' quality (i₃-nun du₁₀-ga us₂) (BPOA 7 2267). However, these conventions for quality standards seem to have fallen into

¹⁵ Snell (1986: 30) suggested that the ordering of the commodities within the lists of aromatics depended on the way they were measured (by weight, volume, or unit). However, this principle of organization does not apply to the Umma recipes. Likewise, the possibility should be excluded that the recipes arranged items based on their silver value, from the most expensive to the cheapest ones (for the ingredients' prices, see Brunke, Sallaberger 2010: 63). In fact, the most expensive ingredient, the bulug₈, regularly occurs after the *tamšillu* plant, which was one of the cheapest ingredients.

¹⁶ A similar sorting criterion can be assumed for those administrative documents that list the materials used in the bleaching, finishing, and washing of fabrics (Waetzoldt 1972: 167-174) or in the tanning and dyeing of leather (Sigrist 1981: 167-168). In these texts, cleansing agents and mordants are presumably listed according to the order of use.

¹⁷ Cf. the label 'fit for the king' used in the Middle Assyrian recipes.

disuse shortly after, and they were replaced, already in the first recipe dated to Šulgi 42, by the indications ‘big woods’ or ‘small aromatics’.¹⁸

Outside the Umma province, the classification of perfumed oils was not based on the recipes but on the extraction method, as hinted at by the notation ‘nth-time (that) the wood (has been added)’ (ġiš a-ra₂ N-kam).¹⁹ This designation alludes to the number of times that the flavouring process was performed, which ranged from 1 to 6 times (Cf. UET 3 1017). On a quality scale, the latter represented the finest and highest-priced variety, since the repetition of the flavouring process led to a more concentrated and fragrant product.

Apparently, the flavouring process impacted the overall quality of the scented oil – and consequently its value – more than the combination of different ingredients did. The flavouring process being equal, scented butter is often more valuable than scented sesame oil, an evaluation based both on the different volumes of the two products and on the order of sequence according to which they were listed (*i.e.* MVN 5 155, CUSAS 3 1004). However, if the scented sesame oil underwent more flavouring processes than the batch of scented butter, the former was often valued more highly than the latter (*i.e.* CUSAS 40-2 408, Nisaba 15/2 184). The influence of the flavouring process on the economic value of scented oils is reflected in the sporadic yet significant evidence of the oils’ worth in silver. According to a ledger from Nippur (BBVO 11 257 4N-T197), a handful more than 9.5 litres of scented butter was valued at ca. 40 gr of silver,²⁰ whereas 3006 litres of unscented butter costed just 32.7 gr of silver.

The lowest quality of scented oils, among which was the Magan-oil, were destined for export (Laursen, Steinkeller 2017: 95). Ceramic findings in the burial mounds at Qala’at al-Bahrein

¹⁸ In the same years, the label ‘royal quality’ also appears in Ġirsu/Lagaš, together with the usual label referring to the extraction process (Nisaba 18 158).

¹⁹ On this expression, see Brunke, Sallaberger 2010: 52-53.

²⁰ The silver value per litre of scented butter was 4.2 grams, while unscented butter costed 0.01 gr per litre. Other silver values per litre of scented products are: 1.78 gr (AUCT 2 173, Š 40), 1.25 gr (NATN 617, Š 47), and 1.6 gr (AUCT 1 517, broken date). BBVO 11 257 4N-T197, dated to Amar-Suena 8, records the highest silver value per litre of scented oils attested in the Ur III documents.

feature numerous pottery imports from Mesopotamia dated to the Akkadian and Ur III periods, that were intended for the transport and thus the trade of oils (Laursen, Steinkeller 2017: 113-117). Among these specimens, Type I vessels feature a heart-shaped body tapering to a pointed base, with a height ranging from 10 to 20 cm and a diameter between 9.1 and 15.2 cm. All the vessels are wheel-made, present a generally fine fabric with a low presence of vegetal temper, and some also bear traces of red paint. The narrow neck and the multiple ribs that decorate the rim were possibly intended to fasten the container with a lid made of perishable materials, like leather, tied to the vessels with strings (Laursen 2011: 33-35).



Fig. 1 - Mesopotamian vessels of Type I from the Burial Mounds of Bahrain:
1. A17368; 2. A19075; 3. A19068 (courtesy of Steffen T. Laursen).

The best textual parallel for this archaeological finding may be the ^{dug}saman₄ container (Sallaberger 1996: 107), a sort of unguentarium used for oils – either neutral or scented – and fastened with leather straps (kuš) and cords (^{gi}gilim). The elongated shape of this container is sometimes described as ‘long’ (gid₂, in CT 7 16 BM 17765), while its average capacity ranged from 0.3 to 5 litres. Red-tanned (kuš udu u₂-hab₂) and whitened (kuš udu bar₆-bar₆) ovine leather straps could be used as lids (ka-tab) in those oil flasks destined for the royal sector (BPOA 1 1687), elite recipients (*i.e.* BPOA 6 1207, BPOA 6 1153), and administrators in charge of oil distribution (MCS 6 20 AO 20026), whereas undecorated leather coverings were possibly used for less prestig-

ious recipients (Syracuse 289, UTI 4 2953).²¹ Bigger, pithos-like jars (^{du}gkur.KU.DU₃) used for the storage of oils, fats, and dried beer, could also be covered with a lid made of coloured leather straps (BPOA 6 1153).²² If such a demarcation between purely decorative elements proves to be consistent with the social status of the recipients, it would suggest that these prized goods acquired an additional value when presented in an aesthetically pleasing form: that is to say, the prestige of the content was mirrored by the beauty of the container.²³

Leather straps were fastened to the ceramic vessels with ropes and cords made of vegetable fibres (BPOA 2 2398), and reed workers (ad-KID) could be assigned to perfumers to produce these ropes for securing oil jars (CUSAS 39 154).²⁴ Unguentaria were also padded with leather wrappings (^{du}gsaman₄ kuš si-ga), that featured a tricolour scheme – black, red, and white – that is found in many decorative patterns, regardless of their material (*i.e.* JCS 26 104 6, SNAT 458).²⁵ Some of these wrapped-up oil containers were specifically issued as travel provisions (BPOA 6 422, UTI 4 2605).²⁶ As in the case of decorated lids, these colour-

²¹ Cf. the lexical entry in Hh X 105: ^{du}gsaman₄ bar-gun₃-gun₃ ‘unguentarium with multicoloured (mottled) surface’, which could hint to an external coloration of the vessels as observed in the Qala’at al-Bahrein types.

²² On this ceramic type, see Civil 2011: 278 and Sallaberger 1996: 102.

²³ Attention to the aesthetics of perfume containers has already been observed for the Late Bronze Age “International Period”, where alabastra feature among the luxurious Egyptian imports found in Assur and Ugarit. Interestingly, in this era too, a preference for a light/dark visual pattern, achieved by combining different colours, can be observed in high-status objects (Feldman 2006: 121).

²⁴ A balanced account from Ur (UET 3 1399) records the delivery of huge quantities of manpower, palm fibres (mangaga), palm midribs (peš murgu₂), and other plants (bur₂, ^u2nin₉) to perfumers for securing pithoi and unguentaria, which were then deposited in the storeroom. Cf. UET 9 411 which record the delivery of palm date fibres to the perfumer Lugalgaḅa for securing pithoi. On the possibility that palm fibers were used in a different type of fastening, see Heimpel 2013: 204.

²⁵ In the Puzriš-Dagān archive, similar colour schemes are applied in the manufacturing of boots and sandals donated as precious gifts to royals, elites, and high-status functionaries (Paoletti 2012b: 284-285).

²⁶ Scented oil was said to be bottled up in generic ‘travel vessels’ (dug kaskal), a label that did not qualify a morphological type but rather its func-

ful wrappings were used to accommodate shipments meant for royal women, like the queen Abī-simtī. Unguentaria filled with scented oils could be wrapped in leather bags (^{kuš}du₁₀-gan), as suggested by two separate shipments from the Umma province to the settlement of Madaga that took place 20 years apart (Santag 6 11 and UTI 4 28 62). The considerable temporal gap between the two deliveries confirms that the Umma province was regarded as a centre of the perfume industry throughout the Ur III kingdom. This evidence suggests that, despite the acquisition of raw materials from abroad,²⁷ the manufacturing of scented oils was a local Mesopotamian craft.²⁸

4. *Perfume-makers in the Ur III society*

None of the Umma tablets identifies the authors of the perfumed-oil recipes. Other documents help us glean the identity of the perfumers amid the thick fog of anonymous suppliers and institutional mediators. The refinement associated with this craft and the exclusivity of the profession is mirrored in the meagre number of artisans dealing with the production of scented oils. For bigger provinces such as Umma or Ġirsu/Lagaš, no more than a few perfume makers are known to have worked concurrently in the same area, whereas for royal settlements like Irisaġrig or the capital Ur, one perfumer served the entire community.

In the area of Ġirsu/Lagaš, Lumagula is certainly the most frequently named perfume maker. Acknowledged on his seal as the perfumer of the goddess Bau (*i.e.* Nisaba 13 37), he oversaw the consignments of oils used at the cultic events (*i₃* za₃-ga) held for the main deities of the province. The temple of Bau's pre-eminence in the production of perfumed oils and in their trade along domestic and foreign routes originates in the Presargonic

tional use (PPAC 5 1659, AUCT 1 320). In PPAC 5 1659, unscented butter is carried in 'vessels hanging from the shoulder' (*dug* za₃-še₃-la₂), which were also used to carry drinks (Sallaberger 1996: 109).

²⁷ For the prices of aromatics and how they reflect possible trade routes, see Brunke, Sallaberger 2010: 72.

²⁸ For the trading of perfumed oils, see Laursen, Steinkeller 2017: 95 on the Ur III kingdom, and Prentice 2010: 116, 122-124 on the Presargonic period.

period, when its socio-economic antecedent, the so-called ‘women’s household’ (e₂-mi₂) managed by the ruler’s wife, engaged in a similar enterprise (Prentice 2010: 111-116). Scented oils feature among the assets of the e₂-mi₂ and were sent as prestige gifts to other elite women – whose compliance may have been a key factor in the success of the ruler’s agenda – or were used as capital for trading metals abroad.²⁹ In the Ur III period, the household of the high priestess of Bau shows very comparable trends. Primary ingredients like aromatics and fats appear in the ledgers of the household merchant, whereas steady volumes of scented unguents – made from prime-quality butter – were expended by the household for the provincial and royal elites, and for the funerals of the high priestess herself.³⁰

As observed for other periods of the Mesopotamian history, in the Ur III documents, we also find confirmation of the hereditary nature in the craft of scented-oil production. In fact, another perfumer and his three sons operated in the province in the same years in which Lumagula’s activity is attested. The senior perfumer, Abba, features as the recipient of a remarkable cargo of resins and woods delivered by the merchant Ursaga and brought into the palace (MVN 3 160): the shipment amounted to a total of ca. 150 kg and 447 litres of goods, including cedar, juniper, cypress, sweet cane, *tamšillu* plant, *nikiptu* plant, terebinth, *hirin* plant, and juniper berries.³¹

Neither Abba nor his sons appear to have been affiliated with any temple institutions,³² and besides the estate of Bau, only two

²⁹ Evidence for an exchange circuit involving metals and perfumes in the Ur III period is insinuated by UET 3 1511 (IS 2.I), which records 1800 litres of scented oils produced by the perfumer Lugalagaba in exchange of bronze (niĝ₂-sam₂-ma urudaše₃).

³⁰ Nisaba 33 1024 (Š 47.I), SAT 1 85 (Š 47.III), SAT 1 87 (S 47.IX), PPAC 5 160 (Š 47.IX), PPAC 5 161 (Š 48.VIII), MVN 12 343 (AS 1.IX). On the economic activities of the household of the high priestess, see Borrelli 2021.

³¹ Based on the Umma recipes, cedar was always used in a proportion of 1:5 with the alcoholic medium, and consequently with the final volume of scented oil. The only exception occurs when a production loss is experienced, yielding a ratio of 1:6. Hence, the 120 kg of cedar (= 1 gu₁₂ 18 mana) recorded in Ursaga’s delivery would have sufficed to produce 2400 litres of scented oil.

³² For his sons, see Ur-Bau (PPAC 5 328), Ur-Nanše (Nisaba 33 800), and possibly Arad-Bau (RA 62 14 22).

other temple institutions employed a perfumer among their staff: the household of Ningîrsu (HLC 2 2) and that of Nin-MAR.KI (Priests and Officials 101 App. 4 a-b). Urdîgîra and his son Lukala represent another family cluster involved in the perfume craft. The son received a batch of sesame oil, to be used as a royal gift, under the authority of the state chancellor himself (DAS 230).³³ Regarding the role of the sons as intermediaries in transactions involving both raw ingredients and finished products, it is fair to guess that they helped their seniors in the craft both on a practical and a logistic level.

The scant data prevents us from ascertaining whether there was a stable and ongoing working relationship between these artisans and their patrons, or if they moved as necessity required, even across provinces. It is evident, however, that in the province of Ġîrsu/Lagaš, patronage was granted to perfumers by either temples or the palace, which vehiculated the demands of both provincial and royal elites.

In the neighbouring province of Umma, royal patronage was more diffused by far. Two of the best-attested perfumers, Buza'a (JSOR 12 39 20) and Urdîgîra (MVN 14 96),³⁴ owned a royal seal. Raw materials were often dispatched to perfumers via the Fiscal Office (*i.e.* SAT 2 193) or by the governor (MVN 3 372); these consignments included bundles of reed and batches of willow wood (*i.e.* MVN 15 249), hinting at firing processes and perhaps at the construction of wooden tools.³⁵ Four documents witness the involvement of Itarraq-ilî, the royal courier in the service of Šulgi's wife Šât-Suen, as mediator of the goods meant for perfumers (*i.e.* Aleppo 11).

The purchase of aromatics was authorized by the Fiscal Office at the governor's order, and the acquisitions were supervised by

³³ A seal bearing a royal dedication was bestowed upon an anonymous individual who was the son of a perfumer (MVN 6 234), thus attesting relationships between the royal branch and the perfumers.

³⁴ Two perfumers named Abba and Urdîgîra recur both in Umma and Ġîrsu/Lagaš sources, thus triggering the question of the possible mobility of these artisans across provincial boundaries.

³⁵ Cf. MVN 13 164 (ŠS 4.VI) and Umma 75 (VI) recording 300 bundles of reeds used to mill oil (i₃ sur-de₃).

the same perfumers, presumably because their expertise was key to selecting the appropriate fragrances (BPOA 1 1005).

Differently from the greater provinces, the state capital of Ur relied on just one atelier, managed by the perfumer Lugalgaba. His personal seal identifies him as the son of Nanna-kuzu and perfume maker of Nanna (UET 3 1008). Lugalgaba's laboratory – notably identified as the house of the perfumers (e₂ i₃-ra₂-ra₂ in UET 3 1115) – employed a small team of junior perfumers, and was regularly stocked with raw and processed fragrances, such as juniper berries and strings of figs, to produce scented oil (i₃ du₁₀-ge-de₃, cf. UET 3 1117 and SAT 3 2027). In turn, Lugalgaba's atelier regularly supplied scented oils to Namzitara (cf. UET 9 807) and interacted with his son Gatie (SAT 3 2026), both officials in charge of provisions for the cult of Nanna at Ur (Huber Vuillet 2019: 186).³⁶

As in the case of Ur, the royal settlement of Irišaġrig also relied on just one perfumer: Nūh-ilum.³⁷ He appears as the recipient of *zibi*-stones for pounding and milling,³⁸ scented oils (CUSAS 40-2 408), and basic ingredients, like butter, dates, dried apples, and strings of figs delivered from the 'scribes of the spices' (CUSAS 40-2 1501 and CUSAS 40-2 1290). As for other perfumers, additional workers were assigned to Nūh-ilum from local workshops, but the circumstances of such transfers remain unclear (CUSAS 40-2 366).

Similarly, the royal princess Šāt-Eštar employed one single perfumer, Urniġar, who worked together with his son at her rural estate, likely located in the Umma region (al-Tae, Feliu 2021: 22-23). The perfumer and his son were on the household's payroll, receiving barley rations between 20 and 60 litres (BMO 18 7 and 11).

³⁶ Cf. the delivery of hundreds of empty pithoi from Gatie to the storeroom in UET 3 887 and UET 3890 vis-à-vis the reception of jars filled with sesame oil in MVN 3 311. According to Widell's reconstruction, the storeroom's storage capacity for sesame oil was equal to ca. 135,000 litres (Widell 2018: 28).

³⁷ The only other two perfume makers cited in the Irišaġrig sources are Išar-paḏān and his sons, and Iliš-tikal, mentioned exclusively in Nisaba 15/2 1074.

³⁸ As shown by Sallaberger (2021), *zibi*-millstones were provided to oil millers as well, thus suggesting an absence of functional specialization for some of the tools used by perfumers and related artisans.

The institutional network provided perfumers with workers, equipment, and raw materials, including the oils and fats to be scented. Many ingredients arrived at the perfume workshop already semi-processed; both the milling of sesame oil and the production of butter and lard fell outside the perfume makers' domain and were performed at other facilities by groups of unskilled labourers or teams of specialists. Unlike the perfume industry, which was male-dominated, the milling of sesame oil was entrusted to women (geme₂ ġiš-i₃-sur-sur-ra) and regulated by a completely different administrative branch, which often operated in accordance with the millhouse and the brewing facility.³⁹ Spices, flavoured cheese, and aromatized fats, on the other hand, were the prerogative of the spice millers (lu₂ ur₃-ra), who were also in charge of the manufacturing of the fish sauce, another prominent delicacy. Despite the fact that oil production, spice processing, and perfume making shared equipment and ingredients, they were all kept separate on an administrative level and possibly also on a physical one, being assigned to distinct – although not necessarily distant – working spaces. However, the traceable flow of goods from oil and spice millers to perfume makers shed some lights on the establishment of a clear *chaîne opératoire*, which could only exist within the range of an institutional economy. The final products of the oil and spice sectors, which appear in the administrative records as their output, became the primary ingredients used by the perfumers, in whose accounts these goods feature as inputs. Once manufactured, perfumed oils were delivered to centralised storage facilities, like the storeroom at Ur, and to provincial leading officials – such as the prefect Lugalezem or Lukala the manager of the Fiscal Office at Umma – who later supervised the allocation of the coveted fragrances to specific recipients. As it will be further argued below, in a circular path, the institutional economy was the patron of this craft as much as its main client.

Evidence for the sustenance of perfumers is elusive at best. Two documents from Umma testify to the allocation of grain al-

³⁹ On the production and processing of sesame oil during the Ur III period, see Paoletti 2022a-b and Sallaberger 2021; for the Old Babylonian period, see Chambon, Ramez 2021.

lotments at the beginning of the year (Ontario 2 306) and to the assignment of small prebend plots (BIN 5 277).

The compartmentalized production circuit attested in the Ur III records matches the one observed in the Mari archive (Joannès 1993: 262-263), but differs, for instance, from other perfume ateliers, such as the Pyrgos-Mavroraki factory (Belgiorno 2012) or the workshops at Delos and Paestum (Brun 2000). Here, the vegetable oil used as a base for the perfumes was milled on the spot, as suggested by the recovery of oil presses and massive storage pithoi in the rooms adjacent to the actual laboratory. The presence of tools and equipment for the initial milling phase to be performed on site may be linked to a diverse managerial organization – which did not separate production and storage facilities – as much as to a different scale of production, oriented towards the market exchange. The assemblage found in the perfumer's room at Pyrgos, however, matches the artisan equipment in the Ur III records. Mortars and grinding stones were retrieved near maceration pits, together with a wide yet specific array of ceramic types that included funnels, cups, ladles, alabastra, pyxes, pitchers, and jugs.

Documents from the Ur III archives (*i.e.* Santag 6 21) provide some insights into the equipment used by perfumers,⁴⁰ which included reed mats for crushing spices (^{gi}mur_x / ^{gi}kid šim gul),⁴¹ sieves (^{gi}ma-an-sim), containers for mixing oils and grains (^{gi}gur i₃ še re-a),⁴² bitumen-coated winnowing trays made of reeds

⁴⁰ Very similar equipment (Santag 6 41) was provided to other artisans and workers, such as oil pressers (^{gi}š-i₃-sur-ra) and spice millers (lu₂ ur₃-ra), pointing to the processing of comparable raw materials and, possibly, a shared technology. For the oil-milling equipment used in the Ur III period, see the Sumerian glossary “G.2 technology” at <https://www.i3-mesop-oil.gwi.uni-muenchen.de/sumerian-glossary/> and Sallaberger 2021.

⁴¹ These reed mats weighed between 10 and 14 shekels (= 83.3 to 116.62 gr.). According to JCS 2 187 YBC 1336, a reed mat from a round boat, which was 5 mt long and 3.5 mt wide, was purposely reconverted to crush spices. On sieves, reed mats, and winnowing trays, see Sallaberger 2013.

⁴² The mixing jars had a fixed capacity of 300 litres (=1 gur). Nonetheless, a few documents suggest that they were not always filled up to their maximum capacity (*i.e.* JCS 2 187 YBC 1336).

(^gbu_x-bu_x esir₂ su-ba), and pots suitable for heating (^{du}g₂utul₂).⁴³ Male workers occasionally seem to have been allocated to perfume makers and spice millers for crushing spices and chopping ingredients (cf. OrSP 47-49 185), as were carpenters and reed makers. Such workers were one-time additions to the meagre regular personnel of the perfume ateliers, called upon necessity for specific tasks that required manpower more than expertise, and related either to the functioning of the laboratory (producing equipment) or to the craft itself (crushing spices).

As mentioned above, there were local variations in the choice of ingredients, resulting in the establishment of different traditions of perfume recipes. In the province of Ġirsu/Lagaš, semolina, groats, dried apples, and dried *lipāru* fruits,⁴⁴ were added, along with dates and strings of figs (SAT 1 49). All these ingredients, classified as ‘goods (for) fat/oil mixed with barley’ (niġ₂ i₃ še re-a) were provided to Lumagula, the perfume maker, together with 10 cooking pots, thus suggesting that the mixing of fat and solid ingredients could ensue from a heating process (Brunke, Sallaberger 2010: 61).

Production losses due to extraction procedures were rare, but attested nonetheless. The first such loss, which amounted to between 10% (Santag 6 232) and 12% (AAICAB 1/3, Bod. S 304), was caused by a quantity of oil being absorbed into the wood (ġiš-e gu₇-bi).⁴⁵ The second type of production loss is identified by a generic expression, roughly translated as ‘what the fire has consumed’ (izi gu₇-bi),⁴⁶ used in the administrative records to address a drop-off in the amount of processed material. Apart from scented oils, this expression recurs in describing the production of metal objects, bricks, and textiles. If the use of a heating source is envisaged for the processing of metals and clay, it is

⁴³ The cooking pot (^{du}g₂utul₂, *diqārum*) came to identify a type of scented oil at Mari (*šaman diqārātīm*, Joannès 1993: 260), and it still features as a key apparatus in the Middle Assyrian recipes (Escobar forthcoming b).

⁴⁴ For a recent discussion on the *lipāru* tree and its identification with either the carob tree or the mulberry tree, see Focke 2015: 208-209. The Crown owned large plantations of *lipāru* trees in the Umma province (Heimpel 2011: 122-123).

⁴⁵ Lit. ‘that the wood has consumed’ (cf. Brunke, Sallaberger 2010: 55).

⁴⁶ Attinger 2021: 434 s.v. gu₇, «izi (erg.) gu₇ “être la proie des flammes”».

less clear how it could be involved in the processing of wool into different textiles and fabrics. Thus, although it is tempting to interpret this idiomatic expression as hinting at the hot enfleurage or even dry distillation, it may well be that, over time, it had acquired the simple meaning of ‘production loss’ regardless of the processing method and the possible use of a heat source. The loss identified by this label in relation to scented oils shows a wider fluctuation, ranging from 5% (Amherst 50) to 27% (Nisaba 15/2 1034) of the initial batch. In summary, it is worth noting that, when manufacturing scented oils, the production loss was described with two different but complementary expressions.

5. Scents for gods, royals, and men

From the preserved colophons of the Umma recipes, the institutional network for which the perfumes were destined is immediately identifiable. Two tablets charged the expended materials to the account of Ur-E’e, the chief administrator of the Apišal district, whereas the remaining accounts belonged to two prefects (šabra). Indeed, in the Umma district, almost every allocation of scented oils was mediated by these three officials – namely Ur-E’e, Ur-Šulpae, and Šarakam –, by the Fiscal Office, through either Lukala or the archivist Ur-Nungal, and by Lugalezem (Brunke, Sallaberger 2010: 41-45). The recipients of the perfumed oils can be categorized into three homogenous groups: the gods, the royal and provincial elites, and ordinary men.

5.1 Scented oils for gods

Gods were undoubtedly the primary beneficiaries of such treasured commodities. In the city of Irisağrig alone, the annual disbursement of scented oils and fats – allocated to the cult of the patron goddess Ninhursağ of Keš and other minor gods in the year Šu-Suen 6 (CUSAS 40-2 954) – amounted to 336 litres, while the volume of unscented sesame oil expended for such purposes was far greater: 3972 litres.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ In this context, the proportion of perfumed oils to unscented ones was ca. 1:8.5.

In the province of Ġirsu/Lagaš, disbursements of scented oils and fats are attested for the cult of NinMAR.KI (SAT 3 1645, Nisaba 13 21), for Ningirsu,⁴⁸ and during the month of the festival of Bau. The aromatized oil known as i₃ za₃-ga was mainly used on cultic occasions, since it was specifically commissioned for the major deities of the districts.⁴⁹ Contained in unguentaria (dug⁴saman₄) and poured into bowls (na⁴bur),⁵⁰ the i₃ za₃-ga oil was possibly an upgrade of the already precious scented oils (CUSAS 40-2 1473).⁵¹ Juniper berries (or pine seeds), and *kanaktu* and *ligidba* resins contributed to it its peculiar scent (TCTI 2 3918), but these ingredients were combined in different proportions than in the Umma recipes. For the i₃ za₃-ga oil, the volume of juniper berries is thrice as much as that of the *kanaktu* resin, while in the Umma recipes, they are almost always in a 1:1 ratio. The *ligidba* component is less prominent in the i₃ za₃-ga oil, for which 0.4 kg of *ligidba* are used per 6 litres of juniper berries, as opposed to the 0.5 kg that were used per 1.6 litres of juniper berries in the Umma recipe TCL 5 6042. All in all, the scented oils produced according to the Umma tradition appear to be a more balanced product than the i₃ za₃-ga oil aromatized based on the Ġirsu/Lagaš tastes. Aromatics and fatty bases used to manufacture sweet oils were allocated to perfumers (BM 18323A) together with pots (PPAC 5 1395, PPAC 5 648).⁵²

⁴⁸ In relation to the cult of Ningirsu, scented and unscented oils were allocated in conjunction with equids offered to the temple estate as a royal donation in Šu-Suen 8 (cf. ITT 3 6096, PPAC 5 1427, ITT 3 4958).

⁴⁹ The usual translation of i₃ za₃-ga as ‘sweet oil’ is based on the equivalence za₃-ga = *dašpu* found in lexical lists dated to the Late Bronze Age and to the 1st millennium (CAD D: 120 s.v. *dašpu*). However, no such meaning can be proven for the Ur III period and a possible connection with (the anointing of) a specific body part – namely ‘shoulders’ – cannot be ruled out.

⁵⁰ The fragility of these containers is confirmed by the necessity of padding them with soft, occasionally red-dyed, leather wrappings (UTI 4 2849, Syracuse 489). According to these documents, the assets belonging to the temple of Šara included just one bowl for the i₃ za₃-ga oil (RA 86 97 and Syracuse 489).

⁵¹ Cf. the lexical list Msk 74234d (Emar 6/2, p. 548), in which ‘sweet vegetable oil’ (i₃-ġiš za₃-ga) is clearly differentiated from ‘scented vegetable oil’ (i₃-ġiš du₁₀-ga) at obv. 4’-5’. Similarly, at obv. 8’-9’, ‘sweet butter’ (i₃-nun za₃-ga) is distinguished from ‘scented butter’ (i₃-nun du₁₀-ga).

⁵² As documented for other scented oils, aromatics could also be acquired through commercial exchange (ITT 3 5219).

The province of Ġirsu/Lagaš apparently enjoyed another specialty: fine perfume (*i₃-ir-nun*). Since references to its ingredients lack entirely, there is no way to ascertain whether this represented a different product than regular scented oils and fats, or was just a regional lexical variation; however, since it occurs in a separate entry than scented butter (*i₃-nun du₁₀-ga*) in Berens 71, it should be considered a different type of scented oil. Presented at festivals alongside other food offerings or aromatics (PPAC 5 67), it was used for the mouth-opening ceremony (*ka du₈-ha*) in a fixed quantity of 0.3 litres.

In the province of Umma, the patron deities Šara and Ninura were allocated the lion's share of perfumed substances. Individual deliveries of scented oils ranged from 2 to 50 litres, and they were authorized by the district official Ur-E'e in the case of Ninura and by the governor himself for Šara, thus hinting at the strict chain of control established to oversee the disbursements of these commodities in each district. Similarly, the healing goddess Gula received her oils on the governor's authorization.⁵³ Scented oils for rites were issued either to the temple prefect (UTI 3 1648, MVN 16 1070) or directly to the cultic personnel, such as the purification priest (*išib*, in Princeton 1 277) or the chief lamenter (*gala-mah*, in MVN 18 303, Santag 6 44, MVN 3 349).⁵⁴ Singers (*nar*) were occasionally allocated scented oils as well (TCL 5 6040).

Other religious occasions featuring the use of scented oils were the festival of the great moon (*u₄-sakar gu-la*), the ritual for the kindling of fire in the temple (*e₂-ta izi-la₂*), the month of the 'first-fruits festival' (*ezem nesaĝ*), offerings for the deified kings and the protective deity known as 'royal Lamma' (*^dlamma-lugal*), and various *sizkur* offerings. Among these communal cultic events, the rites connected with the harvest have their own place. In the ritual re-enactment of the harvest held during the Akiti, the clothes of the king might have been perfumed with scented

⁵³ To the best of my knowledge, there is only one document that may hint at a possible medical use of scented oils: BPOA 6 1296 records one flask containing ½ litre of scented oil for a sick man.

⁵⁴ Scented oils could be commissioned at the direct request of the cultic personnel (UET 3 1133).

oils (UET 3 1766).⁵⁵ Likewise, the king's clothes were treated with perfumed substances on other occasions, such as the Great Festival (ezem-mah), where scented oils were also poured into bowls (bur-ra ba-an-de₂).⁵⁶

Despite the abundance of evidence for scented oils being allocated for cultic activities, there is no way to determine how they were used. The anointing of cultic objects, divine statues, and priests was evidently a major goal, but even in this coherent context, there were differences as to which oil was used on temple furnishings. It is noteworthy that the anointing of temple doors, which was a ritual on its own, simply required unscented sesame oil (*i.e.* JCS 29 122 4) or sheep fat (CUSAS 3 1319). In addition to anointing people and objects or perfuming clothes, other uses might have included the aromatizing of food intended for the gods' meals,⁵⁷ scenting the environment along the lines of incense, or lighting torches.

5.2 Scented oils for royal and provincial elites

At the beginning of Amar-Suena's reign, royal authorities led an extensive audit in the province of Ġirsu/Lagaš. As part of this initiative, the assets of the governor's sons – who also held key positions in the temple management – underwent a thorough assessment, which has left us with an interesting snapshot of their possessions. Alongside metalware, finished clothes, sophisticated furniture, and everyday utensils, the reports also listed perishable goods such as fruit, dairy products, and oils, including scented ones. Altogether, the governor's sons had of ca. 96 litres of per-

⁵⁵ UET 3 1766 obv. 4 – rev. 4: $\frac{2}{3}$ sila₃ 5 gin₂ i₃-ġiš du₁₀-ga ʾbaʾab-ak ʾtug₂? ʾba nam-engar lugal še gur₁₀-gur₁₀-da-bi ša₃ a₂-ki-ti. The same occasion could also be implied in UET 9 811. On this ritual, see Sallaberger 1993: 184.

⁵⁶ UET 3 1688, UET 9 809. These texts refer to the finishing of clothes with scented oils. A document from Irisaġrig (CUSAS 40-2 1723) confirms this process, which is addressed as i₃-ġiš du₁₀-ga ġiš a-ra₂ 2 tug₂-e ba-ab-ak. The expression i₃ tug₂-(g)e ak is regularly used for the finishing of textile with unscented fats and oils (Waetzoldt 1972: 170). Other texts attesting the delivery of scented oils to fullers and weavers are ITT 5 6858, ITT 3 6606, Nisaba 5-2 38 U. 31038, and Nisaba 5-1 211 U. 30166.

⁵⁷ For the use of scented oil in the preparation of food, see Graziani 2012: 128.

fumed substances (ASJ 18 159 3).⁵⁸ To put this volume into perspective, the *lukur* priestess in the royal settlement of Irisağrig received 48 litres of scented oils for a whole year (Nisaba 15/2 133), whereas the female cloister (*ga₂-gi₁-a*) in Umma received an allotment of 20 litres (YOS 18 77).

Members of the elites were also entitled to scented oils whenever they sponsored moments of conviviality. An impression of the royal court's splendour can be gleaned from the account of the Puzriš-Dagān administration's expenditures for a banquet attended by the royal couple and other members of the court.⁵⁹ This occasion, possibly coinciding with the marriage of the king's daughter to Šarrum-bāni (Weiershäuser 2008: 171-173), required that all guests received gifts. Gold and silver jewellery, precious vessels, refined textiles, and even furniture were issued to the king, the queen, and the royal concubines. On top of that, gifts were bestowed upon other low-ranking members of the entourage. Among these prestigious items, scented oils also made their appearance. According to a well-known principle of hierarchy, the king received two unguentaria of oils, whereas all the royal ladies were allotted one unguentarium each.

The habit of providing scented oils during feasts spread across societal boundaries and was not limited to the royal court.⁶⁰ Banquets and private receptions must have been social occasions where the display of wealth played a key role in the declaration of power, the establishment of new alliances, and the reaffirmation of a group ethic (Sallaberger 2019: 908). Those gifts that were bestowed on the administrative and social elites in return for their allegiance to the king also bound them to share

⁵⁸ Lugalzuluhu owned the largest share, equal to 47.5 litres (HSS 4 5), as opposed to the 22 litres owned by his brother Ur-Bau. A similar quantity (24 litres) of scented oil is listed in the audit of the assets belonging to Allamu, another notable resident of the Ġirsu/Lagaš province, who may be identified as either a prefect (*i.e.* MVN 12 341) or a judge (*i.e.* DAS 203). This batch of scented oils is credited to Agadani, who may have been an affiliate of the princess ME-Ištaran (cf. CUSAS 3 1474).

⁵⁹ BPOA 10, p. 479, Phillips 13. For more details on this important document, see Paoletti 2012a: 321-322.

⁶⁰ For instance, scented oils are listed among the expenditures borne for a banquet hosted by an unnamed general in Umma (AUCT 1 517).

a certain vision of power.⁶¹ As such, gifts acted as markers of a social identity (Zaccagnini 1993: 178). Thus, it is not surprising that the acknowledgment of the social relevance of leading exponents of foreign countries was expressed through the same cultural channels used within Mesopotamian peer groups, that is, by gifting them high-status items like scented oils. Hulibar, the governor of the Elamite principality DuhduhNI, received scented oils (JCS 57 29 11, TCTI 2 2660) as did his wife, who herself was a royal daughter (MVN 13 735).

At these events, individuals coming from other social groups, the so-called sub-elites, had the chance to see, taste, and smell what it meant to be exclusive. It is reasonable to think that each of them, according to their own means, tried to replicate this allure as best as they could. In turn, within the hierarchical model of the Mesopotamian society, these people represented an elite for other segments of the population, with whom they came into contact through bonds of work or economic dependence, thus mediating – in a diluted version – the high culture they witnessed to increasingly wider but less privileged social circles.

Public events were another occasion for the broader population to observe the uniquely prestigious lifestyle of the elite. Scented oils often appeared among the *mašdaria* contributions,⁶² a well-established institution that identified the taxes levied upon the country's production – in the form of animals, grains, and raw and finished materials – and sent to the centre of political power, which in the Ur III was embodied by the royal household (Sallaberger 2018: 173-175). Disguised as voluntary contributions with the aim of supporting national and local festivals sponsored by the king, these *mašdaria* contributions acted as a social glue. Their economic importance notwithstanding, the offerings, pledged by all the members of the society, had a high symbolic value and strengthened the bonds between rulers and ruled.

⁶¹ Sallaberger calculated that ca. 40% of the ruler's expenditures, as listed in the corpus of Puzriš-Dagān, were gifts donated to elite individuals (Sallaberger 2019: 918). At the same time, the social cluster that participated in palace life represented just 1% of the entire population.

⁶² Scented oil could purposely be commissioned for such a contribution (BPOA 7 2563, rev. 2-3: i₃ maš₂-da-re₆-a du₁₀-ge-de₃).

The volume of scented oils spent in *mašdaria* contributions at Umma experienced a remarkable increase in the final part of Amar-Suena's rule, rising from ca. 3 litre on Amar-Suena 7 (SAT 2 1035)⁶³ to 16 litres (Nisaba 23 67) per year in Amar-Suena 9. The beneficiaries were called 'the men of the *mašdaria*' (Sallab-erger 1993: 178-179), and they received 3 shekels of oil each per month. Besides these individuals, whose role in the festivals is unclear, scented oils were used to anoint cultic objects (BPOA 7 2411) and possibly clothes.⁶⁴

5.3 Scented oils for ordinary men

Besides gods and elites, another window on the allocations and use of scented oils in the society of the time is the network of travelling officials and emissaries of the kingdom. Consignments of unscented oils, primarily sesame oil, were an ordinary disbursement for the sustenance of this diplomatic branch, which was supported by the provincial economy, although it frequently acted upon royal orders. These personnel could receive scented oils on specific occasions, which were not always disclosed.

Generals, soldiers, and, less often, ordinary messengers collected allowances of scented oils when dispatched to transfer flocks and royal herds, to fetch specialized workers across the country, acquire goods for cultic sacrifices, undertake diplomatic missions abroad, or secure royal demands. However, if it was expected that a soldier could be rewarded with a special allowance when sent to monitor the delivery of Šu-Suen's statue,⁶⁵ it is less

⁶³ A similar volume of scented oil is attested as a *mašdaria* contribution in Ġirsu/Lagaš in Šulgi 46 (PPAC 5 82).

⁶⁴ Two texts from Umma (SAT 2 0249, Š 40 and Princeton 1 290, AS 5) prove that batches of scented oils were delivered to the 'scribe of the textiles', Naua. Similarly, Bazmum, the 'scribe of wool' of Irisağrig, received ingredients for perfumed oils from the merchant Tūram-ilī (Nisaba 15/2 538 and Nisaba 15/2 899). These texts may provide further evidence for the habit of perfuming clothes.

⁶⁵ See TCTI 2 3765, which states that the armed soldier Šu-ilī received 1 litre of scented oil. Cf. also RTC 390 and STA 8, which report that those dispatched to fetch the statue were compensated with special allocations, such as sheep and flour, whereas for the very same mission, sculptors were compensated with regular rations of beer and bread (RTC 395, DAS 183), and a maniple of sol-

clear why scented oil was conferred for fairly ordinary missions.⁶⁶ While no rationale can be found for these special allowances, a clear hierarchical principle in the quantity of scented oils that was allocated to the travelling officials is plain to see. Generals, armed soldiers, and royal ambassadors usually received 1 or 2 litres each,⁶⁷ but the personal ambassador of the king was entitled to the incredible volume of 30 litres (YOS 4 117). Lower range distributions varied between 2 and 10 shekels.

A group of *bullae* from the Umma archive records the monthly expenditures of travel stations on commodities issued to the travelling personnel (sa₂-du₁₁ kas₄). Differently from other commodities, scented oils do not appear among the items that were regularly expended each month, since there are considerable gaps between the occasions on which these goods were bestowed. Moreover, the total amount of scented oils spent on travellers varied randomly, as did the proportion of these allowances to those of unscented oils. In the years between Šu-Suen 2 and 5, the monthly allocations of scented oil issued at the travel station of Anzagar varied from 0.6 to 4 litres, whereas the volume of unscented oil – which was issued regularly each month – ranged between 17 and 44 litres.⁶⁸

This randomness in the allocations of scented oils confirms the extraordinary motivation behind their disbursements, which was tied to the social status as much as to the mission. A further clue in this reconstruction is offered by the special allowances granted to the smiths stationed at the temple of Šara during the years Šu-Suen 1 to 6. Each craftsman received 20 shekels of unscented oil per month and the two deputy supervisors received a

diers received a batch of semolina in addition to these two ordinary commodities (CUSAS 16 262).

⁶⁶ For example, personnel sent to supervise the plucking were usually allocated regular allowances (e.g. MVN 5 261), including unscented sesame oil (e.g. MVN 6 566).

⁶⁷ On specific occasions, generals could receive a combined 8.5 litres of scented fats and oils.

⁶⁸ The percentage of scented oils vs unscented ones varied from 2.6% to 23%, which would drop further if one considered the yearly disbursement.

monthly allowance of 30 shekels each.⁶⁹ However, the top supervisor, Ur-Igalim, not only received twice as much unscented oil, but also benefitted of 1 litres of scented oil.⁷⁰

What is relevant to this discussion is that, once again, the allocations and use of scented oil created boundaries and social stratification within a culture that communally shared the same habit: anointing oneself with oil.⁷¹ While the Ur III state acknowledged and fostered this convention, it catered to this need with very different responses – in terms of both quantity and quality – based on the social status of the beneficiary.

6. Conclusions

In late third millennium Babylonia, under the rule of the Third Dynasty of Ur, perfume making acquired the status of a family-based craft that enjoyed institutional patronage. Differently from later periods, when the number of perfumers active at temples and palaces was considerably higher,⁷² the artisans devoted to this craft were few in relation to the territorial extent of the kingdom. The family-based system, limited by nature to kinship bonds, implied a selective training and a restricted circulation of this professional knowledge.

Due to nature of the Ur III textual record, there is no chance to ascertain whether private perfumers existed and operated independently of the institutional bonds with temples and the palace, as was the case shortly after, during the reign of Rīm-Sîn of Larsa (Middeke-Conlin 2014: 22). The picture that emerges in

⁶⁹ The allowance received by each smith falls within the average volume attested for oil allocations. These rations normally ranged between 2.5 and 5 litres per worker per year and might have applied to most categories of dependents.

⁷⁰ Princeton 2 461 (ŠS 2.V-VIII), MVN 13 371 (ŠS 6.X-XII). BPOA 1 1129 (ŠS 1) and Santag 6 224 (ŠS 2) instead record only the monthly total of the oils expended for these craftsmen.

⁷¹ The lack of direct evidence for the allocation of oil as food paired with the specific indication that it was meant not for consumption (niĝ₂-gu₇-a) but for anointing (ba-ab-šeš₄/i₃-šeš₄) may suggest that in the Ur III period oils and fats only served this latter purpose.

⁷² At least 10 perfumers worked simultaneously at the royal palace of Mari, whereas 14 perfume makers followed the Achaemenid ruler Darius in his travels (Graziani 2012: 122).

the Ur III period is indeed that of an economic loop. The institutional economy provided raw materials, tools, a workforce, and even sustenance to perfumers. Although these craftsmen could interact with merchants to obtain some ingredients, they did so in a clearly institutional context, which bore the expenses of the enterprise and barely left room for private entrepreneurs. A full-time private perfumer would have needed a consistent capital to invest in the acquisition of raw materials, which were often secured elsewhere – if not abroad – and time to learn and practice his skills. Such investment costs would have been compensated only if the craftsman was able to count on a certain clientele, from whose demand he could profit. However, prospective consumers able to afford the cost of his products were few and, since they consisted of temple and palace elites, already received scented oil through the redistributive circuit of allowances and gifts. It is reasonable to suppose that when these people wished to acquire scented oils beyond the quantities already bestowed upon them, they could turn up to institutional perfume makers and pay them on their own: such a limited demand would not have been sufficient to guarantee the existence of a non-institutional perfume industry.

Perfume production thus abided by predetermined commissions, requested exclusively by the institutions to support the cults of their gods and the establishment of their own unique lifestyle. Temple and palace institutions were both the starting and ending points of the perfume industry. Indeed, such a symbiosis between the ruling class and specialized craftsmen is not an isolated case in the ancient Near East (Feldman 2006: 126).

Perfume making was not a Late Bronze Age innovation, as the evidence dated at least to the Presargonic period confirms. *Ateliers* were well established in the territory, as demonstrated by the operational continuity observed for the *Bau* institutions in the region of Lagaš, but in the Ur III period, they were increasingly being centralized by the royal powers. Institutional patronage proved to be fundamental to the establishment of recognized traditions and workshops. State sponsorship is particularly evident in the Umma province, where perfumers were royal dependents, as testified by the legends on their seals. It is relevant to note that direct allocations of oils from perfumers to the final

recipients are not attested since they were always mediated through institutional officials and allocations of raw materials were closely monitored.

Although perfume ateliers were established throughout the kingdom, the Umma workshop possibly became a renowned centre of production, since it features as one of the major contributors of scented oils. Umma seems to have fulfilled a key role in the growth of the perfume industry, likely through the creation of prized new fragrances. It is no surprise that perfume “recipies” were written here. The very same “in between” nature of these documents, which record the ingredients needed for producing scented oils and in the correct proportions with remarkable clarity, implies either that local scribes had a passive knowledge of this craft, or that they consulted the artisans. Their expertise might have been crucial not just to the practical steps of perfume making but also to acquiring the right ingredients.

Despite the fact that raw materials were sometimes sourced from abroad, no perfumer is known to have been a foreigner. Differently from later periods when female masters of perfume making were called in from abroad,⁷³ no such proof is available for the Ur III period. Moreover, no unequivocal sign of female perfumers has been recovered.⁷⁴ The control that the state tried to achieve over this prestige product domestically mirrors the situation abroad, where a Babylonian monopoly on the circulation of perfumed oils can be supposed at least for the Gulf region, as suggested by the ceramic findings in burial contexts.

The economic and social relevance of scented oils is visible throughout the textual sources. These commodities participated in constructing an elite identity that was shared among peers, both domestic and foreign, and occasionally lavished on non-elites. In fact, perfumed oils were mainly the appanage of gods and royalty, reinforcing the material perception of power (cf. Baines, Yoffee 1998: 238). The intentional act of rewarding segments of the population with this prestige commodity, to which they did not normally have access, can be interpreted as a

⁷³ *E.g.* SAA 14 161 or SAA 7 24. For a discussion on foreigner female perfumers, see Cousin 2016: 516-521.

⁷⁴ The only exception might be a certain Da’aga mentioned in BIN 5 346.

strategy to reinforce social control. Based on this vision, the use of scented oils served the purpose of creating horizontal and vertical social relations among people.

Yet, the use of oily substances for body care belongs to the common cultural repository of the Mesopotamian society, a habit that transcended social boundaries. However, the various societal components experienced such a tradition in very different ways. While the wider population contented themselves with unscented products, the ruling class enjoyed superior hand-crafted fragrances, which came to exemplify a precise social etiquette and a cross-cultural habit of the high culture.

Abbreviations

CAD = The Assyrian Dictionary of Chicago of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, Chicago: The Oriental Institute of Chicago.

Text abbreviations follow those of the Database of Neo-Sumerian Texts project (bds.filol.csic.es).

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*Olii aromatizzati nei testi presargonici di Ebla**

AMALIA CATAGNOTI

In questo studio sui testi di Ebla vengono organizzate le informazioni relative ai termini $gišsim$, $gišad$ e $NE-miLUM$ che sono disponibili nei testi cuneiformi del Palazzo G di Tell Mardikh (Siria, fine del XXIV secolo a.C.) finora resi noti.

1. $gišsim$

Nelle liste lessicali bilingui e monolingui di Ebla si trovano le seguenti attestazioni:

- [1] VE 464: $gišsim$ = *ga-na-ga-tum* (A, B, C), *ga-na-ag¹(SUM)-tum* (D)
- [2] MEE 15 1 r. XI 43: $gišsim^1$ (BAPPIR)
- [3] MEE 15 25 v. VII 3': $gišsim^1$ (BAPPIR)
- [4] MEE 15 26 r. VIII' 12: $gišsim^1$ (BAPPIR)
- [5] MEE 15 71 r. I:6': $gišsim^1$ (BAPPIR)

* È con grande piacere che dedico questo mio lavoro all'amica Simonetta Graziani, una collega dai molteplici interessi, che si è occupata anche di profumi, per esempio in "... e le asperse il viso con i profumi più inebrianti". Profumi, seduzione e potere nella Terra fra i due Fiumi, in *I profumi nelle società antiche. Produzione commercio usi valori simbolici*, a cura di Alfredo Carannante, Matteo D'Acunto 2012: 115-135. Questo articolo è stato scritto nel quadro delle attività dell'Unità di Firenze del PRIN 2017 *Big Data and Early Archives (BigDEA). Measuring Settlement Dynamics and Environmental Exploitation in the Ebla Region during the 3rd Millennium BC: Archaeological Record, Cuneiform Texts, and Remote Sensing*.

La glossa *ga-na-ag-/ga-tum* di ^{gis}šim¹ che è fornita dalla lista bilingue ([1]) è interpretabile sulla base dell'accadico *kanaktu(m)*, in Mesopotamia corrispondente al sumerico (^{gis})šim-gig.² Si tratta dunque di un albero o arbusto, non precisamente identificato, da cui si ricava una resina o un olio usato per l'igiene personale e per scopi terapeutici.³

È importante ricordare qui che il termine ^{gis}šim deve essere distinto da quello documentato nei due casi seguenti:

[6] EV 46: šim = *ri-ga-tum* (estratti c, i)

[7] MEE 4 32 v. I 10-11: ^{gis}naga / <šim> / *ri-ga-tum* (D)

Come è stato già proposto,⁴ sulla base di [6] *ri-ga-tum*, *riqāhtum* – comparabile con l'accadico *riqu*, *riqqu*,⁵ termine generico per 'pianta aromatica' – deve infatti essere la glossa di šim (e dunque non di ^{gis}naga) anche in [7]. Questo termine semitico è ulteriormente attestato nel testo amministrativo *ARET IX* 101, r. III 5 e v. V 6, dove qualifica un pane, ninda *ri-ga-tum*.⁶

¹ È importante notare che un termine 'GIŠ-BAPPIR' non esiste nei testi di Ebla: l'insieme delle attestazioni qui in esame assicura che, sia nei passi [2-5] qui sopra che in quelli [21] e [23] più oltre abbiamo a che fare con errori scribali consistenti nella confusione dei due segni simili ŠIM e BAPPIR, sui quali si veda Catagnoti 2013: 46 *ad* 254-255.

² Sulla glossa eblaita si veda Hajouz 2013: 365-366, con bibliografia precedente (cui si aggiunga Joannès 1993: 254 e sg. e nota 8). Sul termine accadico si vedano *AHW*: 434 («etwa "Weihrauchbaum"?»); *CAD*, K: 135-136 («a tree», «an aromatic product obtained from the tree», «The identification of *kanaktu* as opopanax or olibanum suggested by R. C. Thompson Herbal p. 143f. and DAB 344ff. is hardly acceptable. The evidence cited point to a tree growing in mountains (but capable of acclimatization in Assyria) whose exudation (*ru'tu*) and wood produce a specific odor. The mention of color may refer to that of the wood itself»); *CDA*²: 145 («an incense-bearing tree»); *ePSD*: («^{gis}gig = Akk. *kanaktu* "a tree; a resin"»). Il termine *kanaktum* è stato tradotto «oliban» da Durand 1983: 136 e sg., testo 115.

³ Per il suo uso in medicina si vedano per esempio *CAD*, K: 136 («in a potion ... infusion of *k*. ... in an enema ... in an ointment ... on a tampon for the ear ... in a suppository...»), Scurlock 2006: 70 («"fat" of *kanaktu*-aromatic» usato insieme ad altri ingredienti per la cura degli occhi); Geller 2010: 81 (per la cura dell'orecchio).

⁴ Catagnoti 2018: 141.

⁵ *CAD*, R: 368-371 «aromatic plant».

⁶ Vedi Pasquali 2014 per un altro tipo di pane aromatizzato.

1.1 I testi amministrativi eblaiti mostrano che, analogamente a quanto si constata per altri vegetali, l'approvvigionamento di ^{gis̃}sim avveniva tramite 'acquisti' (níg-sám), si vedano sotto i passi [8-23]. Concretamente, si hanno registrazioni della 'consegna' (šu-mu-taka₄) e del 'trasporto' (íl) di ^{gis̃}sim, qui sotto rispettivamente nei passi [24-28] e [29-35]. È interessante notare che il ^{gis̃}sim è spesso menzionato assieme ad altri due beni, il ^{gis̃}ád e il NE-mi-LUM, per il quale si propone una lettura šar_x(NE)-mi-núm (v. § 3).

1.1.1 C'è abbondante evidenza di acquisti di ^{gis̃}sim avvenuti presso le 'fiere' (KI:LAM₇), anche se a volte quest'ultimo riferimento viene omissso:

[8] *ARET* I 1 v. XIII 6-12: 10 KIN siki / níg-sám ^{gis̃}sim / é en / *En-na-ni-il* / šu-ba₄-ti / KI:LAM₇ / *gi-ba-i* (mese IX, za-LUL)

[9] *ARET* III 441 v. IV 1'-4':⁷ [10* KIN* siki* / níg*-sám* ^{gis̃}*sim* / é* en*] / *En-na-ni-il* / šu-ba₄-ti / KI:LAM₇ / *gi-ba<-i>* (mese in lacuna)

[10] TM.75.G.1436 v. X 19-25:⁸ (lana) / níg-sám ^{gis̃}sim / é en / KI:LAM₇ / *gi-ba-i* / *Mi-na-NI* / šu-ba₄-ti (mese XI, MAXGÁNAtenû-sag)

[11] *ARET* IV 18 v. XI 6-11: 10 lá-2 KIN siki / níg-sám ^{gis̃}sim / é en / *I-ti-ne* / KI:LAM₇ / *NI-ab^{ki}* (mese IV, *gi-NI*)

[12] *ARET* XV 58 v. X 16-XI 1:⁹ 12 siki KIN / níg-sám ^{gis̃}*sim[?] // *Si-à-am^{ki}* (mese XI, MAXGÁNAtenû-sag)

[13] *ARET* XII 1292 v. I' 1'-4': 2 KI[N siki] / níg-s[ám] <^{gis̃}*sim / KI:LAM₇ / *Si-à-mu^{ki}* (mese in lacuna)

[14] *ARET* IV 12 v. II 15-III 3: 1 gu-mug^{túg} hul 1 ^{gis̃}KIN siki / níg-sám ^{gis̃}sim / ^dÁš-da-bíl / *En-na-il* / šu-ba₄-ti (mese VI, *i-rí-sá*)

[15] *ARET* XIX 11 r. I 15-II 6: 1 gu-mug^{túg} // 1 KIN siki / níg-sám / ^{gis̃}sim / ^dÁš-da-bíl / *En-na-il* / šu-ba₄-ti (mese VI, *i-rí-sá*)

[16] *ARET* IV 20 v. III 3-7: 1 gu-mug^{túg} 1 KIN siki / níg-sám ^{gis̃}sim / ^dÁš-da-bíl / *Ru₁₂-zú-we-rum* / šu-ba₄-ti (mese VI, *i-rí-sá*)

[17] 75.10252¹⁰ v. 1 5'-9': 1 gu-mug^{túg} 1 KIN siki / níg-sám ^{gis̃}sim / ^dÁš-da-bíl / *Wa-ba-rúm* / šu-ba₄-ti (mese VI, [*i-rí-sá*])

⁷ Integrazioni in Pasquali 1998: 2 [11].

⁸ Citato in Biga 2002: 285.

⁹ Collazionato sulla fotografia.

¹⁰ Citato in Biga 2002: 288 («lbr.; mois [*i-rí-sá*]»).

- [18] *ARET* XX 23 v. VI 14-16: 1 gu-mug^{túg} 1 KIN siki / níg-sám ^{giš}sim / ^dÁš-da-bíl (mese in lacuna, probabilmente VI, *i-rí-sá*)
 [19] *ARET* XII 809 r. V 14-16: 1 gu-mug^{túg} 1 KIN siki / níg-sám ^{giš}sim / [^d*Áš*]-da-[bíl*] / [...] (mese VI, *i-rí-sá*)
 [20] *ARET* XII 884 v. I' 6'-8': [1* gu*-mug^{*túg*} 1*] KIN siki / níg-sám ^{giš}sim GÁ×LÁ / *I-lu₅-za_κ-ma-lik* / [...] (mese in lacuna)
 [21] *ARET* III 156 v. II 1'-3':¹¹ [...] 1* gu*-mug^{*túg*} 1* ^{giš}KIN* siki* / níg-sám / ^{giš}sim'(BAPPIR) / [...] (mese in lacuna)
 [22] *ARET* III 826 r. III 1': níg-s[ám] ^{giš}sim [...] (mese in lacuna)
 [23] *ARET* XII 857 v.² II' 1-4: 3 KIN siki / níg-sám ^{giš}sim'(BAPPIR) / *in* / [...]-'x' [...] (mese in lacuna)

Le ‘fiere’ (KI:LAM₇)¹² attestate in questi passi sono quelle qualificate dal termine *gi-ba-i*¹³ [8-10] (nei mesi IX e XI) e dai toponimi NI-*ab*^{ki} [11] (nel mese IV) e *Si-'à-am/mu*^{ki} [12-13] (nel mese XI; KI:LAM₇ è da sottintendere nel passo [12] per analogia con [13]).¹⁴ Anche nei passi [14-19], relativi all’acquisto di ^{giš}sim in relazione al dio ^dÁš-da-bíl, bisogna verosimilmente sottintendere che gli acquisti avvenissero presso la fiera di questa divinità¹⁵ (che si teneva nel mese VI).

Tutte queste attestazioni mostrano quantità di lana come pagamento per l’acquisto del ^{giš}sim. In [14-21] l’aggiunta di un tessile gu-mug^{túg} deve essere riferita alla persona che si occupa dell’acquisto, e lo stesso deve essere supposto anche in [18], nonostante l’assenza del nome di persona. Gli uomini menzionati in connessione con la fiera del dio ^dÁš-da-bíl sono *En-na-il* [14-15], *Ru₁₂-zú-we-rum*¹⁶ [16] e *Wa-ba-rúm* [17]. Altri uomini che si occupano dell’acquisto del ^{giš}sim sono *En-na-ni-il* [8-9], *Mi-na-NI* [10], *I-ti-ne* [11] (tutti e tre per la ‘casa del re’, é en), e *I-lu₅-za_κ-ma-lik* [20]. Si noti che *En-na-il*, *En-na-ni-il*, *I-lu₅-za_κ-ma-lik*, *I-ti-ne*,

¹¹ Collazionato sulla fotografia in *Ebla Digital Archives* (EbDA), <http://ebda.cnr.it/tablet/view/266>.

¹² Sulle fiere ad Ebla in occasione di festività religiose si veda Biga 2002.

¹³ Per *gi-ba-i* e la sua connessione con la fiera presso il tempio delle divinità inferre ad ^dÁ-da-NI^{ki}, si veda Pasquali 1998: 2.

¹⁴ Per l’acquisto di altri beni quali il legname di ^{giš}taskarin in quella stessa fiera si veda Catagnoti 2016: 32-33 e nota 19. Per la connessione del toponimo con il culto di ^dRa-sa-*ap* e ^dNI-da-bal, si veda Biga 2002: 281.

¹⁵ Vedi Biga 2002: 280.

¹⁶ Frequentemente qualificato come lú dingir-dingir-dingir.

Mi-na-NI e *Wa-ba-rúm*¹⁷ sono anche attestati come ‘collettori’, *ur*₄.¹⁸

In generale, si può notare che il ^{giš}sim acquistato non è mai contato; in particolare, ^{giš}sim GÁ×LÁ di [20] suggerisce che, concretamente, al momento della transazione esso venisse pesato (su GÁ×LÁ si veda uno studio ulteriore).

1.1.2 Per quanto riguarda le consegne (šu-mu-taka₄) di ^{giš}sim si vedano i passi seguenti:

[24] *ARET* III 661 r. I 1'-2': [...] / šu-mu-taka₄ / ^{giš}sim (mese in lacuna)

[25] *ARET* XII 1010 r. VI 1'-2': [...] / šu-mu-taka₄ / <^{giš}>^{giš}sim (mese in lacuna)

[26] *ARET* III 215 v. III 5'-8': 2 sal^{tu}_g / Ra-'^àag^{ki} / šu-mu-taka₄ / ^{giš}sim (mese in lacuna)

[27] *ARET* XII 1241 r. II 6'-10': 1 gu-dùl^{tu}_g 1 íb-III-gùn^{tu}_g / Na-nu-um / Ra-'^àag^{ki} / šu-mu-taka₄ / ^{giš}sim (mese in lacuna)

[28] *ARET* XIX 18 r. I 1-5: [1 ak]tum^{tu}_g 1 íb+III-gùn^{tu}_g / Šubur / Ra-'^àag^{ki} / šu-mu-taka₄ / ^{giš}[ši]m² (mese in lacuna)

È interessante constatare che uomini del regno di Ra-'^àag^{ki}¹⁹ sono menzionati anche nelle consegne della pianta gudu.²⁰

1.1.3 I passi seguenti documentano il ‘trasporto’ (íl) di olio d’oliva aromatizzato con ^{giš}sim, spesso assieme all’olio aromatizzato con ^{giš}ád e šar_x(NE)-mì-núm:

[29] *ARET* IX 80 r. I 1-4: 10 gú-bù ì-giš ^{giš}ši[m] / 10 gú-[bù] ì-[giš] ^{giš}ád / Û-ti / íl

[30] *ARET* IX 80 r. I 5-II 2: 10 gú-bù ì-giš ^{giš}ád / In-gàr / lú še / íl / si-in / DU-lu^{ki}

¹⁷ Attestato in connessione con molte altre fiere, si veda Biga 2003: 65 e nota 30.

¹⁸ Vedi Cianfanelli 2020: 160-161.

¹⁹ Su Ra-'^àag^{ki} vedi *ARES* II: 413-416 e *RGTC* 12/1: 273-274. I nomi di persona connessi nei passi [27-28] al toponimo sono due, Na-nu-um (non attestato altrove) e Šubur, quest’ultimo si ritrova in connessione anche con i toponimi DU-lu^{ki}, Na-gàr^{ki} e NI-ra-ar^{ki} (in relazione a quest’ultimo toponimo consegna (šu-mu-taka₄) beni alimentari: gu-la-'^àtum, NE.É).

²⁰ Vedi Catagnoti 2018: 136.

[31] *ARET* IX 80 r. III 1-10: 45 *gú-bù* <ì-giš>* ^{giš}šim / 40 *gú-bù* <ì-giš>* ^{giš}ád / íl / *si-in* / *Ma-r^{ki}* / kas₊kas₄ / è / [DÍŠ²] mu / níg-[kas₄] / *Ma-[r^{ki}]*

[32] *ARET* IX 82 v. V 8-15: 6 la-*ha* ì-giš ^{giš}šim / 6 la-*ha* ì-^{giš} ^{giš}dùg / àga-ús / íl / *si-in* / NE-*na-su^{ki}* / šu-ì / guruš-guruš (mese VII, ì-DU)

[33] *ARET* IX 89 r. II 3-4: 12 dug ì-giš / ^{giš}šim (íl / *I-bí-zi-kir* / *si-in* / níg-kas₄ / *Ma-r^{ki}*) (mese non indicato)

[34] 75.518 = *ARET* X 67 r. I:1 - v. I 1:²¹ 6 síla ì-giš ^{giš}dùg ^{giš}šim / 17 síla ì-giš ^{giš}dùg ^{giš}ád / 1 la-*ha* 8 síla ì-giš ^{giš}dùg // šar_x(NE)-*mi-núm* / íl / *si-in* / Na-gà^{ki} / *I-bí-zi-kir* // Gi-la-ma-lik / àga-ús / (mese X, *lu-lu-mu*)

[35] 75.544 = *ARET* X 68 r. I 1-v. III 2:²² 30 síla ì-giš šim / 30 síla ì-giš ád / 12 síla ì-giš / šar_x(NE)-*mi-núm* / en / Na-ma-*ha-al₆* / íl / 20 síla ì-^{giš} [šim] // 20 síla ì-giš ád / Ìr-ag-da-mu / Mi-nu⁴KU-ra / íl / 10 [síla ì-giš x] / Ru₁₂-^{giš}zi²-ma-lik / En-na-ni-NI // íl / 90 síla ì-giš ^{giš}dùg / ma-lik-tum / I-da-NE-[ù] / íl / 70 síla ì-^{giš} šim / [...] // 2 m[ì]-a[t] síla [ì-giš] šar_x(NE)-[mi]-*núm* / en / Šu-ma-NI / wa / Mi-ga-NI / [íl]

In due altri casi questi stessi tipi di olio d'oliva aromatizzato sono registrati in relazione a spostamenti (lú DU) del ministro eblaita *I-bí-zi-kir* verso le principali capitali mesopotamiche:

[36] *ARET* IX 83 v. I 1-6: [...] / šar_x(NE)-m[ì]-*núm* / A-bu / šu-ba₊ti / lú DU / *I-bí-zi-kir* / Na-gà^{ki} (mese VI, nídba^d Aš-da-bíl)

[37] *ARET* IX 84 v. V 1-12: 50 síla ì-giš ^{giš}dùg / ^{giš}šim / wa / ^{giš}ád / 73 síla ì-giš ^{giš}dùg / šar_x(NE)-*mi-núm* / A-bu / šu-ba₊ti / lú DU / *I-bí-zi-kir* / *si-in* / *Ma-r^{ki}* (mese in lacuna, *[II bis²])

[38] *ARET* IX 94 r. IV 1-v. I 3: 50 síla ì-giš ^{giš}šim / wa / ^{giš}ád / 73 síla ì-giš / šar_x(NE)-*mi-núm* / A-bu / šu-ba₊ti (dub-gar níg-kaskal *I-bí-zi-kir* lú DU *si-in* Kiš wa Na-gà^{ki}) (mese non indicato)

Differente è il caso seguente, in cui i tre tipi di olio aromatizzato vengono dati a NI-ba-NI, un militare (àga-ús)²³ che verosimil-

²¹ Citato in Pettinato, D'Agostino 1996: 3. Vedi Bonechi 2016: 23-24, [33-39] in connessione con àga-ús.

²² Parzialmente citato in Archi 1991: 220 («*ARET* 10.68 f. I 1-5, III 2-3, ap-
portés (íl) au roi; à la reine on livre par contre de l'huile fine: 30 síla ì-giš šim
30 síla ì-giš ád 12 síla ì-giš *ne-mi-tum* en ... 90 síla ì-giš-du₁₀ *ma-lik-tum*»). Citato
anche in Pettinato, D'Agostino 1996: 3 (r. I 1-II 4). Ringrazio Maria Giovanna
Biga per avermi comunicato l'intero passo di questo testo ancora inedito.

²³ Bonechi 2016: 19: a high-ranking military leader.

mente, vista la grande quantità dei beni assegnati, poi doveva distribuirli:²⁴

[39] *ARET* IX 103 r. I 1-II 3: 1 *mi-at g[ú]-bù ì-giš* / *lú gišsim* / 1 *gu-bù* ì-giš / *lú gišad* / 50 *gu-bù ì-giš* / *šar_x(NE)-mi-núm* / *NI'-ba-NI* / *àga-ús* (mese non indicato)

Come già notato per le piante aromatiche o medicinali,²⁵ nei testi amministrativi di Ebla anche le quantità di olii aromatizzati sono misurate tramite i loro contenitori. Nei passi menzionati sopra, l'olio di oliva (ì-giš) aromatizzato con *gišsim*, *gišad* e *šar_x(NE)-mi-núm* viene misurato in *la-ḥa* ([32] e [40]), in *dug* ([33]), in *sila* ([34-35, 37-38])²⁶ e *gú-bù* ([29-31], [39]).²⁷ Appare dunque del tutto ragionevole integrare <ì-giš> anche in [31]. Lo stesso vale anche nel caso delle 3 giare (*la-ḥa*) registrate nell'inventario dei beni della casa di *En-na-BAD* che si trovano nelle mani di *Ù-rí*²⁸ (*kas₇* / *é* / *En-na-BAD* / *si-in* / 2 *šu* / *Ù-rí*):

[40] TM.75.G.1383 r. III 3:²⁹ 3 *la-ḥa* <ì-giš> *gišsim*

Questo *En-na-BAD* potrebbe essere identificato con il *lugal* del periodo di *Ar-ru₂-LUM*, attestato forse anche come *ur₄*.³⁰ L'acquisto di un'altra sostanza aromatica, il *gišad*, per la casa di

²⁴ Come proposto in Milano 1990: 300.

²⁵ Vedi Catagnoti 2018: 141.

²⁶ Per *la-ḥa*, *dug* e *sila* si veda Milano 1990: 350-352.

²⁷ Per *gú-bù* si vedano Milano 1990: 389 («Un recipiente usato come misura di capacità per grassi e resine aromatiche (cf. akk. *quppum* “cesta, cassetta”)»); Archi 1991: 218 («On ignore la capacité du *gú-bù*, à mettre en rapport avec le sém. **kapp*, akk. *kappu* “main; bol”; en ougaritique et en arabe “plateau de la balance”)»; Pasquali 2005: 136 sg. («cratere», «Il termine è stato spiegato tramite l'accadico *quppu*, “cesta, cassetta”, ma questo significato non si accorda a tutti i contesti, né pare adeguato ad un contenitore destinato a contenere olii.»).

²⁸ Il nome di persona *Ù-rí* è poco frequente nei testi di Ebla finora noti: un *Ù-rí* ha 60 *ir₁₁* al suo servizio (*ARET* III 253 v. II 5'-6'), in altri casi è in connessione con *Sa-za_x^{ki}* (*ARET* XII 357 v. V 2') e si ritrova anche attestato come *ur₄* di Mari (*ARET* XX 16 r. IX 22-24).

²⁹ Editto in Archi 1986: 194-195.

³⁰ Si vedano Archi 1986: 192; Archi 2000: 49; Cianfanelli 2020: 133, come *ur₄*.

un altro lugal che è anche attestato come *ur*₄, cioè *Du-bi-šum*,³¹ è registrato in [51] (si veda più oltre).

Le quantità di *giš*šim e *giš*ād spesso si equivalgono (si vedano i passi [29], [32] e [35]) e in un paio di casi ([37-38]) i due prodotti sono contati insieme. Per quanto riguarda la precisazione della qualità dell'olio, cioè *i-gi*š *dùg*, si confronterà la glossa in VE 883, *i-dùg* = *ša-ma-nu da-bu-um* (A), [*sa-ma*]-*nu* [*da*]-*bù*, B), *šamnum ṭabum*, 'olio dolce, fine, di buona qualità'.³²

Il passo [35] menziona personaggi di alto rango che ricevono olii aromatizzati: il re, la regina, *Ru*₁₂-*zi-ma-lik* (figlio di *I-bi-zi-kir*) e il principe *Īr-ag-da-mu*. Purtroppo, la lacuna alla fine del testo non permette di sapere quale fosse l'occasione di questa distribuzione.

Interessanti sono i contesti in cui si trovano questi beni che vengono trasportati anche molto lontano, seguendo i viaggi³³ del ministro *I-bi-zi-kir* verso Mari ([31], [33], [37]), Nagar ([34], [36], [38]) e Kiš ([38]). Tra i personaggi coinvolti nel trasporto degli olii aromatizzati vi sono *A-bu*³⁴ [36-38] e *Ù-ti* [29]. Essi sono registrati insieme in *ARET* VII 91, testo che menziona un viaggio a Nagar e Mari del ministro *I-bi-zi-kir*. È interessante anche notare che alcuni degli uomini che ricevono olii aromatizzati sono qualificati come *àga-ús*. Si tratta di *Gi-la-ma-lik* [34] e *NI'-ba-NI* [39].³⁵ Un militare (*àga-ús*), di cui non è riportato il nome, trasporta olio (aromatizzato con) *giš*šim e olio di prima qualità

³¹ Vedi Cianfanelli 2020: 130.

³² Si vedano Hajouz 2013: 704 sg., con bibliografia; Catagnoti, Fronzaroli 2020: 34. Da intendere «processed oil» per Middeke-Conlin 2014: 12 e nota 49.

³³ Cf. a questo proposito quanto si evince dai testi di Mari paleobabilonese circa le assegnazioni di olio per il re quando parte in viaggio e anche delle forniture che gli vengono inviate (Joannès 1993: 264). Razioni di olio vengono date anche alle truppe, vedi Abrahami 1997: 181-183. Per le provviste di viaggio in generale, ad Ebla, vedi Milano 2014, in particolare p. 291: «The travel provisions delivered to five palace officials on the occasion of a journey of Ibbi-Zikir to Kish and Nagar (*ARET* 9, 94) ... include basically flour (*za-la-tum*) and bread made of beer bread (*ninda-bappir*) as coupled entries for four of the recipients, with the addition of high quantities of perfumes (*i-gi*š *GIŠ*šim, a perfumed oil, and *GIŠ*ād, a "myrtle resin") which have nothing to do with food preparation».

³⁴ Vedi Catagnoti, Fronzaroli 2010: 62: probabilmente un *maškim* di *I-bi-zi-kir*.

³⁵ Bonechi 2016: 25.

(dùg) a NE-na-su^{ki} [32], l'olio doveva servire per ungere (šu-ì) guruš-guruš. Si potrebbe supporre che questi prodotti servissero, almeno nei casi dei passi [32], [34] e [39], per l'unzione di soldati.³⁶ A questo proposito è interessante un confronto con i testi di Mari paleobabilonese nei quali troviamo che l'olio è impiegato per la pulizia,³⁷ e che olii erano attribuiti a soldati della scorta per i piedi (si veda ARM XXI 125: 9-10, ½ qa ì-giš / a-na gîr aga-ús), o anche che olii profumati erano dati al corteggio del re per partecipare alla festa di Šamaš (vd. ARM VII 13: 7-8, a-na pa-ša-aš ša-bi-im).³⁸ Inoltre, in una lettera di Mari (ARM XXVI/1 29) il ministro Asqudum lamenta la mancata ricezione dell'olio da parte dei soldati in relazione al freddo: «Mon seigneur sait que sans l'huile, l'armée ne peut livrer combat par temps froid», forse le razioni di olio potevano servire per l'apporto calorico nell'alimentazione oppure per la cura dei soldati.³⁹

1.1.4 Molto rara è l'attestazione di personale addetto al gišim. Nel passo seguente si registrano due donne anonime che verosimilmente si occupavano della sua preparazione o conservazione:⁴⁰

[41] ARETIX 53 v. II 5-6: 2 dam / gišim (mese non indicato)

³⁶ A proposito dell'utilizzo di olio di buona qualità (ì-giš dùg) in contesto militare si veda Mouton 2016: 278, per l'impiego di «huile fine» in un rituale preventivo hurrita prima del combattimento.

³⁷ Vedi Abrahams 1997: 182, nota 272, con rimando a Durand 1983: 126: «Le sens de “nettoyer” pour pašâšum entraîne donc dans ces textes celui d'onguent, voire même de “savon” pour Ì-GIŠ», in riferimento a delle cure corporali.

³⁸ Vedi Jacquet 2011: 99 «Huile parfumée au cypres, à la myrte, huile de marmite, huile parfumée à l'oliban, huile de Mari, huile amère. Pour oindre la suite (du roi), lors de la fête de Šamaš; 18/xi/ Tâb-šilli-Aššur»; anche p. 71. Vedi anche Abrahams 1997: 181 «Souvent, les soldats qui sont conviés à participer aux banquets donnés par le roi recevaient à cette occasion de l'huile fine et des faibles quantités d'huile aromatisée. C'est également lors du repas organisé pour fêter l'arrivée à Sippar de Šamaš des soldats suhéens dépêchés par Zimri-Lim qu'il fut procédé à une distribution d'huile».

³⁹ Vedi Abrahams 1997: 182.

⁴⁰ Cf. Archi 2002: 2 «women who “prepared perfumes” (dam GIŠ-šim)». Cf. Biga 1991: 303.

2. $giš_{\text{ad}}$

Le liste lessicali rinvenute a Ebla documentano il sumerogramma $giš_{\text{ad}}$ nei casi seguenti:

- [42] VE 436: $giš_{\text{ad}}$ = *a-da-tum*
- [43] MEE 15 1 r. XI 16: $giš_{\text{ad}}$
- [44] MEE 15 25 v. VIII 5: $giš_{\text{ad}}$
- [45] MEE 15 26 r. VIII 13: $giš_{\text{ad}}$

La glossa *a-da-tum* di [42] è stata confrontata con l'accadico *eddittu*, un tipo di cespuglio spinoso,⁴¹ mentre il sumerogramma $giš_{\text{ad}}$, è stato generalmente tradotto 'a thorn bush'.⁴²

2.1 Analogamente a quanto si constata per il $giš_{\text{sim}}$, i testi amministrativi eblaiti mostrano che il Palazzo si approvvigionava di $giš_{\text{ad}}$ per mezzo di 'acquisti' (*níg-sám*) nei quali questo bene veniva pagato in lana ([46-51], [53-58]) o, più raramente ([52]), in argento:

- [46] ARET I 13 v. X 15-19: 10 KIN siki / *níg-sám* $giš_{\text{ad}}$ / *é en* / *En-na-ni-NI* / *šu-ba₁-ti* (mese I, *i-si*)
- [47] ARET I 14 v. VII 17-VIII 3: 3 na₁ siki / *níg-sám* / $giš_{\text{ad}}^*$ / KI:LAM₇ / *^dA-da-ma-um* (mese I, *i-si*)
- [48] ARET IV 4 v. VIII 18-21: 20 KIN siki / *níg-sám* / $giš_{\text{ad}}$ / *En-na-ni-NI* (mese I, *i-si*)
- [49] ARET XII 690 v. III' 4'-6': 10 lá-1 [K]IN siki / *níg-sám* $giš_{\text{ad}}$ / *Bù-da-ma-lik* (mese XI, MA×GÁNA*tenû-sag*)
- [50] ARET XII 865 v. II' 3-5: 5 KIN siki / *níg-sám* $giš_{\text{ad}}$ / *é* / *en* / *in* / [KI]:LAM₇ / [...] (mese in lacuna)
- [51] ARET XV 50 v. III 24-IV 3: 2-1/2 siki KIN / *níg-sám* $giš_{\text{ad}}$ / *é* / *Du-bi-šum* (mese in lacuna)

⁴¹ Sulla glossa eblaita vedi Conti 2003: 123. Sul termine accadico si vedano CAD, E: 23 sg. *eddetu*, «boxthorn»; CDA: 65 *eddittu*, «a kind of thornbush»; Ahw: 266 sg. *ettettu(m)*, «ein dornstrauch (Teufelszwirn?)».

⁴² Vedi ePSD, che con lettura $giš_{\text{kiš}}_{17}$ rimanda invece al mirto, corrispondente all'Akk. *asu*. Cf. Attinger 2021: 136 sg. ($giš_{\text{ad}}$), «un arbuste et/ou arbre épineux», da confrontare con $giš_{\text{kišeg}}$ a p. 633 sg. «une plante épineuse». Per l'identificazione con il mirto si veda Brunke, Sallabarger 2010: 50 *ád(GÍR-gunû)*, *asu* «Myrte». Vedi anche Milano 1990: 387 «mirto?».

- [52] MEE 7 47 r. IX 6-11: 6 gín-DILMUN kù:babbar / n[íg-sám] ^{giš}ád / KI:LAM₇ / ^dA-da-ma / wa / SA-ZA_x^{ki} (probabilmente mese I, *i-si*)⁴³
 [53] MEE 12 18 v. II 5-12: 5 KIN siki / níg-sám ^{giš}ád / 10 KIN siki / níg-sám *a-gi* / wa / im-gi₆ / KI:LAM₇ / ^dGa-mi-iš (mese IV, *gi*-NI)
 [54] 75. 1382 v. IX 2-9:⁴⁴ (lana) níg-sám ^{giš}ád é en *En-na-il* šu-ba₄-ti KI:LAM₇ 'À-da-NI^{ki} lú 'dAMA'.RA (mese III, *za*- 'à-tum)
 [55] 75.1795 v. IV 5' -10':⁴⁵ (lana) / níg-sám ^{giš}ád / in / KI:LAM₇ / šeš-II-ib / 'À-da-NI^{ki} (mese in lacuna)
 [56] 75.2430 v. IX 1-6:⁴⁶ (lana) / níg-sám ^{giš}ád / (lana) / níg-sám im-gi₆ / KI:LAM₇ / 'À-da-NI^{ki} (mese in lacuna)
 [57] 75.10152⁴⁷ v. III 4-8: (lana) / níg-sám / ^{giš}ád / KI:LAM₇ / ^dA-da-ma (mese I, *i-si*)
 [58] 75.10253⁴⁸ v. X 1-4: (lana) / níg-sám ^{giš}ád / KI:LAM₇ / ^dGa-mi-iš (mese [IV], [*gi*-NI])

Anche nei casi in cui ciò non viene esplicitamente indicato (mi riferisco ai passi [46], [48-49] e [51]) si può supporre che l'acquisto di ^{giš}ád avvenisse presso le 'fiere' (KI:LAM₇). Gli uomini menzionati in questi passi – *Bù-da-ma-lik* ([49]), *Du-bí-šum* ([51]), *En-na-il* ([54]), *En-na-ni-NI* ([46], [48]) – sono tutti 'collettori' (ur₁), come è deducibile dall'analisi prosopografica.⁴⁹ *En-na-il* ([54]) e *En-na-ni-NI* ([46], [48]) potrebbero essere identificati con *En-na-il* ([14-15]) e *En-na-ni-il* ([8-9]) attestati nel § 1.1. per l'acquisto di ^{giš}sim.

2.2 Nel passo seguente una serie di beni è 'trasportata' (íl) da un certo *A-da-gàr*:⁵⁰

- [59] 75.1245 r. X 9-11:⁵¹ 4 la-ḥa ì-giš / wa / diri / é / ^{giš}DUB / wa ^{giš}ád / ^{giš}ti-ḤAR

⁴³ Questo mese è stato proposto a causa della menzione del KI:LAM₇ ^dA-da-ma, evento generalmente attestato nel primo mese dell'anno, si veda Biga 2002: 280.

⁴⁴ Citato in Biga 2002: 285.

⁴⁵ Citato in Biga 2002: 286.

⁴⁶ Citato in Biga 2002: 287 («Ibr.; mois perdu»).

⁴⁷ Citato in Biga 2002: 288.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Si veda Cianfanelli 2020: 159 e sgg.

⁵⁰ Il contesto secondo Archi 2005: 13 nota 6, non sembra suggerire che ^{giš}ád possa essere una sostanza aromatica: «4 jars of oil, and in addition, a building (with) GIŠ-um and boxthorn, (chariot-)rail(s)».

In questo caso, come nel successivo, sembra si faccia riferimento al legno di ^{giš}ad piuttosto che all'olio:

[60] 75.2362 r. II 1-2:⁵² (silver) níg-sám ^{giš}ti-ĪAR ^{giš}ad.

3. *šar_x*(NE)-*mi-núm*

Guardando all'intera documentazione eblaita si può notare che il termine per 'cipresso'⁵³ non è attestato nei testi amministrativi. Essendo questa mancanza singolare, propongo per il termine NE-*mi-núm*, letto solitamente *ne-mi-lum*, presente nei testi amministrativi e generalmente non tradotto, una nuova lettura: *šar_x*(NE)-*mi-núm*, collegandolo quindi al termine per 'cipresso'. Il termine *šar_x*(NE)-*mi-núm*, come abbiamo visto (passi [34-39]), è sempre attestato senza il determinativo, ed è presente in contesti che fanno riferimento a viaggi del ministro *I-bí-zi-kir* (§ 1.1.3).

3.1 Il termine per 'cipresso' ad Ebla è invece presente nelle liste lessicali, sia bilingui sia di tipo *éš-bar-kin*:

[59] VE 379: ^{giš}su-me = *šè-rí-mi-nu* (A) *ša-mi-nu* (D), *šermēnum*, *šarmēnum*⁵⁴

[60] MEE 15 1 r. X 9: ^{giš}su-me

[61] MEE 15 33 r.IV' 3': ^{giš}su-me

[62] ARES IV p. 103, n. 217: *silā-^{giš}su-me* 'a chunk of cypress'

⁵¹ Pubblicato in *Archi* 2005, e si veda in particolare p. 13 § 26.

⁵² *Archi* 2005: 13 nota 6.

⁵³ Sul cipresso, in generale, si noti quanto osservato da Postgate 1992: 184 alla voce «*šurmēnu* "cypress" *Cupressus*. Now fairly generally identified with cypress. It yielded aromatic products and oil, and the royal inscriptions regularly comment on its sweet smell. As timber it is particularly favoured for doors, though used in other contexts as well. Not apparently taken from Lebanon or Amanus by the Middle Assyrian kings, but regularly in the 1st millennium. The tree does not occur in the wild in Iraq, "though one or two species are occasionally cultivated in sheltered gardens" (Guest 1933, 27). *Šurmēnu* is once mentioned by Sennacherib as cultivated for its wood in the swamps created by him near Nineveh (OIP 2.1 15), and it was of course planted by Assurnasirpal at Kalhu; one of Sargon's officials writes of "the season for uprooting cedar and cypress shoots" (Fales 1983, 59)).

⁵⁴ Vedi Hajouz 2013: 723-724, con bibliografia.

Il sumerogramma è presente anche nell'*Inno a Šamaš di Sippar* (ARETV 6), una versione parallela del quale è stata identificata in IAS 326+342, rinvenuta ad Abu Salabikh.⁵⁵

[63] ARETV 6 // IAS 326+342 r. III 6: ^{giš}su-me

3.2. Il cipresso si ritrova anche nei testi rituali, editi in ARET XI, dove compare sia come sumerogramma (^{giš}su-me) che nella sua grafia fonetica (*šar-mi-na*):

[64] ARET XI 1 r. VIII 1-6:⁵⁶ ^{giš}maš-^{giš}maš / *šar-mi-na* / ^{giš}giš / *na-gi-ba* / *ma-sa-da* / [^{giš}ildag₄]

[65] ARET XI 2 r. IX 13'-18':⁵⁷ *ap* / ^{giš}maš-^{giš}maš / ^{giš}su-me / ^{giš}giš-sù / *na-gi-ba* / 2 ^{giš}ma-dul₁₀ ^{giš}ildag₄

3.3 Nei testi di cancelleria, nella lettera ARET XVIII 6 v. I 7, è attestata una grafia <ì>^{giš} *nì-mì*, per la quale era stato proposto che potesse essere una variante di ì-^{giš} *ne-mi-lum*,⁵⁸ e quindi tradotta 'olio chiaro'. Alla luce però del fatto che NE-*mi*-LUM è preceduto da ì-^{giš} ('olio d'oliva') con la qualifica dūg ('di buona qualità') ([34, 37]), come anche avviene per ^{giš}sim [34, 37] e ^{giš}ád [34, 37], cioè due nomi di piante, di conseguenza anche NE-*mi*-LUM deve essere il nome di una pianta che con lettura *šar*_x(NE)-

⁵⁵ Vedi di recente Steinkeller 2021: 175-176 e nota 5, con bibliografia precedente.

⁵⁶ Fronzaroli 1993: 7: «Le assi di due cipressi come (suo) legname sono provviste, (e) due timoni [di pioppo]».

⁵⁷ Fronzaroli 1993: 56: «E inoltre assi di cipresso come suo legname sono provviste, (e) due timoni di pioppo».

⁵⁸ Catagnoti, Fronzaroli 2020: 35: «Questa grafia può essere interpretata come una variante di ì-^{giš} *ne-mi-lum*, un unguento che risulta fornito al re (ARET X 68 = TM.75.G.544, citato in Archi, *Fs Garelli*, p. 220) e a Yibbi'-Dikir in occasione di un viaggio a Kish (ARET IX 94 r. IV 4-v. I 1). Per quanto riguarda l'abbreviazione *nì-mì*, si confronteranno grafie come 'à, 'à-da per 'à-da-um-túg (p. es., ARET XII, p. 512), a per aktum-túg (ARET XII, p. 513), gú, gú-li per gú-li-lum (p. es., ARET XII, p. 544). La grafia *ne-mi-lum* (var. *nì-mì*), può essere interpretata come [nimī-um] per /nawī-r-um/ "olio chiaro", con armonia vocalica di /a/ pretonica; la resa di /w/ intervocalica con -m- in derivati di **nur* "splendere" è documentata a Ebla nelle grafie di nomi personali (ARES III. p. 152). In accadico il tema con vocale lunga caratterizza l'aggettivo verbale sostantivato (von Soden, GAG³, p. 74 i)».

mi-núm indicherebbe quindi il ‘cipresso’. L’attestazione di *ARET* XVIII 6 non dovrà quindi essere messa in rapporto con la grafia *NE-mi-LUM*. Inoltre, è interessante notare che nelle assegnazioni presenti nei testi di Mari paleobabilonese l’olio di cipresso, di cedro e mirto, spesso elencati insieme, sono attestati molto frequentemente.⁵⁹

4. Valutazioni conclusive

In base ai passi sopra riportati è difficile dire quale uso si facesse di questi olii aromatizzati. In generale l’olio veniva utilizzato in vari modi: toilette, pulizia di oggetti, cucina, illuminazione;⁶⁰ l’olio profumato era invece considerato un bene di lusso che, verosimilmente, veniva utilizzato in momenti particolari, come cerimonie culturali, o per scopi specifici, anche medici. Probabilmente, come avveniva a Mari paleobabilonese, i legni venivano lasciati macerare (a freddo) o erano decotti (a caldo) nell’olio.⁶¹ Come già detto, nelle assegnazioni presenti nei testi di Mari alcuni tipi di olii aromatizzati sono molto frequenti, è questo il caso dell’olio di cipresso, cedro e mirto. In conclusione, si propone che ^{giš}sim possa indicare la resina di ‘cedro’, con la consapevolezza che il termine per cedro è ^{giš}eren (akk. *erēnu*). Quest’ultimo termine, come è già stato notato,⁶² è praticamente

⁵⁹ Vedi Joannès 1993: 255 («La répartition de ces huiles parfumées n’est pas égale, car on constate (voir corpus, en appendice) une très nette prédominance du cyprès (70 attestations), du cèdre (42 attestations), et de de la myrte (29 attestations)»); p. 254 («La myrte, le cyprès, et le cèdre sont bien attestés comme arbres de l’Ouest»).

⁶⁰ Per la documentazione di Mari paleobabilonese si veda Joannès 1993: 254.

⁶¹ Vedi Joannès 1993: 253, 260 («L’inconvénient de la macération à froid est qu’elle peut être très longue selon les produits aromatiques utilisés. Il est probable qu’elle ne convenait bien que pour les essences dont nous trouvons le nom directement associé à l’huile, comme le cèdre, le cyprès, la myrte, ou le genévrier» ... «On peut donc faire une distinction entre des produits aromatiques utilisés pour une macération à froid, qui sont les quatre “bois” cités les plus fréquemment (cyprès, cèdre, myrte, genévrier), et toute une variété d’autres produits qui nécessitent une technique plus élaborée, celle de l’extraction à chaud et qui fournissent l’huile dite “de marmites”»).

⁶² Vedi Steinkeller 2021: 179: «The usual term for “cedar” is of course ^{giš}eren (Akkadian *erēnu*). The sign combination ^{giš}ir-nun means literally “tree of fragrant oil/resin”. Following an earlier suggestion by Archi (1993b, 17), I

assente nei testi amministrativi di Ebla,⁶³ quindi šim, termine che dovrebbe indicare in generale la resina, potrebbe invece essere stato utilizzato nei testi amministrativi di Ebla per indicare un particolare tipo di resina, quella di cedro, che unita all'olio lo avrebbe profumato. In aggiunta a questo, le attestazioni del § 2 sul ^{giš}ád dovrebbero far riferimento al 'mirto' e all'olio (î-giš) aromatizzato con tale legno e quelle dei passi [34-39] all'olio aromatizzato al cipresso.

Abbreviazioni

ARES II = Alfonso Archi - Paola Piacentini - Francesco Pomponio, *I nomi di luogo dei testi di Ebla (ARET I-IV, VII-X e altri documenti editi e inediti)*, Roma: Missione archeologica italiana in Siria, 1993.

RGTC 12/1 = Marco Bonechi, *I nomi geografici dei testi di Ebla* (Répertoire Géographique des textes Cunéiformes 12/1), Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1993.

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take this term to be a synonym of ^{giš}eren. An alternative solution would be to see in ^{giš}ir-nun a word for cedar resin/oil. But this solution is hardly satisfying, since the Ebla sources do not otherwise contain any mentions of cedar resin/oil (by using ^{giš}ir-nun or any other term). More fundamentally, one is perplexed by the fact that ^{giš}eren itself never appears in this documentation, the only type of timber mentioned there being fir = ^{giš}taskarin [...]. In spite of all these reservations, however, the explanation of ^{giš}ir-nun as "cedar" appears to be the most likely solution at this time».

⁶³ Nei testi amministrativi finora editi il termine ^{giš}eren ricorre esclusivamente in *ARET* XV 8 r. II 2 (1 ^{giš}-gígir-II ^{giš}eren TAR kù: babbar), e senza il determinativo in *MEE* 7 14 v. II 17 (šu-mu-taka₁ / éren).

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*The Impact of the Royal Danish Expedition
to Arabia (1761-1767) on Semitic Studies:
Some Preliminary Remarks.*

RICCARDO CONTINI

The following lines are intended as a very imperfect homage to my old friend and colleague Simonetta Graziani, drawing from a line of research on philological, ethnographic, and archaeological data preserved in travel literature on the Near and Middle East, which we separately and jointly pursued for many years, even occasionally coming to a published result.¹ In the present case, Carsten Niebuhr – who was famously the first to reliably illustrate cuneiform writings – seemed to me to offer a particularly fitting topic for a gift to an Assyriologist, even though no further mention of Assyriological lore shall be found in this paper, focused on Semitic linguistics.²

1. Originally conceived by the leading Semitist of the Georgia Augusta Universität in Göttingen (the first modern research university in Europe according to William Clark [2006]) Johann

¹ Contini, Graziani 2013 and 2016 are cases in point.

² This is a slightly revised version of a lecture given on June 26th, 2017 at the Seminar für Sprachen und Kulturen des Vorderen Orients – Semitistik der Universität Heidelberg: I warmly thank my host, Prof. Dr. Werner Arnold, a deeply valued colleague and friend, and several members of the audience for a very useful discussion.

David Michaelis (1717–1791), revised and backed by the humanistic vision of the German minister at Copenhagen Johann Hartwig Ernst Bernsdorff (1712–1772), generously subsidized by the king of Denmark Frederik V (1723–1766) and provided with a set of collegial and individual royal instructions,³ the Royal Danish Expedition to Arabia (henceforth: R.D.E.A.) produced significant results – not just for the 18th century – in most of the sciences covered by its multidisciplinary (and internationally supervised) project:⁴ geography, cartography, (navigational) astronomy, antiquities, botany and zoology, and philology.⁵

2. Its impact on Semitic studies, particularly epigraphy and linguistics (mainly lexicology), though, is best illustrated by distinguishing its *expected*, *actual* and *potential* results. The tragic death by malaria, contracted in the unhealthy Tihāma of Yemen, in 1763 of four of the five members of the expedition (the philologist Frederik Christian von Haven [1727–1763], the biologist Pehr Forsskål [henceforth: F., 1732–1763] – a disciple of Carl von Linné –, the physician Christian Cramer [1732–1763], and the artist Georg Wilhelm Baurenfeind [1728–1763]) left its only survivor, the geographer Carsten Niebuhr (henceforth: N., 1733–1815), with the task of publishing all the results of the enterprise, his own as well as his companions', without having a specific training in natural sciences or Oriental philology: though he

³ These are reproduced in Rasmussen 1986: 59–78.

⁴ The final bibliography in this paper records not only the original editions in German of N.'s *Beschreibung von Arabien* (= BA, 1772) and *Reisebeschreibung nach Arabien* (= RA, 1774, 1778, 1837) but also their incomplete and frankly indifferent French and English translations, respectively: no serious work on N.'s travel accounts can do without the German text.

⁵ An attractive popularized narrative of R.D.E.A. is in Hansen 1964; the most important scholarly accounts, often voluminous and lavishly illustrated, were provided by Rasmussen 1986 and 1990; Wiesehöfer, Conermann 2002; Klaver 2009: 35, 64–69 and 79–81; (above all) Baack 2014. On the key role of Michaelis as the first initiator of the expedition see also Feuerhahn 2001; Achermann 2002; Hübner 2002; Rauchstein 2016: 167–210. On the importance of questionnaires as heuristic tools for 18th century scholarly travellers the crucial references are Stagl 1995: 123–124, 273–277, and *passim*, and Osterhammel 2018: 189–195.

acquitted himself with extraordinary probity, industry and intelligent flexibility, he could of course not fully replace what F. C. von Haven and particularly Forsskål – the expeditions's best linguist by far, fluent in several Arabic dialects, – could have performed. This is why the results of the R.D.E.A. for Semitics have generally been reputed to be poor, even by its inspirer Michaelis (henceforth: M.), and generally limited in the best accounts of its impact on 18th cent. learning⁶ to a list of the slightly over 100 fine Arabic and Hebrew manuscripts bought with taste and discrimination by von Haven in Istanbul and Cairo.⁷ On the other hand, M. was disappointed with N. (and F.)'s scanty answers to the lexical points covered in his – often very complex – 100 questions,⁸ whereby he expected illumination from the reputedly conservative Yemeni Arabic vocabulary to explain enigmatic Biblical Hebrew words (plant and animal names, illnesses, denotations of sexual mores or items of material culture, and other *hapax legómena*), while other spoken Arabic lexical data *expected* (mainly by the scholars of the Parisian Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres) from von Haven and F.'s field investigation in Egypt and especially in Yemen were altogether missing.

3. In fact, in the field of *epigraphy*, N.'s best-known contributions pertain rather to Old Egyptian and cuneiform inscriptions than to Semitica: as is well known, his amazingly accurate copies of the three different cuneiform scripts employed at Persepolis (Babylonian, Elamite, Old Persian) were decisive in allowing Georg Friedrich Grotefend (1775–1853)'s decipherment in 1802 of the Old Persian writing,⁹ as his copies of the Sasanian royal inscriptions at Naqš-i Rāgāb and Naqš-i Rostam were instrumental for Antoine Isaac Silvestre de Sacy's cracking of the Middle Persian and Parthian scripts, while his excellent copies of hieroglyphic inscribed walls from Egypt and Sinai were useful to Jean-François Champollion's decipherment of Old Egyptian. In the *Semitic* realm, though, the record of the R.D.E.A., owing both

⁶ Rasmussen 1986 and 1990, Wiesehöfer, Conermann 2002; Baack 2014.

⁷ See the list in Rasmussen 1986: 46–47.

⁸ *Fragen* [1762, 1774].

⁹ Wiesehöfer 2001. I owe further enlightening remarks on this subject to a lecture in Naples by my colleague and friend Gian Pietro Basello.

to mistakes in planning and execution and mostly to singular bad luck, is exclusively a list of failures:

1) The mysterious inscriptions seen by former travellers in the “Gebel Mokateb” (*i.e.* the thousands of *Nabataean* graffiti in the *W. Mukattab*) in the Sinai could not be copied in September 1762 by von Haven and N., misled by their bedouin guides (with whom in the absence of F. neither scholar could efficiently communicate in colloquial Arabic); however, N. copied about 20 Nabataean graffiti elsewhere in Sinai: this dismal fiasco¹⁰ – that made Bernstorff quite furious because of Frederik V and M.’s specific interest in these relics – was only partially made good by Jasper Ulrich Seetzen (1767–1811)’s copying about 25 graffiti from Wadi Mukattab in the summer of 1809, later published with extracts of his letters by Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall (1774–1856).

2) During the expedition’s ill-fated stay in Yemen, N. was informed of the existence of *Himyaritic* (= Ancient South Arabian) inscriptions in *Zafār e Mankat*, but was prevented by illness from copying them: here again, Seetzen’s (equally ill-fated) expedition to Yemen could in a way repair the R.D.E.A.’s omissions, since in 1810 he could copy those five Ancient South Arabian inscriptions, his copies – also published in 1811 by von Hammer – representing the first documentation of the language known in Europe.¹¹

3) During his stay in Syria in 1766, N. was asked to copy some *Phoenician* inscriptions in Kition (Cyprus), found in 1738 but very poorly reproduced in 1745 by Richard Pococke (1704–1765): N. was however unable to find the epigraphs, the marble slabs on which these were inscribed having presumably been removed before his visit, and some of them brought to England around 1750.¹² These missed opportunities exemplify what I dubbed the R.D.E.A.’s *potential* contribution to Semitic studies: if made available to Oriental philologists in Europe in the 1770s, these texts might possibly have concurred to anticipate by a few decades the

¹⁰ Full account of the Sinaitic episode in Kraack 2002.

¹¹ Nebes 1995, with full documentation and facsimiles.

¹² One of them is now in the Bodleian Library in Oxford: see Gibson 1982: 135 and Baack 2014: 262 ff.; texts A1 and B1 – B30 were subsequently published, mostly from Pococke’s copies and from a few recovered originals, by Guzzo Amadasi, Karagheorghis 1977: 11–13 and 48–76.

decipherment of Nabataean and ASA,¹³ while reliable copies of all the Kition inscriptions would certainly have marked a substantial progress in the description of Phoenician, already deciphered – also thanks to the Bodleian text – by the supremely talented Abbé Jean-Jacques Barthélemy of the Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres since 1764 at the latest.¹⁴

4. Concerning the R.D.E.A.'s results in aid to M.'s *comparative Semitic investigations into problematical Biblical Hebrew words* (a method advocated in his *Beurtheilung der Mittel, welche man anwendet, die ausgestorbene Hebräische Sprache zu verstehen*, 1757), M. himself – vainly solicited by N. for a commentary or correction of the relevant sections of *BA* before impression – expressed his disappointment for the short shrift his *Fragen* had received in the introduction to the book, while greatly praising the work itself, in his extensive review (38 pages, usefully reprinted in *Recueil*, 1774): he, however, highlighted there (as well in his posthumous, massive *Supplementa ad lexica hebraica*, 1792) several instances where N.'s authority ("teste Niebuhrio") supported his own opinion against Samuel Bochart or other eminent lexicographers of Biblical Hebrew: *e.g.*

1) *s.v.* *bōhaq* (Lv 13,39) denoting a kind of white *vitaligo*, which Moses had excluded from being leprosy: «Nomen adhuc et rem in Arabia superesse docuit Niebuhrius, esse autem has papulas innocentes, sulphuri cedere, atque etiam sponte evanescere» (*SLH* 157 f.): already in his review M. avowed that «les Voyageurs [*i.e.* also F., in *BA* XLIV ad *Fr.* XXVIII] ... ont répondu à mes Questions aussi complètement, que j'aurais pu le souhaiter», N.'s testimonial even allowing him to assert that the central meaning (roughly corresponding to what Pierre Guiraud famously dubbed "sème lexicogène") of $\sqrt{\text{BHQ}}$ was WHITE (as confirmed by Barhebraeus' use of Syriac *'abheq* when describing Abgar the Great's illness);

2) *s.v.* *t'w* (Dt 14,5) 'buffalo' (today more often translated as 'antelope'), *pace* Bochart, against whom N. (*BA* 165) is invoked as

¹³ Lewis, Macdonald 2003 (Nabataean); Garbini 2006: 24-25 (Ancient South Arabian).

¹⁴ Gibson 1983: 135 and Garbini 2006: 22-25, with further references.

a source for the consumption of buffalo meat by Arabs in Syria and Palestine, whereas buffaloes are absent in Arabia (and actually, as M. was quick to point out, Ar *ḡāmūs* is a Persian loanword).

Elsewhere in *SLH*, however, though very often quoting travel literature in the Near and Middle East as sources for his lexicological reasoning (as befitting an eager practitioner of the discipline of *ars apodemica*, greatly in vogue at Göttingen, where his former pupil and colleague August Ludwig Schlözer (1735–1809) – well known as the originator [1781] of the adjective “Semitic” to denote the language family – figured as its theorist),¹⁵ M. does not seem – at a first, quick perusal – to quote N.’s and particularly F.’s data on Neo-Arabic vocabulary as much as he could have to support his comparative elucidation of difficult Biblical Hebrew words. Concerning the limitations of M.’s comparative lexicological practice, while consulting his *SLH* we are often reminded of Wilhelm Gesenius’s famous verdict: M. in 52 years of philological activity collected a mass of useful integrations to current Biblical Hebrew dictionaries, «wiewohl man in Materie und Form des Werkes hier und da die consequente Haltung der Grundsätze vermisst, die der Verfasser selbst in der Theorie aufgestellt hatte».¹⁶

Still regarding *Neo-Arabic*, rather surprisingly, M. decreed that F.’s onomasiological list of lexical differences between Yemeni and Cairo Arabic (reported by N. in *BA* 84-88) was already well known “also from books”: actually, while some data on Cairo Arabic were certainly accessible in Europe in the second half of the 18th cent. (*e.g.* in the grammar + collection of proverbs used

¹⁵ Cf. Stagl 1995: 244-268, and *passim*. N. was actually praised by his contemporary readers as a paradigmatic instance of “philosophical traveller”, aptly defined by Osterhammer (2018: 185, 212 and note 549) as «an ambulatory scholar who, not yet bound by the constraints of strictly defined academic disciplines such as geography or ethnology, contributed to universal knowledge in accordance with the most advanced methodological standards of the day». Another such traveller of the highest interest for Semitic scholars was of course, about a generation after N., Constantin-François Chasseboeuf, comte de Volney (1757–1820).

¹⁶ Gesenius 1815: 154. Some more denunciations, by Heinrich Ewald *inter alios*, of M.’s methodological weaknesses in Semitic lexicology and comparative philology are recorded in Smend 2007: 38-41, Legaspi 2010: 79-104, and Rauchstein 2017: 143-206.

by their teacher in Cairo and copied by N. as a present for M., who stated his intention of publishing it, but apparently never did), Yemeni Arabic was known mostly from Ludovico de Varthema's rather deformed early 16th cent. version of *Šan'āni*,¹⁷ whereas F.'s forms exemplified the very different Tihāma dialect, whose serious field investigation was essentially begun only after 1980.¹⁸ Even in the absence of a coherent system of transcription of Arabic dialects, F.'s data – as well as N.'s intelligent choice to include this instance of his friend's gift for field dialectology in his description of the language situation of Arabia – would certainly have deserved the attention of Semitic scholars in the 1770s, as the following very small selection tries to show:

- 'wo gehst du hin?' Yem(enī Tihāma) *fēn tebuch* [√BWK, typically Tih.], *fēn tidschi*, *fēn tesîr*, *fēn tisrah* [√SRH (telic) 'to go']; Ca(iro) *fēn terûch*;

- 'verstehst du?' Yem *iftahamlak* (Gt suffix conjugation + co-referential dative:¹⁹ cf. *Beh* 957); Ca *fahîmt*;

- 'anjezt' Yem *delhîn* (= *dalhîr*); Ca *dilvakt* (= *dilwaqtî*);

- 'eine Kammer' Yem *makân* ('Platz; Zimmer'); Ca *oda*;

- 'Ich habe in dieser Nacht gar nicht geschlafen' Yem *ma ragadt noum fillæjla*; Ca *ma nymt schi di llæjl*.

5. The importance of F.'s data for *Egyptian* and especially *Yemeni Arabic plant and animal names* had long been recognized by Semitic scholars, only the absence of a lexical index in both his capital monographs posthumously edited by N. in 1775, with the help of yet unidentified natural scientists,²⁰ prevented their being made use of in descriptive or comparative lexical research before Georg Schweinfurth (1836–1925) compiled an index of the plant names in 1912: this glossary, largely referred to by eminent lexicographers of Classical Arabic (Freytag, Kazimirski) with wrong plant identifications, needed however to be updated

¹⁷ Soravia 1991; Contini 1996.

¹⁸ Cf. Behnstedt 1985; 1996; 2016; 2017.

¹⁹ The coreferential dative here, as in several West Semitic languages, is used to express the middle diathesis: cf. Lentin 2008 for Levantine Arabic, with relevant comparative remarks.

²⁰ Though Daniel Zoega is known to have collaborated to the edition of F. 1775a and of its accompanying volume of illustration, *Icones*.

in the light of over two centuries of progress in botanical classification and correlated to the numerous *specimina* and seeds sent by F. to Copenhagen. Only after this indispensable naturalistic work was superbly performed by Hepper and Friis (1994), intensive lexicological research on F.'s data (1775b: 758 local plant names only for Yemen) was carried out by Provençal (2002 and 2010), with some application of ethnoscientific methodology.

F.'s zoonymical data (over 1370 local Neo-Arabic animal names), on the other hand, are still waiting for the same attention, though a few promising attempts at ethnozoological analysis of Red Sea fish names also recorded by F. (1775a) have lately been made by Provençal and Skaarup (2016). Only a few instances shall be discussed here of both Yemeni Arabic plant and animal names transcribed by F. (generally both in Latin and in Arabic letters, though some cases of ambiguity remain), in order to show, *inter alia*, how this uniquely gifted biologist-cum-linguist even in his rough field notes edited by N. already anticipated some results of present-day Neo-Arabic ethnolinguistics, *e.g.* also recording the uses of Arabic zoological and botanical *materia medica*:

PLANT NAMES:

- Mesembryanthemum nodiflorum L.: F. *schæchacha*, Pr(ovençal) *šahhāḥah*, an intensive (or rather: factitive) formation from √SHH 'to micturate', expressing the diuretic properties of this plant;

- Suaeda ægyptiaca (Hasselq.) Zohary: F. *mullæah*, Pr *mullāh*, where F. already recognized what we would name the *sème lexicogène* of SALT (*milh*), this being a 'salsuginosa planta';

- Commiphora gileadensis (L.) Christensen (olim Commiphora Opobalsamum, a small branch and seeds of which F. sent to his teacher Linné in Uppsala): F. *Abu schâm* 'good-smelling', a metanalysis through √SMM in *kunya*-form of Yemeni Arabic *būšām*, cf. Biblical Hebrew *bāsām* and the Semitic loanword in Greek βάλαμον, with the etymological voiceless fricative lateral *s.²¹

FISH NAMES:

²¹ Complete etymological dossier in Steiner 1977: 123-129; Schopen 1983: 58-59; Müller 1997: 199-200.

- Monotaxis grandoculis (Forssk.) ‘Bigeye Emperor’: F. Sciæna grandoculis abu ajn, Pr and Randall (1992: no. 122) *abū‘ayn*, whose salient feature had clearly already been recognized by F.

- Lutjanus bohar (Forssk.) ‘Twinspot Snapper’: F. Sciæna bohar, promoting – as he often did – the local Arabic name to the scientific nomenclature: the *sème lexicogène* was here presumably BRILLIANT, expressed by √BHR;

- Cephalopholis miniata ‘Coral Grouper’: F. Perca summana varietas fusco-guttata *koschar*, Pr *kušar*, whose *sème lexicogène* was possibly the teeth-showing GRIMACE (√KŠR) of this fish, evident also in Randall’s photo (1992: no. 43).

6. Albeit von Haven’s efforts at dialectological investigation of Neo-Arabic were apparently restricted to some dozens of Italian loanwords into Egyptian Arabic which he recorded in Alexandria and Cairo, witness his notebooks (so far unavailable to me) according to N.’s report to M., F.’s interest in languages was never dormant, and actually resulted in the collection of some useful lexical data from an unexpected corner of Neo-Semitic: *Maltese*. In his zoological monograph (1775a), F. recorded (*DA XVIII-XIX*) a list of Maltese fish names obtained for him by an eminent – but unfortunately heretofore unidentified – physician and naturalist of Malta. Since most of these words are missing from the first functional dictionary of Maltese (Vassalli 1796 = V), but are confirmed by reliable 20th cent. sources (Oman’s 1966 [= O] and Aquilina’s 1969 [= Aq1] inquiries in the cadre of the *Atlante Linguistico del Mediterraneo*, Aquilina’s standard Maltese dictionary [= Aq2], and Brincat and D’Avenia’s 2014 inquiry for the *Atlante Linguistico della Sicilia* [= Br and D’Av]),²² I think it is fitting to mention here F.’s pioneering contribution to Maltese nautical vocabulary, by offering a few instances:

- ‘long-nosed skate’ F. *hamiema*, V *Hamÿme*, Aq1 + Aq2 *ħamiema* (< *Ar ḥamāma* ‘dove’), O *hamiema*, Br and D’Av 87 (no. 451) *ħamiema* ‘razza stellata’;

²² Some diachronic phenomena in Maltese fish-names in their interaction with Romance are described by Brincat 1978, now to be compared with the newer trends in Brincat 2021.

- ‘shark’ (1) F. *il chelp il bahr* (‘the dog of the sea’: a calque on Italian *pescecane*), Aq1 + Aq2 *kelb il-baḥar*, Br and D‘Av 87 (no. 446) *kelb il-baḥar* ‘pescecane’;
- ‘shark’ (2) F. *sia*, Aq2 *sija* ‘saw-fish’ (possibly < Sicilian **sia* ‘saw’);
- ‘grey mullet’ F. *caplar* (recte: *caplat*), V *kaplât* ‘muggine grande, cefalone’, Aq1 *kaplât* (< Sicilian *capulatu*), Aq2 + O *kaplat*, Br and D‘Av 80 (no. 378) *kaplat* ‘cefalo musino’;
- ‘horse mackerel’ F. *savrella*, O + Aq1 + Aq2 *sawrella* (s.f. ← collective *sawrell* < Campidanese *sauriello*, Sicilian *saurieddu*), Br and D‘Av 80 (no. 370) *sawrella imperjala* ‘carango mediterraneo’.

7. No less significant for Semitic linguistics are some remarks on the *distribution* and, as we would say today, *sociolinguistics* of *Neo-Semitic* languages in Western Asia offered by N. in the linguistic chapter of his *Beschreibung Arabiens* (1771) [BA 83-94]:²³ due mention is made of language variation in ancient as well as in modern Yemen, with quotation of the well-known anecdote about the king of Ḥimyar saying <theb> (from √WTB ‘to sit down’ in Ancient South Arabian, but ‘to jump’ in Arabic) to an Arab, who subsequently plunged to his death into a ravine; for contemporary Yemen not only diatopic, but also “ecolinguistic” (bedouin vs. sedentary) and possibly diastratic (specific features of the language of the élites, *Vornehmen*) distinctions are illustrated; different phonological reflexes of velar and uvular Arabic consonants in Gulf Arabic are mentioned (but N. – as occasionally also F. as reported by N. – makes some confusion between *qāf* and *kāf*); N. was aware of what we now know as Arabic diglossia, though he compares the differences between Classical Arabic and Peninsular Arabic varieties with those between Classical Latin and Italian dialects, the Neo-Arabic dialects outside Arabia with Romance languages outside Italy; more importantly, N. – no doubt following F.’s remarks – stresses the interest of investigating the presumably more conservative dialects of inner Ḥijaz as

²³ Pace Reinfandt 2002: 110 note 19, this account can hardly be based on von Haven’s notes, save for the first two pages.

of inner northern Yemen, two areas still rather understudied full 250 years after his exhortation.²⁴

N. was also the first European traveller to Western Asia to mention Aramaic as being still spoken in several regions, actually showing awareness of the four Neo-Aramaic subgroups which we still distinguish: Western (in the area of the Qalamūn highland, N-E of Damascus), Turoyo (in the Tur Abdin region in S-E Turkey), North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic in NW Iraqi Kurdistan and in Iranian Azerbaijan and Kurdistan (N. particularly mentions the opportunity for European Semitists to study spoken Chaldean for a year at least in a monastery in Alqosh), and even Neo-Mandaic (whose spoken status in Baṣra he explicitly states).

Concerning the status of Coptic in Egypt, N. recognized its reduced role as a liturgical language. This reminds contemporary readers of the distinction: liturgical language *de iure* vs *de facto*, made for Egypt, among others, by Andrzej Zaborski (1996: 202-203). Some of these instances of his power of observation also in linguistic matters are actually summarized by Michaelis in his, as usual, quite competent review, but without adequate evaluation of their importance for the study of Neo-Semitic, a topic rather outside M.'s range or conception of Semitic linguistics.

8. What I presented here is just a first survey of the advantage of a reading of N.'s travel accounts slanted towards Semitic, particularly Neo-Semitic, languages: the admirable concreteness, impartiality and most particularly impersonality of N.'s work as supplying «a basis and a standard to every subsequent inquirer about Arabia», as rightly stressed by David Hogarth (1904: 58 ff.),²⁵ combined with his rare capacity for observation, stood N. in good stead also as making his complementary Arabian travelogues *BA* (= *ordo rerum*) and *RB* (= *ordo itineris*) an invaluable source for Semitic scholars, too. I hope and trust that the development of some of my work in progress may soon show this even further.

²⁴ Though Behnstedt's wonderful *Dialect atlas of North Yemen and adjacent areas* (2017) marked a remarkable progress also in this perspective.

²⁵ Hogarth's distance from matters of philological expertise is however shown by his remarking (p. 49) that von Haven's death robbed the R.D.E.A. of «their best Arabist»!

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*Trasformazione e adattamento delle scienze
astrologiche nella tarda antichità.
Una prima analisi del seismologion
nel ʿAsfar Malwašia mandaico*

ALFREDO CRISCUOLO

Nel 2000¹ Francesca Rochberg pubblicava il primo e unico studio sull'eredità mesopotamica² delle conoscenze astrologiche nel mandaico ʿAsfar Malwašia (AM) o *Libro dello Zodiaco*.³ Nel pieno di un solco metodologico e epistemologico alla Pingree,⁴ la

¹ Rochberg (1999-2000), ripubblicato in *ead.* (2010) da cui traggio le citazioni. Per dovere cito il lavoro della storica delle scienze astrologiche occidentali di epoca medioevale Masco (2012): seppur ben condotto si limita a una sintesi di quanto già noto alla mandeistica e agli studi sull'astrologia nel Vicino Oriente antico e tardoantico.

² Ancora molto utile è la sintesi di Pingree in appendice a Dalley 1998.

³ Edizione di riferimento è Drower (1949). L'edizione è stata condotta su tre manoscritti: 1) di proprietà della Drower copiato per lei da un mss. datato 1247 A.H. (corrispondente al D.C. 31 oggi alla Bodleiana); 2) una seconda e più recente copia (1350 A.H.) messa a disposizione della Drower da un sacerdote mandeo a Baghdad; 3) il mss. C.S. 26 della *Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris*, datato al 1212 A.H.

⁴ Al netto degli indiscutibili meriti della monumentale opera di ricerca condotta da David Pingree, la recente critica ha messo in discussione non poche delle sue ricostruzioni storiche. Oggetto particolare di revisione è il concetto stesso di trasmissione come nel caso dei suoi studi sull'astrologia indiana e la sua presunta eredità mesopotamica. Cfr. Brown (2018) in particolare pp. 456-481 sul ruolo dell'astrologia iranica nella trasmissione dalla Mesopotamia all'India.

Rochberg tentava di ricostruire la catena di trasmissione che dalla seconda metà del primo millennio a.C. avrebbe trádito il materiale mesopotamico nel *Tesaurus* astrologico mandaico del V/VI secolo d.C.,⁵ esemplificando tale trasmissione con la messa in sinossi di passi tratti dalla serie *Iqqur Ipuš* con gli “equivalenti” passi individuati nel AM.⁶ Al riconoscimento di un’evidente equivalenza contenutistica non ha fatto seguito una altrettanto evidente ricostruzione storico testuale.⁷ Questo mio breve contributo,⁸ che dedico con affetto, stima e gratitudine a Simonetta Graziani, si inserisce nel dibattito aperto dalle domande poste dalla Rochberg, aggiungendo ulteriori elementi di comparazione nella speranza di arricchire il quadro generale sotteso alle risposte già offerte dalla studiosa.⁹ Molto ancora si dovrà fare in futuro: uno studio dettagliato dell’AM sia sul piano linguistico sia testuale per definire meglio le fasi redazionali dei vari trattati e, cosa ancor più complessa, un’ampia comparazione con la letteratura astrologica al fine di individuarne le fonti.

L’AM è un *kurasa*, cioè un deposito di testi di diversa grandezza ma di contenuto omogeneo aggiunti uno dopo l’altro nel corso del tempo. Non conosciamo la chiusura del canone¹⁰ ma

⁵ Questa datazione si basa esclusivamente su elementi riconducibili a un presunto *milieu* sasanide presenti nel testo e in particolare nella prima parte dell’AM.

⁶ In particolare, gli *omina* ai vv. 1-6 del paragrafo 77 di *Iqqur Ipuš* con i versi del paragrafo 210 del AM riguardanti la presenza di un alone (*ušurtu*) intorno alla luna. Per l’edizione di *Iqqur Ipuš* vd. Labat 1965.

⁷ La comparazione tipologica ha sofferto sia la mancanza di una comparazione linguistica, per ammissione della stessa studiosa che non legge il mandaico, sia la mancanza di una comparazione con le tradizioni parallele. Fin d’ora faccio notare che in realtà, allo stato attuale della ricerca, è impossibile ogni ricostruzione della trasmissione testuale se non a grandi linee.

⁸ Spero in un prossimo futuro di dedicarmi a uno studio dettagliato dell’AM. Un ostacolo al momento insormontabile è la gran quantità di materiale siriano e arabo che attende ancora di essere pubblicato e studiato.

⁹ La questione più importante è posta in questi termini dalla studiosa: «The question is therefore raised whether the Babylonian “origins” of the Mandaean *Book of the Zodiac*, were the result of a direct transmission, or were carried back to Mesopotamia through the medium of Hellenistic science in the specific form of Greek astrology» (Rochberg 2010: 226).

¹⁰ Dal colofone presente solo nella prima parte dell’AM l’unico dato utile è che la catena dei copisti non risale oltre il XVI secolo.

in tutte le copie a noi note alla fine di ogni pagina si riporta l'incipit della pagina successiva: tra le tipologie testuali mandaiche un *kurasa* è quanto di più vicino a un codice.¹¹ Tradizionalmente diviso in due grandi sezioni contenutisticamente simili ma linguisticamente diverse: la prima, composta da venti libri (o trattati) di diversi paragrafi ognuno è scritta in un mandaico che possiamo ancora definire classico;¹² la seconda, di un solo libro e più paragrafi, è scritta in un mandaico molto tardo in fase di transizione verso il neomandaico.¹³

Il riconoscimento dell'eco mesopotamica nell'AM ha una lunga tradizione riconducibile già alle prime descrizioni occidentali del nostro testo nel diciassettesimo secolo.¹⁴ Ibrāhīm al-Ḥāqilānī, meglio noto come Abraham Ecchellensis,¹⁵ nel 1660, nella sua breve ma puntuale descrizione, lo attribuisce alla tradizione astrologica aramaica: «liber signorum zodiaci, sive de Sphaera, et est de Chaldaeorum perantiqua illa et tam decantata Astrologia».¹⁶ Soltanto dopo l'edizione del 1949 della Drower si registrano brevi e quasi mai argomentati riferimenti alla tradizione mesopotamica, se non giudizi affrettati come in Sarton 1950 o difficilmente comprensibili come in Pingree 1997:44 dove l'autore glossa l'AM come "curious work". Fa eccezione, divenendo punto di riferimento per la Rochberg, il lavoro della Müller-Kessler (1999) che seppur non completamente condivisibile nelle conclusioni di storia linguistica ha il merito di aver eviden-

¹¹ Lady Drower 1949: 1, così descrive la forma: «In form, the *Sfar Malvašia* is a *kurasa*, that is, a set of unbound pages kept within a pair of stiff covers».

¹² Di diverso avviso era Nöldeke 1875: xxiv-xxv.

¹³ In questa sede non è possibile descrivere nel dettaglio l'AM e le molte problematiche che esso comporta, pertanto rinvio all'introduzione di Drower 1949 e più in generale sulla letteratura mandaica a Rudolph 1996: 339-362 in particolare pp. 352-354. Sull'importanza dell'AM per lo studio delle tradizioni astrologiche è ancora possibile leggere la risposta di Neugebauer 1951 alla recensione di Sarton all'edizione della Drower. Per una sintesi contenutistica dell'AM cfr. Neugebauer 1950 e Rochberg 2010.

¹⁴ L'incontro tra i missionari cristiani con i mandei e la loro letteratura è efficacemente sintetizzato in Lupieri 1993: 85-154.

¹⁵ Una scheda bio-bibliografica sul noto orientalista maronita è offerta in Moukarzel 2017: 774-782.

¹⁶ Ecchellensis 1660: 335.

ziato sia le problematiche linguistiche sia storico testuali del materiale offerto dall'AM.

La natura composita dell'AM fa sì che i suoi trattati siano ascrivibili a più di una categoria del genere letterario astrologico,¹⁷ presentando un'ampia casistica tanto tipologica quanto contenutistica. Il caso che prenderemo in esame rientra a pieno titolo nella tipologia degli *omina*, ricordando che tra tutta la letteratura astrologica tardoantica è stato riconosciuto, già da molto tempo,¹⁸ che sono proprio gli *omina* a mostrare un tratto spiccatamente conservativo riconducibile alla più ampia tradizione divinatoria mesopotamica.¹⁹ Non è possibile in questa sede ricostruire la storia dell'astrologia tardoantica²⁰ ma è necessario, ai fini della comparazione, un inquadramento minimo dell'AM nel suo contesto storico letterario. Chiunque si sia cimentato nel compito di classificare il materiale letterario astrologico si è sempre imbattuto, e ancora oggi è così, in una difficoltà oggettiva che è necessario tenere a mente in via preventiva, al fine di chiarire che ogni ricostruzione è al momento un'ipotesi di lavoro. Il materiale tardoantico e medioevale, riconducibile alla tradizione mesopotamica, è il risultato di una lunga opera di diffusione del pensiero scientifico astrologico, e della sua tecnologia, tra le diverse culture del Vicino e Medio Oriente. Lingue diverse, identità comunitarie diverse, ambienti socio-economici diversi, epoche e momenti storici diversi sono state le zattere che contemporaneamente hanno traghettato e influenzato un genere letterario unico nel suo nucleo originario. Convenzionalmente, e per ovvi motivi di competenza, gli studiosi dividono le diverse tradizioni in base alle lingue in cui i vari testi sono stati scritti e tramandati, nel nostro caso l'AM rientra nella letteratura astro-

¹⁷ La classica definizione di "Astrologia" in Pingree 1968 con la classificazione delle sue categorie può oggi essere aggiornata con Brown 2018: 12-30.

¹⁸ Il primato bibliografico di Bezold, Boll 1911 è oggi ampiamente superato da una vasta bibliografia difficilmente sintetizzabile in una nota.

¹⁹ Sebbene datato il miglior compendio sulle scienze divinatorie mesopotamiche resta ancora Bottéro 1974, da integrare per la bibliografia con Brown 2006.

²⁰ Un'ottima sintesi è ancora l'introduzione offerta in Mengozzi 1997: 16-35 da aggiornare con la bibliografia in Ben-Dov 2018 per il semitico nordoccidentale e più in generale Brown 2018.

logica in lingua aramaica. Un catalogo sommario dei testi editi al momento non è particolarmente ricco:²¹ per l'aramaico di Qumran si deve tener conto del *brontologion* e del *selenodromion* in 4Q318,²² del testo fisionomico in 4Q561²³ e dei frammenti in aramaico del libro di *1 Enoch*, noti come *Il libro dell'astronomia di Enoch*;²⁴ in aramaico Giudaico Palestinese abbiamo i testi rinvenuti nella Genizah del Cairo;²⁵ in aramaico Samaritano abbiamo il *Libro dei segreti di Mosé*;²⁶ in ambito Siriaco possediamo i trattati pubblicati da Kugener,²⁷ Budge,²⁸ Furlani,²⁹ Mengozzi.³⁰ Da questa lista, che ricordo essere parziale e al netto del nostro AM, emergono dalla trasparenza della filigrana almeno due dati significativi: 1) alle varianti dialettali corrispondo le sottese varianti comunitarie, quella giudaica, quella cristiana e quella mandai-ca; 2) lo iato temporale tra i testi nelle diverse tradizioni.³¹ Allo stato attuale il lavoro su una singola tradizione restituisce un quadro altamente frammentario, solo tenendo conto di tutta la letteratura astrologica sarà possibile ricostruire un mosaico leg-gibile seppur sempre parziale.

Le due raccolte di *omina* sui terremoti che troviamo nelle due sezioni dell'AM, rispettivamente AM I 241: 19-245: 5 e AM II 274: 2-46, hanno tutte le caratteristiche per essere usate in modo esemplificativo di una storia letteraria solo apparentemente interrotta. Il grande merito del lavoro della Rochberg è di aver messo in evidenza il punto di partenza e di arrivo di una tradizione, le differenze emerse dal confronto hanno suscitato legiti-

²¹ Naturalmente mi limito a citare solo i testi che rientrano nella tipologia degli *omina* o che ad essa fanno riferimento.

²² Greenfield, Sokoloff 1994: 507-525.

²³ Popovic 2007.

²⁴ Ben-Dov 2008 e 2018.

²⁵ Greenfield, Sokoloff 1989: 201-214; Leicht 2006: 45-82, di particolare importanza per la discussione sulla versione in AGP del *Trattato di Sem* precedentemente noto solo nella versione siriana, cf. Mengozzi 1997.

²⁶ Gaster 1927.

²⁷ Kugener 1907: 137-194.

²⁸ Budge 1913.

²⁹ Furlani 1918; 1921; 1947.

³⁰ Mengozzi 1997.

³¹ Indicativamente dal III sec. a.C. al XVI sec. d.C.

time domande e dubbi sulla catena di trasmissione.³² A mio modo di vedere non credo ci siano dubbi sul ruolo svolto dalla tradizione greca, e non solo: in più punti dell'AM viene ricordata l'origine greca dei trattati e anche solo ipotizzare una trasmissione diretta mi sembra veramente improbabile.³³ Fatta salva l'equivalenza delle strutture formali e dei contenuti che determinano tipo e genere letterario, le differenze devono essere valutate sotto un'altra lente. L'uso dei presagi riflette le necessità e le condizioni sociali degli utenti. Se non vogliamo dare credito a un'origine divina veicolata nell'apodosi degli *omina*, le differenti risposte sono l'esito della trasformazione e dell'adattamento al mutato contesto sociale. La stessa Drower, nella sua breve introduzione, coglie l'importanza di un tale approccio: «the book is certainly of value and is a rich mine of information for the anthropologist and folklorist». Poco dopo aggiunge: «The manuscripts, as said, have been assembled from various sources and represent different social conditions and different epochs. Parts I and II give a lively picture of people who are frequently well-to-do since they own slaves and handmaidens, are sometimes landed proprietors or, at any rate, overseers of estates, travel by land and water, are often red-haired, and are certainly not militant, as there is no mention of serving in an army. They appear to be peaceful folk under a foreign governing caste, and might well be Jews, or semi-Jews under Sasanian or Persian rule» (Drower 1949: 2).

Prima ancora di procedere a una semplice messa in parallelo tra le diverse tradizioni, faccio notare come il processo di adattamento sia evidente tra le stesse due versioni del *seismologion* presenti nell'AM.³⁴ Le due versioni, seppur nella loro diversità e

³² Cfr. *supra* nota 9.

³³ Ricordo che la stessa Drower chiarisce questo punto evidenziando le fonti e la lunga storia redazionale del testo: «In considering the fragments as a whole, it should be borne in mind that most of them are probably, and some admittedly, translations, or, it may be, translations of translations. Arabic, Greek, Persian, and Pahlevi writers probably drew upon older material. In some passages references to the "King of kings" and mention of certain place-names indicate a Sasanian epoch, and much of the folklore and magic is a heritage from Babylon» (Drower 1949: 2).

³⁴ In calce riprodurrò entrambi i trattati in trascrizione e traduzione letterale, anche se a discapito della forma in italiano, nella speranza di agevolare chi

distanza temporale, apparentemente sembrano essere in rapporto di dipendenza ascendente della seconda, più breve e meno ricca di dettagli, rispetto alla prima: sia per la medesima struttura formale sia nei contenuti simili. In realtà, pur non essendo ancora in grado di ricostruire uno stemma preciso, sono persuaso che i conflitti nella trasmissione non nascono dalla consueta pratica dei copisti ma dalla necessità di adattare i contenuti al mutato *milieu* storico-sociale. Ovviamente non posso neanche escludere la possibilità che entrambi i testimoni facciano capo a due tradizioni diverse.³⁵ In ogni caso mi sembra evidente, anche dalla sola semplice lettura, che la prima versione fosse destinata a un pubblico maggiormente attento e forse particolarmente ansioso di sapere e prevenire quante più cose possibili, probabilmente perché le condizioni di vita non erano sufficientemente stabili.

Limitandoci al solo mese di *Nisan*³⁶ proviamo a mettere in parallelo il nostro testo con le versioni accadiche tratte dall'*Enuma Anu Enlil*³⁷ e dall'*Iqqur Ipuš*.³⁸ Fatta salva l'equivalenza formale della tipica struttura a protasi/apodosi, risulta subito evidente la nota caratteristica degli *omina* mesopotamici prevalentemente indirizzati agli interessi del sovrano e alle condizioni generali del territorio. Elementi specifici che riguardano cose, persone e luoghi che possiamo leggere nella tradizione ellenistica prima e poi in quella mandaica non sono presenti nell'*Enuma Anu Enlil* e nella sintesi dell'*Iqqur Ipuš*. È però interessante notare come alcuni elementi formali, ad esempio la tempistica del fenomeno sismico (di giorno o di notte), che nella tradizione mesopotamica sono trattati analiticamente in specifiche rubriche, nelle tra-

non leggendo il mandaico avesse la necessità di confrontarsi con il testo. Faccio presente che una trascrizione completa dell'AM corredata da note ortografiche è oggi disponibile online sul sito del CAL (*Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon*) all'indirizzo www.cal.huc.edu.

³⁵ Il diverso uso dei nomi dei mesi, mandaico nel primo e arabo nel secondo trattato, lasciano pensare a una tale ipotesi.

³⁶ Lo spazio concesso non mi permette di aggiungere altro materiale.

³⁷ Cito i passi dall'edizione Gehlken 2012: 150. Ho inserito anche il mese intercalare di *Nisan* per il parallelo tematico, presumibilmente confluito nelle tradizioni successive. Non ho preso in considerazione, in questa sede, le tradizioni parallele come quella di Nuzi, vd. Lacheman 1937, perché certamente confluite nelle redazioni neoassire dell'*Enuma Anu Enlil*.

³⁸ Labat 1965: 188-189 per la serie A e 212-213 per la serie B.

dizioni successive, invece, si trovano tutte assemblate nel corpo letterario del presagio. Questo, a mio avviso, dà ragione a chi sostiene, senza poterlo provare, che la tradizione mesopotamica è sopravvissuta sotto forma di almanacchi sintetici, probabilmente in una serie di traduzioni su materiale deperibile sia in aramaico sia in greco. Lo stesso *Iqqur Ipuš* potrebbe essere considerato, in tal senso, l'archetipo di una tradizione ormai scomparsa e utilizzata dai compilatori tardoantichi come un vecchio deposito da saccheggiare per arricchire le proprie opere.

AM I 241: 20 - 242: 04

*ʿu biahra nisan arqa tinud bʿumama
aṭšia ḡgaiṭa nihisrun ušigša uhauqa
ʿl arqa nihit umalka lmdiniata mdiniata
ništania. ʿu blilia arqa tinud mn šilia
dahalta banašia tipil umata bmata
tiiul uʿburia uʿngiriata lmatuata
napšata nišadrūn.*

Se nel mese di *Nisan* la terra trema di giorno
ogni genere di frutto estivo perirà e confusione e panico
sulla terra discenderà e il re da città a città
sarà rimosso. Se di notte la terra trema improvvisamente
la paura tra le genti cadrà e di villaggio in villaggio
entrerà e raccolti e sementi verso i paesi
molti invieranno.

AM II 274: 2-5

*ʿu biahra ḡnisan arqa
tinud bʿumama mia šapir nihun urumaiia lmalakaiun
niqmun unitgarbun. ʿu blilia arqa tinud anašia
mn atraihun nipqun s__a*

Se nel mese di *Nisan* la terra
trema di giorno, i frutti buoni saranno. I Bizantini contro i loro re
si alzeranno ed essi saranno derubati. Se di notte la terra trema le
genti
dai loro luoghi andranno via.

Enuma Anu Enlil Tavola 47

39'
 * DIŠ KI *ina* ^{III}BÁRA *i-ru-ub* NUN KUR-su BAL-su
 Cr3' [B]AL-su
 E2' DIŠ [KI] *ina* ^{III}BÁRA [i]-[]
 V1 DIŠ KI *i+na* ^{III}BÁRA.ZAG.GAR *i-ru-ub* NUN KUR-su BAL-su
 101:1 DIŠ KI *ina* ^{III}BÁRA KI *i-ru-ub* LUGAL
 KUR-su BAL-su *ár-bu-tu* [GAR-an]
 R 366 01f. DIŠ KI *ina* ^{III}BÁRA KI *i-ru-ub* LUGAL
 KUR-su BAL-su
 R 8 rif. DIŠ KI *ina* ^{III}BÁRA KI ŠÚ-[ub] NUN KUR-su BAL-su

If the earth quakes in Nisan, the ruler's land will rebel against him.

40'
 * DIŠ KI *ina* ^{III}BÁRA.2.KAM* *i-ru-ub* KI KUR *ar-bu-tú* DU-ak
 Cr3' DIŠ KI *ina* ^{III}BÁRA.2.KAM* MIN KI KUR *ar*-[]
 E3' DIŠ KI *ina* ^{III}BÁRA.2[]
 V2 DIŠ *i+na* ^{III}BÁRA.2.KAM*.MA *i-ru-ub* KUR-tam DU-ak

If the earth quakes in intercalary Nisan, the soil of the land will become infertile.

Iqqur Ipuš A

§100
 1) DIŠ *ina* Nisanni *ri-i-bu i-ru-ub* (/ŠÚ-ub) LUGAL (/MAN) KUR-su
 BAL-su
Si, au mois de Nisan, se produit un tremblement de terre: le roi, son pays se révoltera contre lui.

§101
 1) DIŠ *ina* Nisanni KI *i-ru-ub* LUGAL KUR-su BAL-su *ár-bu-tu* GAR-an
*Si, au mois de Nisan, la terre tremble: le roi, son pays se révoltera contre lui
 (; il y aura désolation).*

Iqqur Ipuš B

Nisan
 V 19-20
 [DIŠ LU] GAL KUR-su BAL-su

[DİŠ LUGAL KUR-su BAL-s] u-ma ar(!)-bu-tú
GAR-an

[S'il se produit un tremblement de terre: le] roi, son pays se révoltera contre lui.

[Si la terre tremble: le roi, son pays se révoltera contre] lui et il y aura désolation.

Se la tradizione mesopotamica è certamente da considerarsi l'archetipo di questo genere letterario, il modello di riferimento per le tradizioni successive, compresa quella mandaica, è da cercare nelle versioni ellenistiche.³⁹ Il rapporto tra il *seismologion* accadico e quello greco è un lavoro ancora tutto da fare e che vedrà spostare l'asse comparativo della trasmissione in ambito alessandrino, dove il *medium* portante è stato quasi certamente quello egiziano con le sue versioni in demotico prima e poi in copto.⁴⁰

L'importanza del materiale greco, per l'eredità mesopotamica, fu messo per la prima volta in evidenza nel lavoro di Bezold e Boll (1911), soffermandosi anche sugli *omina* dei terremoti tramandati nell'opera di Giovanni Lido.⁴¹ È necessario però, prima di continuare la nostra carrellata di esempi, fare una precisazione: ciò che si trova nelle opere tarde in greco bizantino, e da qui quasi certamente in arabo, è il risultato di una riflessione scolastica già avanzata e interessata più al dato scientifico, secondo la

³⁹ Il compendio più recente sulle scienze astronomiche greche è offerto da Bowen, Rochberg 2020, più nello specifico è ancora valido Rochberg-Halton 1988: 51-62.

⁴⁰ Non potendo entrare in tale ambito rinvio a Roccati 1984 per un parallelo testuale e Quack 2018 per l'astrologia egiziana in generale, in particolare pp. 107-123 per le influenze sulla letteratura greca.

⁴¹ Il *De Ostentis* di Giovanni Lido è importante, tra le altre cose, per aver tramandato un *seismologion* attribuito dallo stesso Lido a un altrimenti ignoto Vicellio Romano che a sua volta avrebbe prosato i versi del mitico Tagete padre della divinazione etrusca. Il testo, ai cc. 55-58, è certamente da mettere in relazione con la letteratura astrologica di nostro interesse ma solo molto marginalmente con la tradizione che conduce al nostro AM. Per un esame delle fonti della pericope lidiana cfr. Rota 2015a: 493-519.

lezione aristotelica, che non al mero interesse divinatorio.⁴² Più in generale per l'astrologia, i primi trattati astrologici in greco bizantino dal V al VIII sec. d.C., quali quelli di Efesto di Tebe, dello stesso Giovanni Lido o di Teofilo di Edessa, risentono non poco della tradizione persiana che a sua volta veicolava quella indiana. Siamo dunque in quella fase storica dove tradizioni greche, latine, siriane, arabe, persiane e indiane si fondono in una tale amalgama che ancora oggi risulta difficile, in alcuni casi impossibile, tracciare le rispettive influenze. Ai fini di questo superficiale contributo sarà sufficiente limitarsi al materiale ellenistico o, in ogni caso, precedente all'epoca bizantina. Già noto è il poema di attribuzione orfica *περὶ σεισμῶν* pubblicato nel *Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum* (CCAG)⁴³ e la sua versione in prosa in CCAG VII molto più interessante per la nostra comparazione e che riproduco qui con la traduzione italiana offerta da Moreno Neri nella sua traduzione di *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste. I. L'astrologie et les sciences occultes* del Festugière.⁴⁴

CCAG VII: 167-168

Ἀπρίλιος. Ἡλίου ὄντος ἐν Κριῶ ἐὰν σεισμὸς γένηται ἡμέρας οὔσης, οἱ γειτνιώντες τῶν βασιλέων ἀλλήλοις ἐπιβουλεύονται. Καὶ αἱ γειτνιώσαι πόλεις ταραχθήσονται μεγάλως καὶ ὕβρεις καὶ φόνους ἔξουσι. Καὶ ἀνὴρ ἔνδοξος ἀπολείται, καὶ οἱ περὶ αὐτὸν κινδυνεύσουσι. Ὅμβροι δὲ ἐν νυκτὶ γένηται ὁ σεισμὸς, ἀντιλογίαι ἔσσονται περὶ τοὺς δήμους καὶ ἀντιλογίαι τοῦ ὄντος τυράννου. Οἱ γὰρ στρατηγοὶ αὐτοῦ ἀποστήσονται ἀπ' αὐτοῦ ἐναντία αὐτῷ φρονοῦντες καὶ τῷ ἰδίῳ βασιλεῖ ἀντιλέγοντες. Τάραχος δὲ περὶ τοὺς

⁴² Molte opere anonime aspettano di essere pubblicate. Per una rapida rassegna sulla divinazione a Bisanzio cfr. Papathanassiou 2020: 464-495 in particolare 466-469.

⁴³ CCAG V 1: 54 e V 3: 71. Per completezza cito qui solo la traduzione in italiano di Neri in Festugière 2019: 138: «Impara ancora questo discorso, figlio mio: ogni volta che lo Scuotitore dai capelli scuri (Poseidone) fa tremare la terra, ciò fa presagire per i mortali felice fortuna o disgrazia. Quando è giunto l'equinozio di primavera e Helios attraversa l'Ariete, se allora il dio che abbraccia la terra la agita violentemente durante la notte, ciò fa presagire grandi rivolte nella città (Alessandria). Se la agita durante il giorno, è l'annuncio di tristezze e maledizioni, un flagello si abatterà sulle popolazioni straniere e ci saranno, per noi, afflizioni e pene».

⁴⁴ Festugière 2019: 138-139.

δήμους καὶ ἀκαταστασίαι. Οἱ δὲ περὶ τὴν δύσιν οἰκοῦντες τύραννοι ἀπολοῦνται. Καὶ ὄμβροι πολλοὶ γίγονται ὁ δὲ σπóρος πληθυνθήσεται ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ δὲ λιμὸς ἔσται καὶ τοῦ Νείλου ἔκλειψις γενήσεται

Aprile. Essendo il sole in Ariete, se la terra trema durante il giorno, coloro che avvicinano i re si scontreranno l'un l'altro con insidie; le città vicine saranno scosse da grandi disordini e subiranno atti di violenza e omicidi; un uomo illustre perirà e i suoi seguaci saranno in pericolo; ci saranno forti piogge; i frutti della terra e gli alberi prospereranno. Se la terra trema di notte, ci saranno controversie nel popolo e ci si rivolterà contro il tiranno installato: infatti i soldati del tiranno lo lasceranno, si opporranno a lui e si ribelleranno contro il loro stesso re; ci saranno guai e rivoluzioni nel popolo, i tiranni dell'Occidente periranno; ci saranno forti piogge; il seme si moltiplicherà. In Egitto ci sarà carestia e mancanza d'acqua nel Nilo.

L'unica vera differenza tra questo testo e i due trattati dell'AM è di natura prettamente astrologica: Ἡλίου ὄντος ἐν Κριῶ ci fa capire che i presagi seguono l'ordine zodiacale del sole⁴⁵ e non quello mensile/stagionale come vorrebbe farci credere il nome latino Ἀπρίλιος che, presente già nella versione orfica in versi, potrebbe essere un'aggiunta redazionale posteriore,⁴⁶ o come è facile sospettare un adattamento delle fonti egiziane o semitiche che hanno fatto da modelli per questa tradizione. Ciò premesso, struttura⁴⁷ e contenuti, soprattutto nello stile che riflette il sentimento sociale,⁴⁸ sono quasi perfettamente sovrapponibili.

Prima di chiudere con la traduzione dei due trattati mandaici mi corre l'obbligo di aggiungere, a corredo della relazione ellenistico-mandaica che sto larvatamente proponendo, alcune testimonianze che oltre a dimostrare l'ampia diffusione di questa letteratura potrebbero indicarci possibili vie di trasmissione testuale.⁴⁹ Si è spesso fatto notare⁵⁰ il silenzio quasi totale di questo

⁴⁵ Cfr. Mengozzi 1997: 41 e ss. per la caratteristica formula di apertura dei dodici capitoli del *Trattato di Sem*.

⁴⁶ L'adozione dei nomi dei mesi latini in greco non mi risulta sia precedente l'epoca ellenistica.

⁴⁷ Si noti soprattutto la sequenza giorno/notte.

⁴⁸ Una sinossi completa di entrambi i testi sarà prima o poi necessaria.

⁴⁹ Fino ad oggi ampiamente disattesa.

⁵⁰ La stessa Rochberg avanza l'ipotesi iranica quale luogo e momento di passaggio tra le tradizioni mesopotamiche e quelle del tardoantico, unendosi al

genere letterario nella tradizione iranica, quasi certamente suo veicolo di passaggio come dimostrerebbero sia le tarde traduzioni arabe di testi pahlavi sia lo stesso AM.⁵¹ Verso la metà degli anni novanta, rompendo il silenzio delle testimonianze in una lingua iranica, Sims-Williams⁵² pubblicava una serie di frammenti testuali in sogdiano ritrovati tra le carte di Olaf Hansen e rimasti inediti: oltre a una parziale edizione della *Vita di Serapione* i restanti frammenti erano tutti di natura astrologica. Gli *omina* in sogdiano riguardano prevalentemente fenomeni di natura meteorologica, tuoni, fulmini, arcobaleni e terremoti, tutti riconducibili alle tradizioni greche, come pure arabe⁵³ e in maniera sorprendente a quella siriana adeguatamente nota dai trattati parzialmente pubblicati dal Furlani.⁵⁴ Il frammento che più ci interessa, per il riferimento ai terremoti, ricorda perfettamente la tipologia mista di *omina* dei tuoni/terremoti ampiamente attestata nell'*Enuma Anu Enlil* e nelle serie dell'*Iqqur Ipus*⁵⁵ come pure nei pochi riferimenti di epoca ramesside ricordati dal Roccati.⁵⁶ Mi limito a riportare la traduzione di Sims-Williams (1995b: 294) del solo mese di Nisan: «[In Nisan: if thunder should occur, that] year [the grain will not] ripen well (5v1) if perchance the earth

coro (me compreso) di chi sostiene che le prime traduzioni in aramaico iniziano già in epoca achemenide. Per un'ampia disamina della trasmissione dell'astrologia in area (culturale) iranica cfr. Panaino 2018: 482-514.

⁵¹ Vedi qui nota 5.

⁵² Sims-Williams 1995a e 1995b.

⁵³ Nonostante la sua importanza ai fini comparativi, soprattutto per la versione tarda del *seismologion* mandaico (AM II 274:2-46), ho volutamente taciuto l'ampia tradizione araba, a tal proposito si confronti l'edizione di un *malhama* in Raggetti 2018: 421-445 in part. 437-439 per la sezione sui terremoti. Più in generale sulla tradizione dei *Malhamāt Dānyāl* cfr. Chalyan-Daffner 2017: 207-223.

⁵⁴ Così Sims-Williams 1995b: 291: «Omen texts of similar type, often attributed to the prophet Daniel, exist in Syriac, Arabic, Greek, and perhaps other languages. It is therefore quite possible that a direct source for the present text may one day be discovered. The closest Syriac parallels which I have been able to find so far are the texts in two British Library manuscripts, Or. 2084, ff. 1-42 (described by Furlani, 1918), and Or. 4434, ff. 46-58 (summarized and partly translated by Furlani, 1921)».

⁵⁵ Cfr. Labat 1965: 173.

⁵⁶ Roccati 1984: 349.

should quake, there will be much rain but men will be very unhappy».

In conclusione, lascio a te Simonetta la lettura di una pessima traduzione italiana del *seismologion* mandaico dove, sono certo, troverai molti punti di contatto con la tradizione mesopotamica che hai tanto profondamente studiato e magistralmente contribuito a far conoscere.

AM I 241: 19 - 245: 5

atuat qarqa dñaida umsandra ʿl anašia

Presagi della terra che trema e squarcia⁵⁷ verso le genti.

ʿu biahra nisan arqa tinud bʿumama

Se nel mese di Nisan la terra trema di giorno

aššia dgaiša nihisrun ušigša uhauqa

ogni genere di frutto estivo perirà e confusione e panico

ʿl arqa nahit⁵⁸ umalka lmdiniata mdiniata

sulla terra discenderà e il re da città a città

ništania ʿu blilia arqa tinud mn šilia

sarà rimosso. Se di notte la terra trema improvvisamente

dahalta banašia tipil umata bmata

la paura tra le genti cadrà e di villaggio in villaggio

tiul uʿburia uʿngiriata lmatuata

entrerà e raccolti e sementi verso paesi

napšata nišadrūn ʿu biahra aiar

molti invieranno.⁵⁹ Se nel mese di Ayar

arqa tinud bʿumama aššia dšidta

la terra trema di giorno il raccolto annuale

nišiprun usiba banašia uṭabuta balma

⁵⁷ L'uso del participio di SNDR è interessante perché semanticamente ricorda il greco *ῥήχεται*, una delle definizioni dei terremoti che troviamo nei trattati naturalistici da Aristotele in poi; come pure nello stesso Giovanni Lido, cfr. Rota 2015b: 371 da cui traggio la traduzione del passo: «*Lyd. Ost. 53, 30 sg. = ῥήχεται δὲ οἱ τὰς καταπόσεις καὶ τὰ χάσματα διαπηδῶσης τῆς γῆς ἀποσχίζοντες. ἔτι τῶν ῥηκτῶν οἱ μὲν πνεύματα ἀναβάλλουσιν, οἱ δὲ ὑγρὰ καὶ πηλόν* (i terremoti *squarcianti* sono quelli che aprono inghiottimenti e voragini nella terra che si scuote. Inoltre, tra i terremoti squarcianti, alcuni provocano la fuoriuscita di esalazioni, altri di liquidi e fango)».

⁵⁸ Prob. *nihit*.

⁵⁹ Il passo è oscuro, cfr. Drower 1949: 146 nota 11.

perirà e spada tra le genti e benessere nel mondo
nihuia bmdiniata ṭabuta tihuia ʿu
ci sarà, nelle città benessere ci sarà. Se
blilia tinud kṣurta umutana banašia nihuia
di notte trema malattia e morte tra le genti ci sarà
umia uiamamia usaria nihun bḏinba ʿ
acque e laghi e grano ci sarà alla fine dell'
šidta ʿu biahra siuan arqa bʿu
anno. Se nel mese di Siwan la terra di
mama tinud ṣaiarta uqraba rba
giorno trema un assedio e una guerra grande
nihuia umata bmata umahuza bmahuza
ci sarà e di paese in paese, di luogo in luogo
tiʿiul⁶⁰ umn mataiun anašia nipqun ʿu
invasioni e dai loro paesi le genti scapperanno. Se
blilia arqa tinud kṣurta umutana banašia
di notte la terra trema malattia e morte (pestilenza) tra le genti
nihuia uiamamia nitun batra ʿnaida
ci sarà e laghi appariranno nel luogo del terremoto (lett.: tremore)
ʿu biahra ʿṭaimuz arqa bʿumama
Se nel mese di Tammuz la terra di giorno
tinud qiria uzma hambalta banašia
trema guai e sangue e disastri tra le genti
nihuia nihuia batra ʿnaidabh ʿu blilia
ci sarà nel luogo del suo tremore. Se di notte
arqa tinud malka šīṭuata unsiṣuta timiṭiḥ
la terra trema il re farà follie e il male sarà su di lui.
ʿu biahra ab⁶¹ arqa bʿumama tinud
Se nel mese di Ab la terra di giorno trema
qirsa umutana udahalta urnita bmdiniata
disgrazia, pestilenza, terrore e tristezza nelle città
nihuia ʿu blilia arqa tinud šidta
ci sarà. Se di notte la terra trema l'anno
šapirtia⁶² tihuia ʿu biahra ʿlul
favorevole sarà. Se nel mese di Elul
arqa bʿumama tinud kupna uqirsa urusia
la terra di giorno trema carestia e disgrazia e dispersione
rba banašia nihuia ʿu blilia arqa

⁶⁰ Prob. *tiʿiuz*.

⁶¹ Leggi *dab*.

⁶² Prob. *šapiria*.

grande tra le genti ci sarà. Se di notte la terra
tinud gumlia urakšia utauria ukulhun
trema cammelli, cavalli e bestiame tutto
hiuaniata zma ukiba uništa nihuibun
animali, sangue e malattia e ništa⁶³ ci saranno.
ʿu biahra tišrin arqa bʿumama
Se nel mese di Tišrin la terra di giorno
tinud malka ʿl anašia napil ušigša
trema, il re contro le genti attaccherà e confusione
kul zban wʿdan nihuia ulqiniana ništalaʿ
in ogni tempo e stagione ci sarà e (il re?) si impossesserà delle pro-
prietà
umalkia lhdadia niplun uništaḡṣun ʿu
e re si attaccheranno l’un l’altro dandosi battaglia. Se
blilia arqa tinud ʿnšia baṭinata ninipṣun
di notte la terra trema donne incinte abortiranno
batra ḡnaidabḥ ʿu biahra mašruan
nel luogo del suo tremore. Se nel mese di Mašruan
arqa bʿumama tinud šigš[a] hurina nihuia
la terra di giorno trema confusione altra ci sarà
batra ḡnaidabḥ ušilia ukauna lahauiā ʿu
nel luogo del suo tremore, calma e stabilità non ci sarà. Se
blilia arqa tinud ʿnšia baṭinata niahṭan
di notte la terra trema donne incinte abortiranno
umalka mn dukṭḥ nitqar šidta hanata
e il re dal suo posto sarà cacciato, l’anno questo
tišpar ʿu biahra kanun arqa bʿumama
sarà infausto. Se nel mese di Kanun la terra di giorno
tinud qirsa umutana umahra bmdiniata
trema, disgrazia e pestilenza e malattia nelle città
nihuia apsada ḡmalka bbaita uanašata
ci sarà, ingiurie del re nella sua casa e parenti
uqinianḥ nihrub ulanimitun batra ḡnaidabḥ
e proprietà sue saranno distrutte ma non morirà nel luogo del suo
tremore.
ʿu blilia arqa tinud bmdinta bturša
Se di notte la terra trema in città la costruzione (!)
laništalam ʿu biahra ṭabit arqa
non sarà completata. Se nel mese di Ṭabit la terra

⁶³ Un tipo di malattia veterinaria non ben compresa, probabilmente una forma di costipazione.

b^umama tinud šidta tišpar utipsuṭ
di giorno trema l'anno sarà infausto e esteso⁶⁴
uap dina mina nipil utihrub uhiuaniata
inoltre, un giudizio su di lui ricadrà. Sterminerà gli animali
bnai[h] un nimitun umaiahun bbašarta
i loro giovani moriranno e le loro acque saranno insufficienti.
ušidta haila nimut umutana nihiua uša
E (in questo) anno uno potente morirà e pestilenza ci sarà, e nove
malkia ništagšun unišlum hda malka
re si troveranno in conflitto un re
minaiun nigtil ^u blilia arqa tinud
sarà circondato e ucciso. Se di notte la terra trema
qirsa nihiua barqa dñaidab^h ^u
disgrazia ci sarà nel luogo del suo tremore. Se
biahra šabaṭ arqa b^umama tinud
nel mese di Šabaṭ la terra di giorno trema
bnia matuata huriniata ṭabuta d^umalka
i figli dei paesi altri (con) la benevolenza del re
nidabrun ukupna w^ulšana batra dñaidaba
governeranno, carestia e fame nel luogo del tremore
nihiua hda l^hda ništal^{am}⁶⁵ uarbaiaⁱ urumaiⁱa
ci sarà, uno all'altro si arrenderanno e arabi e bizantini
mn h^udadia nitkadšun uzaina l^hdadia ninisbun
si daranno battaglia e alzeranno le armi l'uno contro l'altro
ulbataiaⁱ malkuta titriš ^u blilia arqa
alla fine, un regno sarà fondato. Se di notte la terra
tinud gabra mn ṭuhm^h d^umalka napil
trema un uomo di stirpe reale cadrà.
umn šilia ginza qiniana nibun min^h uguha
e inaspettatamente chiederanno il tesoro e le sue proprietà, clamore
batra dñaidaba nihiua ^u biahra
nel luogo del tremore ci sarà. Se nel mese
adar arqa b^umama tinud šidta hanath
di Adar la terra di giorno trema l'anno questo
šapirtia⁶⁶ tihiua ugumlia urakšia utauria
sarà infausto, cammelli cavalli e bestiame
zma ukiba nilgiṭinun uniš^{ta} umutana ninpilbun
sangue e malattia saranno colti e flatulenza⁶⁷ e pestilenza li attaccherà,

⁶⁴ Non è chiaro il senso, cfr. Drower 1949: 148.

⁶⁵ Prob. *ništam*.

⁶⁶ Vd. nota 62.

batra dtindba šigša dmalkia nihiuibun
nel luogo del tremore sconvolgimenti di re ci saranno
ulanašia nizerinun lduk malkia l hdadia
e le genti si spargeranno ovunque. Re l'uno contro l'altro
niphun ušlama lanihuilun ukila dhda malka
si attaccheranno e la pace non ci sarà, e la misura di un re
nišlum urgala nimpulbun umalka hda bhanath
sarà piena, moderazione sarà loro imposta e a un re, in questa
arqa zma ništud uarbaiia urumaiia zaina
terra sangue sarà sparso e arabi e bizantini armi
lhdadia ninisbun umalkuta titriš l arqa
l'uno contro l'altro prenderanno e un regno sorgerà sulla terra
hazin aqapra nišganas u blilia arqa
questa che polvere susciterà.⁶⁸ Se di notte la terra
*tinud miṭraria*⁶⁹ *umia kabiria nihun uqraba*
tremia piogge e acque molte ci saranno e guerra
bbabil nihiuia s a
in babilonia ci sarà.

AM 274: 2-46

atuata darqa dnaida u biahra dnisan arqa
presagi della terra che tremia. Se nel mese di Nisan la terra
*tinud b'umama miuia*⁷⁰ *šapir nihun urumaiia lmalkeinun*
tremia di giorno, i frutti buoni saranno. I Bizantini contro i loro re
niqmun unitgarbun u blilia arqa tinud anašia
si alzeranno ed essi saranno derubati. Se di notte la terra tremia le
genti
mn atraihun nipqun s a
dai loro luoghi andranno via.
u biahra daiar arqa tinud b'umama arzanā
Se nel mese di Ayar la terra tremia di giorno buon mercato (prezzi
bassi)
umiṭra nihiuia u blilia tinud bnā anašia utauria
e pioggia ci sarà. Se di notte tremia esseri umani e bestiame
nimitun s a
moriranno.

⁶⁷ Vd. nota 63.

⁶⁸ Non è chiaro il senso metaforico.

⁶⁹ Prob. *miṭria*.

⁷⁰ Leggi *mia*.

ʿu biahra dhizran arqa tinud bʿumama grania niħuia

Se nel mese di Haziran la terra trema di giorno i prezzi saranno alti.

ʿu blilia tinud harba mdinta rabtia dbabil

Se di notte trema, battaglia nella città grande di Babilonia

ʿnšia maitin s a

donne moriranno.

ʿu biahra dtaimuz arqa tinud bʿumama had

Se nel mese di Tammuz la terra trema di giorno un

gabra bbabil nimut ʿu blilia tinud ldaiania [daiaia]

uomo in Babilonia morirà. Se di notte trema, tra gli abitanti

dkurasan qiria ušibia hauilun s a

del Korasan litigi e incursioni ci saranno.

ʿu biahra dab arqa bʿumama tinud tʿam

Se nel mese di Ab la terra di giorno trema cibo

šapir niħuia ugiḷla ušibia bnpiš niħuia ʿu

in gran quantità ci sarà e uccisioni e devastazioni innumerevoli ci saranno. Se

blilia tinud šibia napuṣ s a

di notte trema le devastazioni aumenteranno.

ʿu biahra dʿlul arqa tinud bʿumama kibia

Se nel mese di Elul la terra trema di giorno, malattie

umasasia niħuia uṭʿam uatmar šapir niħun

e infermità ci saranno ma cibo e frutti in gran quantità saranno,

had gabra rba nimut s a

un uomo grande (potente) morirà.

ʿu biahra dtišrin laual bʿumama arqa

Se nel mese di Tišrin al-Awwal di giorno la terra

tinud had malka mithaial bkulḥ alma uanašia ma

trema un re farà guerra contro tutto il mondo e le genti po-

skinia niħun ʿu blilia tinud baṭinata iasqiṭun

vere saranno. Se di notte trema donne incinte abortiranno.

s a

ʿu biahra tišrin ltania arqa bʿumama

Se nel mese di Tišrin al-Tania la terra di giorno

tinud šigša hurina niħuia barqa

trema, confusione altra ci sarà nella terra

*ušilia ukauna ʿlḥ hauia ʿu blilia arqa tinud ʿnšia baṭinata niaḥṭan umal-
ka mn*

e pace e stabilità non ci sarà. Se di notte la terra trema donne incin-

te abortiranno e il re dal

dukḥ nitqar šidta hanatia tišpar

suo posto sarà cacciato. L'anno questo sarà infausto.

ʿu biahra dkanun alawal arqa bʿumama tinud

Se nel mese di Kanun al-Awwal la terra di giorno trema

Ianqia uhiuaniata nimitun ukibia unapšia nihun

bambini e animali moriranno e malattie in gran quantità saranno

uiitagaia⁷¹ malka dbabil ʿu blilia tinud

e sarà tormentato il re di Babilonia. Se di notte trema

šibia banašia nihiua s a

devastazioni per le genti ci saranno.

ʿu biahra dkanun ltania arqa bʿumama tinud

Se nel mese di Kanun al-Tania la terra di giorno trema

kibia banašia nihiua ʿu blilia tinud hiuaniata

malattie per le genti ci sarà. Se di notte trema gli animali

nimitun s a

moriranno.

ʿu biahra dšabaṭ arqa bʿumama tinud

Se nel mese di Šabaṭ la terra di giorno trema

miṭra nihiua ukiba bianqia nihiua ukupna

pioggia ci sarà e malattia tra i bambini ci sarà e carestia

umutana nihiua ʿu blilia arqa tinud bišuta

e morte (pestilenza) ci sarà. Se di notte la terra trema il maligno

tihua bkulḥ alma uanašia bnikla niqmun ubi

sarà in tutto il mondo e le genti nell'inganno ergeranno loro stessi e

šuta uqiria nihiua uhad gabra rba nimut

malvagità e lamenti ci saranno e un uomo grande (potente) morirà.

s a

ʿu biahra dadar arqa bʿumama tinud

Se nel mese di Adar la terra di giorno trema

ganabia napšia umalka nimutun ukiba banašia

i ladri aumenteranno e i re moriranno, malattia tra le genti

nihiua ubdinba dšidta nihuta uarzania nihiua

ci sarà e alla fine dell'anno ci sarà un buon mercato (prezzi bassi)

ubrumaiia kupna nihiua umutana nihiua ʿu blilia

e tra i Bizantini carestia e pestilenze ci sarà. Se di notte

arqa tinud bmišraiia zipa ugītla nihiua

la terra trema tra gli egiziani truffe e omicidi ci sarà.

s a

⁷¹ Prob. *uiatgaiir*.

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*L'eredità assira a Babilonia e in Persia:
il τόπος della lotta tra re e leone**

FRANCESCA D'ALONZO

Una chiara reminiscenza della tradizionale ed emblematica iconografia dei sigilli reali neoassiri¹ (fig. 1) è rintracciabile nei rilievi rupestri neobabilonesi di Nabucodonosor II (605-562 a.C.) in Libano. La presenza di Nabucodonosor II in queste aree è testimoniata da alcune evidenze archeologiche nel territorio dell'odierno Libano dove il re si procurava il pregiato legno di cedro, necessario alla costruzione di templi e palazzi nel quadro di una politica di ricostruzione che riguardò l'intero paese. Si tratta di iscrizioni e rilievi rupestri, eseguiti su ordine del sovrano, situati in luoghi strategici di passaggio, aventi chiaro intento propagandistico; i siti in questione sono quattro: Nahr el-Kalb, Brisa, Shir es-Sanam, Wadi es-Saba'.²

* Colgo questa lieta occasione per porgere i miei più sentiti ringraziamenti e per rinnovare la mia più sincera stima alla cara Simonetta Graziani, la quale mi ha sempre sostenuto e sapientemente guidato nel corso dei miei anni di studio presso l'Università di Napoli "L'Orientale".

¹ Nei principali centri urbani dell'Assiria (Nimrud, Ninive, Khorsabad) sono state rinvenute numerose impronte di sigillo a stampo che raffigurano il sovrano in posizione stante, con il capo cinto dalla tiara troncoconica con terminazione a punta, nell'atto di uccidere un leone rampante. A tal proposito si veda Nadali 2009-10 e Winter 2010: 109-162.

² Da Riva 2010: 165-168. Per una recente panoramica sull'argomento, si veda Da Riva 2018.

In questa sede sono presi in considerazione esclusivamente i siti di Brisa e Wadi es-Saba' ('Valle del leone') dove sono stati rinvenuti i rilievi rupestri raffiguranti il sovrano che lotta contro il leone.

A Brisa, nella valle della Beqa, due rilievi rupestri sono incisi sulle pareti rocciose dello Wadi esh-Sharbin e sono accompagnati da iscrizioni che commemorano le gesta di Nabucodonosor alla conquista del Libano. Secondo la tradizione babilonese l'accento è però posto non sulle attività militari del re, solo accennate e comunque relative all'opera di pacificazione del paese, quanto sulla grandiosa attività edilizia intrapresa dal sovrano a Babilonia. L'iscrizione incisa sul pendio occidentale è accompagnata da un rilievo rupestre raffigurante Nabucodonosor che indossa una lunga veste e una tiara troncoconica con terminazione a punta, in lotta con un leone rampante (fig. 2).

Il medesimo soggetto è raffigurato sul rilievo di Wadi es-Saba', sul pendio orientale dello Jebel Akrum. La scena rappresentata è estremamente simile a quella di Brisa, ma la qualità artistica appare più scadente. La differenza sostanziale tra i due rilievi sta nel fatto che quello di Wadi es-Saba' non è accompagnato da alcuna iscrizione e non sussistono tracce di un eventuale tentativo di apporre una testimonianza scritta. Lo stato di conservazione del rilievo è piuttosto frammentario, ma è comunque riconoscibile una figura umana che trafigge con una lancia un leone rampante; solo la parte inferiore del corpo del sovrano è visibile più nitidamente (fig. 3).

Queste rappresentazioni figurative monumentali, insieme alle iscrizioni, sono espressione del controllo imperiale neobabilonese sull'area levantina: esse sono infatti collocate in punti altamente strategici, lungo rotte commerciali e militari, in modo da essere pubblicamente visibili. In linea con la tradizione mesopotamica che risale almeno alla fine del III millennio, questi monumenti rupestri hanno una forte connotazione politica e rappresentano un messaggio propagandistico rivolto sia alle popolazioni locali già conquistate e sia a potenziali nemici.³

La scelta di utilizzare l'iconografia neoassira della lotta tra sovrano e leone è altamente simbolica: così facendo Nabucodono-

³ Da Riva 2010: 177-182.

sor intende sottolineare sia la vittoria della dinastia neobabilonese sull'impero assiro e la conseguente ritrovata indipendenza della Babilonia dopo secoli di dominazione straniera, sia il ruolo guida della antica nazione sul piano politico, religioso e culturale nel Vicino Oriente antico. Ciò appare ancor più significativo se si tiene conto del fatto che nelle iscrizioni celebrative dei re neobabilonesi non esiste alcun riferimento alla caccia al leone o al combattimento contro di esso, e pertanto l'uso di questa immagine deve ritenersi un chiaro prestito dalla tradizione figurativa assira. I sovrani neobabilonesi si sostituiscono a quelli neoassiri nel dominio del mondo conosciuto e ne utilizzano i *tópoi* comunicativi e celebrativi anche allo scopo di dimostrarne la definitiva sconfitta.⁴ La sostituzione dell'imperialismo assiro con quello babilonese e il processo di affermazione della dinastia fondata da Nabopolassar passano infatti anche per l'assunzione di tratti caratteristici dell'ideologia regia assira che si saldano con quelli tradizionali della regalità babilonese. Va inoltre considerata la funzione apotropaica di questi rilievi, nella misura in cui svolgono un ruolo protettivo nei confronti dei popoli e dei territori conquistati da Nabucodonosor e rappresentano simbolicamente il potere del sovrano. Nell'iscrizione di Brisa il sovrano esplicita il suo ruolo di protettore e garante di pace e stabilità dei paesi conquistati, inglobati nell'*oikoumene* babilonese e perciò in un mondo ordinato, con queste parole:

La popolazione della terra intera che Marduk mi ha affidato [...] la totalità di tutti i popoli dal Mare Superiore al Mare Inferiore. Le popolazioni sparse dei paesi remoti, delle isole al di là della terra e situate in mezzo al Mare, il Mare Superiore e il Mare Inferiore: io feci portare loro la cesta di mattoni per costruire l'Etemenanki [...] Io resi quel paese (Libano) felice: sradicando i suoi nemici ovunque, feci tornare alle loro abitazioni i suoi abitanti (che erano) sparsi. Io feci ciò che nessun re prima di me aveva mai fatto.⁵

L'assenza di fonti epigrafiche coeve concernenti la caccia reale al leone interessa anche l'età achemenide (550-330 a.C.): all'interno

⁴ Da Riva 2010: 178-179; Da Riva 2013: 93-94.

⁵ Da Riva 2012: 62-63.

del *corpus* delle iscrizioni reali⁶ non viene fatta esplicita menzione di questa diffusa pratica regia.⁷ Soppperiscono in qualche misura a questa lacuna documentaria le testimonianze iconografiche provenienti dai maggiori centri del potere persiano.⁸

In prospettiva storica la Persia achemenide si pone come grande erede dell'impero assiro, riqualificando antichi modelli ideologici atti a comunicare un nuovo messaggio propagandistico.⁹ I prototipi figurativi della produzione artistica achemenide riecheggiano la secolare tradizione assira della caccia al leone e perpetuano l'idea del sovrano inteso come eroe, sebbene i dinasti persiani non vengano celebrati in questi termini nelle iscrizioni reali, così come già evidenziato per il periodo neobabilonese.¹⁰ La persistenza dei canoni espressivi si riscontra in particolar modo nella glittica e nei rilievi dei palazzi achemenidi, ovvero nelle scene di caccia riprodotte sui sigilli cilindrici persiani¹¹ e nella reinterpretazione figurativa del motivo del sovrano assiro che lotta contro il leone rampante, tipico dei sigilli a stampo neoassiri e dei cicli scultorei del Palazzo di Assurbanipal a Ninive.

Uno degli esempi più significativi della glittica achemenide è costituito dal sigillo, conservato al British Museum,¹² che ritrae Dario I (522-485 a.C.) intento nell'attività venatoria. Il sovrano, in posizione stante sul carro reale, è raffigurato nell'atto di scoccare una freccia contro un leone rampante, mentre i cavalli che trainano il veicolo calpestano il corpo di un leone accasciato a terra.¹³ La scena è fiancheggiata da due alberi di palma da dattero, tra i quali è incisa un'iscrizione trilingue (antico persiano,

⁶ Per le iscrizioni reali achemenidi si veda Lecoq 1997; Kuhrt 2007 e Schmitt 2009.

⁷ La pratica della caccia al leone in Persia è nota grazie alle fonti classiche. Cf. Fauth 1979; Tuplin 1996: 80-131 e Shapur-Shahbazi 2012.

⁸ A tal proposito, si veda Almagor 2021.

⁹ Liverani 2017: 250-251. Sull'ideologia regia achemenide cf. Gnoli 1974 e Root 2000; sulla trasmissione dell'eredità mesopotamica cf. inoltre, Panaino 2000; Westenholz 2000 e Kuhrt 2010.

¹⁰ Lanfranchi 2007: 24.

¹¹ Già durante il periodo neoelamita (1000-539 a.C.) si assiste alla penetrazione di temi tipicamente neoassiri, quali appunto la caccia al leone.

¹² Per i sigilli pre-achemenidi e achemenidi del British Museum si veda Merrillees 2005.

¹³ Garrison 2014: 82-84, § 3.8.

elamico achemenide e babilonese achemenide): “Io sono Dario, il grande re”. La composizione figurativa è sormontata da un disco solare alato con la parte superiore in forma di corpo maschile che rappresenta il dio Ahura Mazdā¹⁴ (fig. 4).

Numerosi sigilli provenienti da Susa e Persepoli, sia cilindrici sia a stampo, e le relative impronte, afferenti principalmente alla collezione del Musée du Louvre, raffigurano il sovrano achemenide in veste di cacciatore.¹⁵ L'iconografia in questione è incentrata sul ruolo del re, armato di lancia o di arco e frecce, che combatte contro un leone rampante. Sono apprezzabili varianti figurative dovute alla presenza di altri personaggi nelle suddette scene, come il cane che azzanna il leone o il disco solare alato che sovrasta l'immagine.

L'antico tópos mesopotamico del re cacciatore, che diviene appunto emblema dei sigilli imperiali neoassiri, ricorre nei rilievi di Persepoli sui quali è rappresentata una figura regia in atteggiamento eroico che combatte contro il leone o creature mostruose ibride dalle fattezze leonine: si tratta di un motivo preso in prestito dalla tradizione assiro-babilonese che caratterizza in particolare la glittica del I millennio,¹⁶ la quale a sua volta affonda le sue radici nell'iconografia della dinastia di Akkad.¹⁷

Le strutture architettoniche persepolitane ove sono stati rinvenuti i rilievi sono il Palazzo di Dario, il cosiddetto “Harem” di Serse e la Sala del Trono. Il Palazzo di Dario il Grande, chiamato *Tačara* nelle iscrizioni di Serse I (486-465 a.C.), situato nell'angolo occidentale della terrazza e a sud del cosiddetto Apadana, presenta dei cicli scultorei sulle porte d'accesso alla residenza regia e sugli stipiti annessi. Le porte, che conducono dalla sala principale agli ambienti occidentali e orientali della struttura, sono decorate con rilievi che mostrano il sovrano in lotta con un

¹⁴ Curtis, Tallis 2005: 221.

¹⁵ In generale si faccia riferimento al database digitale disponibile sul sito www.achemenet.com.

¹⁶ Ehrenberg 2017.

¹⁷ Nel I millennio a.C. si assiste a una nuova fioritura del tema della lotta e alla reinterpretazione iconografica della figura del “Signore degli animali”, sia sui sigilli sia sui maestosi rilievi palatini, anche sulla scia delle rappresentazioni assire della caccia al leone e mantenendo comunque l'eredità artistica accadica.

leone, con un mostro dalle sembianze leonine e con un toro.¹⁸ In particolare, sulla porta orientale, è raffigurato l'eroe reale che trafigge con forza il corpo del leone rampante. La medesima iconografia viene riproposta sulla porta occidentale della sala principale dell'Harem di Serse (fig. 5) identificato da E.F. Schmidt con la residenza delle donne di corte,¹⁹ e sul muro occidentale della porta meridionale della Sala del Trono, la cosiddetta Sala delle Cento Colonne, la seconda struttura più grande della Terrazza di Persepoli, situata a est dell'Apadana.²⁰

Un'altra iconografia permutata dal mondo assiro è quella dell'eroe che opprime il leone, desunta dalle sculture monumentali, dal profondo valore apotropaico, che ornavano la facciata settentrionale della sala del trono del Palazzo di Sargon II a Khorsabad (fig. 6). L'eroe, spesso identificato con Gilgameš, archetipo del concetto di regalità, è raffigurato nell'atto di soffocare un leone mentre impugna un'arma cerimoniale. Il colosso neoassiro trova il suo corrispettivo achemenide nella rappresentazione dell'eroe regio nel Palazzo di Dario, collocata sullo stipite occidentale della porta meridionale dell'ambiente 5.²¹

Tutti gli esempi di scultura monumentale provenienti da Persepoli, riguardanti l'aspetto eroico del sovrano, rappresentano un personaggio che indossa abiti tipici della corte persiana, fatta eccezione per il copricapo e i calzari che si discostano in parte dall'iconografia classica del re achemenide. Ciò potrebbe denotare la volontà di raffigurare una visione mitica del sovrano che è dotato di forza e potere, incarnando l'archetipo dell'eroe, in linea con il pensiero mesopotamico.²²

¹⁸ Schmidt 1953: 226; Root 1979: 81.

¹⁹ Si veda ora Razmjou 2010: 243-244.

²⁰ Schmidt 1953: 226; Root 1979: 102-103, 107-108.

²¹ Root 1979: 82; Garrison 2010: 165.

²² Garrison 2010: 165.

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Figure



Fig.1 - Riproduzione grafica di impronta di sigillo a stampo neoassiro raffigurante il sovrano che lotta contro un leone rampante, Periodo neoassiro (VII sec. a.C.).
(Nadali 2009-10: 220, fig. 4b; per gentile concessione dell'autore).



Fig. 2 - Rilievo rupestre che raffigura Nabucodonosor II in lotta con un leone rampante, Brisa, Periodo neobabilonese (VI sec. a.C.).
(Da Riva 2018: 35, fig. 8; per gentile concessione dell'autrice).



Fig. 3 - Rilievo rupestre che raffigura Nabucodonosor II in lotta con un leone rampante, Wadi es-Saba', Periodo neobabilonese (VI sec. a.C.).
(Da Riva 2018: 25, fig. 4; per gentile concessione dell'autrice).



Fig. 4 - Riproduzione grafica di impronta di sigillo cilindrico raffigurante una scena di caccia al leone di Dario I, Tebe (?), Periodo achemenide (VI-V sec. a.C.).
(Ward 1910: 336, fig. 1104).



Fig. 5 - Rilievo raffigurante il sovrano in lotta con un leone rampante, Porta Occidentale, Harem di Serse, Persepoli, Periodo achemenide (V sec. a.C.).
(Root 1979: pl. XXVIII, fig. 28b).



Fig. 6 - Riproduzione grafica di rilievo che raffigura un eroe nell'atto di annientare un leone.
Facciata Nord della sala del trono del Palazzo di Sargon II, Khorsabad, Periodo neoassiro (721–705 a.C.).
(General Research Division, The New York Public Library. "Façade n. Bas-relief 46".
The New York Public Library Digital Collections. 1849.
<https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e2-7270-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>).

The Decree Issued by Hattusili III for the ^{NA4}hekur Pirwa (KBo 6.28 + KUB 26.48)

STEFANO DE MARTINO

1. KBo 6.28

The Hittite tablet KBo 6.28+ preserves a decree issued by King Hattusili III. Although this document has often been cited in the secondary literature – specifically its historical preamble and presentation of events during the reigns of Tuthaliya III and Suppiluliuma I – no complete edition of this text is currently available. A few passages have already been published in transliteration and translation.¹

2. The ^{NA4}hekur Pirwa

The resolution taken by Hattusili III in this decree concerns the exemption from all duties that was granted to the rock sanctuary of the god Pirwa² (^{NA4}hekur Pirwa).³ The expression ^{NA4}hekur re-

¹ See Götze 1940: 21-22; Otten 1963; Heinhold-Krahmer 1977: 40-41; Imparati 1977: 39-41; Christiansen 2012: 294-295. I am deeply indebted to H. Craig Melchert, who read the manuscript of this essay and gave me valuable comments and suggestions.

² The god Pirwa, originally from Cappadocia, had entered official Hittite cult during the reign of Suppiluliuma I. See Imparati 1990; Pecchioli Daddi 2005; Archi 2010; Cammarosano 2018: 329-331; Mouton 2020.

³ Imparati 1974: 154-155; 1977; 1983; 1990.

fers to an architectural structure that might have been erected either on a mountain peak or on a rock platform. This term may be followed by either a place name referring to its location, or the name of the deity to whom it was dedicated.⁴

The ^{NA4}*hekur* Pirwa is documented in a very few texts⁵ that we will briefly mention here. A fragmentary passage in the oracular tablet KUB 16.42 + KBo 58.78 deals with the offerings due to this institution (rev. 1-3). In this text the divine name Pirwa is preceded by the determinative DINGIR, which is usually omitted when it follows the expression ^{NA4}*hekur* (Imparati 1977: 48).

Another mention of the rock sanctuary of Pirwa occurs in KUB 27.13 rev. 18. The obverse of this tablet enumerates offerings to several deities (Wegner 2002: 278-279), while the first lines on the reverse list a series of sacred springs and the cult attendants who took care of them (ll. 4-12, Imperati 1977: 52). As the following lines state, the personnel of the “Palace of Arnuwanda” and the servants of a certain Tarhuntapiya must present the offerings for two *hekur* sanctuaries (rev. 13-18). The mention of Tarhuntapiya, who is attested as a royal official on another tablet, supports the assumption that this document dates to the last decades of the 13th century BC (van den Hout 1995, 214). This passage also documents that the attendants of the *hekur* Pirwa and the king of Ishuwa⁶ were charged with the care of two other sacred places, namely, the sanctuary called *hekur annari* and the sacred spring *muwattinna* (CHD L-N 3: 317). The former sanctuary is defined by the word *annari*, which may be a Hurrian term (Richter 2012: 29), and this assumption is supported by the Hurrian character of the deities listed on the obverse of this text. We cannot say anything about the deified spring *muwattinna* apart from the fact that this term is perhaps related to the word *muwa(t)ta(l)la* ‘terrifying’ (CHD L-N 3: 316). Hence – as we infer from this passage – the personnel of the rock sanctuary of Pirwa maintained at least one other *hekur*, which might have been located nearby and presumably did not have any other attendants.

⁴ See Imperati 1977; van den Hout 2002; Kapelus 2007; Singer 2009; Mora, Balza 2010; Unal 2019; 2020. See also HW2 III/2, Lief 18: 556-560.

⁵ See Imperati 1977: 64.

⁶ As Imperati (1977: 55) states, the expression “servants of the King of Ishuwa” presumably refers here to the administration of this polity.

The king of Ishuwa is also cited in the inventory tablet KBo 12.140 (obv. 4, left edge 1),⁷ in which he and other officials are responsible for carrying out the inventorying procedures (Cammarosano 2013: 70 note 23; Waal 2015: 369). This text mentions the *hekur* Pirwa of Tuthaliya (rev. 12'),⁸ which might have been the rock sanctuary devoted to the cult of Tuthaliya IV after his death.⁹ The identification of the Tuthaliya listed in KBo 12.140 with the last Hittite monarch of that name is supported by the fact that the king of Ishuwa also appears in this text and plays a significant administrative role, and we know that the ruler of this kingdom became more extensively involved in the life of the Hittite state during the reign of Hattusili III. The *hekur* Pirwa of Tuthaliya is named in a passage that lists some deified mountains (see rev. 7'-13'). The mention of the city of Hubisna (rev. 10'), which was in the region of Tuwanuwa on the border between Tarhuntassa and Kizzuwatna,¹⁰ might be a clue to the location of this sanctuary.

In addition, the “men of the *hekur* Pirwa” are mentioned in the tablet KBo 14.142 in a list of individuals, officials, and palace personnel of the cities of Sapinuwa and Supassi who are charged with maintaining the cult performed in the temple of the Stormgod of Aleppo (Imparati 1977: 51-52 and n. 115).

3. Observance and Negligence of the Cult of Pirwa

Some Hittite texts document that the cult of Pirwa was neglected during the 13th century BCE. A passage in IBoT 2.131 (obv. 15'-28'; Cammarosano 2018: 262-263) refers to the results of an inspection in the sanctuary of Pirwa that was located in the town of Sippa, and thus in the region of Kültepe.¹¹ The existence of a cult of Pirwa in the town of Sippa is also documented by the inventory text KUB 38.4 (Cammarosano 2018: 329-331).

Text IBoT 2.131 can be dated to the time of Tuthaliya IV (Cammarosano 2018: 256), but it refers also to older events; in

⁷ See Torri, Barsacchi 2018: 151-152.

⁸ See Cognetti 2021: 321-322 note 970.

⁹ See Cognetti 2021: 368-369.

¹⁰ See Forlanini 2017: 240.

¹¹ See Forlanini 2009: 40-42.

fact, one passage (obv. 17'-28') states that Urhi-Teshshob had re-established the cult of Pirwa after a period of neglect¹² and ordered the renovation of the vineyards.¹³ The sealed tablets that regulated the cult offerings and the duties towards the god Pirwa were kept on Mount Lihsa.¹⁴

In any case, the cult offerings for Pirwa were eventually neglected again, leading Tuthaliya IV to order the inspection that led to the drafting of the tablet IBoT 2.131. Indeed, we know from another passage in this text (rev. 26-30; Cammarosano 2018: 266-267) that the servants of Hattusa-^DKAL, who resided in the town Gapiliwanta, had cut down the vineyards of Pirwa and eventually began to cultivate them for themselves.

Hattusa-^DKAL is mentioned in another text, again in connection with the sanctuary of Pirwa, that can also be dated to the reign of Tuthaliya IV. KBo 14.21 preserves the results of a series of KIN oracular inquiries on some neglected cults and offerings (Marcuson 2016, 424-435). Four passages in this text (i 21'-27', 28'-35', 61'-65', ii 55'-75') concern the cult of Pirwa, and one of them refers to the fact that Hattusa-^DKAL and a priest, whose name is not given here, had neglected the offering owed to Pirwa by the town of Hartimika¹⁵ (ii 55'-62'). We argue that Hattusa-^DKAL, who occurs in this passage as well as in the aforementioned document IBoT 2.131, may be identified with the official who bears the title GAL GEŠTIN in other Hittite texts (Imparati 1990: 171; Marizza 2007) and is among the witnesses in both treaties with Tahuntassa.

The divinatory tablet KBo 14.21 also contains an oracular inquiry that aimed to ascertain whether the offering owed by Ali-Sharruma to Pirwa had indeed been given (i 61'-65'). We assume that this personage is the king of Ishuwa, who is known from

¹² For the reading of the name of Urhi-Teshshob in this passage, see Cammarosano (2018: 262), who emends the reading given by Imparati (1990: 168-169).

¹³ See Corti 2018: 289-292.

¹⁴ Imparati (1990: 1880) argued that a storehouse was located at Lihsa and held the goods given to the god.

¹⁵ Forlanini (1992: 172-173) argued that the place name written as Harmikka in this passage should be amended to Hartimika. The latter form is known from the Old Assyrian texts from Kültepe.

other Hittite sources (de Martino 2010) and was a contemporary of Hattusili III (Glocker 2011). If KBo 14.21 indeed dates to the time of Tuthaliya IV, the cited passage presumably mentions events of the reign of his father, as the verb *peškir* ‘they regularly gave’ suggests (i 62’, 63’). As stated above, the king of Ishuwa was among the personages who were responsible for the management of the *ḫekur* sanctuary of Tuthaliya (see § 2).

4. KBo 6.28+: The incipit

The decree opens with the name of Hattusili III and his genealogy. As in the other documents issued by this king, no mention is made of Muwatalli II and Muršili III; in fact, Hattusili III not only condemned the latter to be erased from memory, but also avoided mentioning his brother Muwatalli II. Indeed, Hattusili III did not lie when he stated that he was the son of Mursili II and the grandson of Suppiluliuma I, but he pretended to fashion himself as their direct heir to the throne.

Furthermore, the Hittite king mentioned his homonymous predecessor Hattusili I. The latter also occurs in the genealogy of other documents issued by Hattusili III, although the phraseology differs. Thus, in the “Apology”, the king is only said to be a ‘descendant of Hattusili, king of Kussar’ (ŠĀ.BAL ŠĀ ḫHattušili LUGAL ^{KUR}Kuššar).¹⁶ The decrees KBo 4.12 and KBo 6.29+ document the expression ‘seed of Hattusili’ (respectively, NUMUN ḫHattušili DUMU ^{URU}Kuššar, and NUMUN ŠĀ ḫHattušili).¹⁷ The appellative ‘son (= ruler) of Kuššar’, which occurs in KBo 4.12 obv. 4, might be an intentional archaism intended to recall the most ancient Hittite texts, such as KBo 3.27 (+) 28, in which the rebellious ruler of Purushanda is called DUMU ‘son’ of this city (KBo 3.28 ii 5’).¹⁸

In KBo 6.28+ obv. 4-5, Hattusili III added that he belonged to the Hittite royal family, which had been favoured by the god. The restoration *k[a-ne-eš-ša-a]n-da-aš*, which had first been proposed by Göetze (1957: 59 note 75), was shared by Otten (1971:

¹⁶ See Otten 1981: 4-5.

¹⁷ See Göetze 1925: 52.

¹⁸ See Gilan 2015: 111.

236) and Güterbock (1973: 102; Klinger 2017: 72 note 63). This verb means ‘to favour’, and it also occurs in a passage of Hattusili III’s decree in favour of Mittanamuwa (KBo 4.12 obv. 8-12), which states that Mittanamuwa was favoured by Mursili II (*IŠTU ABI-YA kaneššanza*). Furthermore, a similar expression is documented in a passage of Muwatalli II’s Prayers to the Assembly of Gods, in connection with the Storm-god of Lightning: *IŠTU^D U ... kaniššanza* ‘I (have been) favoured by the Storm-god’ (iii 74-75, Singer 1996: 24).

In KBo 6.28 obv. 5 it is said that Hattusili I had been favoured by the god(s), and the word ^D*šūni* occurs here with the suffix of the instrumental case that marks agency. As Melchert (2016: 240) argued, the ablative progressively replaced the instrumental also in the agentive function, and hence the aforementioned passage in Hattusili III’s decree might echo an older document, or it might simply be an intentional archaism.

Although only the name of Hattusili III occurs in the *incipit* of KBo 6.28+, a passage at the beginning of the curse formula also mentions Pudu-Heba: «(This is) the word of Tabarna Hattusili, Great King, and Pudu-Heba, Queen of Hatti» (rev. 28).

5. The celebration of Suppiluliuma I

In this narrative Hattusili III depicted the political situation of the Hittite kingdom during the reign of Tuthaliya III in dramatic fashion and exclusively credited his grandfather Suppiluliuma I with saving the state from the so-called “concentric enemy attack”.

This presentation was intended to redeem the character of Suppiluliuma I, who had been a usurper just as Hattusili III was.¹⁹ The Hittite king aimed to prove that his grandfather’s usurpation did not compromise the divine protection of the throne, nor did it impede Hattusili III himself from being a victorious and glorious ruler. Hattusili III certainly did not ignore the claim made by Mursili II in his prayers that Suppiluliuma’s murder of Tuthaliya the Younger had provoked the anger of the gods and eventually triggered the spread of a terrible epidemic

¹⁹ See Singer 2009: 177.

disease. But Hattusili III chose not to mention this dramatic episode and instead trumpeted Suppiluliuma's success in his military expeditions as a clear sign of the god's acknowledgement and protection.

Without diminishing Suppiluliuma I's merit, a careful examination of the Hittite sources now supports the assumption that Hattusili III's historical reconstruction exaggerated the consequences of the enemy attacks. Furthermore, Tuthaliya III had already addressed this difficult situation and re-established Hittite control on both the western and eastern boundaries (Stavi 2013; 2015).

As noted, Hattusili III avoided mentioning Suppiluliuma I's coup d'état, and the latter's accession to the throne is presented in a singular way in this document; in fact, Hattusili III stated that the Great King Suppiluliuma 'rose to prominence' (– *kánšara išparzašta*) and became the sovereign. Our interpretation of this verb differs from the translation given by Götze (1940: 23–24). This scholar argued that the phrase meant 'he came of age' and alluded to the time when Suppiluliuma led the Hittite army together with Tuthaliya III before becoming king. Instead, S. Heinhold-Krahmer (1997: 41) assumed that it referred to Suppiluliuma I's seizure of power and translated it 'empor (ent-?)kam'. The literal translation 'he emerged' has been adopted by the editors of the Chicago Hittite Dictionary (CHD Š 2: 215).²⁰

This expression also occurs in the last paragraph of Hattusili III's Apology. The passage (iv 6–88) states that whoever 'rises over' (*šarā išparzi*), whether a son, grandson, or other descendant of Hattusili and Pudu-Heba, shall be devoted to Ishtar of Samuha.

The preverb *šarā* 'up, above, upon, on the top', which occurs in connection with the verb *išpart-* in the passage that refers to Suppiluliuma I, emphasises that this personage was able to rise to the top over the other competitors to the throne, such as Tuthaliya the Younger and his brothers. Analogously, in the Apology, the descendant of Hattusili and Pudu-Heba who prevails over another royal prince will be under the protection of Ishtar.

²⁰ See also Stavi 2013: 135 note 8; 2015: 39.

The same verb *išparšt-*, but without the preverb *šarā*, was intentionally employed in the line that precedes the mention of Suppiluliuma I. Here this verb is used with the meaning ‘to escape’, ‘to come down from a disaster’, and refers to the survival of the *hešta*-sanctuary (obv. 14-15). This sanctuary was a temple dedicated to the cult of Lelwani and of the netherworld deities, and it might have been located at Hattusa at Büyükkale.²¹ Hattusili III stated that the sanctuary *hešta* was spared by the fire that had burnt Hattusa. This monument was presumably mentioned here as a symbol of the endurance of the Hittite dynasty that Suppiluliuma I had assured.²²

6. The Exemptions

Hattusili III established that the ^{NA}*hekur* Pirwa should be exempted from any levies and duties (rev. 22-27). This portion of the text contains a very detailed description of the obligations from which the sanctuary was freed, and we wonder whether the scribe might have consulted a previous document that had introduced all these duties. A comparable list of obligations also occurs in the decree issued by Tuthaliya IV in favour of the grandchildren of Sahurunuwa who were born from his daughter Tarhun(t)amanawa (Imparati 1974: 34-35).

In KBo 6.28 + Hattusili III emphasised that he freed the *hekur* Pirwa, and the verb form *arawahhun* (‘I have freed’) occurs at the beginning of the paragraph (rev. 22) as well as at its end (rev. 27). Thus, the Pirwa sanctuary was exempted from the *šahhan* and *luzzi*. As is well known, it is difficult to draw a clear distinction between these two words. Imparati (1983: 246) argued that in the late imperial period the two terms were no longer distinguished from each other, and that the hendiadys *šahhan luzzi* referred to «des prestations à effectuer et des tributs à verser».²³ These obligations and payments were due from land tenants to the real owners of the land, whoever they might have

²¹ See Torri 1999: 31-32; Groddek 2001; Pierallini 2002; Kapelus 2007.

²² See Mora, Balza 2010: 259-260; Cognetti 2021: 362.

²³ See also Puhvel 2015.

been – the palace, the temple, local communities, or individuals (CHD Š 1: 2).²⁴

These duties supported the Hittite economy, and thus we do not share Lorenz’s statement that they had become economically irrelevant in the 13th century (Lorenz 2017), nor his assertion that «the institution of private land ownership had no further place in Hittite society and most probably vanished» (Lorenz 2021: 438). The latter affirmation is contradicted by the aforementioned decree issued by Tuthaliya IV in favour of the heirs of Sahurunuwa, which documents a huge private land-holding (Imparati 1974).

The sanctuary of Pirwa was exempted from daily farm labour, from providing wooden chariot components, and from the delivery of products of farming and herding, such as cereals, straw, and wool. The *hekur* Pirwa would supply neither trained horses, nor a particular type of sheep. Hattusili III’s decree also prescribes that the *hekur* Pirwa did not have any obligations towards representatives of the central power, such as the “Lord of the Land” and the “Frontier Post Governor”, or to the local authorities, such as the “Commissioner of the town” (Imparati 1983: 245-246). The Pirwa sanctuary was only asked to supply troops in case of war, and these soldiers could not be drafted for construction work. The provisions enacted by Hattusili III could not be changed, and the king explicitly established that no high dignitary or member of the royal family could cancel or reduce the exemptions granted by his decree (Imparati 1983: 249; 1988: 228).

The edict issued by Hattusili III was intended to permanently assure the sustainability of the cult of Pirwa in the *hekur*, which was presumably destined to become the main sanctuary of this deity. Imparati (1977: 47) and Singer (2009: 178) argued that this institution might have supported Hattusili at the time of his conflict with Mursili III. Furthermore, both researchers proposed that this sanctuary might have replaced the *hešta*-building that was spared during the destruction of Hattusa at the time of Tuthaliya III, as was already said. Although it is possible that the priests of the Pirwa sanctuary had indeed supported Hattusili

²⁴ See also von Dassow 2020.

and his accession to the throne, we cannot exclude that the exemption granted by the king might have been just one of the many donations and grants that Hattusili III and Pudu-Heba promised to temples and gods in exchange for divine protection (de Martino 2017).

7. The Decree

Obv.

1. UM-MA ta-ba-ar-na $\text{H}_a\text{-a}[\text{t-t}]\text{u-ši-li}$ LUGAL.GAL LUGAL KUR
 HA-AT-TI UR.SAG
 2. NA-RA-AM DU^{URU} A-ri-i[n-na] DU^{URU} Ne-ri-ik U^{D} IŠTAR URU Ša-
mu-ḥa
 3. DUMU Mur-ši-li LUGAL.GAL L[UGAL KUR URU H]A-AT-TI
UR.SAG DUMU.DUMU-ŠU ŠA m Šu-up-pí-lu-li-u-ma LUGAL.GAL
 4. LUGAL KUR URU HA-AT-TI UR[.SAG DUMU.DUM]U.DUMU-
ŠU²⁵ ŠA m H_a-at-tu-ši-li LUGAL.GAL ŠA LUGAL URU Ku-uš-šar
 5. $\text{D}^{\text{Ši-ú-ni-it}}$ k[a-ne-eš-ša-a]n-da-aš NUMUN-aš
-
6. ka-ru-ú KUR.KUR MEŠ^{URU} HA-AT-TI [I]Š-TU LÚ KÚR ar-ḥa ḥar-ga-
nu-wa-an e-eš-ta e-di-iz ku-i[t]²⁶
 7. nu LÚ KÚR URU Ga-aš-ga-aš ú-it nu [KUR.]KUR MEŠ^{URU} HA-AT-TI ḥar-
ga-nu-ut nu-za URU Ne-na-aš-ša-an ZAG-an
 8. i-ya-at e-di-iz-ma IŠ-T[U KU]R URU ŠAP-LI-TI LÚ KÚR URU Ar-za-u-wa-
as ú-it nu a-pa-a-aš-ša
 9. KUR.KUR MEŠ^{URU} HA-AT-TI ḥar-ga-nu-ut nu-z[a URU T]u-u-wa-nu-an
 URU U-da-an-na ZAG-an i-ya-at
-
10. e-di-iz-ma LÚ KÚR URU A-ra-u-un-n[a-aš ú-i]t nu KUR URU Ga-aš-ši-ya
ḥu-u-ma-an ḥar-ga-nu-ut
-

²⁵ For this possible restoration of the text, see Otten 1971: 237; Güterbock 1973: 101.

²⁶ A. Götze (1940: 21 note 85) wrote that the sign before the gap could be either MA or KU, and the partially preserved sign could be read as DA. S. Heinhold-Krahmer (1977: 40) shared this assumption and transliterated the last words in l. 6 as *e-di-ma-az d[a-*. We argue that the sign before the gap can only be KU; in fact, the sign MA occurs in other passages in this text and shows a different shape. See also below.

11. e-di-iz-ma ^{LÚ}KÚR ^{URU}Az-zi ú-i[t nu KUR.KUR^M ^{JEŠ}UGU^{TI} ḫu-u-ma-an-da ḫar-ga-nu-ut
12. nu-za ^{URU}Ša-mu-ḫa-an ZAG-an i-ya-a[t ^{LÚ}KÚR ^{URU}] ^{JEŠ}u-wa-aš-ma ú-it [nu ^{URU}]U^UTe-ga-ra-ma ḫar-ga-nu-ut

13. e-di-iz-ma ^{LÚ}KÚR ^{URU}Ar-ma-ta-na-aš [ú-it] ^{JEŠ}nu a-pa-aš-ša KUR.K[UR^{MEŠ}U] ^{RU}HA-AT-TI ḫar-ga-nu-ut
14. nu-za ^{URU}Ki-iz-zu-wa-at-na-an URU-an [ZAG-an i-ya-at ^{URU}Ḫa-at-t]u-ša-aš-ša URU-aš ar-ḫa
15. wa-ar-nu-wa-an-za e-eš-ta nu-kán [gur-t]a-aš (?)²⁷ ^Eḫé-eš-ti-ya iš-pár-za-an

16. [m]a-aḫ-ḫa-an-ma-kán A-BU A-BI-YA ^{mŠ}[u-up-pí-lu-li-u-ma LU-GAL.G]AL UR.SAG ša-ra-a iš-pár-za-aš-ta
17. [nu-]za-kán A-NA ^{GIŠ}ŠÚ.A LUGAL-UT-TI e-š[a-at] ^{IŠ-TU}KUR.KUR ^{URU}HA-AT-TI ar-ḫa
18. [ú-i-y]a-at nu KUR ^{URU}HA-AT-TI da-a[n-na-at-ta-an / da-a[n-na-ta-aḫ-ḫa-an-ta-an (?)²⁸ EGI]R-pa aše-ša-nu-ut

19. [] pa-it nu KUR.KUR^{MEŠ} Ḫur-ri ḫ[u-u-ma-an-da tar-uḫ-ta (?)²⁹ nu ^U] ^{RU}Kar-ga-miš-ša-an IŠ-BAT
20. [nu I-NA ^{UR}]U^UKar-ga-miš-ša ^{mP}[í-ya-aš-ši-li-in LUGAL-]an-ni ti-it-ta-nu-ut
21. [nu I-NA ^{URU}Ḫal-pa ^{mT}]e-li-p[í-nu-un LUGAL-an-ni t]i-it-ta-nu-ut pa-ra-a-ma-aš pa-it
22. [^{UR}]U^UNu-ḫaš-š[e KUR(?) ^{UR}]UA-mur-ri ZAG-an i-ya-at
23. [(-)d]a-ri-y[-t]a nu-uš-ši-kán KUR ^{URU}A-mur-ri
24. []x-iz-za-ya [ar-ga-am-ma-a]l-la (?) KUR.KUR^{MEŠ} i-ya-at
25. [nu KUR.KU]R^{MEŠ}A-mur-ri [] x x x ^{JEŠ}na-aš URU/^{URU}x x x x x

26. ^{JEŠ}nu K[UR.KUR^{ME}]Š ^{URU}HA-AT-TI [

²⁷ So Börker-Klähn 1995: 79. See Cognetti 2021: 362, for other possible restorations.

²⁸ We owe this possible restoration to Craig Melchert.

²⁹ So Klengel 1965: 34.

27. ɸu-u-ma₁-an-ta₁ tar-uɸ-t[a
28. na-at-za₁-kán₁ p[í-

-
29. nu KUR.KUR^{MEŠ URU}HA-AT[-TI
30. me-ek-ki da-ri-y[a-
31. ták-ša-an ták-ša-an[(-)
32. nu-kán ki-iš-š[a-
33. A₁-NA₁ x[

Rev.

1. KUR^{U[RU}
2. nam[-ma
3. na-a[t
4. ta[-
5. A₁-NA₁ x[

-
6. nu-za-kán A-BU-YA [
7. EGIR-an da-a₁-aš-ta₁[
8. pa-it ^mŠu₁-up-pí-lu-li-u-m[a(-)
9. ku-it EGIR-an da-a-aš nu A-B[U-YA
10. ^UUL ki-ša-at A-NA KUR.KUR^{M[ES}
11. nu-kán A-BU-YA-ya A-NA a[-

-
12. ma-a-an-za-kán ú₁-uq₁-qa A-NA x[
13. A-NA A-BU A-B[I-Y]A še-er x[
14. EGIR-an ^UUL k[u-i]t-ki (?) x[
15. nu-kán IŠ-TU É/^È[] x [k]u-it-ki x[
16. kap-pu-u-wa-an-te-eš [NAM.R]A^{MEŠ} x[k]u-e
GIŠ-TUKUL-it tar-uɸ-ɸi-iš-ki-mi
17. nu NAM.RA^{MEŠ} ku-e ú₁-e-da₁-a-mi nu-kán x[]x
IŠ-TU NAM.RA^{MEŠ} an-da šar-ni-ke-eš-ki-mi

-
18. ^{URU}KÚ.BABBAR-ši-ma³⁰ É LUGAL te-pa-u-e-eš-ta *ras* na-at[(-)
n]u ku-iš ú-iz-zi DUMU-YA DUMU.DUMU-YA

³⁰ Lines 18'-21' have been published by Otten 1963: 19-20, and Imparati 1977: 39.

19. URUKÚ.BABBAR-ši LUGAL-uš ki-ša nu A-NA ^{NA4}ḫé[-kur Pí-ir-wa
-z]a pé-e-da-a-i na-ṣaš-ṣa []x
20. le-e ku-it-ki da-a-i ma-a-an-na *ras* ^{NA4}ḫé[-kur Pí-ir-wa
a-ši-wa-]an-te-eš-zi³¹ na-a[t(-)]
21. ṣar-ni-in-ki-iš-ki-id-du
-
22. ^{NA4}[ḫé-ku]r Pí-ir-wa-ma-kán a-ra-u-wa-aḫ-ḫu-un n[a-aš-ta (?) ša-aḫ-
ḫa-ni³²] lu-uz-zi ṢA UD.KAM^M ḫar-šu-wa-an-zi
23. te[-ri-]ip-pu-u-wa-an-zi ^{GIŠ}ŠĀ.KAL ^{GIŠ}BU-BU-TI [^{GIŠ}wa-ar-ša-am-
ma³³ Š]E IN.NU.DA ^{SI}Gḫu-ut-tu-ul-li []
24. A-NA Ḫ ŠA LÚ^{MEŠ} MÁŠ.GAL ^{UDU}ku -ut-ri³⁴ IL₅-K[IE]N KUR^T[I
IL₅-K] EN M[AD-GA]L₉-TI IL₅-KI MAŠKIM URU^{KI} []
25. ANŠE₁.KUR.RA₂^{MEŠ} ú-e-ḫa-an-na-aš le-e ku-iš-ki p[í-r]a-an EGIR-
p[a e-ep-z]i A-NA NA-RA-RI^{LÚ}KÚR-ma-at i[-ya-at-t]a-ru
26. ma-a-an LÚ^{MEŠ} NA<RA>RI *ras* a-ša-an-du-la-an-zi a-pu-uš-m[a-
kán (?) ar-]ḫa tar-na-an-du I-NA KARÁŠ[-ma-aš-ma-aš]
27. ú-e-du-ma-aš KIN le-e e-eš-zi da-pí-za-kan a-ra-u-w[a-aḫ-]ḫu-un na-
at a-ra-u-e-eš aš[a-and]u
-
28. A-WA-AT³⁵ ta-ba-ar-na ^mḪa-at-tu-ši-DINGIR^{LM} LUGAL.GAL Ḫ
ⁿPu-du-Ḫé-pa MU[NUS.]LUGAL.GAL MUNUS.LUGAL
URUKÚ.BABBAR-^{TI}
29. ŠA LA-A NA-A-DI-YA-AM ŠA LA-A ŠE[-BI]RI-IM ku-iš-ma-an ḫu-ul-
la-i ma-a-na-aš BE-LU ma-a-na-aš DUMU.L[UGAL]
30. ma-a-na-aš EN ^{GIŠ}ŠÚ.A ma-a-na-aš ku-iš i[m-m]a ku-iš UN-aš nu
LÚ^{MEŠ} ^{NA4}ḫé-kur Pí-ir-wa ke-da-aš ša-aḫ-ḫa-n[a-a]š
31. lu-u[z-z]i-ya-aš ti-it-ta-nu-zi na-a[n A-]NA (??) ^DUTU³⁶ ŠA-ME-E
^DUTU ^{URU}A-ri-in-na ^DU ŠA-ME-E

³¹ So Imparati 1977: 40 note 67.

³² See Imparati 1977: 40 note 68.

³³ See Imparati 1977, 40 note 70.

³⁴ This word might be either a Hittite term (Weeden 2011: 183) or an unusual Akkadogram (*KUTRI*), as, for example, in Imparati's edition of the text (1977: 40).

³⁵ Lines 28-42 were published by Christiansen 2012: 294.

³⁶ As Christiansen (2012: 294 note 1166) argued, the scribe wrongly wrote ^DU here.

32. ^DU ^{URU}H[A-A] T-TI ^DŠe-ri ^DHur-ri ^DU [KI.]LAM ^DU ^{URU}Pít-ti-ya-ri-
i[k ^DU] ^{URU}Ne-ri-ik ^DU URU.DU₆³⁷
33. ^DU ^{URU}H[a-l]a-ab ^DU ^{URU}Li-iḫ-zi-n[a ^DU ^{URU}Š]a-mu-ḫa ^DU ^{URU}Hur-
ma ^D.[U ^{URU}Š]a-ri-iš-ša ^DU KARAŠ
34. ^DU ^{URU}Š[a-aḫ-p]í-na ^DU ^{URU}Hi-iš-ša[-pa ^DU(?)
^{URU}KÙ.BAB]BAR^{TI} ^DZi-it-ḫa-ri-ya [^DKar-z]i ^DḪa-pa-an-ta-li-ya
35. ^DLAMMA ^{URU}G[a-ra-aḫ-na] D[] ^D.AL-LA-AT-TUM
^DÉ.A ^DT[e-li-p]í-nu ^DḪé-pát MUNUS.LUGAL ^DŠA-MEE
36. ^DIŠTAR ^DIŠTAR ^DGASAN (?) ^{URU}Ḫ]a-at-ta-ri-
na ^DNi-na-at-ta ^DKu₁-li-it-₂[ta
37. ^DIš-ḫa-ra-a[š ^D]ZA-BA₄-BA ^{URU}KÙ.BABBAR^{TI} ^DZA-BA₄-
BA₄ ^{URU}EI-I[a-ya ^DZA-BA₄-BA₄ ^{URU}Ar-z]i-y[a]
38. ^DYa-ar-ri [^DZa-ap-pa-na (?)³⁸ ^DḪa-ša-am-mi-li (?)³⁹ ^DḪa-an-t]i-ta-aš-
šu ^{URU}Ša-mu-ḫa-aš ^DA-ba-ri ^{URU}A[-an-ku-wa-aš ^DKa-ta]ḫ-ḫi
39. ^{URU}Ka-ta-pa-aš M[UNUS.LUGAL ^{URU}Ta-ḫur-pa-aš ^DAm-m]a-am-ma
^{URU}Du-un-na-aš ^DḪal-la-ri ^{URU}Ḫu-u-pé-eš-na₁-aš₂ [^DGAZ.BA.A]
DINGIR^{MEŠ} LÚ^{MEŠ}
40. DINGIR^{MEŠ} MUNUS^{MEŠ} ŠA KUR ^{URU}ḪA-AT-T[I nu-]za ku-iš ke-e
tup-pí-ya-aš ud-da-a-ar EGIR-pa ḫu-ul-l[iz-zi ke-e-da-aš]
41. A-NA LIM DINGIR^M[EŠ] EN DI-NI-ŠU [e-] ₁eš-du₂ na-an-kán EN-
ZI⁴⁰ NUMUN-an-na da-an-ku-wa-ya-za ták-na-za ḫar₁-ga-nu-wa-an-
du₂
42. A-NA ^DU-ma-aš GU₄.MAḪ e-eš-du na-an pár-ḫé-eš-ki-id-du

Obv.

1. Thus, Tabarna Ha[tt]usili, Great King, King of Hatti, Hero,
2. beloved by the Sun-goddess of Ari[nna],⁴¹ the Storm-god of Ne-
rik, and IŠTAR of Samuha,
3. son of Mursili, Great King, K[ing of H]atti, Hero, grandson of
Suppiluliuma, Great King,

³⁷ For this logogram, see Weeden 2011: 195-196.

³⁸ See Christiansen 2012: 294 note 1169.

³⁹ See, for example, the mention of this deity in the treaty concluded by Suppiluliuma I with Shattiwaza of Mittani, Devecchi 2015: 251.

⁴⁰ The scribe might have written ENZI ‘goat’ instead of MÁŠ ‘family’, because the latter sign looks similar to UZ₆ ‘goat’. See HW² III 15: 304.

⁴¹ See Cognetti 2021: 62.

- 4-5. King of Hatti, He[ro, descenda]nt of Hattusili, Great King, of the seed of the king of Kussar (that had been) f[avour]ed by the god(s). §
6. In earlier days the Hatti lands were sacked [b]y the enemy, what (was) on (any) far side,⁴²
7. the Kaskean enemy came and sacked the Hatti lands, and established Ninassa as the border.
8. And, from another far side, in the direction of the Lower Land⁴³, the enemy of Arzawa came, he too⁴⁴
9. sacked the Hatti lands, and established [T]uwanuwa and Uda as the border. §
10. And from another far side the enemy of Arawann[a ca]me and sacked the whole land of Kassiya. §
11. And from another far side the enemy of Azzi ca[me,] sacked all the Lower [Land]s,
12. and establish[ed] Samuha as the border, and the enemy] of Isuwa came and sacked [the country] of Tegarama. §
13. And from another far side the enemy of Armatana [came], he too sacked the Hatti lan[ds]
14. and [established] the city of Kizzuwatna⁴⁵ [as the border,] even the city of [Hatt]usa
15. had been burned [the cita]del (?) and the *hešti*-house [] (had) escaped. §
16. However, [w]hen my grandfather S[uppiluliuma, Great K]ing, Hero, rose to prominence
17. [and] s[at] on the seat of kingship, [he drov]e out [all the enemies?] from the Hatti lands,
18. and the land of Hatti, de[solated (country) he aga]in settled. §

⁴² We assume that the expression *ēdiz kuit* is a kind of “frame-setting” relative clause. On *ēdiz* see Goedegebuure 2014: 123-128.

⁴³ The expression *IS-T[U KU]R URUŠAP-LI-TI* is translated by Heinhold-Krahmer (1977: 40, 48-49) as “vom Unteren Land her”, and this interpretation is shared by Stavi (2015: 38). Götze (1940: 21-22), however, had argued that it could mean “toward the Lower land”. Indeed, according to KBo 6.28, the Arzawean troops moved from Arzawa in the direction of south-central Anatolia and reached Tuwanuwa by crossing the Lower Land. On the ablative of direction, see Melchert (1977: 358) and Miller (2014: 547).

⁴⁴ See Goedegebuure 2014: 456-457.

⁴⁵ On the identity of the city/land of Kummanni and the city/land of Kizzuwatna, see Hawkins, Weeden 2017: 281.

19. [And] he went [to smash] a[ll] the Hurri lands [and] he took Karkemish,
20. [and] he appointed P[iyassili] as [king in] Karkemish,
21. [and] he [a]ppointed [T]elip[inu as king in] Aleppo, and he went forward
22. [] Nuhas[he] established Amurru as the border,
23. [] . . . [] . and to him⁴⁶ Amurru
24. [][] made the lands of Amurru⁴⁷ [trib]ute [bearing] (to him),
25. [the lan]ds of Amurru [] §

26-33. *fragmentary*

Rev.

- 1-11. *fragmentary*
12. And my father to .[
13. to my grandfather . . [
14. nothing back . [
15. and from the building [] so]mething / [no]thing . [
16. numbered (= few) deportees . [] t]hat I conquer by force of arms
17. and the deportees that I bring, . [] . I'll replace with deportees. §
18. But the royal palace in Hattusa become impoverished and it [a]nd whoever, my either my son, or my grandson,
19. becomes king in Hattusa, and brings to the *hē[kur* Pirwa] and [
- 20-21. he shall not take anything and if the *h[ekur* Pirwa imp]overishes, he shall replace it. §
22. And I have freed the [*heku*]r Pí-ir-wa, a[nd] let no one impose (on it)[for the *šahhan*] (and) the *luzzi*, for the daily ploughing,

⁴⁶ The personal pronoun might refer to Aziru, if he was indeed mentioned in the previous line; see Klengel 1969: 298 note 75.

⁴⁷ As Singer (1991: 72-73) argued, the expression “Land of Amurru” refers to Aziru’s country, while the “Lands of Amurru” might instead indicate «the broad geographical entity of the Syrian states west of the Euphrates that were indeed controlled by Mittani».

23. (and) tilling, (for the provision of) wooden chariot axle(s),⁴⁸
[firewood (?), cere]als, straw, wool-tuft []
24. (for the provision of) *kutri*-sheep (to be given)⁴⁹ to the house of
the goat-herds,⁵⁰ for the *ILKU*-obligation (in favour of) “Lord of
the Land”, [the *ILKU*-obligation (in favour of)] the Fro[ntier
Post Gov]ernor, the *ILKU*-obligation (in favour of) the “Commis-
sioner of town”,⁵¹ [],
25. (for the provision of) trained horses,⁵² instead it (= the *hekur* Pí-
ir-wa) shall come to (my) aid (against) the enemy,
26. if the auxiliary troops are in the garrison, let them go, [but]
27. (no) construction activities shall be (imposed) on them in the
military campaign, I have freed (them) completely, and they
[sha]ll be free. §
28. (This is) the word of Tabarna Hattusili, Great King, and Pudu-
Heba, Great Queen, Queen of Hatti
29. not be neglected, not to be broken, but whoever opposes it,
whether it be a Lord, or a pr[ince],
30. or a person close to the king,⁵³ or else any man, and allocates the
personnel of the *hekur*-Pirwa for these *šahhan*
31. (and) *luzzi*,⁵⁴ and h[im in fron]t of (??) the Sun-god of Heaven,
the Sun-goddess of Arinna, the Storm-god of Heaven,
32. the Storm-god of H[a]tti, Sheri, Hurri, the Storm-god of the
[Gate-]house, the Storm-god of Pittiyarik, [the Storm-god] of
Nerik, the Storm-god of the mound of the town,

⁴⁸ On the meaning of the words ^{GIŠŠÀ}.KAL and *BUBUTU*, see Weeden 2011: 183-184.

⁴⁹ So Weeden 2011: 183; instead, see HW² III/2 (2012): 792: «für das Haus der Männer (des?) Ziegenbockes (des?) *KUTRI*-Schafes».

⁵⁰ For this interpretation of the expression ^{É ŠA LÚ}^{MEŠ} ^{MÁŠ}.GAL, see Otten 1988: 46 and note 85.

⁵¹ On this term, see Bilgin 2018: 84 note 263.

⁵² The expression ANSE.KUR.RA^{MEŠ} *wehannaš*, which literally means ‘the horses of turning’, could refer to horses that were trained to move in circles. See Starke 1941: 26 note 67.

⁵³ Literally ‘a Lord of the throne’.

⁵⁴ These two terms occur here with the dative plural suffix; see Imparati (1977: 45) and CHD Š 1: 2. See Christiansen (2012: 294) for a different interpretation of this passage.

33. the Storm-god of A[le]p, the Storm-god of Lihzin[a, the S]torm-god of Hurma, the [Storm-god of S]arissa, the Storm-god of the army,
34. the Storm-god of S[ahp]ina, the Storm-god of Hissa[pa, the Storm-god (?) of Hattu]sa, Zithariya, [Kar]zi, Hapantaliya,
35. LAMMA of G[arahna], Allatu, Ea, T[elip]inu, Hebat Queen of Heaven,
36. Ishtar, I[shtar] the Lady of H]attarina, Ninatta, Kulit[ta
37. Ishara [], Zababa di Hatti, Zababa of Ell[aya, Zababa of Arz]iya,
38. Yarri, [Zappana (?), Hasammili (?), Hant]itassu, Abari of Samuha, [Kata]hha of A[nkuwa,]
39. the Q[ueen] of Katapa, [Amm]amma of Tahirpa, Hallari of Dunna, [Huwassanna] of Hubesna, the male deities (and)
40. the female deities of Hatti (???),⁵⁵ [and] whoever corr[upts] the words of this tablet,
41. may he become a legal opponent to these thousand gods, and they shall cause him, (his) family and offspring to perish from the black earth,
42. let he be (like) a bull in front of the Storm-god and let (the Storm-god) drive him.⁵⁶

Abbreviations

CHD *The Hittite Dictionary of the University of Chicago*, Chicago: The Oriental Institute of Chicago.

HW² *Hethitisches Wörterbuch 2nd ed.*, Heidelberg: Winter.

⁵⁵ Whatever restoration one might suggest in the gap in l. 31, it is clear that the scribe has here forgotten to supply a predicate after the long list of deities.

⁵⁶ I share the interpretation proposed by the editors of CHD P: 144; see also Schwemer 2001: 479 note 3922.

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*Athanasius Kircher, Pietro Della Valle,
and the Mesopotamian Collection in Turin*

ELENA DEVECCHI

The collection of Mesopotamian artefacts currently housed in the Museo di Antichità of Turin constitutes the largest collection of Mesopotamian artefacts in Italy.¹ It consists of cuneiform tablets, Assyrian reliefs, and fragments of inscriptions from Khorsabad/Dūr-Šarrukīn and Nineveh, cylinder seals, stamped bricks, and a few more inscribed objects.²

These objects came to Turin between 1847 and 1921. During that period, they were housed in the Royal Museum of Antiquities, whose Egyptian collection formed the core of the now world-renowned Egyptian Museum. While the earliest Mesopotamian acquisitions entered the museum mainly as occasional

¹ This research developed from my collaboration with the project ArCOA “Archivi e Collezioni del Vicino Oriente Antico”, which aims at studying, publicizing, and promoting the Italian collections of ancient Near Eastern artefacts (see Peyronel *et al.* forthcoming). I would like to thank especially Stefania Ermidoro for suggesting that I investigate a possible connection between Kircher and Della Valle. The abbreviations MAT and CGT correspond respectively to the publication numbers of the bricks in Archi *et al.* 1999 and of the cylinder seals in Bergamini 1987.

² The cuneiform tablets and the other inscribed objects are edited in Archi, Pomponio 1990; Archi *et al.* 1995; Archi *et al.* 1999; they are also available at https://cdli.ucla.edu/collections/turin/turin_it.html. For the cylinder seals, see Bergamini 1987.

gifts, important additions were facilitated by Ernesto Schiaparelli, who directed it from 1894 until 1928.³

In 1896, Schiaparelli acquired a group of objects that included mainly Egyptian items, together with a few Near Eastern antiquities from the Kircher Museum in Rome, which at that time was being phased out of existence; its collections were dispersed among several Italian museums.⁴ In retracing the historical journey of three stamped bricks that are now in Turin, I hope this note will complement the interests of our honouree, whose research has touched upon related topics.⁵

The fascinating institution known as the *Musaeum Kircherianum* owes its name to the German Jesuit Athanasius Kircher (1602–1680), who set it up in the Jesuit College in Rome in 1651. Often regarded as the first museum in the world, it housed a collection of antiquities, scientific tools, and curiosities “from all parts of the world” and soon became a must-see attraction for the many pilgrims and travellers who visited Rome in the 17th century.

Kircher himself was an extraordinary figure. One of the most learned persons of his time, whose vast erudition and multifaceted interests are witnessed by more than forty books he wrote on all kinds of topics, Kircher conceived the museum more as an encyclopaedic collection that should serve scholarly and educational purposes, rather than as a *Wunderkammer* for the astonishment of its visitors.

Over its centuries-long history, the Kircher Museum’s fortunes rose and fell until it finally ceased to exist at the end of the 19th century. In 1896 Schiaparelli acquired from the museum a small group of Mesopotamian objects that are described in the contemporary archival records as follows: «1 iscrizione cuneiforme in pietra, 3 iscrizioni su tavoletta di terracotta, 1 bassorilievo (testa virile), 2 cilindri (persiani)». ⁶ They have been identi-

³ For a brief history of these acquisitions, see Bergamini 1995.

⁴ Among the several publications devoted to Kircher’s museum, see especially the essays collected in Lo Sardo 2001 and Godwin 2009.

⁵ See Contini, Graziani 2016 on Pietro Della Valle as well as Caterina *et al.* 2017 and Graziani 2019 on the history of other Italian collections of ancient Near Eastern artefacts.

⁶ See the list published by Mineo 2003: 110-111.

fied respectively with a stamped brick of Sennacherib from Nineveh (MAT 789), one stamped brick of Ur-Namma from Ur (MAT 788) and two stamped bricks of Nebuchadnezzar from Babylon (MAT 791-792), the head of a royal guardsman from Khorsabad, and two cylinder seals, one Old Babylonian and the other Neo-Assyrian (CGT 70020 and 70030).⁷ The bricks of Ur-Namma and Nebuchadnezzar were at some point trimmed to the size of the inscriptions.

While the history of Schiaparelli's acquisition is well documented by archival records now kept in the State Archive of Turin and in the Archive of the Museo delle Civiltà - Museo Preistorico Etnografico "Luigi Pigorini" in Rome,⁸ it is more challenging to explain how and when some of these objects came to be included in the holdings of the Kircher Museum in the first place.

The earliest mention of Mesopotamian objects in the museum's collection appears in an inventory dated May 6, 1874.⁹ According to this document, a showcase contained a «testa in basorilievo di Re Assiro tratta dagli scavi di Ninive» together with Etrurian, Egyptian, and even modern artefacts.¹⁰ Later sources do not mention any reliefs portraying Assyrian kings from Nineveh in the museum, thus the item in question is probably the misidentified head of a royal guardsman from Khorsabad now in Turin. Another error in identification might have led to «tre mattoni di forma quadrangolare con iscrizioni geroglifiche» being counted among the Egyptian objects; rather, these items might have been three bricks bearing cuneiform inscriptions.

Finally, we find a more detailed and reliable list of Mesopotamian antiquities in a guide to the museum published in 1879 by Ettore de Ruggiero, one of its last curators. The list includes seven objects that correspond to those acquired by Schiaparelli in 1896, described as follows:

⁷ Bergamini 1995: 316.

⁸ See Mineo 2013: 107-113 for the documents kept in the Archive of the Museo delle Civiltà - Museo Preistorico Etnografico "Luigi Pigorini" in Rome.

⁹ Fugazzola Delpino, Mangani 2003: 292-319.

¹⁰ Fugazzola Delpino, Mangani 2003: 276, 298.

170. Testa di re assiro (di alabastro). Apparteneva ad un'intera figura, che ritrovata in alcuni scavi fatti a Khorsabad, fu donata dal P. Bresciani al Museo nel 1847.

171. Mattone con iscrizioni in lingua e scrittura babilonese, relativa a un re di Babilonia del 604-661 av. Cr.

172. Simile al precedente.

173. Simile con iscrizione cuneiforme relativa al re di Ur, Uruk, che visse tra il 2600 e 2200 av. Cr.

174. Iscrizione cuneiforme.

175. Cilindro persiano con figure mitologiche.

176. Simile di pietra bianca.¹¹

De Ruggiero's guide gives us a secure *terminus post quem* for dating the presence of these items in the museum, but, with the exception of the head of an Assyrian "king" (actually a royal guardsman) from Khorsabad, donated by a certain Father Bresciani, it is of no help for reconstructing their acquisition history. Lacking any precise information about the origin of most objects in the "oriental collection", which also included Egyptian antiquities, de Ruggiero assumed that almost all of them reached the museum via Jesuit missionaries who travelled in the East, but he does not mention any documentary source supporting this hypothesis.¹²

Going back in time, there is no mention of Mesopotamian antiquities in the first catalogues of Kircher's museum by Alfonso De Sepi and Filippo Bonanni, which appeared respectively in 1678 and 1709.¹³ But this is not surprising, since those authors did not aim at providing exhaustive accounts or detailed information about the items housed in the museum, especially with regard to the "exotic" ones.¹⁴ Likewise, archival documents that bear witness to the museum's holdings during the earliest phases of its history are silent on the presence of Mesopotamian items in Kircher's museum.¹⁵

¹¹ de Ruggiero 1879: 141; see also Curto 1990: 105-107.

¹² de Ruggiero 1879: 133. Elsewhere, the author laments the lack of early records useful for reconstructing the history of the museum's collection (de Ruggiero 1878: xxx).

¹³ De Sepi 1678; Bonanni 1709.

¹⁴ Cardelli Antinori 2001: 79.

¹⁵ Bartola 2004; Lallemand-Buysens 2012.

Furthermore, it should be considered that not necessarily all items collected by Kircher were put on display and counted among the museum's belongings. Indeed, a more complete picture can be gained by consulting also Kircher's books, where one finds references to several items that do not appear in early catalogues and archival records. As a matter of fact, a suggestive piece of information about the early presence of at least one Mesopotamian object in Kircher's collection can be found in Kircher's last book, *Turris Babel*, that appeared in 1679. Here, the Jesuit polymath provides a very detailed, albeit quite fictitious description of the Tower of Babel, based on the accounts of one of the first and most famous European travellers in the East: Pietro Della Valle (1586–1652), a Roman nobleman who travelled extensively in the Near East between 1614 and 1626, and became one of the first Europeans to visit ancient sites such as Babylon, Ur, Ctesiphon, and Persepolis.¹⁶ Della Valle and Kircher were in close contact since the Jesuit's arrival in Rome in 1633, and they exchanged letters and ancient manuscripts, especially in relation to Kircher's study of the Coptic language.¹⁷ In *Turris Babel*, Kircher quotes long excerpts from Della Valle's accounts and uses the drawings made by the Flemish artist who accompanied the traveller to illustrate his own book. Most important for us, Kircher states that Della Valle gave him a specimen of the bricks he found in Babylon's ruins, which Della Valle identified with the remains of the legendary tower described by Herodotus and by the biblical sources: «Haec Petrus à Valle, qui & laterem unum bitumine adhuc paleisque arundinaceis mixtum, tanquam singulare & antiquitatis primaevae maximum donum, museo meo inferendum, ad perpetuam rei memoriam contulit».¹⁸

¹⁶ The most important sources for reconstructing Della Valle's adventures are the diary and the letters he wrote during his trips; for the letters, see Della Valle 1650-1663.

¹⁷ Fletcher 2011: 31-32, 531-533; Stolzenberg 2015: 88-93, 124-126.

¹⁸ Kircher 1679: 95; see Rivosecchi 1982: 112-113; Godwin 2009: 92. The ruins explored by Della Valle probably did not correspond to the remains of the building described by Herodotus, *i.e.* the ancient ziqqurat of Marduk, but to those of the so-called Summer Palace of Nebuchadnezzar (Invernizzi 2000: 647; Invernizzi 2001: 51).

Thanks to Della Valle's accounts, we can trace the history of that brick back to the very moment when it was found in Babylon. In his diary and a letter, Della Valle describes in great detail the building materials and the construction techniques that he observed in the ruins of Babylon, which he visited and literally excavated with a pick on November 23, 1616.¹⁹ It is worth quoting his description of these discoveries, since it gives a vivid picture of Della Valle's "proto-archaeological" approach to ancient monuments:

La materia di che è composta tutta la fabrica è la più curiosa cosa che vi sia, e da me fu con diligenza osservata, rompendola con picconi in diversi luoghi. Son tutti mattoni molto grandi e grossi di terra cruda, seccati, come io credo, al sole, a guisa delle tappie di Spagna; e son murati, non con buona calce, ma pur con terraccia; e per più fortezza, tra mattone e mattone, mescolate con quella terra che serve di calce, vi sono come a solaio certe cannuccie palustri spezzate, ovvero paglie dure da fare stuoie. A luogo a luogo poi, vi sono mescolati in diverse parti, massimamente dove più importa per sostegno, molti mattoni della medesima grandezza, ma cotti e sodi, e murati con buona calce, o con bitume: però li crudi sono senza dubbio assai più. Di questi mattoni, cotti, e crudi, co'l bitume attaccato, e di quelle cannuccie che hanno in mezo, io hebbi gusto di pigliarne, e ne porto meco per mostrarli in Italia, a gli antiquari curiosi, che certo mi par che sia una bella antichità.²⁰

Unfortunately, neither Della Valle nor Kircher mentions the presence of cuneiform inscriptions on Babylon's bricks, but Della Valle's description of baked bricks «di terra rossetta», «cotti e sodi, e murati con buona calce, o con bitume», fits exactly the external features of one of Nebuchadnezzar's bricks (MAT 791) that arrived in Turin at the end of the 19th century, during the dispersion of Kircher's collections.

Even though Kircher refers to only one brick received from Della Valle, it is very well possible that another brick of Nebu-

¹⁹ See the diary and the letter written in Baghdad on December 10 and 23, 1616 (Invernizzi 2001: 136-142).

²⁰ On Della Valle as an "archaeologist *ante litteram*", see Invernizzi 2000; Invernizzi 2001: 40-41.

chadnezzar from the Kircher Museum (MAT 792) had the same origin.

Probably, also Ur-Namma's brick from Ur (MAT 788) came into Kircher's museum through Della Valle. In fact, we know that the explorer visited Ur on June 19, 1625, and collected a brick from a building made of «*buonissimi e grandi mattoni cotti, la maggior parte de' quali erano iscritti e bollati in mezo con certe lettere incognite e che paiono antichissime. Io presi e portai via con me uno di questi mattoni (...)*».²¹

Perhaps Della Valle, who died only one year after Kircher opened his museum, personally gave to the Jesuit only one brick from Babylon; the other two might have entered the collection after Della Valle's death, when the traveller's own collection was partially dispersed.²²

If this reconstruction is correct, the bricks of Nebuchadnezzar and Ur-Namma mentioned by de Ruggiero in his guide from 1879 had belonged to Kircher's museum since its earliest days.

Furthermore, if they were collected and brought to Italy by Della Valle in the first quarter of the 17th century, the bricks of Nebuchadnezzar and Ur-Namma now in the Museo di Antichità of Turin would deserve a special status among the Mesopotamian antiquities that are housed in museum collections worldwide: in fact, they could be the very first cuneiform objects ever seen in Europe, long before the *kudurru* known as "caillou Michaux" arrived in Paris in 1786.²³

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²¹ See the diary and the letter sent from Aleppo on August 5, 1625 (Invernizzi 2001: 207-212). Curiously, Della Valle does not seem to realize that the inscriptions on the bricks he sees in Ur were written using the same script of the cuneiform inscriptions he had copied a few years earlier during his visit of Persepolis (Invernizzi 2001: 31).

²² See Invernizzi 2010: 57-58.

²³ See Thomas 2016.

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*Questions of Tone and Points of Logic.
Making Sense of a Letter between Neo-Assyrian
Palace Ladies**

FREDERICK MARIO FALES

The historical problem of literacy in the ancient Mesopotamian record – who was entitled/capable/trained to perform acts of writing, for what occasions, requirements or reasons, and in which formal or legal/social contexts – has emerged in the last decades from a certain prior haziness into a definite research focus on cuneiform culture, thus finding a good-sized set of basic testimonials from the 3rd to the 1st millennium BC.¹ Access to writing (and reading, even teaching) on the part of particular linguistic, cultural, and social groups, and even across the gender barrier, have of late become themes central to dedicated handbooks, conference papers, and workshops with quite diverse possible slants.² The latter have come to involve sub-themes and aspects such as materiality and media, technical re-enactments

* Over the years, I have greatly enjoyed sharing with Simonetta Graziani research agendas, colloquia, exhibitions, and publications, *ša lā mīni*. Whether carried out among rows of gilded mirrors in the dark halls of baroque Naples or through drenching rainstorms and dazzling sunbursts in boundless Eastern venues, our projects have always benefitted from her good taste and savvy, wisdom and wit.

¹ See *e.g.* Radner, Robson 2011.

² See *e.g.* Maul 2010; Frahm 2017a; Robson 2019.

(experimental archaeology), the anthropology of writing, the social-geographical spread and limits of the written testimonials, and the adaptations of writing systems from one language to another.³ And I could go on for a long time.

On the present occasion, I have chosen to take up once more a well-known Neo-Assyrian letter from the Kouyunjik collection, which has writing in cuneiform script on clay tablets as its main topic, and two women of the highest rank within the imperial hierarchy of the mid-7th century as its protagonists.⁴ Further features that set this text apart within the corpus of some 3000 items of epistolary nature of the same general period,⁵ are – by absolute standards – its decided brevity (13 lines in all), and – as for the factor of chance in archaeological preservation and retrieval – its perfectly intact appearance in both shape and content, with not even a single blemish to mar understanding or grammatical interpretation on the part of the present-day reader.⁶ Finally, it should be added that the document has hitherto received plentiful translations and brief commentaries, either within anthologies of epistolary documents or on its own, from the time of the earliest editions in the 1930s to most recent years.⁷ In a nutshell, it may be said that almost every major specialist of Neo-Assyrian has, at one time or another, come to grips with this letter.

³ See *e.g.* Taylor, Cartwright 2012; Jursa 2014; Fincke 2017; Cammarosano *et al.* 2019; Ito 2019.

⁴ Fully updated edition, with translation and translation: SAA 16 28 (previously quoted as ABL 308). The complete set of data concerning this text is available (with photograph) at: https://cdli.ucla.edu/search/search_results.php?SearchMode=Text&ObjectID=P334196. The photograph of the tablet is in the public domain, and may be quickly retrieved, *e.g.* at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serua-eterat>.

⁵ On the Neo-Assyrian (NA) variety of the Akkadian language, see Fales 2021. For NA epistolary texts in their formal and contextual aspects, cf. most recently Radner 2014a; Fales 2015; Luukko 2019.

⁶ The tablet is of the rarer horizontal format in NA, being written along the long edge with a 2:1 ratio and a slight pillow-shaped bulge at the center. This type would seem to have been used for less formal messages than the regular “vertical” one-column, format (*egirtu*): see Radner 1995.

⁷ First editions: ABL 308, SLA 152, RCAE 308. Revised presentations: Oppenheim 1967: 158 note 97; Fales, Lanfranchi 1992: 72-74; Kuhrt 1995: 529. Most recently revised readings, Livingstone 2007: 105.

Taking account of this general background, it might at first sight seem that I am about to offer the feted scholar – despite our fast friendship of long standing – something of a gift horse (*caval donato* in Italian) or, even worse, a rehashed or merely repackaged present, devoid of any truly new or original feature in its description and treatment. In point of fact, this is not the case, as I will argue in the following pages. In particular, I will attempt to show that, regardless of the quantity and relative variety of previous interpretations, a small but crucial point of (communicational) logic which lies embedded in the exchange between the two palace women has been consistently overlooked. In my opinion, if this point remains unaddressed, it risks leaving the entire missive ultimately devoid of overall significance as for its reasons and rhetoric.

The text of the letter is the following:

1. *a-bat* DUMU.MUNUS.LUGAL *a-na*
2. ^f URU.ŠÀ-URU-šar-rat
3. *a-ta-a* *tup-pi-ki la ta-šaṭ-ṭi-ri*
4. IM.GID-ki *la ta-qab-bi-i*
5. *ú-la-a i-qab-bi-ú*
6. *ma-a an-ni-tu-u* NIN-sa
7. ša ^{fd} EDIN-e-tè-rat
8. DUMU.MUNUS GAL-tú ša É ÚS.MEŠ-te
9. ša ^m aš-šur-NIR.GÁL-DINGIR.MEŠ-GIN-in-ni
10. MAN GAL MAN *dan-nu* MAN ŠÚ MAN KUR *aš-šur*
11. *ù at-ti ma-rat kal-lat* GAŠAN É ša ^m aš-šur-DÙ-A
12. DUMU MAN GAL ša É ÚS.MEŠ-te
13. ša ^m aš-šur-PAB-AŠ MAN KUR AŠ

I will tackle this document the “good old way”, viz. by reading and translating it progressively by short clusters, while bringing up for discussion any relevant point of information or question of interpretation.

Ll. 1-2. *abat mārat šarri ana Libbāli-šarrat*, «Word of the daughter of the king to Libbāli-šarrat». The (self-)identification of the sender in this *incipit* is unique: no other letters “signed” by the woman named Šērū’a-ēṭirat – who is named a few lines later – have survived, and no other letters from kings’ daughters in the Assyrian imperial period have been retrieved. The formula of

address poses no problems, since it is entirely parallel to *abat šarri*, ‘word/message of the king’, which is known from many letters between the 9th to the 7th century.⁸ The sole debatable point here, rather, is whether the royal princess Šērū’a-ēṭirat could have actually penned this text herself, in view of the fact that the entire message regards ability in writing, and specifically by women. This possibility for physical authorship by the signatory herself (as opposed to dictation to a scribe) was intimated by S. Parpola, who suggested that «to judge from a contemporary letter, learning to read and write cuneiform was not considered a difficult task in this period».⁹ I further believe that a shred of evidence pointing to self-authorship might be retrievable in the message itself (see ll. 8-10, below).

Now for the historical identity of both sender and addressee. Only the latter, Libbāli-šarrat, is mentioned in the address by her name (which means ‘the Inner City [= Assur] is Queen’). She is again named with the same orthography in a fragmentary inscription on a stele within the *Stelenreihen* from Assur, as queen of king Assurbanipal. This monument also bears a partially preserved image of an Assyrian crowned female in profile, quite surely representing this woman.¹⁰ Libbāli-šarrat is further presumed to be the woman depicted beside Assurbanipal in the famous Nineveh bas-relief with the banquet scene in the garden.¹¹ In any case, both these attestations with images refer to later dates, since in lines 12-13 of our letter Libbāli-šarrat is dubbed as being already ‘lady of the house’ of Assurbanipal, although he still bears the title of Crown Prince designate.¹²

⁸ See the material collected in Watanabe 1985.

⁹ Parpola 1997: 321 note 18.

¹⁰ See PNA 2, 660b-661a (C. Ambos). A line drawing of the female face – taken from the 1913 original by Walter Andrae – is reproduced *e.g.* by Pinnock 2014: 511, fig. 4. The corresponding photograph, in a clear and readable specimen, and with all relevant references, is provided *e.g.* by Gansell 2014: 397, fig. 4.

¹¹ In point of fact, a recent study (Kertai 2020) makes the case that the entire scene was «organized around the queen rather than the king», also because the queen wore a crown, while the king did not.

¹² Following the intimations of SAA 10 152 and 153, Assurbanipal’s marriage should have taken place in 672, the year of his appointment as heir to the throne: see Livingstone 2007: 102.

As for the sender, Šērū'a-ēṭirat was – as she herself states in lines 8-10 of this text – the eldest daughter in the line of succession of Esarhaddon, and may be theoretically classified through present-day prosopographical research as the third eldest offspring of the Assyrian ruler.¹³ She was quite surely born after Sin-nadin-apli, the first heir designate of Esarhaddon who might have died (or fallen out of favor) prior to the succession arrangement in II/672.¹⁴ She was also begotten after Šamaš-šumu-ukin, who is called 'your eldest son' (*māru rabû*) in a letter to the king by the court exorcist Adad-šumu-ušur,¹⁵ but who merely obtained, despite his seniority, the politically secondary crown of Babylonia in his father's plans for dynastic continuity.¹⁶

Šērū'a-ēṭirat should have been, on the other hand, older than Assurbanipal,¹⁷ who was designated by the ageing Esarhaddon as his main heir and the successor to the throne of Assyria thanks to the moral and political influence of his own mother, the widow of Sennacherib and dowager queen Naqī'a / Zakutu.¹⁸ However, the relative age-order between sister and brother cannot be established with any certainty, since purely chronological listings in administrative or epistolary texts were often altered or fully upset through inputs in registration by gender and/or by possible inner rankings within the palatial structure. Thus, *e.g.* a letter regarding offerings to be presented

¹³ See PNA 3, 1264a-b (H.D. Baker). Admittedly, the position, order, and relevance of a further son of Esarhaddon, Šamaš-metu-uballit, remain uncertain (Novotny, Singletary 2009: 169-170).

¹⁴ See Novotny, Singletary 2009: 169, who quote a haruspical query of 677 concerning Sin-nadin-apli's appointment as heir designate (SAA 4 149).

¹⁵ SAA 10 185.

¹⁶ Both the crown princes designate are portrayed on the sides of a stele discovered at Zinçirli (ancient Sam'al) and of two stelae from Tell Aḥmar (ancient Til Barsip) – all three monuments celebrating the victory of Esarhaddon (at center, in taller physical proportions) over foreign foes. Assurbanipal is in Assyrian garb, while Šamaš-šumu-ukin is in traditional Babylonian dress. See Porter 2001 for these monuments.

¹⁷ It is possible that Šērū'a-ēṭirat's mother was Ešarra-ḥammat, «the only queen of Esarhaddon for whom we have a name» (Novotny, Jeffers 2018: 13 note 78, with previous bibliography), who is believed to have begotten Assurbanipal and probably – before him – Šamaš-šumu-ukin.

¹⁸ For discussion on Naqī'a/Zakutu's role in promoting Assurbanipal's kingship, see the references given in Fales 2020: 236 note 38.

in the Ezida temple in Kalhu (SAA 13 56 r. 6–10), shows Šērū’a-eṭirat named third, after Assurbanipal and Šamaš-šumu-ukin, *i.e.* in a 3-1-2 order by respective age.

Šērū’a-eṭirat enjoys three further attestations as member of the royal line in the contemporary corpus of archival texts, albeit in very fragmentary contexts; however, in the general paucity of mentions of female palace members in NA texts, these notations are enough to leave us with the impression of a woman of prominent status at the royal court, with possible extensions in the field of imperial administration and even foreign policy (in one text, Elam is named).¹⁹ On the other hand, Šērū’a-eṭirat appears in a totally unique manner – with the rendering *s.ryt.r*, ‘Saritra’ – in a clearly demarcated and autonomous section of Papyrus Amherst 63, a 4th century text of 23 columns and 414 lines in length from Thebes in Egypt, written entirely in Demotic script but in the Aramaic language.²⁰ The conclusive segment (cols. 18-23) of the vast collection of religious and other linguistically Aramaic compositions which made up the Demotic papyrus, holds a fictionalized account of the war between Assurbanipal and his brother Šamaš-šumu-ukin – *i.e.* it refers back to an important event of Assyrian history, which is related or touched upon in a large number of archival documents or official inscriptions in NA and contemporary varieties of Babylonian for the years 652 to 648 BC. In the version of Papyrus Amherst 63, the “war between the brothers” was made into a fully literary narrative which played upon historical occurrences, and was transmitted and enhanced in collective memory through the centuries, even far away from their original locale; and the figure of the sole female protagonist, princess Saritra, is particularly vivid and striking within the story, specifically *vis-à-vis* her two warring brothers, as has been recently shown.²¹

Ll. 3-4. *atâ ṭuppiki lā taṣaṭṭiri liginnuḳi lā taqabbî*, «Why don’t you write your tablets and recite your exercise?». This double clause was misunderstood by Oppenheim («Why do you not write me any letters, why do you not send me any oral

¹⁹ PNA 3, 1264b.

²⁰ Fales 2020, for the complete study.

²¹ Fales 2020: 244-247.

message?»).²² The first half has nothing to do with the sending of messages from one person to another (where *šapāru* would be the expected verb), but refers purely and simply to the act of ‘writing tablets’, as more recent translations of this text (such as SAA 16 28) have begun to acknowledge.²³ The second half refers to a parallel action involved in the process of acquisition of literacy: *liginnu qabā’u*, ‘to recite from an exercise tablet’.²⁴ The tone of these questions bears no particular connotation: we are dealing with a straightforward double query on the recipient’s activity in writing and reciting lessons, which is considered insufficient and/or incomplete.

Ll. 5-8. *ūlā iqabbiu mā annītu aħassa ša Šērū’a-eṭirat*, «or they will say, “is this the sister of Šērū’a-eṭirat...”?»). Here lies, in my opinion, the crucial but still not totally explained problematical point of the text. What, exactly, should have been meant or implied by a foreseen collective judgment and/or ensuing rumor that ‘this (woman)’ could have been the ‘sister’ of the highest Assyrian princess in the royal line of succession? And why should this judgment and/or rumor have constituted an alternative outcome (*ūlā*, ‘otherwise...’) to the level/status of Libbāli-šarrat’s writing activities?

A way out from this conundrum was attempted by A.L. Oppenheim, but it involved very heavy tampering with the original text, such as to exceed the limits of acceptable interpretation: «Isn’t it in reality because people might say: “Perhaps that one (*i.e.* the writer of the letter) is higher in rank than she”».²⁵ Disregarding this solution *in toto* as misleading and not viable, therefore, we are left with the further option that Šērū’a-eṭirat was tracing a potential identification between Libbāli-šarrat and a ‘sister’ of hers. Until recent times, this identification was viewed with fully negative connotations. Thus,

²² This mistranslation was also perpetuated in Fales, Lanfranchi 1992: 72-74.

²³ The question was set definitively straight by Livingstone 2007: 104, who even went through all the renderings of this clause in the CAD, ending up with the feeling that «Oppenheim and other later translators intentionally ignored the plain meaning and tried to twist it because they balked at the idea of a woman – and that a princess – having personally anything to do with writing at all».

²⁴ CAD L, 183b-184a.

²⁵ Oppenheim 1967: 172.

the editors of SAA 16, M. Luukko and G. Van Buylaere, wrote in 2002:

Note that Šērū'a-ēterat is annoyed that Libbāli-šarrat might be publicly referred to as her 'sister' (*ahātu*). This use of *ahātu* resembles the usage of the word *ahu* ('brother') in letters, where it mostly means 'colleague, fellow'. Presumably in this letter, too, the word carried the nuance 'equal, equivalent, as good as'. In any case, Šērū'a-ēterat clearly did not want simply benevolently to instruct the newcomer to the royal family in the ways of the palace, but seems to have written the letter out of feelings of rivalry and jealousy.²⁶

More recently (2007), an important study of literacy at the Assyrian court by the late Alasdair Livingstone brought him to two conclusions on this letter. The first was to fully reconsider the tone of the message, with the suggestion that, *pacē* the editors of SAA 16, «no evidence for the rivalry and court intrigue that was introduced into previous translations by interpolation of extra wording» is discernible in the text, *i.e.* that – on the face of it – the discourse between sender and recipient was not marred by any polemical undercurrent.²⁷ I will come back to Livingstone's second conclusion shortly, since it is also of importance for the formulation of a new interpretation of this passage.

In the meantime, however, we may pass on to consider P. Villard's useful step forward. In an overview of the issue of female literacy at the Assyrian court of 2009, the French scholar fully accepted the "non-controversial" approach taken by Livingstone, and even went so far as to posit a friendly reception of Assurbanipal's wife by her sister-in-law in the palace hierarchy. Specifically, Villard stated that Šērū'a-ēterat, «qui occupait une place importante à la cour d'Assarhaddon, voulait signifier à Libbāli-šarrat qu'elles étaient "sœurs", c'est-à-dire de statut égal, mais que ce statut impliquait certaines obligations, dont celle de s'instruire».²⁸ In conformity with this approach, Villard's translation of the clause under examination reads as follows: «Si

²⁶ SAA 16, *Introduction*: XXVIII.

²⁷ Livingstone 2007: 105.

²⁸ Villard 2009: 314.

tu ne le fais pas, on va dire : “Celle-là est-elle (vraiment) la sœur de Šērū’a-ēṭerat....?”».

At this point it may be noted that all the main interpretations of this clause which have been brought forth in the last two decades have in common a touch of incredulity or fancifulness about them. In other words, all the translations – whether viewed as bearing overtones of scepticism and hostility or of friendly welcome – agree on the fact that the interrogative clause within quotes of direct speech (introduced by *mā*) which regards the possible evaluation of ‘this (woman)’ (*annitu*) as ‘sister’ (*ahassa*) of Šērū’a-ēṭerat, is not supposed to portray a true, existing, parental relation, but only a metaphorical one, in any case one in the sphere of irreality. To put it still differently: the clause has been hitherto understood by all interpreters as meaning that people ‘will/might say’ (*iqabbiu*) that ‘this (woman)’, *i.e.* Libbāli-šarrat, is comparable, equivalent to a sister of the princess, not that she is her real blood relative.

But let us consider for a moment the possibility that, in lieu of resorting to such a convoluted rhetorical layout, a totally opposite – *i.e.* realistic – perspective were implied by the clause. We may start out on this line of inquiry from Livingstone’s second conclusion:

The second and more important point regards literacy. Libbāli-šarrat is letting her sister-in-law and her husband down by not studying, by not writing her tablets and reciting her lesson. This is of course negative evidence of literacy. The princess was not writing her tablets or reciting her lesson. But the memo demonstrates extremely clearly that there was an expectation that she should be doing lessons. And if this was the case, it would be surprising if other young people at the royal court were not similarly expected to learn to read and write.²⁹

This last item may retain us, because it holds a possible key to a new solution. Now, among these «other young people at the royal court» envisaged by Livingstone, there happened to be in reality a further princess, of younger age, who is specifically

²⁹ Livingstone 2007: 105.

attested after Šērū'a-ēterat in an archival list of Esarhaddon's offspring, although her name is lost.³⁰ This shred of textual evidence is in itself sufficient to suggest that Šērū'a-ēterat could have actually been following a fully logical path in her discourse, and making a quite elementary and straightforward communicational point. In order to dress her sister-in-law down for her shoddy writing performance, she compared Libbāli-šarrat's output to that of an actual little sister of hers, a later addition to Esarhaddon's progeny, whose youth and inexperience would have justified as a matter of course her clumsiness and flaws in the scribal arts.

This – in a nutshell – is the new interpretation which I suggest for the text under examination and which I offer with great pleasure to the feted colleague on the present occasion. Without changing a word in the accepted translations («...or they will say, “is this the sister of Šērū'a-eṭirat...”?»), my specific solution is that the *ahassa ša Šērū'a-eṭirat* referred to an actually living person, viz. a quite junior female member of the royal line, as the further (unnamed) protagonist of this message. In plain speech, Šērū'a-ēterat would have meant to say: *the level of your proficiency in writing tablets and reciting lessons is so low, that people who read your output might believe that it came from the pen of my little sister, the junior princess, not from that of an adult.*

But, despite this small breakthrough, it would be wrong to abandon here our reading-out of the text by clusters, since in my opinion there is some further content that might justify the interpretation suggested above. So, going on, we have:

Ll. 8-10. *mārtu rabitu ša bēt redūte ša ^mAššur-etel-ilāni-mukīnni šarru rabū šarru dan-nu šar kiššati šar māṭ Aššur*, «the eldest daughter of the House of Succession of Aššur-etel-ilani-mukinni, the great king, the mighty king, king of the world, king of

³⁰ Novotny, Singletary 2009: 172, with reference to an administrative text recording quantities of unknown commodities associated with statues of Esarhaddon's family on display in the Assur temple of the homonymous city: «The list (in order) comprises the “principal crown prince”, Šamaššumu-ukin, the “mausoleum which Assurbanipal ...”, Aššur-taqiša-liblut, Aššur-mukin-pale'a, Aššur-etel-šamē-eṣeti-muballissu, Šeru'a-eṭirat, and a princess whose name is completely destroyed».

Assyria?». This *coda* of the rhetorical question raised by Šērū'a-eṭirat and discussed above is marked by a decided flourish in titulary, whereby the princess dubs herself grandiosely as daughter of Aššur-etel-ilani-mukinni, *i.e.* using the alternate, full, dynastic name for Esarhaddon bestowed by his father Sennacherib as a sign of special fondness and political favor.³¹ This particular stylistic leap in our letter (which also includes the full array of epithets of the ruler, 'great king, mighty king, king of the world, king of Assyria') has been often singled out as a presumable marker of slight disdain for Libbāli-šarrat, who – as will be said for ll. 11-13 below – is merely called up in connection with the royal name Esarhaddon and the basic title of 'king of Assyria'.³² On the other hand, if one is to accept, following Livingstone, that no particular animosity reigned between the two women in this text, this show of literacy may simply be evaluated as such – *i.e.* in the sense that Šērū'a-eṭirat was purely and simply flaunting her own level of command of the scribal arts, possibly because in point of fact she was, as Parpola suggested, the person who actually penned our text.

Ll. 11-13. *ù attī mārāt kal-lat bēlat bēti ša ᵐAššur-bāni-apli mār šarri rabī ša bēt redūte ša ᵐAššur-ahu-iddina šar māt Aššur*, «And you are a daughter-in-law, the lady of the house of Assurbanipal, the great crown prince of the House of Succession of Esarhaddon, king of Assyria!». This last clause may be best understood by following again Livingstone's "matter-of-fact" translation, in the sense that «Šērū'a-eṭirat is treating her sister-in-law with respect, addressing her with her royal titles and emphasising her high position and reminding her of it». ³³ On the other hand, if one considers that the entire message up to this point concerned a decidedly negative appraisal of Libbāli-šarrat's performance in writing – and even a relatively biting one, through the straightforward comparison with a junior princess of "school" age – this clause must be understood as implying the kindest possible urge to the younger woman to be worthy of her rank as

³¹ Cf. PNA, 184 b (J.A. Brinkman) for the name; notice further that in itself it represents a slightly abbreviated form of Aššur-etel-ilani-mukin-apli (PNA, 184a; J.A. Brinkman).

³² *E.g.* by J.A. Brinkman in the PNA items quoted in the previous footnote.

³³ Livingstone 2007: 105.

Assurbanipal's future queen, as already Villard had suggested in his conclusions.³⁴

We may at this point sum up what is known of this letter, and the perspectives it opens up in its wake. Assuming that the main problems in actual interpretation and translation of the document have at this point found reasonable solutions, the slight "mystery" surrounding this unique missive exchanged between the two most important women at the Assyrian court ca. 672 BC remains: and one might even wonder if the point of having the arts of writing as its exclusive subject should not make us suspect that its *Sitz im Leben* was not based on concrete, day-to-day, preoccupations – such as the epistolary format of the text would lead to believe – but rather on a more rarified level of concerns, produced by a scribal instruction with its specific outputs. In other words: whether this missive was a testimonial of a true and indispensable epistolary exchange, or whether it was merely a sophisticated exemplar of "how to write letters the right way" with the use of various stylemes and modes, is still in my opinion up for questioning.

Abbreviations

ABL = Harper, Robert F. 1892-1914. *Assyrian and Babylonian Letters belonging to the Kouyunjik Collection of the British Museum I-XIV*. London - Chicago: Andesite Press.

RCAE = Waterman, Leroy 1930-1936. *Royal Correspondence of the Assyrian Empire I-IV*, Ann Arbor (MI): University of Michigan Press.

SLA = Pfeiffer, Robert H. 1935. *State Letters of Assyria*, New Haven (CT): American Oriental Society.

³⁴ Villard 2009: 314.

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La danza di Gesù negli Atti di Giovanni

DOROTA HARTMAN

ὁ μὴ χορεύων τὸ γινόμενον ἀγνοεῖ

Chi non danza non sa ciò che avviene

1. Introduzione

Gli *Atti di Giovanni* fanno parte, con gli altri *Atti* che vanno sotto il nome di Pietro, Paolo, Andrea e Tommaso, di un piccolo gruppo di opere apocriefe collocate fra il II e il III secolo d.C., in circolazione dapprima individualmente, poi collettivamente.¹

Il testo (d'ora in poi AG)² ci è pervenuto da una trasmissione intermittente e incompleta: ne risulta mancante, fra l'altro, la parte iniziale, e quanto resta è a sua volta frutto di una ricostruzione sulle cui lacune e cesure non vi è consenso; e in cui, peraltro, la sezione che qui maggiormente c'interessa è rappresentata

¹ Su questo insieme, in generale Stoops (ed.) 1997; Bovon *et al.* (eds.) 1999; Klauck 2008.

² L'edizione critica di riferimento è Junod, Kaestli 1983, con ampia traduzione e commento; gli studi anteriori a tale data fanno invece riferimento a Lipsius, Bonnet 1898: 151-216 (testo curato da M. Bonnet), da cui dipendono anche le traduzioni italiane, di valore disuguale, in Moraldi 1971: 1131-1212 ed Erbetta 1978: 29-67 (la traduzione di M. Inserillo apparsa precedentemente in Amiot 1964: 130-151, dipende invece dalla versione francese). Fra le principali traduzioni e introduzioni, Junod, Kaestli 1982; Schneider 1991; Schäferdiek 1992; i vari studi in Bremmer (ed.) 1995; Lalleman 1998; Elliott 1999: 303-310; Czachesz 2002: 90-118; Pervo 2016.

quasi per intero da un solo testimone.³ Per quanto riguarda l'unità redazionale e tematica dell'opera, difficile comunque da valutare in base al suo stato frammentario, alcuni cambi di registro narrativo, insieme ad altri elementi di eterogeneità, concorrono a definire AG come un testo composito, formatosi nel corso del tempo.⁴

Com'è noto, AG si caratterizza, fra l'altro, per i dettagli favolosi e l'accento sulle descrizioni eterodosse della polimorfia e sulla varietà della consistenza corporea di Gesù: elementi, d'altra parte, presenti in varia misura anche in atti altri apocrifi e di cui lo pseudo-Giovanni sostiene e rimarca di essere stato testimone oculare.⁵ Il testo è però ancora più noto per un altro motivo: ossia per la presenza di una sezione (AG 94-96) in cui gli apostoli appaiono coinvolti in un'azione rituale di danza corale guidata dallo stesso Gesù, con esecuzione di un inno responsoriale e di una danza apparentemente rotatoria: anche se, come si vedrà, la tipologia esatta del movimento non è ben specificata.

Questa particolare scena, inserita nella sezione più problematica dell'opera dal punto di vista teologico (AG 87-105), non è attestata altrove, o almeno non negli stessi termini. Se si escludono infatti i frammenti copti di altri testi emersi solo negli ultimi decenni e in una fase di studio ancora iniziale,⁶ la 'danza di Gesù' in AG, che include la complessa esegesi del suo canto di riferimento, costituisce tuttora un *unicum*, cui sono stati dedicati diversi tentativi d'interpretazione.⁷ In tale ambito, non si è limitata l'analisi al solo punto di vista letterario e storico-religioso,

³ Si tratta del ms., con testi per lo più agiografici, Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Hist. gr. 63 (AG 87-107 ai ff. 51v-55v); su cui cf. Junod, Kaestli 1983: 26-26.

⁴ Junod, Kaestli 1983: 632-642; Sirker-Wicklaus 1988; Lalleman 1998: 12.

⁵ Sugli elementi docetisti in AG, si vedano fra gli altri Junod, Kaestli 1983: 466-493; Lalleman 1995; Foster 2007; Farmer 2015; Khomych 2018; Schlapbach 2018b.

⁶ Si tratta del cosiddetto *Vangelo del Salvatore*, ora noto da più testimoni, e del frammento da Qasr el-Wizz (Nubia Centrale) già indicato come *Danza di Gesù intorno alla croce*. Su questi testi e le loro interessanti implicazioni, rimando per ora a Piovaneli 2012 (con tutta la bibliografia anteriore) e Yingling 2013.

⁷ Mi limito a indicare Pulver 1942; van Unnik 1964; Dewey 1986; Kaestli 1986; Bowe 1999; Czachesz 2006; Häller 2012; Schlapbach 2018a: 154-166; Schlapbach 2021.

ma anche considerando la pericope come un vero e proprio testo performativo, modello o specchio di una prassi effettivamente eseguita entro determinati circoli.⁸

2. L'inno al Getsemani

Il contesto narrativo è la notte di veglia al Monte degli Ulivi, dopo l'ultima cena pasquale e prima dell'arresto di Gesù. Nella narrazione preliminare (AG 90-93), in cui Giovanni parla – come in gran parte del testo, ma non sempre – in prima persona, gli eventi sono presentati in maniera abbastanza diversa rispetto alla descrizione presente nei vangeli canonici, e non solo per le varie omissioni, ma soprattutto per l'aggiunta di importanti particolari.

Traendo spunto dal momento in cui il Nazareno, lasciati indietro gli altri discepoli, porta con sé nell'orto soltanto Pietro, Giacomo e Giovanni stesso, il narratore si sofferma sulle diverse occasioni in cui avrebbe avuto modo di constatare le alterazioni dello stato fisico di Gesù, dal corporeo all'incorporeo, e come i suoi piedi non toccassero mai terra. Quella notte al Getsemani, in particolare, dopo aver seguito di nascosto il maestro nel suo luogo di preghiera, Giovanni trova Gesù completamente trasformato:

Così lo vidi: era interamente senza vestiti, e senza neanche quelli che avevamo visto prima, né sembrava più un uomo: i suoi piedi erano più bianchi della neve, tanto che il suolo ne era illuminato.⁹

A questa scoperta, per la quale Giovanni viene bonariamente ma decisamente rimproverato con una tirata di barba, fa seguito la scena che è stata definita in più occasioni, sebbene impropriamente, come la 'danza pasquale' di Gesù. Va notato che nello svolgimento dell'azione risulta dunque del tutto omessa l'intera circostanza del sonno colpevole dei tre discepoli che avrebbero

⁸ Sebbene non sia forse necessario insistere troppo su quest'ultima interpretazione, può essere utile ricordare come nella narrazione di AG siano presenti richiami, e quindi una certa attenzione, a situazioni e temi collegati a contesti teatrali, peraltro di registro 'basso': cf. Plümacher 1992.

⁹ AG 90,9-13; in base a Junod, Kaestli 1983: 195 per il testo greco.

dovuto sostenere Gesù nella veglia, e invece si addormentano ripetutamente, lasciandolo solo e vulnerabile (cf. Mc 14,37-41; Mt 26,36-46).¹⁰

Nel passo successivo, che prelude alla scena di *χορεία*, si preannuncia l'arresto di Gesù da parte «della sinagoga dei giudei senza legge, governati da un serpente senza legge». ¹¹ Prima di tale evento, però, il maestro ha tempo di convocare i discepoli allo scopo di inneggiare al Padre (*ὕμνήσωμεν τὸν πατέρα*, AG 94,3-4). Benché ad alcuni sia apparso altrimenti,¹² è evidente che questo invito a cantare insieme un inno non può essere stato ispirato – nonostante l'uso comune di *ὕμνέω* – da Mc 14,26//Mt 26,30: il canto al termine della cena pasquale descritta nei sinottici è infatti ben circoscritto ai salmi conclusivi dell'*Hallel* (Sal 113-118) e anche la sua collocazione narrativa, prima che i commensali si rechino al Monte degli Ulivi, è del tutto diversa rispetto al posizionamento dell'inno in AG.¹³

Alla struttura incoerente e prosastica dell'inno¹⁴ si aggiunge la complessità del suo contenuto, diviso in tre parti, di cui solo le prime due (da AG 94,7 a 95,50) a carattere responsoriale (gli apostoli sono invitati a rispondere «amen» al termine di ogni strofa). La terza parte mostra questo elemento, invece, solo nella finale (AG 96,20-28). Non ci soffermeremo, per ora, sulle varie

¹⁰ In Luca risultano diverse varianti, e appare fra l'altro che tutto il gruppo dei discepoli era stato lasciato in disparte (Lc 22,39-46); vi è introdotta però la figura di un angelo che sarebbe apparso a Gesù per sostenerlo (Lc 22,43) e che potrebbe essere all'origine della visione descritta sopra.

¹¹ Il riferimento è chiaramente a Gv 8,44. Sugli elementi di polemica anti-giudaica in AG, cf. il commento in Junod, Kaestli 1983: 643-644; per i rapporti fra AG e quarto vangelo, Czachesz 2009.

¹² Ad es. Cacitti 2001: 82, nota 156.

¹³ Allo stesso modo, non è accettabile che il momento dell'inno e della danza sostituiscano, in AG, l'intero rito della cena pasquale: benché alcuni commentatori lo diano per scontato (ad esempio, Czachesz 2006), in realtà tutta l'azione appare chiaramente posteriore. Sulla possibile sovrapposizione in AG fra ultima cena e danza corale, così come fra l'*Hallel* pasquale e l'inno al Getsemani, cf. già van Unnik 1964: 1-2. Un altro elemento inesistente in AG, ma che invece viene talora richiamato nella letteratura secondaria, anche di recente (cf. Moxnes 2021: nota 71), è che la danza abbia luogo intorno alla croce: questa circostanza riguarda invece solo i frammenti copti con altre 'danze di Gesù' menzionati sopra (nota 6).

¹⁴ Schattenmann 1965: 97-101.

ipotesi riguardanti i suoi diversi momenti compositivi, che vedrebbero alla base un inno originario (secondo alcuni, parzialmente o totalmente precristiano) sul quale sarebbero stati poi innestati ulteriori passaggi;¹⁵ né sul suo contenuto simbolico, volutamente criptico e ricco di riferimenti gnostici.¹⁶ Ci limiteremo, invece, a qualche osservazione sulla descrizione e il lessico dell'azione coreutica, cercando di mettere in luce qualche possibile antecedente, diretto o indiretto, nel materiale apocrifo (in particolare, in 4Mac) e neotestamentario (segnatamente, Luca).

A riprova della forza delle immagini, ancorché oscure, contenute nell'inno, vale la pena di ricordare come questi versi abbiano goduto nell'antichità di una certa diffusione nel Manicheismo e in alcune confessioni cristiane non del tutto marginali, e che il suo linguaggio e le sue immagini siano state d'ispirazione, lungi dal loro ambito originario, ancora ai giorni nostri.¹⁷

3. La danza

Vi è in primo luogo da osservare come la definizione corrente di 'danza di Gesù' per questo contesto si riveli, alla lettura, del tutto fuorviante, dal momento che si tratta di un'azione indubbiamente collettiva, una danza corale nel senso proprio del termine *χορεία*, in cui il ruolo pivotale di Gesù emerge sin dalle prime battute:

Quindi ci ordinò di fare un cerchio (*γῦρον ποιῆσαι*) tenendoci l'un l'altro per la mano (*ἀποκρατούντων τὰς ἀλλήλων χεῖρας*) e postosi nel mezzo disse: «Rispondetemi con "Amen!"» (AG 94,4-6).

¹⁵ Junod, Kaestli 1983: 632-642.

¹⁶ Su cui, solo in generale, Junod, Kaestli 1983: 589-593; Luttikhuizen 1995; Lalleman 1998: *passim*; Hübner 2017. La letteratura secondaria è molto ampia.

¹⁷ Nel commento di Junod, Kaestli 1983: 646, nota 5, si rilevano diversi usi dell'inno in età moderna, fino alla citazione nell'*Opera al nero* di Marguerite Yourcenar (1968) e, nel cinema, in una scena nella *Via Lattea* di Luis Buñuel (1969). La fortuna dell'inno, sempre più sganciato dal suo ambito di provenienza, è proseguita fino a tempi recenti e ha conosciuto, ovviamente, particolare diffusione fra i movimenti spiritualistici, neognostici e teosofici attivi fra la fine del XIX e l'inizio del XX secolo; per questo approccio, si veda ad esempio Mead 1926 (1910¹), ma l'elenco potrebbe essere assai lungo, fino all'inclusione nei movimenti New Age.

La disposizione degli apostoli in circolo fa prevedere, ai fini della danza seguente, un possibile movimento rotatorio; più o meno veloce o cadenzato, limitato dalle mani unite dei partecipanti, le cui braccia possono al massimo muoversi contemporaneamente, o in alternanza, verso l'alto e verso il basso. A Gesù, «postosi nel mezzo» (ἐν μέσῳ δὲ αὐτὸς γενόμενος), inizialmente sembra che spetti soprattutto il ruolo di cantore:

Iniziò quindi a inneggiare dicendo: «Gloria a te, Padre!». E noi standogli tutt'intorno (κυκλεύοντες) gli rispondevamo: «Amen!» (AG 94,7-9)

ma in effetti, se si escludono i punti in cui il cantore accenna, per lo più indirettamente, all'azione coreutica in termini generici, dopo la conclusione dell'inno apprendiamo che Gesù stesso ha preso parte alla danza, in due diversi passaggi: quando Giovanni riprende la parola:

Così, o cari, dopo che ebbe danzato con noi (χορεύσας μεθ' ἡμῶν) il Signore andò via (ὁ κύριος ἐξῆλθεν): mentre noi, confusi e assonnati, scappammo via da ogni parte (AG 97,1-3)

e poco oltre, allorché già dopo la crocifissione, nella sua apparizione a Giovanni in una grotta, Gesù espone il suo discorso sulla 'Croce di Luce' e la sua estraneità all'esperienza terrena e soprattutto rispetto a quella di sofferenza e morte:

Dunque io non ho patito alcuna delle cose che si racconteranno. E anche la passione che ho mostrato danzando, a te e agli altri (ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ πάθος ἐκεῖνο ὃ ἔδειξά σοι καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς χορεύων), dev'essere considerata un mistero (μυστήριον βούλομαι καλεῖσθαι) (AG 101,1).

Gesù, dunque, anche nel narrato interagisce totalmente nella danza, elemento che rende più vividi i passaggi della terza parte dell'inno in cui, a differenza dei riferimenti indiretti della sezione intermedia, il cantore si pone come riferimento simbolico dei suoi discepoli e fa emergere in metafora il suo ruolo di lucerna, specchio, porta e via:

Sono una lucerna
per te che mi vedi.

Amen.

Sono uno specchio
per te che mi comprendi.¹⁸

Amen.

Sono una porta
per te alla quale bussi.

Amen.

Sono una via
per te che passi.

Amen.

Ora rispondi alla mia danza (ὕπακούων δέ μου τῇ χορείᾳ):

vedi te stesso in me che parlo,

e vedendo ciò che io compio

taci sui miei misteri (τὰ μυστήριά μου σίγα).

Tu che danzi comprendi il mio agire (ὁ χορεύων νόει ὁ πράσσω),

perché è tua la sofferenza d'uomo

che io affronterò.

(AG 95,43 - 96,4)

...

Io ho saltato (ἐγὼ ἐσκίρτησα), tu tutto hai saputo (σὺ δὲ νόει τὸ πᾶν)

e poiché hai compreso di': «Gloria a te Padre!».

Amen.

(AG 96,26-28).

Prima di questi ultimi passaggi, nella sezione intermedia dell'inno – peraltro considerata un innesto posteriore rispetto all'inno originario – il tema della danza è solo una delle componenti fra le altre azioni, o condizioni, in cui sono coinvolte non solo persone, ma anche ipostasi divine, astrazioni e concetti derivati o ispirati dalle dottrine gnostiche:

La Grazia danza (ἡ χάρις χορεύει).

Voglio suonare il flauto,

danzate tutti (ὁρχήσασθε πάντες).

Amen.

¹⁸ Sul tema dello specchio (ἔσπετρον) in questo punto e la sua presunta citazione nel *De Montibus Sina et Sion* dello pseudo-Cipriano, cf. Schäferdiek 1992: 153. Gli altri elementi che appaiono poco dopo (come 'porta' e 'via') sono tratti direttamente, come molti altri, dal testo giovanneo (Gv 10,9 e 14,6): cf. Junod, Kaestli 1983: 599-600; Czachesz 2009: 53.

Voglio cantare una lamentazione (θρηνῆσαι θέλω),
battetevi tutti.

Amen.

Un'Ogdoad
canta con noi.

Amen.

Il numero Dodici
in alto danza (ἄνω χορεύει).

Amen.

Al Tutto
in alto danzare conviene (ἄνω χορεύειν ὑπάρχει).

Amen.

Chi non danza (ὁ μὴ χορεύων)
non sa ciò che avviene.

Amen.

(AG 95,18-30).

4. Antecedenti lessicali e tematici

4.1 χορεύω

Considerando la pericope nel suo complesso, per riferirsi alla danza il predicato più ricorrente è senza dubbio χορεύω, del tutto ignorato nel NT ma più volte utilizzato, anche se non troppo spesso, nell'AT (LXX).¹⁹ Dal momento che il significato di χορεύω è strettamente connesso non solo alla danza, ma anche al canto e all'azione combinata di canto e danza corale, specialmente se in circolo, la ricorrenza appare opportuna, anche se da quest'accezione generica il testo, appena possibile, si discosta per ricorrere ad altri verbi (σκιρτάω e ὀρχέομαι, su cui cf. oltre).

Nella ricerca di eventuali spunti d'intertestualità, senza considerare in questa sede i possibili rapporti della danza pasquale di AG con le fonti giudaiche più o meno coeve,²⁰ una menzione a parte merita l'uso isolato ma non casuale di χορεύω in 4Mac 14,8, nel contesto dell'encomio per i sette fratelli martiri maccabei: una pericope in cui l'azione dei martiri, ossia la loro 'danza' verso il martirio, è esplicitamente posta in parallelismo col movi-

¹⁹ Gdc 21,21.23; 1 Sam 18,6. 21,12; 1Re 1,40.

²⁰ Su cui particolarmente, ma senza molto seguito, van Unnik 1964.

mento circolare degli astri.²¹ Altro aspetto interessante nel passo, è l'uso della danza corale come mezzo di trasmissione rituale della gnosi,²² nonché come azione magica – non necessariamente estatica²³ – per l'annullamento della sofferenza e del dolore; elementi richiamati esplicitamente nell'inno in AG (come del resto nel suo antecedente neotestamentario); quindi si potrebbe collocare, abbastanza verosimilmente, anche 4Mac fra le basi letterarie della nostra pericope innologica. L'analogia risulterà più evidente rileggendo sotto tale luce la conclusione del passo (4Mac 14,7-8):

... Come, infatti, i sette giorni della creazione del mondo si muovono in coro intorno alla pietà, così i giovinetti andavano in cerchio danzando in coro (χορεύοντες οἱ μείρακες ἐκύκλουν) intorno all'ebdomade, abbattendo il timore della tortura.²⁴

4.2 ὀρχέομαι

In AG ὀρχέομαι indica l'atto pratico del danzare, com'è anche in contesti profani e si riscontra spesso altrove. Nel NT è il predicato che si usa, ad esempio, per indicare la danza di Salomè in Mc 6,22 (e Mt 14,6);²⁵ e nella celebre metafora usata da Gesù in Lc 7,32 a proposito del comportamento dei Farisei: «“Vi abbiamo suonato il flauto e non avete ballato (οὐκ ὠρχήσασθε)”». ²⁶ La ripresa di ὀρχέομαι in AG 95,19-20, versi in cui è menzionato anche il flauto («Voglio suonare il flauto / danzate tutti»), non appare dunque accidentale come, in effetti, più in generale l'influsso

²¹ Sulle connessioni fra gli atti apocrifi e la prima letteratura martirologica cristiana, si veda Hilrost 1995. Altri temi collegati sono menzionati in Tronca 2016, con ulteriore bibliografia.

²² Junod, Kaestli 1983: 621-627.

²³ Così in Pulver 1942: 150-151.

²⁴ Seguo e riporto la traduzione di L. Troiani in Sacchi (a c.) 1997: 241 (qui 14,6-7).

²⁵ Ma con sfumature diverse: in Mc 6,22: καὶ ὀρχησαμένης ἤρεσεν τῷ Ἡρώδῃ καὶ τοῖς συνανακειμένοις («danzò per compiacere Erode e i suoi commensali»); Mt 14,6: ὠρχήσατο ἡ θυγάτηρ τῆς Ἡρωδιάδος ἐν τῷ μέσῳ («la figlia di Erodiade si mise a danzare in mezzo»).

²⁶ ἡλλήσαμεν ὑμῖν καὶ οὐκ ὠρχήσασθε, ἐθρηνήσαμεν καὶ οὐκ ἐκλαύσατε. Osservazioni interessanti, che qui non è possibile sviluppare, in Roth 2018: 148-149.

dei testi lucani nella tessitura di AG, che si evidenzia anche nell'uso di *σκιρτάω*.

4.3 *σκιρτάω*

In AG 96,26 si trova l'aoristo di *σκιρτάω* nell'espressione *ἐγὼ ἐσκίρτησα*, «io ho saltato», pronunciata da Gesù al termine dell'inno e della danza.

L'uso di *σκιρτάω*, che per sé indica il balzo o il salto, specialmente per esultanza (spesso è tradotto con 'gioire' o 'esultare'), in rapporto alla danza è considerato un'estensione del suo significato principale: il che non ne ha impedito la diffusione anche quest'ambito, cui, d'altra parte, corrisponde l'uso di *saltatio* in latino.²⁷

In questo punto conclusivo della pericope di AG, la danza espressa da *σκιρτάω* è posta direttamente in rapporto alla rivelazione, alla comprensione o alla gnosi («Io ho danzato / tu tutto hai saputo») e anche qui, come nel caso di 4Mac visto sopra, lo sfondo o l'allusione può essere alla conoscenza e quindi al superamento del dolore. In questo caso, però, come per *ὀρχέομαι*, l'eco sembra giungere ancora da Luca, unico a usare *σκιρτάω* fra i sinottici; e particolarmente da Lc 6, raccolta di detti e beatitudini in parte parallela al Discorso della Montagna.²⁸

Con tutte le differenze del caso – la più macroscopica, il contesto non direttamente collegato alla Passione – in Lc 6,12-23 appaiono alcuni elementi, formali e strutturali, che si ritrovano in filigrana anche in AG 94-96: ossia il ritirarsi di Gesù su di un monte per una veglia di preghiera (v. 12) e l'invito a gioire, anzi a 'esultare' (con *σκιρτάω*, quindi a 'saltare di gioia') anche nel momento del dolore, perché vi sarà ricompensa nei cieli (vv. 22-23):

²² μακάριοί ἐστε ὅταν μισήσωσιν ὑμᾶς οἱ ἄνθρωποι καὶ ὅταν ἀφορίσωσιν ὑμᾶς καὶ ὀνειδίσωσιν καὶ ἐκβάλωσιν τὸ ὄνομα ὑμῶν ὡς πονηρὸν ἕνεκα τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου· ²³ χάρητε ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ καὶ σκιρτήσατε, ἰδοὺ γὰρ ὁ μισθὸς ὑμῶν πολὺς ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ· κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ γὰρ ἐποίουν τοῖς προφήταις οἱ πατέρες αὐτῶν.

²⁷ González 2004: 215; Garelli 2006.

²⁸ Fitzmyer 1970: 625-646.

²² Siate felici quando gli uomini vi odieranno e vi rifiuteranno, quando vi insulteranno e allontaneranno il vostro nome come empio, a causa del Figlio dell'Uomo. ²³ Gioite in quel giorno (χάρητε ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ) e saltate di gioia (καὶ σκιρτήσατε), perché ecco, la vostra ricompensa sarà grande in cielo. Infatti allo stesso modo fecero coi profeti i loro padri.

Sempre in Luca, e non vi sono altre attestazioni negli altri vangeli, σκιρτάω indica anche il balzo del venturo Giovanni Battista, mentre era ancora nel ventre di Elisabetta, al saluto di Maria (Lc 1,41: ἐσκίρτησεν τὸ βρέφος ἐν τῇ κοιλίᾳ αὐτῆς, «il bambino le balzò nel seno»). Subito dopo quel balzo, Elisabetta si trova «colma dello Spirito Santo» (καὶ ἐπλήσθη πνεύματος ἁγίου) e, com'è precisato poco dopo, si trattava di un balzo di gioia (ἐσκίρτησεν ἐν ἀγαλλιάσει, «è saltato dalla gioia», Lc 1,44).

L'accezione gioiosa, in base a questi precedenti in Luca, di σκιρτάω forse anche in AG, attenua la connotazione cerimoniale e in parte solenne della danza corale al Getsemani e la cupezza dell'inno con una nota di speranza; anzi, di certezza nella vita futura:

Impara l'inno della sapienza
e di' di nuovo:
Gloria a te Padre,
Gloria a te Logos,
Gloria a te Spirito (Santo).
(AG 96,19-23).

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gôlēm, √glm, g^elôm

GIANCARLO LACERENZA

Il mio golem gli occhi tuoi videro*

1. Gli accenni alla formazione del corpo umano nel salmo 139 (gr/lat 138), 13.15-16, offrono non poche difficoltà testuali e interpretative, su cui l'abilità e talora l'ingegnosità degli esegeti è stata messa lungamente alla prova.¹

Già rileggendo le sole versioni offerte nel corso del tempo, e particolarmente per il v. 16 che qui c'interessa, c'è da restare sorpresi per il numero e la varietà delle differenti interpretazioni e soluzioni che sono state proposte, senza peraltro mai giungere a una risoluzione conclusiva o condivisa per l'*hapax* che apre il versetto, **gôlēm* (TM מְלִמִּי *gôlmî* 'il mio golem', riduzione da גּוֹלֵם per lo stato costruito con pronomi di 1^a persona singolare). La pericope, inserita in un'accorata esaltazione dell'onniscienza di-

* Colgo l'occasione di questa *Festschrift* per offrire a Simonetta Graziani un contributo minimo alla conoscenza di un terreno già arato fino al paleosuolo, ma forse non fino alla roccia. Spero che non le risulti troppo noioso e che lo accolga come segno d'imperitura amicizia di uno studente, invisibile come un golem, di tanti anni fa.

¹ Gran parte della vastissima bibliografia sul salmo 139, per lo più teologica, si troverà elencata in Gerstenberger 2001: 407-408, ma già allora non troppo aggiornata. Fra i numerosi studi apparsi in seguito, segnalo soltanto Maier 2001; Booij 2005; Maré 2010.

vina, nel testo masoretico risulta, al netto degli accenti, come segue:²

לֹא־נִכְחַד עֲצָמֵי מִמֶּךָ אֲשֶׁר־עָשִׂיתִי בְּסֶתֶר רִקְמָתִי בְּתַחְתִּיּוֹת אָרֶץ¹⁵
 גְּלָמִי רָאוּ עֵינֶיךָ וְעַל־סִפְרְךָ כָּלֵם יִכְתְּבוּ יָמִים יָצְרוּ וְלֹא אֶחָד בָּהֶם¹⁶

Il testo – in parte perché corrotto, e in parte forse volutamente oscuro – si presenta in maniera tale da non poter essere tradotto in maniera del tutto comprensibile senza ricorrere a forzature più o meno lievi, o a perifrasi; e che questa condizione sia di origine remota, emerge ampiamente da un esame, anche superficiale, della tradizione esegetica.³ Anche la versione che propongo qui di seguito sarà dunque, almeno in parte, interpretativa e un po' libera, lasciando per ora in sospeso la traduzione del termine apparentemente più arduo, ossia *gôlēm*:

¹⁵ Non ti era nascosto il mio ossame
 allorché nel segreto fui fatto,
 ordito nelle profondità della terra.

לֹא־נִכְחַד עֲצָמֵי מִמֶּךָ
 אֲשֶׁר־עָשִׂיתִי בְּסֶתֶר
 רִקְמָתִי בְּתַחְתִּיּוֹת אָרֶץ
 גְּלָמִי רָאוּ עֵינֶיךָ
 וְעַל־סִפְרְךָ כָּלֵם יִכְתְּבוּ
 יָמִים יָצְרוּ
 וְלֹא אֶחָד בָּהֶם

¹⁶ Il mio *gôlēm* gli occhi tuoi videro
 e sul tuo libro erano già tutti scritti
 i giorni venturi,
 e non uno ve n'era.

È, come si vede, soprattutto la particolare costruzione del v. 16 a richiedere al traduttore il maggiore impegno; come dev'essere avvenuto anche in passato, osservando le divergenze fra LXX:⁴

τὸ ἀκατέργαστόν μου εἶδον οἱ ὀφθαλμοί σου⁵
 καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ βιβλίον σου
 πάντες γραφῆσονται

² Seguo il testo del Codice di Aleppo, che rispetto al ms. di San Pietroburgo non presenta alla fine del v. 16 il *k'tiv* וְלוֹ («e a lui»), ma וְלֹא («e non»). וְלוֹ è peraltro una variante antica, che troviamo già a Qumran (cf. Flint 1997: 111).

³ Rimando per brevità alla letteratura citata e in parte discussa in Schökel, Carniti 1993: 773-796 e *passim*.

⁴ Rahlfs 1979: 323.

⁵ In vari codici, così come in Eusebio e in Origene, si registra lo scambio dei pronomi μου/σου, «mio»/«tuo»; lo stesso, non incomprensibilmente, nella *Vetus Latina*: *imperfectum tuum viderunt oculi mei* (Sabatier 1752: 270).

ἡμέρας πλασθήσονται
καὶ οὐθεις ἐν αὐτοῖς

e, fra le parti superstiti delle versioni minori, particolarmente in quella di Simmaco:

Aquila⁶

τὸ ἀκατέργαστόν μου
εἶδον οἱ ὀφθαλμοί σου
καὶ ἐπὶ βιβλίον σου
πᾶσι γεγραμμένοις
ἡμέραι κτίζονται
καὶ οὐ μία ἐν αὐταῖς

Simmaco⁷

ἀμόρφωτον με
προεῖδον οἱ ὀφθαλμοί σου
σὺν τοῖς ἐν τῇ βίβλῳ σου
πᾶσι γεγραμμένοις
ἡμέρας πλασσομένοις
οὐκ ἐνδούσης οὐδεμιᾶς.

e anche nella *Vulgata*, un po' di tempo dopo; in cui, pur senza grossi sforzi di fantasia, tornano e si rimarcano le differenze fra l'*hebraica* e la *graeca veritas*.

Vg *iuxta LXX*⁸

*Imperfectum meum
viderunt oculi tui
et in libro tuo omnes scribentur
die formabuntur
et nemo in eis*

Vg *iuxta hebr.*⁹

*Informem adhuc me
iderunt oculi tui
et in libro tuo omnes scribentur
dies formatae sunt
et non est una in eis*

mentre nel Targum il testo risulta, come di consueto, leggermente espanso:

גְּשָׁמִי חֲמִין עֵינֶיךָ וְעַל סֵפֶר דְּכָרְנֶךָ כּוֹלְהוֹן יוֹמֵי מִכְתָּבֵי בְיוֹמָא דְּאַתְבָּרִי עַלמָא מִן
שְׂרוּיָא אַתְבָּרִיא כּוֹלְהוֹן בְּרִיתָא וְלִית כְּחַד חַד בֵּינֵיהוֹן

Il mio corpo (גְּשָׁמִי) i tuoi occhi videro, e sul tuo registro (סֵפֶר דְּכָרְנֶךָ) tutti i miei giorni erano già stati scritti nel giorno della creazione del mondo, al principio della creazione di ogni creatura, e (ancora) non ve n'era nessuno.

⁶ Field 1875: 294.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*, I, Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt 1969 (2007⁵): 942.

⁹ *Id.*: 943.

La principale difficoltà interpretativa che emerge da queste versioni risulta evidente nella resa di גֹּלֶם/gōlmâ, ‘il mio golem’, sia nel greco, con ἀκατέργαστόν μου (LXX, Aquila) e ἀμόρφωτον με (Simmaco), sia in latino, con *informem adhuc me* e *inperfectum meum*. In ogni caso indicato, fuorché nel Targum, si è fatto ricorso a termini neutri relativi a qualcosa d’informe o d’incompiuto, privo di fattura o di rifinitura.¹⁰ Dal momento che la radice גלם (*glm*), come vedremo a breve, non sembra avere avuto rapporti diretti, nelle sue scarse attestazioni, con l’idea dell’informe o del grezzo, va da sé che le summenzionate interpretazioni derivino più da un’esegesi già consolidata, che da una vera e propria traduzione dell’*hapax*.

2. A parte il salmo 139, in tutta la Bibbia ebraica la radice *glm* non si ritrova che in altre due attestazioni.

La prima, in 2Re 2,8, è un predicato verbale in cui l’azione espressa è quella dell’avvolgere, attorcigliare o piegare su sé stesso il manto con cui il profeta Elia percuote l’acqua del Giordano per separare i flutti e passarvi col suo discepolo Eliseo:

וַיִּקַּח אֶלְיָהוּ אֶת־אֲדָרְתּוֹ וַיִּגְלֵם וַיַּכָּה אֶת־הַמַּיִם וַיַּחְצוּ הַנָּהָ וְהַנָּהָ וַיַּעֲבְרוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם
בַּחֲרָבָה

Allora Elia prese il suo mantello, l’avvolse e batté le acque, che si divisero di qua e di là, e i due passarono sull’asciutto.

Il significato di וַיִּגְלֵם (*wa-yiglōm*), dunque già indicato dal contesto, è confermato anche dalle versioni antiche, in cui si trova καὶ εἰλέσεν (LXX, quindi da εἰλέω ‘volgere, pressare, girare’) e *involved* (Vg), che rende bene l’idea dell’arrotolare o avvolgere; nel Targum Yonathan troviamo וַאֲחִזֵּר ‘e rivoltò/attorcigliò’ dalla radice חזר *hʒr* che indica tutte le possibilità del ‘volgere, tornare, girare’.¹¹ Incidentalmente, il gesto di attorcigliamento del manto

¹⁰ Nel Targum sia ha invece גִּשְׁמִי (*gišmî*, anche con altre lezioni) «il mio corpo», che riflette l’interpretazione del passo.

¹¹ Cf. Jastrow 1903: 446-447.

serve ovviamente a dargli maggiore consistenza e forza d'urto, ma non è detto che le cose stiano necessariamente così.¹²

L'ultima attestazione di *glm* in ebraico biblico si trova invece in un sostantivo plurale, גְּלוֹמִים *g^llômîm*, presente allo stato costruito in Ez 27,24 – il contesto dunque è quello del celebre oracolo-lamento sulla caduta di Tiro, uno dei capitoli più complicati di sempre anche grazie alla sofisticata varietà lessicale sfoggiata dall'autore¹³ – nell'espressione גְּלוֹמֵי תְּכֵלֶת וְרִקְמָה *g^llômê tekēlet w^l-rîqmâh* la cui interpretazione è sempre stata molto fluida, ma in cui è frequente la resa di גְּלוֹמִים con 'mantelli'.¹⁴

בְּמַכְלִים בְּגָדֵי תְּכֵלֶת וְרִקְמָה וּבְגָדֵי בְּרָמִים בְּתֵבִלִים תְּבָשִׁים וְאַרְזִים

Torneremo in seguito sull'accostamento, già rilevato in passato, fra le radici *glm* e *rqm* sia in Sal 139,15 sia in Ez 27,24. Va notato subito, tuttavia, che le versioni antiche ignorano l'accezione di גְּלוֹמִים come 'mantelli', o comunque di prodotti finiti, e scelgono strade diverse, del tutto disomogenee nell'elencazione delle merci scambiate sui mercati di Tiro dai trafficanti stranieri, a causa di un'evidente difformità dei testi di partenza. È infatti difficile conciliare la lista nei LXX (con interessanti varianti)¹⁵ e

¹² Infatti, poco oltre nella narrazione, quando è Eliseo a ripetere il prodigio del mantello battuto sul Giordano, il testo dice solo che egli prese il mantello e lo batté sull'acqua (2Re 2,14: וַיִּקַּח אֶת-אֲדָרְתוֹ אֲלֵהוּ אֲשֶׁר-נִפְלָה מֵעֲלָיו וַיִּבֶה אֶת-הַמַּיִם), omettendo del tutto l'azione dell'avvolgimento. A questa differenza, che non si direbbe casuale, in realtà non si presta spesso attenzione (cf. ad esempio Heller 2018: 119: «He returns to the Jordan, takes the mantle ... and rolls it up in imitation of Elia's earlier action») e quindi allo scopo pratico dell'avvolgimento si può presumere fosse associato, ma solo nella figura di Elia, anche un significato simbolico. Ignoro se nella letteratura rabbinica questa omissione sia stata in qualche modo rilevata, com'è probabile, e vi abbia eventualmente ricevuto una spiegazione.

¹³ van Dijk 1968; Corral 2002, etc.

¹⁴ Cf. CEI 1974 e 2008: «mantelli di porpora e di broccato»; TILC: «mantelli tinti in viola, ricami»; IEP: «mantelli di porpora e stoffe variopinte», etc. Lo stesso ovviamente, con poche eccezioni, in altre lingue. Non ho effettuato controlli puntuali ma ad esempio, nelle traduzioni in inglese, 'cloaks' a un certo punto comincia a sostituire quasi sistematicamente 'clothes' e 'wrappings'.

¹⁵ Ziegler 1977: 218.

nella Vulgata, sia reciprocamente¹⁶ sia col testo masoretico; sebbene, almeno nella Vulgata, si possa riconoscere abbastanza facilmente גִּלְוִמִּי תְּכַלֵּת in *involutris hyacinthi*.

Materie prime quindi, o semilavorati dell'industria tessile di lusso. L'arrivo dei 'mantelli' nelle traduzioni di Ez 27,24 è invece una variazione relativamente recente: non so se iniziata in quella sede, ma sicuramente sancita dall'indicazione, nei lessici più diffusi dell'assiro e dell'accadico del XX secolo,¹⁷ di una possibile origine di גִּלְוִמִּי dal sost. *gulēnu* (*gulīnu*, *gulānu*), cui è stato attribuito il significato di 'mantello' o 'soprabito, sopravveste', che si è voluto porre in rapporto – sovrapponendo però fonti e materiali di ambiti e tempi diversi – sia con l'ebraico biblico *g'łôm* che con il giudeo-aramaico *g'łm/g'łmâ*, copertura o mantello.¹⁸ Termine poi presente anche in siriano¹⁹ e di cui, cercandone l'eziologia insieme a quella di molte altre parole rare o d'incerta ortografia, i saggi del Talmud sembrano ipotizzare che, trattandosi forse di un manto molto ampio che copre entrambe le braccia, toglie al corpo la sua forma facendolo sembrare un golem (TB Shab. 77b).²⁰ Benché si tratti solo di una similitudine mnemotecnica, il dato soggiacente relativo alle dimensioni del tessuto, tali da coprire quasi l'intero corpo, fanno escludere ogni parentela lessicale con la γλαμύς, cui pure sono stati accostati sia *g'łôm* che *g'łmâ*, la cui etimologia va però forse cercata altrove.²¹

Esiste invece in arabo un'interessante radice *ġlm* col significato di 'tagliare, tosare' e in rapporto con vari strumenti di taglio,²² peraltro già accostata all'ebraico *glm*.²³ Ci avviciniamo comunque

¹⁶ ὑάκινθον καὶ θησαυροὺς ἐκλεκτοὺς δεδεμένους σχοινίοις καὶ κυπαρίσσινα; *multifariam involutris hyacinthi et polymitorum gazarumque pretiosarum quae obvolutae et adstrictae erant funibus cedros*.

¹⁷ CAD V (= Oppenheim 1956): 127 (*gulēnu*); quindi von Soden 1965: 296-297 (*gulēnu*, *gulīnu*).

¹⁸ Jastrow 1903: 249.

¹⁹ Payne Smith 1879: 731; Brockelmann 1928: 118.

²⁰ Il passo talmudico è in realtà molto conciso: גִּלְמָא שְׁנַעְשָׁהּ בּוֹ כְּגֹלֶם («(Si dice) *g'łmā* perché fa sembrare un golem»); il resto è interpretazione posteriore.

²¹ Payne Smith 1879: 731 rimanda anche al persiano, ma tutto sta a determinare quale tradizione (e quando) abbia influito sull'altra, e non soltanto a proposito della clamide.

²² Lane 1863-93: 445.

²³ Gesenius *et al.* 1987: 219.

a una spiegazione più verosimile per i גְּלוֹמִים/*g^lômîm* di Ez 27,24: ‘tagli’ – o meglio, ‘pieghi’ o ‘pezze’ – di tessuto purpureo (תְּכֵלֶת/*ṯ^kēlet*),²⁴ viola o bluastro. Larghi tagli di stoffa ravvolta su sé stessa o su un asse: il che ci riporta, uniti tutti i dati e senza dimenticare il mantello ravvolto di 2Re 2,8, al problema iniziale del nostro *gôlēm*.

3. Per spiegare *gôlēm*, tutte le antiche versioni di Sal 139,16 si sono in qualche modo distaccate dal significato principale della radice *glm* ‘avvolgere, piegare, avviluppare’, riscontrabile sia in 2Re 2,8 che in Ez 27,24 – radice peraltro in ovvio rapporto con *gll*, ‘girare, rotolare, essere rotondo’²⁵ – e senza quindi mai tradurre *gôlmâ* come ‘il mio involto’ o espressioni simili (in italiano, ad esempio, vi sono varie possibilità sinonimiche, una più brutta dell’altra, come ‘il mio attorcigliamento’, ‘il mio viluppo’, etc.).

Si è dunque guardato altrove, trovando apparentemente la risposta in un termine che doveva essere da tempo in circolazione, ma che noi conosciamo solo da attestazioni relativamente tarde, qual è גּוֹלְמָא/גּוֹלְמָא (*gulmâ/gôlmâ*), sempre con radice *glm*, che in giudeo-aramaico palestinese, ma anche in siriano, indica un ammasso informe, o qualcosa dall’aspetto comunque non ben determinato, come può essere un sasso, una roccia, o un’altura priva di una forma specifica.²⁶ Da qui si può credere siano usciti i vari ἀκατέργαστος, ἀμόρφωτος, *informis* e *imperfectum*, come definizione dell’essere umano allo stadio, più che prenatale, preformativo. Postillando l’ἀκατέργαστος della LXX, Girolamo equipara *imperfectum* a *incompositum*, ossia l’uomo allo stadio più basilico della sua formazione: *imperfectum hic pro incomposito posuit: quod etiam elementa hominis ante, quam formentur in utero, cognoscat Deus*.²⁷

²⁴ Nell’ormai troppo vasta e talora ripetitiva bibliografia su *ṯ^kēlet*, mi fermo alle considerazioni in Fales 1998. Fra i pochi lavori di riferimento sul lessico tessile nel Vicino Oriente antico, cf. ad esempio Michel, Nosch (eds) 2010, inutile per *glm* ma, a proposito dei tessuti in porpora, con qualche annotazione su Ez 27,7.

²⁵ Su cui cf. GLAT II, s.v. גָּלַל (Münderlein 2002, 1977¹).

²⁶ Jastrow 1903: 222 e per altre accezioni e derivazioni anche p. 249. Per il siriano cf. Payne Smith 1879-1901: 731 («*gôlm...* locus saxosus, massa, materia rudis et informis»).

²⁷ Hier., *Brev. in Psal.*, CXXXVIII (PL XXVI: 1233; CCL LXXII: 243). Anche Epiph., *Panar.*, I, 2, *haer.* xxx-xxxI, 156-157 (PG XLI: 460).

L'interpretazione rabbinica riferita in *Midraš B're'sît Rabbah* 8,1 intende il golem del salmo come il macrantropo originario, senza soffermarsi sul lessico: schiacciato sul significato di 'ammasso informe del *gôlmâ* aramaico, il desueto *golem* definisce lo stadio primitivo dell'essere, immoto, privo di forma e di conoscenza.²⁸

4. Nei rari sforzi sinora compiuti di applicare qualche metodo di critica testuale alla comprensione della Bibbia ebraica, ci si è sforzati di cercare altre strade, considerando גִּלְמִי alla stregua di un'errata lezione.

Si è proposto ad esempio di mutare גִּלְמִי in כְּלִימִי (= כְּלִי־יָמִי) 'tutti i miei giorni';²⁹ o di accogliere l'indicazione indiretta della Peshitta (138,15b), ove si trova *pur'ân* ('remunerazione, ricompensa'), cui soggiace presumibilmente l'aramaico *g'mûl*.³⁰ גִּלְמִי *g'mly* sarebbe stato quindi, originariamente, גִּמְלִי *g'mly*.³¹ Secondo invece M. Dahood, che è tornato sul punto più volte, nel v. 16 vi sarebbe stato originariamente גִּלִּים (גִּלִּים) e non גִּלְמִי, ossia il sostantivo גִּל ('età, era'; cf. Dan 1,10; Sal 43,4), al plurale costruito con una *mem* enclitica finale, quindi *gîlay-m(î)*, 'le mie età'.³²

Comunque, se guardiamo alla trasmissione ebraica del salmo, vi troviamo uniformemente גִּלְמִי: così a Qumran, in quattro mss. su quattro (si veda specialmente 11QPs^a),³³ con varianti significa-

²⁸ *Midraš B're'sît Rabbah*, 8,1: בְּשִׁעָה שֶׁבָּרָא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרֹדֶף הוּא אֶת אָדָם הָרִאשׁוֹן גִּלְמִי בָּרָא, וְהָיָה מוֹטֵל מִסּוּף הָעוֹלָם וְעַד סוּפוֹ («Quando il Santo, sia benedetto, creò il primo uomo, golem lo creò, disteso da un capo all'altro del mondo»); il passo è quindi sviluppato, specialmente per quanto riguarda il tema della predestinazione, in 24,2.

²⁹ Cf. Kraus 1961: 914 (da Dhorme).

³⁰ Su cui Jastrow 1903: 252 (*g'mûl/g'mûlā*).

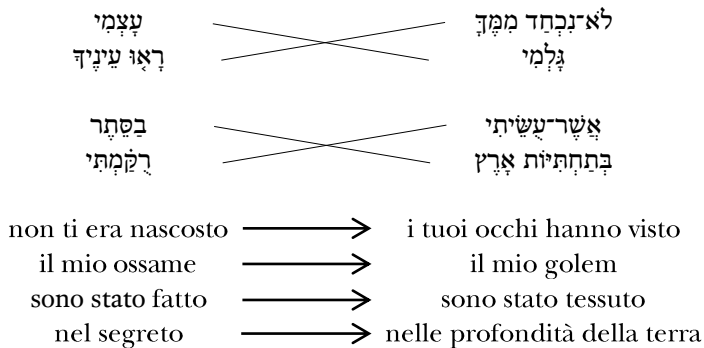
³¹ Gunkel 1926: 591. Il testo della Peshitta suona, al v. 15 (la cui finale corrisponde all'inizio del v. 16 del TM): «Non ti erano nascoste le mie ossa, che facesti in segreto. Sono sceso alle profondità della terra: *i miei occhi hanno visto la mia ricompensa*»; cf. l'edizione e traduzione ora in Kiraz, Bali (eds) 2020: 578.

³² Dahood 1959: 168-169; *Id.* 1970: 295 (con qualche precisazione rispetto alla prima elaborazione). La versione finale del v. 16 è la seguente: «Your eyes did see my life-stages, and in your book were they all written. / My days were created, when I was not seen among them». La principale attrattiva di tale ricostruzione è in יָמִים יָצָרוּ, staccato da יִכְתְּבוּ e collegato invece a גִּלִּים; più problematico è אחד come predicato verbale di radice *hdy*, rinvenuta ovviamente in ugaritico ('vedere', cf. ebr. חִזָּה), forse sostenuto da 11QPs^a.

³³ Per il testo, cf. Sanders 1965: 41, col. xx, ll. 7-9.

tive, semmai, in altri luoghi del versetto.³⁴ A sostegno di questa tradizione interna, emerge la testimonianza tarda, ma non per questo poco significativa, nella glossa γολμὶ riportata da Epifanio (IV sec.) a proposito di ἀκατέργαστος (τὸ ἀκατέργαστον γὰρ γολμὶ ἐκάλεσαν).³⁵

5. Resta infine da rilevare, per quanto riguarda la struttura dei vv. 15-16, la presenza di almeno due parallelismi chiastici



dai quali è forse possibile ricavare qualche elemento in più sull'idea di *gôlēm*, cui volle fare riferimento l'autore.

Il tema della progressiva formazione del corpo si preannuncia in realtà già al v. 13; ma al confronto lessicale coi vv. 15-16, e anche considerata la cesura offerta dal v. 14, è evidente che si tratta non di un'anticipazione dello stesso frangente, ma di due momenti diversi: da un lato, la formazione del singolo uomo nel grembo materno (v. 13); dall'altro, la creazione dell'uomo primordiale (v. 15). Il successivo v. 16 potrebbe riferirsi a entrambi, ma a sciogliere il dubbio è la sede della formazione o creazione, così definita al v. 15: «in segreto (בְּסֶתֶר) ... nelle profondità della terra (בְּתַחְתִּיּוֹת אָרֶץ)». Queste due espressioni non possono riferirsi al grembo materno, tanto meno a uno specifico «ventre di mia madre» (בֶּטֶן אִמִּי), quindi è chiaro che il salmista ha esteso l'esempio dell'onnipotenza e onniscienza divina dalla sua condi-

³⁴ Per le varie lezioni di Sal 139,16 negli altri mss. noti (4QPs^d, 4QPs^e, 11QPs^b), cf. Flint 1997: 111.

³⁵ Epiph. (cf. sopra, nota 27), *haer.* xxxi (30.31.1).

zione singola a quella più generale dell'umanità intera, la cui storia era racchiusa nell'Adamo primordiale già all'inizio dell'opera della creazione, quando l'uomo venne formato con la terra della *'ādāmāh* (עֶפֶר מִן־הָאֲדָמָה, Gen 2,7). Questo dettaglio è notoriamente ignorato nel primo racconto della creazione (Gen 1,26-27), e Sal 139,15-16 concorre a definire ulteriormente, con altri passi delle Scritture, il modo in cui quella creazione si sarebbe compiuta: e per fare ciò, la metafora prescelta è quella della tessitura.³⁶

«Il mio *gōlēm*» è quindi «il mio tessuto corporeo», il corpo informe dell'Adamo primordiale avvolto in un viluppo di materia, come una crisalide in un bozzolo. Ciò fa escludere ogni possibilità di riferimento del nostro salmo al concetto di 'embrione' – che pure molti esegeti hanno tirato spesso in ballo, dal medioevo a oggi³⁷ – e lo lascia in rapporto solo parziale con quel celebre passo del libro di Giobbe in cui, in pochi versetti (Gb 10,9-11) si descrive effettivamente attraverso tre fasi la formazione dell'uomo: dall'incontro di ovulo e seme, fino al coagulo simile al caglio e, infine, al rivestimento esteriore:

⁹ Ricordati, che come creta mi hai fatto,	זָכֹר־נָא כִּי־כָחַמְרָא עָשִׂיתָנִי
e che alla terra mi farai ritornare.	וְאֶל־עֶפֶר תְּשִׁיבֵנִי
¹⁰ Forse che non come il latte	הֲלֹא כְחָלָב תַּתִּיכֵנִי
mi hai fatto versare,	וְכִגְבַּנָּה תִקְפִּיאֵנִי
e come il caglio mi hai fatto rapprendere?	עֹר וּבָשָׂר תִּלְבִּישֵׁנִי
¹¹ Di pelle e di carne mi hai rivestito,	וּבְעֶצְמוֹת וְגִידִים תִּסְכְּכֵנִי
di ossa e di nervi mi hai ricoperto.	

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³⁶ Su Dio tessitore e l'uomo "tessuto", cf. Dhorme 1923: 4-19, specialmente 4-5; Vattoni 1966: 319. A causa di un fraintendimento di lunga durata sulla radice *rqm* e i suoi derivati, molto spesso viene però confuso 'tessuto' e 'ricamo'.

³⁷ Ravasi 1984: 820; Schökel, Carniti 1993: 138-139; Brown 2000.

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*An Akkadian Cylinder Seal
from the Museo Orientale “Umberto Scerrato”.
Preliminary Notes on a Digital Microscopic
High Magnification Analysis*

ROMOLO LORETO

1. Introduction

I am particularly glad to celebrate Simonetta Graziani because of her role in my personal and scientific formation. Back in 1999, since my very first student experiences, Simonetta Graziani has proven herself as a very valuable resource for every young student looking at the Ancient Near East not just as a far mirage, but literally as a stone's throw away destination. In fact, the display of marvellous Ancient Near Eastern seals during her lessons worked as a fashionable bait that contributed to give shape to inspiring lectures. Although the call of Arabian Peninsula was overwhelming, one believes that this is the right venue to return to a subject that still has something to offer, one hopes.

Thirty-seven seals constitute a small but precious collection exhibit in the Ancient Near East section of the Museo Orientale “Umberto Scerrato” (MOUS) of the Università di Napoli “L’Orientale”. The lot was previously studied by Luigi Cagni (1971, 1972), Stefania Campurra Mazzoni (1972) and Alessandro de Maigret (1974); finally, they were introduced by Simonetta Graziani in the catalogue of the MOUS (Graziani

2018). Quoting Simonetta Graziani: «In spite of their small number, the seals in the collection of “L’Orientale” are quite diverse in type, date, portrayed subjects, culture-geographical origin, and materials». Thus, since the previous studies focused only on the stylistic and iconographic features of both cylindrical and stamp seals, a technological study focused on engraving and intaglio techniques will be carried out within the laboratory’s activities of the MOUS and the teaching of Archaeology and Art History of the Ancient Near East at “L’Orientale”. The collection is even more valuable because the seals’ dates cover a wide chronological range, stretching from the Akkadian to the Sassanian period, allowing to observe the technological changes that characterize the Ancient Near Eastern glyptic, based on a digital microscopic analysis approach. A first pilot study conducted on the earlier item, and the only Akkadian seal (a cylinder type, catalogue number MO255), is the main matter of this paper. Nonetheless, in order to better suggest the possible identification of engraving and intaglio techniques, an Ur III cylinder seal (MO257) is taken into account for comparisons.

2. Cylinder seals manufacture techniques and experimental analyses: state of the art

The amount and variety of seals emerged from the Ancient Near East archaeological contexts is extremely varied, *i.e.* the abilities, techniques, and the general expertise of a seal cutter should have been versatile as well. Factors in the making of a product include not only technical ones, such as the stone quality, the type of tools and abrasive agents adopted, but also the iconographic style, whose choice could be linked to the workshop or the commissioner, or simply derived from the cutter himself (a master or an apprentice) and the amount of time and patience devoted to the task (Collon 2005: 103).

The history of developments of seal-cutting techniques is deeply indebted to the studies of Sax and Meeks (1994) and Sax, McNabb and Meeks (1998), who were able to replicate experimentally the tools’ marks of the seal cutter on the basis of the British Museum collection of seals.

Basically, four main techniques are defined: micro-chipping, filing/sawing, drilling and wheel-cutting. All of them possibly include a wide range of variation based on the material and the way of using the tools. The micro-chipping, a hand-held technique, should vary according to the tool's material (flint, obsidian, copper, bronze, chalcedony, or emery), as well as the tool's shape and its usage (pointed tools for direct or indirect percussion, pointed tool for scratching or gouging, chiselling), providing an extremely wide range of choices. Filing or sawing, also hand-held, goes together with the usage of abrasive. The tool can vary from metallic to flint/obsidian and wooden solutions, what is important is the straight working edge used according to a sawing motion backwards and forwards charged with abrasive. Drilling, which probably do not include wooden points, but obsidian, flint, or metallic points, can operate hand-held with a partial rotation oscillating, or by bow, with a more regular continuous rotation. Finally, a copper wheel-cutting instrument, mounted horizontally, can operate only by continuous rotation, providing successful results on the harder stones (*i.e.* quartz). All these techniques and materials, tested by Sax *et al.*, were confirmed on the same stones from which the original seals are made, giving remarkable results, and providing a milestone for the identification of manufacture techniques and dating of the seals.

It is on these premises that one ventures in the collection of seals of the MOUS.

3. Microscopic approaches to the definition of cylinder seals manufacture techniques

Among several diagnostic techniques, most of them adopted by Sax *et al.*, one is aware that the most suitable instrument for a better detection of the traces and marks produced by the working tools is the Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM). SEM scans objects with a focused beam of electrons capable to interact with the atoms of the object, so that it defines the surface topography of the sample, at a scale able to give form to the most infinitesimal detail or sign that a peculiar tool can leave on the worked surface.

More recently, Vidale, Angelini and Frenéz (2018) carried out a technological study on the Indus valley steatite (softstone) stamp seals by adopting a Laser Scanning Confocal Microscopy (LSCM), able to give form to a high-definition 3D model with a magnification range comprised between 108× and 17200× (in this paper the magnification range does not exceed the 470×).¹

Waiting for such endeavours, this paper is based on both macro photography and macro 3D orthorestitutions generated by macro lenses as well as the usage of high magnification digital microscopes. As one hopes to prove, macro photography and macro 3D orthorectified models can provide not only a beautiful and suitable for museums' audience entertainment 3D model to play with (fig. 1), but also define first geometrically measurable details to recognize the most detectable engraving or intaglio techniques well attested during specific period of time, for example the difference between the adoption of a hand-drill or a scraper/micro-chipping instrument; or the difference between a scraper, a file or saw and a wheel tool.

Digital microscopes, stretching from 10× to 250× and from 390× to 470× magnification, were also used to try to take the analysis to a higher level of definition. Although one has at its disposal the original seal, anyhow considered, micro technical details are better visible on the stamped moulded surfaces obtained, up to now, by using wet polymer clay.

Basically, considerations on the surface topography of the seal can be suggest, as well as a basic distinction between roughly or coarse surfaces/shapes and smoother features. Roughly or coarse features can be resulted by basic techniques, such as micro chipping, scratching, and hand-held drilling; smoother features can be resulted by file or saw tools or a much patience usage of abrasive materials.

¹ I would like to thank Dennys Frenéz for his kind and fruitful availability in discussing possible methodological applications.

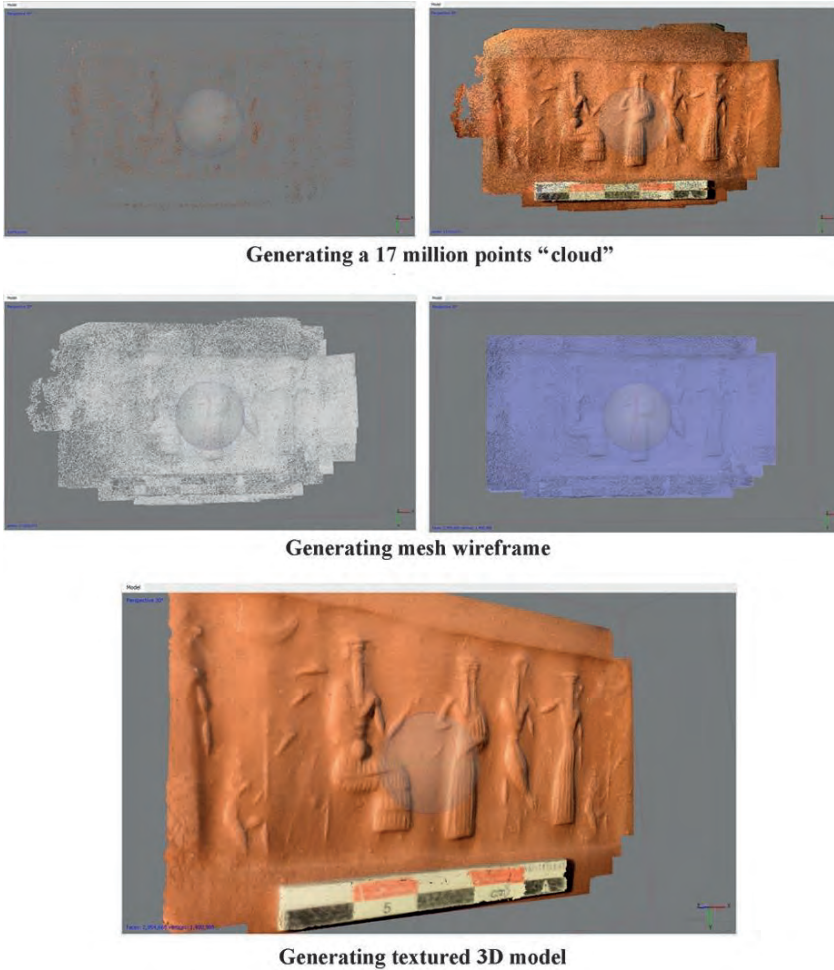


Fig. 1 - Making of a medium definition 3D orthorectified model of MO255 mould.

4. MO255

MO255 is a 3.2cm high cylinder seal made of serpentine, the most common stone type used during the Akkadian period, dated to between 2300–2200 BCE (Collon 2005: 102, Period III), large and slightly concave-sided (fig. 2).



Fig. 2 - MO255 rolled stamp on polymer clay.

A presentation scene, among the most frequent iconography of the Akkadian period, is engraved: a doubled headed god introduces Zu, the bird-god, to the water god Ea sitting on his throne. Behind Zu a third deity stands; behind Ea a kneeling nude attendant is holding the gate-pole under the lunar crescent, from where three fishes are swimming up towards the water god. Ea, sitting on a throne simply rendered by a vertical line, has his left shoulder bare, he is holding a jar with his right hand and his left arm addressed toward the upcoming visitors. The doubled headed god has his right shoulder bare and both arms bended towards his chest. Zu, whose lower half of the body reveals his bird nature, is followed by a last figure with a long skirt and his right hand on Zu's left shoulder. Ea has got a horned hat; the doubled headed figure has a flat hat; Zu has got a diadem; the last figure after Zu has got a flat cap with two disks close to his head suggesting astral symbols connected with a natural myth or a different cap type (?). All of them have got a long beard. Ea wears the typical ruffles dress, whilst the other, apart from Zu, a long grooves skirt.

5. A microscopic high magnification analysis on MO255

5.1 Surface treatment and polymer clay effectiveness

The first step of the analysis concerns with a checking, that is to verify if after the impression of the seal the polymer clay can register as much technical details and marks of tools usage as possible. In fact, even at a macroscopic scale one can distinguish on the seal surface marks probably related both to the vicissitudes that the seal lived during the millennia (scratches/damages) and working marks used to give the seal the cylindrical shape and to smooth its surface (fig. 3). By all means the cylinder surface is not particularly well smoothed.

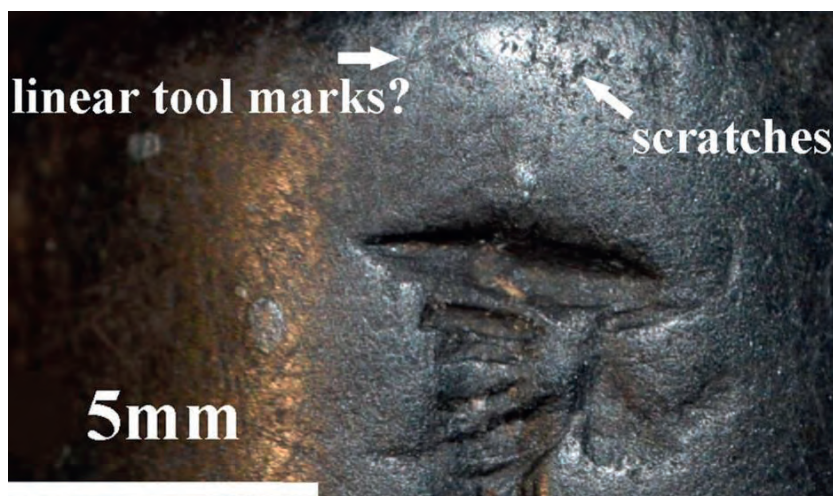


Fig. 3 - Ea's head with scratches and possible linear tool marks.

If one shifts to a 470× high magnification view, one can really test the efficacy of the polymer clay. A trial was done on three different surfaces: 1) the polymer clay surface just flattened and not stamped; 2) the stamped cylinder surface under Ea's feet; 3) the stamped surface of the lowest part of Ea's dress (fig. 4).

The non-stamped polymer clay surface (fig. 4.1), just flattened before the impression, shows a flat surface without any particular sign. The stamped polymer clay surface, in particular that corresponding to the area under the feet of Ea shows a rug-

ged surface (fig. 4.2), resulting from the usage of the tool (micro-chipping or scratching method?) used to smooth the cylinder not-incised surface. Finally, the detail of Ea's dress shows a smooth surface (fig. 4.3), different from 4.1 and 4.2, resulting perhaps not only from the usage of a different tool or method of engraving from 4.2 but also from the usage of abrasive materials.

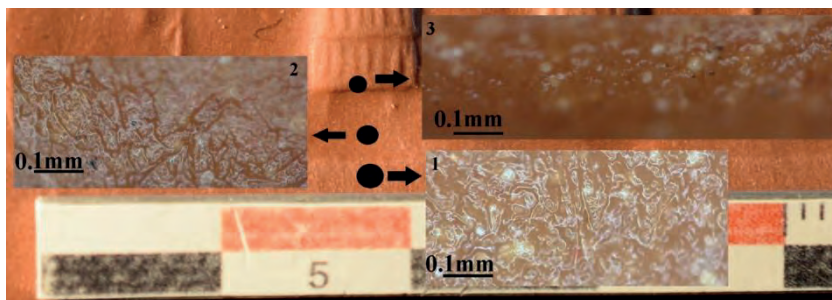


Fig. 4 - Different surface treatment: 1) non-stamped polymer clay results in a flat surface; 2) the seal surface, non-incised, stamped on polymer clay results in a rugged surface; 3) Ea's dress detail stamped on polymer clay results in a smoothed surface.

Thus, this test allows to state that polymer clay can register the tools' marks left on the seal, at least those marks visible up to 470× magnification. The clay must remain wet, otherwise if the clay is cured any micro detail will merge irremediably.

5.2 Engraving methods. Absence of file-sawing or wheel-cutting marks

The usage of a linear instrument, such as a file/saw or the wheel-cutting, results, respectively, in a linear (horizontal, oblique, and vertical) or linear to curvilinear marks. Also, at a SEM degree of analysis, the usage traces appear as very regular and parallel lines testifying a mechanical regular and constant action. According to Sax *et al.* (1998: 20) and Collon (2005: 103) the introduction of the wheel-cutting technique is later than usually believed and must be dated to the first half of the II millennium BCE. Thus, only a file/saw could be identified in MO255, if it was used at all. If one begins to analyse Ea's features, at a macro level one can look at the profile of the linear element of the figure reproduced in the mould (fig. 5).

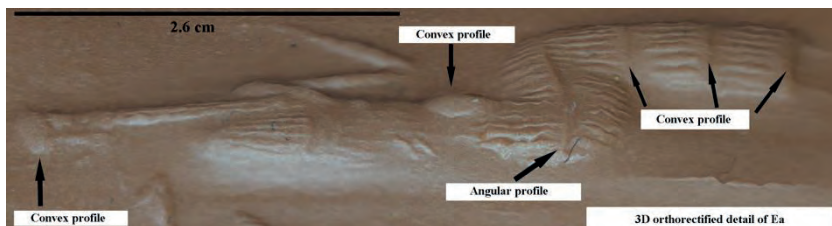


Fig. 5 - Longitudinal profile of Ea on the 3D orthorectified model.

Considering some of the horizontal linear elements, two line's profile can be distinguished, a convex one (hat and last three horizontal dress' lines) and an angular one (upper horizontal dress' line). This difference could be attribute to the usage of two different tools (a rounded end one and a pointed end one) or methods of engraving (filing/sawing, micro-chipping, or scratching). The wheel-cutting can be fairly excluded since none on the element shows the typical regularity of such an instrument (fig. 6).

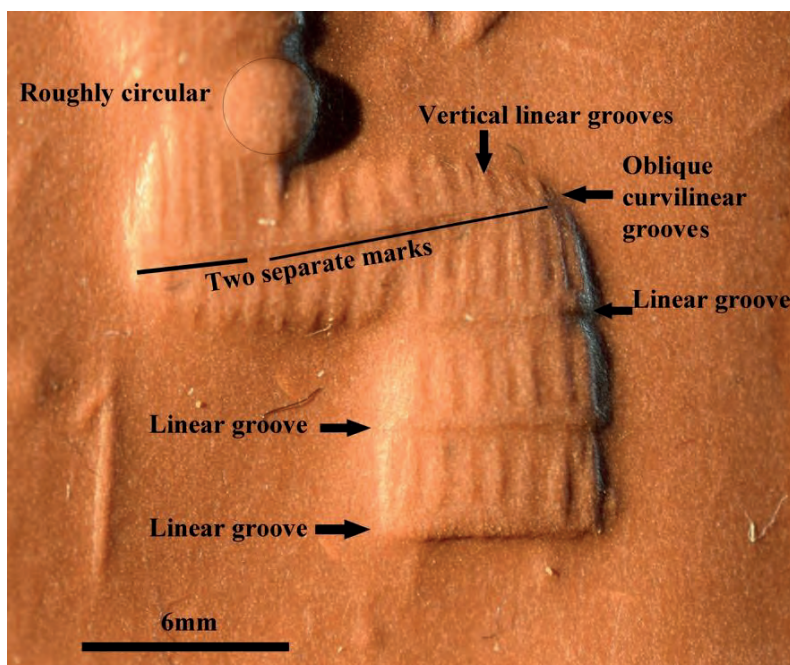


Fig. 6 - Macro view of Ea's dress.

The three lower horizontal lines are quite regular, whilst the oblique curvilinear groove, made of two separate marks, is more irregular. Moreover, all the vertical elements show a great deal of irregularity: none of these elements seem to follow a precise pattern attributable to a file/saw. Looking at the seal itself (fig. 7), it seems that any linear element of the dress was accomplished by the usage of a pointed tool, hand-held, used to scratch the surface by moving it with a backward and forward movement or by percussion.



Fig. 7 - Detail of the engraved surface of Ea's dress in MO255.

To better understand the difference in the tools or the methods of engraving adopted, one can have a look at a later seal, MO257, an Ur III chlorite seal, dated right after the Akkadian period (fig. 8). In this case, if one looks at the seat of the engraved god, in particular the vertical elements, one can distinguish the irregular lines that give shape to the squared throne and two parallel much more regular horizontal lines under the

throne. The most important detail lies in the fact that the vertical marks of the tool used for the throne are not homogeneous from one end to the other, so one can see the first impact point of the scratcher or chipper where the groove is larger. On the contrary, the two parallel horizontal lines under the throne are regular (same thickness) along their whole length. Finally, looking at the inscription's panel, made of a rectangle, one can see that the horizontal lines are particularly regular, whilst the vertical ones are not. The horizontal lines are precisely cut because, has proven by Sax *et al.* (1998: 6), they were made by the usage of a file-saw: the file-saw is easier to use on a curved surface, that is along a transversal axis to generate horizontal lines. On the contrary, a file-saw cannot be used to cut a vertical segment, unless it runs from the very top of the cylinder up to its very bottom, that is from one edge to the other along a longitudinal axis. Thus, one must contemplate the usage of a scratcher or a chipping action to cut the vertical lines.

None of the linear marks in MO255 dresses resemble the horizontal file/saw made lines of MO257, whilst a comparison can be seen in the vertical ones.



Fig. 8 - Details of MO257.

In fact, also the long skirt of the other participants to the scene of MO255 seem to be engraved by using not a file/saw, since the grooves are once again irregular, without a constant thickness (fig. 9).

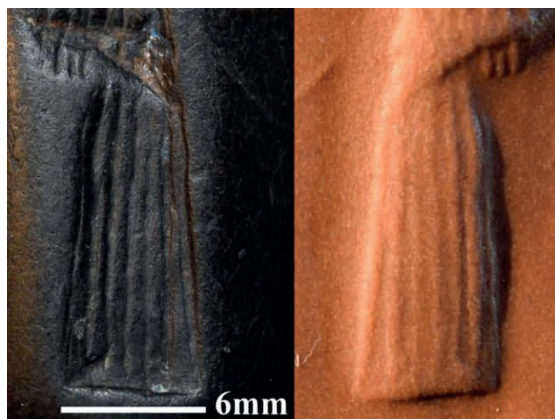


Fig. 9 - Detail of the long skirt of the double headed god of MO255.

Finally, looking at the double headed god's long skirt with a 390× magnification rate, there are no clear longitudinal and parallel lines that one could expect from the usage of a file or saw, but only an irregular sequence of longitudinal micro rugged traces (less than 2mm long) probably resulting from micro-chipping or the usage of a hand-held scratcher (fig. 10).

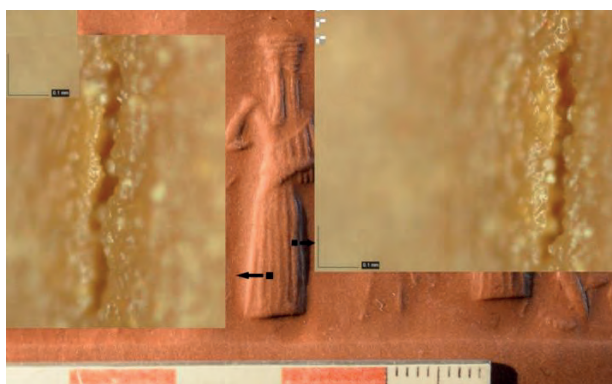


Fig. 10 - Micro details of the traces of a micro-chipping or scratches technique on the long skirt of the double headed god in MO255.

On the contrary, if one looks at the arms of all the participants to the scene, maybe file tool's traces can be recognized. By looking at the seal itself, compared with the experimental analysis of Sax *et al.* that generated file features along a diagonal axis (1998: 13), a possible comparison could be detected (fig. 11).

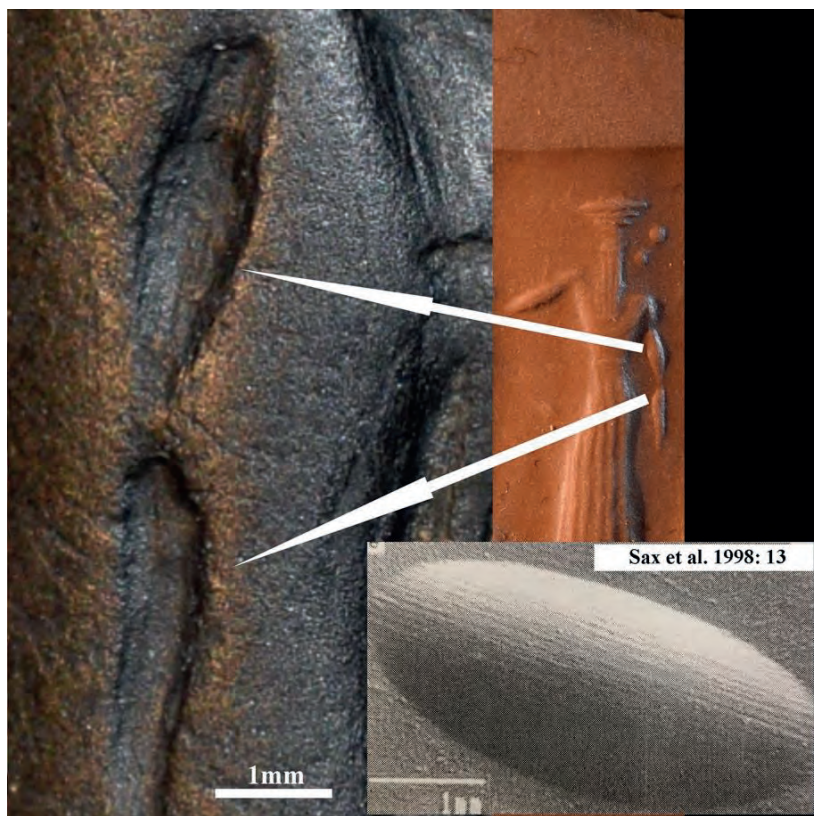


Fig. 11 - Comparison between the left arm of the last figure of the scene in MO255 and an experimental file's mark by Sax *et al.* 1998.

Looking at a 390× magnification rate of the left arm of the last figure engraved in MO255, the usage traces visible are different from the ones recorded in the long skirt (fig. 10). In the left arm there are clear regular traces with an angular profile running all along the length of the arm, suggesting the adoption of a more regular mechanical action than the scratching or the micro-chipping, with a regular pressure/strength in moving the tool

(fig. 12). Apparently, this is the only possible mark for the usage of a file or saw. One must bear in mind that this analysis is based neither on a SEM instrument nor on the same mould material (silicon) used by Sax *et al.*, so the comparison cannot be considered certain. Nonetheless, it is a fact that the micro traces left on the left arm (fig. 12) are totally different from the ones left on the long skirt (fig. 10).



Fig. 12 - Detail of the regular mark registered on the left arm of the last figure in MO255.

5.3 Engraving methods. The drill.

One last feature can be discussed here, the usage of drills. Ea holds a circular jar with his right hand. Also, two circular elements are engraved close to the back of the last figure's head; these rounded elements are probably made thanks to the usage of a tool driven by a revolving movement. One can dissertate if the tool is a hand-held pointed instrument or a mechanical bow-drill. Looking at a 250× magnification rate photo mosaic of Ea's bowl, deep irregular marks of a circular movement are visible on the bottom of the jar, whilst singular irregular (mostly vertical) scratching marks are visible all over the jar body, thus not smoothed neither by the usage of a regular drill nor by the charge of abrasive (fig. 13).

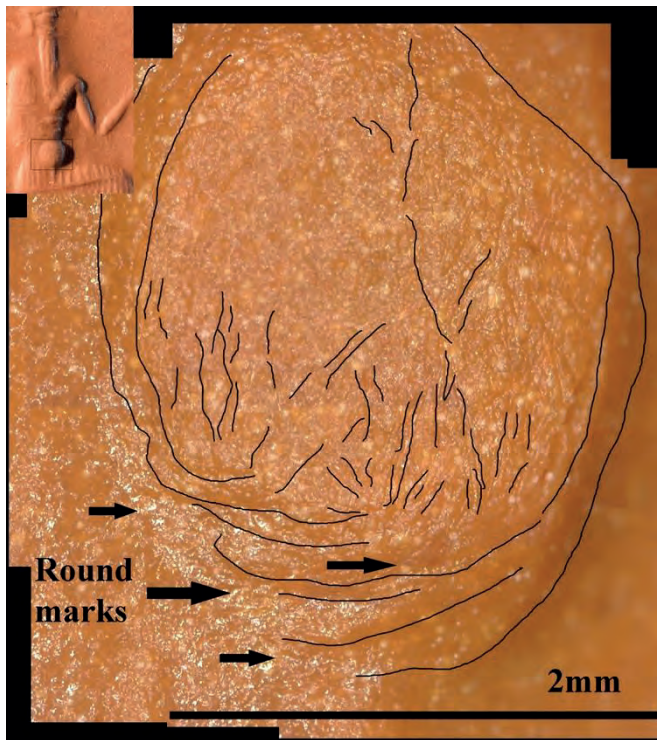


Fig. 13 - A 250× photomosaic of Ea's jar with partial indication of the scratchings over the jar's body. At a 250× magnification rate is also clear that the jar actually has an oval body instead than circular, as one perceives after a macro view.

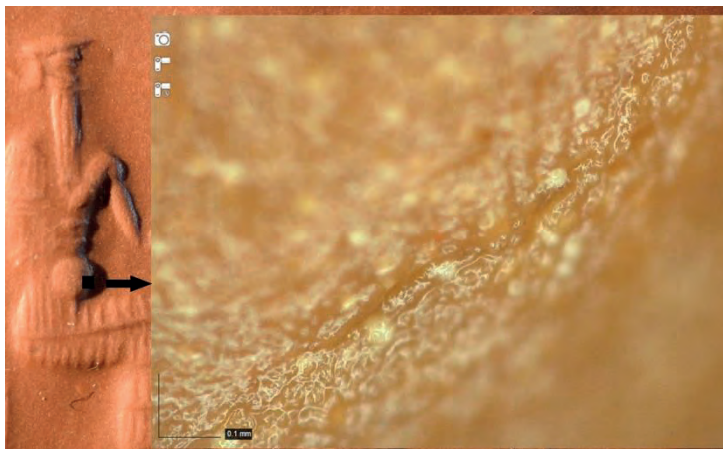


Fig. 14 - Detail of a tool's mark (390×) on the jar held by Ea in MO255.

Looking at a 390× magnification rate detail of the jar (fig. 14), one can also recognize irregular marks in shape of an arch parallel to the circumference of the jar, mainly on the right side of the jar's body. There are no traces of very regular and concentric marks that a bow-drill can leave on the seal, but only traces of a hand-held procedure, one believes.

6. Conclusion

This preliminary analysis, far to be conclusive, necessarily needs to be implemented from different points of view. First, by using different magnification rates, in order to contemplate different tools' marks, from the smallest one (derived from sharp or pointed tools) to the most evident (presumably derived from blunt or raw ones), as well as testing other moulding materials than the polymer clay, such as peculiar silicon pastes that can better match with previous studies. Also, to involve SEM analyses that can even better try to compare the MOUS seals with other collections studied by SEM. Finally, one should proceed with the analysis of the whole lot of seals available at the MOUS, in order to achieve, at least, a "relative" technological study that can contemplate a long chronological time span during which many other technical features could be identified or recalibrated. On this regard, even a more precise dating of the seals could be proposed.

Finally, following the main aptitude of the MOUS, one hopes that this study could improve the academic educational vocation of this Institution.

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Edubba'a Rhymes: A New Sumerian Textual Genre?

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The excavations at al-Hiba, which were conducted by a joint expedition of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Institute of Fine Arts of New York University, provided a small group of Pre-Sargonic tablets – *Al-Hiba* (= Biggs 1976; ²1992) 26-31 – that can be regarded as products of a local scribal school.¹ The tablets come from a large administrative building in area C;² more precisely, nos. 26, 28, 29, 30, and 31 were recovered from room 7/18 on the Level IA floor,³ while no. 27 was found in Room 4 in the fill of the earlier Level IB, which also contained *Al-Hiba* 3, a tablet bearing a royal inscription of En-anna-abtum I.⁴ Because of this association, Biggs dated *Al-Hiba* 27 to the period of En-

¹ I would like to thank Holly Pittman, Director of the Lagash Archaeological Project, for kindly providing me with photographs of the tablet 2H-T 7 = *Al-Hiba* 29 and granting me permission to publish them. Federica Proni processed the pictures; Glenn Magid offered valuable feedback and editing assistance. I am grateful to both of them.

² Studied in detail by Bahrani (1989).

³ Biggs 1976: 6-7; Bahrani 1989: 113-115.

⁴ Biggs 1976: 7. For the reading En-anna-abtum (rather than Enannatum) of the personal name written en-an-na-tum₂, note the more accurate spelling en-an-na-ab-tum₂ in Nisaba 11 7 rev. i 7 (Ur III). The name in question is to be analyzed as {en-'an.'a-'a(l).b(i).tum}, «The lord befits heaven» (cf. Marchesi 2004: 191 with note 216; id. 2006: 2-3 note 7).

anna-abtum I.⁵ It should be noted, however, that the colophon of *Al-Hiba* 3 mentions a scribe by the unusual name of ^dsul-MUŠ×PA-gana₂-zi-en-mete-na-ka, which also occurs in the colophon of *Al-Hiba* 27, though abbreviated there as ^dsul-MUŠ×PA-gana₂-zi.⁶ Since the name ^dsul-MUŠ×PA-gana₂-zi-en-mete-na-ka has the form of a standard “reverential name” (*i.e.* one that extolls the ruling sovereign as the person who enjoys divine support),⁷ its occurrence in both texts suggests that they date to the time of En-metênnâk,⁸ instead. If this is true, then the En-anna-abtum I text recorded on *Al-Hiba* 3 must either be a posthumous composition that was commissioned by En-anna-abtum I’s son and successor En-metênnâk,⁹ or a later copy of a royal inscription from the reign of En-anna-abtum I.¹⁰ Be that as it may, both *Al-Hiba* 3 and *Al-Hiba* 27 were sealed by the Level IA floor that contained the other school tablets. Those tablets should therefore be dated later, though not much later.¹¹

The dating and content of *Al-Hiba* 26-31 are very interesting. However, except for *Al-Hiba* 31, which is a fragmentary collection of Sumerian incantations,¹² all of these texts are very difficult to categorize, and their interpretation is controversial.¹³ This is especially true of *Al-Hiba* 29 (figs. 1-5).

The text in question is divided into sections consisting of four or more lines (henceforth referred to as “paragraphs”), each be-

⁵ Biggs 1976: 7.

⁶ Marchesi 1999: 4.

⁷ Cf. Selz 1990: 112 with note 8 (on pp. 137-138); *id.* 1995: 14 with note 75; and Bauer 1998: 519-520.

⁸ For this, more accurate, reading of the personal name that is usually read Entemena or Enmetena, see Marchesi 2006: 83 with notes 469-470; and Marchesi, Marchetti 2011: 178. Cf. also Jagersma 2010: 216 and 237-238. For the PN ^dsul-MUŠ×PA-gana₂-zi-en-mete-na-ka, «(The god) Sul... is the fertile ground of En-metênnâk», see Marchesi 1999: 4.

⁹ Cf. Cooper 1983: 30; *id.* 1986: 48 with note 10; and Selz 1995: 143 with note 592.

¹⁰ As the unusual presence of a colophon may suggest. For the practice of copying royal or private inscriptions as part of the training of apprentice scribes, see Kraus 2020: 112-126.

¹¹ See Bahrani 1989: 50-51.

¹² See, most recently, Rudik 2011: 16 and 414-416 (with previous literature).

¹³ See Biggs 1976: 6-7; Alberti 1980; Marchesi 1999; Michalowski 2013: 16 with note 3; Wagensonner 2016: 340 with note 1169; and 397-398.

ginning with a semicircular DIŠ (transliterated in the present article as ¶) followed by a sign or sign group. Miguel Civil offered a preliminary transliteration of the text (also based on collations he made from photos of the tablet¹⁴) and commented on select lines.¹⁵ Noting that *Al-Hiba* 29 contains several syllabic spellings,¹⁶ Civil provisionally classified it as «a school exercise dealing with sign values».¹⁷ At a later date, Civil referred to this tablet as an early example of an explanatory text:

The exercise tablet is divided into paragraphs devoted to a particular sign or sign group. Within a paragraph there are obvious examples of logogram readings, but there are also short phrases exemplifying the use of the sign. The following paragraph [*i.e.* § 5 = col. ii 10 – iii 3], for instance, deals with the sign DU:

NI-DU, ¶¹-ne₆-né, i-¶¹-ne₆-[x], eren-A, i-DU, u₅-du, «What is written with the signs NI and DU is read /i₃en(e)/, ..., (but in another instance like) “Mr. Eren-A comes (i-DU)”, (the imperfective form is pronounced) /u₅-du/».¹⁸

However ingenious, this interpretation is not without flaws. Civil interpreted the sign group NI.MI.NI (= i₃-ĝe₆-ne₂, according to Civil) as syllabic writing of NI.DU with the reading i₃-ĝen.¹⁹ However, it should be noted that in the Sumerian dialect that was spoken in Lagash during the Pre-Sargonic period, «he went» was not pronounced /'iĝen/ but rather /'eĝen/, due to the so-called Old Sumerian vowel harmony.²⁰ Accordingly, in the Pre-Sargonic texts from Lagash both «he went» (= /'eĝen/) and «he came» (= /'emĝen/) were not spelled NI.DU = i₃-ĝen, but rather e-DU = e-ĝen.²¹ Moreover, «Eren-A» is a rather unlikely personal name; in

¹⁴ Civil 1983a: 560-561 (§ 3).

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 562-564 (§ 4.4).

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 562 (§ 4.3).

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 559.

¹⁸ Civil 2009: 64.

¹⁹ Cf. Civil 1983a: 563: «The reading i-ĝe₆-né is a good rendering of i-ĝen, except for the final e».

²⁰ See Jagersma 2010: 57-60 (§ 3.9.3).

²¹ See, *e.g.* 4H-T 38 ii 1-3 (Crawford 1977: 219-220): PA.TE.SI / ĜEŠ.DU₃ tug₂ ⁴nanše-ka / řu₂-de₃ e-ĝen-¹na¹-a, «when the ruler came/went to erect the mast of the sail of Nanše('s boat)»; CUSAS 26 171 ii 1-3: mu lugal-eden-ne₂ /

fact, nowhere else in Sumerian documentation is a personal name EREN.A attested. Nor is there any other evidence that the verbal prefix i_3 was ever pronounced /u/ before a verbal base with an /u/ vowel sound.

The same passage was interpreted by Theo Krispijn as a paradigm of the verb $\hat{g}en$, ‘to go’:

$\dot{i}.DU - \dot{i}.\hat{g}e_6.ne$ (second or first person?) – $\dot{i}.\hat{g}e_6.[]$ – $a:eren$ (plural base?) – $\dot{i}.DU - u_5.DU$.²²

However, the first and second person perfective form of the verb ‘to go’ in the Pre-Sargonic dialect of Lagash can confidently be reconstructed as /’e $\hat{g}enen$ /, which one would expect to see written syllabically as $e-\hat{g}e_6-ne_2$,²³ not $i_3-\hat{g}e_6-ne_2$. Moreover, EREN.A can in no way be interpreted as a plural form of $\hat{g}en$. Even assuming that the two signs could be read in reverse order as $a-eren$ and that $eren$ could be understood as a sort of rebus writing for the plural stem of $\hat{g}en$, namely /’er/ or /’ir/, in combination with the very rare plural suffix {en},²⁴ one would have to explain why the stative verbal prefix {’a(l)} was, in this instance, erroneously affixed to a perfective verb of motion in a main clause.²⁵ In other words, a verbal form $a-eren$ analyzed as {’al.’er.en}, ‘they went’, is grammatically impossible. Further damning, in the Early Dynastic period, the EREN sign did not have the reading /eren/, but rather /($\hat{h}$)urin/.²⁶

kaskal-ta / e- $\hat{g}en$ -na-a, ‘in the year in which Lugal-edene came back from the expedition»; *DP* 261 ii 2 – iii 1: $sag_3-sag_3 e_2-ud-sakar ni\hat{g}en_6^{kl}[(na)-\check{s}e_3]$ e- $\hat{g}en$ -na-a, ‘when Sassag went to the E-udsakarak (‘‘House of the lunar crescent’’) of Ni $\hat{g}en$ »; etc. For additional occurrences of e- $\hat{g}en$ in Pre-Sargonic texts from Lagash, see Steible 1982: 238, Ent. 28 iii 28-33 = 29 iv 18-23 (cf. Marchesi 2006: 125-126 note 636); and Selz 1995: 237 note 1152 *sub* (4) (cf. Sallaberger 2000: 256). In contrast, $i_3-\hat{g}en$ never occurs in these texts.

²² Krispijn 1991-1992: 19.

²³ The phoneme /n/ in syllable-final position first began appearing in writing in the Ur III period; see Jagersma 2010: 22 and 345.

²⁴ See Jagersma 2010: 322-323 (§ 12.5; note, especially, example 52).

²⁵ In the Pre-Sargonic dialect of Lagash, in main clauses, perfective forms with {’a(l)} express a state, not an action. See Jagersma 2010: 535-537 (§ 24.4.2).

²⁶ See Civil 1983b: 3. Cf. Bauer 1987: 4.

Al-Hiba 29 was later treated by Niek Veldhuis, who described it as a «sign list with explanatory glosses»,²⁷ and placed it in the textual category of “syllabaries”.²⁸ According to Veldhuis, «Each section of this text treats the various readings of a sign that heads the section. ... The section TUM ... is the clearest example».²⁹

Veldhuis suggests the following transliteration and interpretation of col. v 5 '9' (§ 8):

5'. ¶ TUM	
6'. du-u ₂	(du ₄ /dum)
7'. da-ma-am ₆	(dam ₃)
8'. e-gi-ir	(egir ₄ = back)
9'. ha-aš ₂	(haš _x = thigh) ³⁰

He goes on to comment:

The readings dum (or du₄) and dam₃ ... are straightforward; ... In modern sign lists the word for thigh (haš₂) is usually represented by NINDA₂×EŠ, but in origin, the sign belongs to the TUM family and is still written that way as late as the Old Babylonian period ... In third millennium writing the sign is TUM×AŠ₂ or TUM.AŠ₂ ... and the present entry suggests that a simple TUM could do, too. The word for back (egir) is also written with a TUM-related sign and could be written TUM = egir₄ in the Early Dynastic period.³¹

Admittedly, the passage quoted by Veldhuis from *Al-Hiba* 29 bears some resemblance to lines 634-639 of the Old Babylonian Nippur syllabary Proto-Ea, especially as regards the sequence TUM (= /^(ʿ)ib/ or /tum/), /^(ʿ)eger/, /ḥaš/; see MSL 14: 56:

634. ib	TUM (= ib ₂)
635. tu-um	TUM (= tum)
636. el/il	IL (= el ₂ /il)
634. e-ge-er	EGIR (= eger)

²⁷ Veldhuis 2010: 386 note 33.

²⁸ Veldhuis 2014: 126-127.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 126.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 127.

³¹ *Ibid.*

635. 𒄩a-aš/aš ₂	ZIK (= 𒄩aš ₂)
636. zi-ib	ZIK (= zib ₂)

However, things are not as straightforward as Veldhuis claims. First, the spelling du-u₂ (col. v 6') can hardly be understood as representing /du/ or /dum/;³² more likely, du-u₂ represents /du'u/, /duhu/, or /duwu/.³³ Second, both *du*₄ and *dam* are not Sumerian values but Akkadian *Lautwerte*, which, furthermore, are only attested much later.³⁴ Third, in third-millennium texts, there is no evidence that TUM alone could be used to write the word for 'thigh', that is, /𒄩aš/.³⁵ The spelling 𒄩a-aš₂ (v 9') more likely provides the reading of the compound logogram TUM.AŠ₂ or TUM×AŠ₂,³⁶ which is the ancestor of 𒄩aš₂(ZIK). In short, of the various syllabically written words in this paragraph of *Al-Hiba* 29, only e-gi-ir (v 8'), or rather e-ge-er,³⁷ certifiably represents a value of the TUM sign (*i.e.* eger₄) in Old Sumerian

³² Note that *Pleneschreibungen* representing long vowels were introduced into the writing of Sumerian only in later periods; see Krispijn 2000: 159-160 with note 30; and Jagersma 2010: 25-26.

³³ The existence of a bilabial glide (= /w/) in third-millennium Sumerian is revealed by occasional syllabic spellings of Sumerian words, such as a-wu-zu for *LAK* 384 (Civil 1982: 4, line 41); ru₁₂-wu for *RU* (Pettinato 1982: 352, 055; and 359, 0161); u₈-wa/wu for *U₈* (Krecher 1983: 182, lines 37 and 38); etc. See also Krispijn 2000: 161. For the glottal phonemes /' / (glottal stop) and /h / (glottal fricative) in early Sumerian, see Jagersma 2010: 38-41 and 48-49, respectively. All these phonemes disappeared in Sumerian before the Old Babylonian period, when the syllabaries that provide the phonemic values (so-called "readings") of Sumerian signs first occur; but they were still present in Old Sumerian, sometimes modifying the syllabic structure of words known from later syllabaries; see Civil 1984: 80-81.

³⁴ See von Soden, Röllig ⁴1991: 25 *sub* TUM.

³⁵ TUM sometimes occurs in the place of ZIK = 𒄩aš₂ in texts from the Old Babylonian period; see N 6467 + N 3295: 14 = "Dumuzi's Dream" 75 source V (Alster 1972: pl. VIII; cf. Mittermayer 2006: 55 *sub* 140); "Sumerian Proverb Collection 22" col. ii 19 (Alster 1997: 265 and pl. 89); *SLT* 179 (= *CDLI* P227751) rev. iv 24 (= Nippur Forerunner to *ĦĦ* XVI 129-131; see *MSL* 10, 59). Such few cases are probably to be regarded as scribal mistakes.

³⁶ See Westenholz 1987: 150; and Alster 1991-1992: 14, line 78; and 48, fig. 3a, col. v 5.

³⁷ For GI = /ge/ (and not /gi/) in Pre-Sargonic Lagash, see Meyer-Laurin 2011: 40-41.

texts.³⁸ It is, thus, clear that the text in question is not a syllabary of the type known from the Old Babylonian period onwards.³⁹

The last scholar to deal with *Al-Hiba* 29 was Klaus Wagensonner, who remarked that «andere Abschnitte ... bieten neben Zeichenlesungen auch kurze Phrasen, in denen das jeweilige Zeichen verwendet wird. Somit gehört dieser Text zu den frühesten Beispielen von Kommentarliteratur».⁴⁰

The «kurze Phrasen» to which Wagensonner refers are copular clauses of various types, such as [ř]e₆-dal-am₆, «it is ashes» (col. iii 13);⁴¹ [t]u-š[a₄]-¹am₆, «he is sitting» (rev. v 4');⁴² tir en-na-kam, «the forest belongs to (lit. 'is of') the lord» (i 5); im ¹zur¹-re₂-¹dam¹, «clay is to be broken» (i 9);⁴³ etc.

Indeed, most of the lines of *Al-Hiba* 29 contain copular clauses.⁴⁴ At times, copular clauses appear to play with the values of a sign; for instance, in col. iii 4-8 (§ 6), we read:

³⁸ eger₄(TUM) is regularly used in the place of eger in the Pre-Sargonic texts of Lagash.

³⁹ See Veldhuis 2014: 177-187.

⁴⁰ Wagensonner 2016: 340.

⁴¹ Assuming that ře₆-dal is an older form of dedal_x(NE)/de₃-dal (for which, see Crisostomo 2019: 314). Cf. Civil 1983a: 562 *sub* § 4.3.

⁴² Assuming that tu-ša₄ is a syllabic writing of tuš-ša₄. Although Sollberger (1961) does not list it in his “syllabaire présargonique de Lagash”, ša₄ is the standard syllabogram for /ša/ in the Pre-Sargonic texts from Lagash; see *DP* 126 rev. i 3: aš₁₀-ša₄-ne₂ (cf. Balke 2017: 99); 418 rev. iii 4: a-tuš-ša₄; 482 rev. ii 2: ba-uš₂-ša₄-ta; *RTC* 29 rev. i 3: ... ḥaš-ša₄; etc.

⁴³ Cf. zur-zur, ‘to break to pieces, to shatter’, in Proto-Diri Nippur 93 (MSL 15, 16); and “Lugalbanda and Enmerkar” 320 and 386 (Wilcke 1969: 120-121 and 124-125; ETCSL 1.8.22). However, the connection between this very rare verb and zur in *Al-Hiba* 29 i 9 is not completely certain, as the former always occurs in a reduplicated form. If zur-zur belongs to the reduplication class (as P. Attinger [*GSF* 1176] has tentatively suggested), then zur in our text must be a different verb. It could be the same as /zer/, ‘to break (to pieces), to destroy’ (*GSF* 1155 s.v. ze-er, ze-r), pronounced /zur/ in Lagash. In this connection, note that (1) several words containing an /e/ vowel in standard Sumerian occur in the local dialect of Lagash with an /u/ vowel instead (see Krispijn 2000: 161; and Marchesi, Marchetti 2011: 240 with the literature in notes 27-28); (2) /zer/ does not seem to occur as such in the Pre-Sargonic texts from Lagash.

⁴⁴ 39 out of 63 lines of which the last sign is preserved end with signs that represent the copula {am} (that is, am₆, dam, kam, or nam). Relatively little attention has been paid to this point, which is crucial, in my opinion. Civil (1983a: 561-562) commented on this as follows: «I assume that -am₆ represents

4. ¶ ĜIR₂-am₆
5. ĝeš-er-am₆
6. su₄-ma-am₆
7. tab₂-ba-am₆
8. tum₃-ḫa_x(SAG×ĤA)-am₆⁴⁵

While lines 5 and 8 are uncertain (5) or obscure (8), lines 6-7 consist of copular clauses with past participles as predicates: {sum.'a.'am} = /summa'am/, «he was slaughtered», {tab.'a.am} = /tabba'am/, «he was burnt». In both cases, the employed verbal bases – that is, sum_x and tab₂ – are values of the ĜIR₂ sign,⁴⁶ which occurs two lines above, just after the semicircular DIS that marks the beginning of the paragraph.

On the other hand, if we look at col. ii 1-5 (§ 3):

1. [¶] 'KUL-am₆¹
2. 'X¹-am₆¹ (or: 'X¹(.)[X]-am₆¹)
3. ra-ba-am₆
4. ḫenbur ša₄-ra-am₆
5. mes a ede_x(E₃.E₃)-dam⁴⁷

a completely different picture emerges. In this instance, in the only two intelligible lines – that is, lines 4-5: «the shoots are abundant;⁴⁸ the *mes*-tree is to be watered»⁴⁹ – none of the quoted words is a value of the sign that occurs at the beginning of the

the copula which frequently has simply a topic-making function. The presence of -am₆ cannot be accounted for by its position in the section (some “headings” have it, others not) or by any discernible criteria. Hypothetically, it may represent phonological information» (see also *idem* 2009: 64); while according to Veldhuis (2014: 127), «the significance of -am₆, which is added to many entries in(!) [Text: is] this list, remains unclear».

⁴⁵ The sign SAG×ĤA was studied in detail by Civil (1983a: 564-566). The evidence he quoted suggests that when used as a syllabogram, the sign in question should be read /ḫa/. As for tum₃, its only attested use as a syllabogram outside this text is in the writing of the DN ^dga₂-tum₃-dug₃.

⁴⁶ For the use of ĜIR₂ as a variant of sum₆ (Old Sumerian) / šum (later) = *tabāḫum*, ‘to slaughter’, see Lambert 1981: 85; Bauer 1987: 2; and Sjöberg 2003: 554 with note 40.

⁴⁷ For ede_x(E₃.E₃), see Krecher 1995: 166; and Meyer-Laurin 2010: 4 note 11.

⁴⁸ Assuming that ša₄-ra is a syllabic writing of šar₂-ra (cf. note 42 above).

⁴⁹ For the expression a e₃, ‘to let the water out, to water’, see *GSF* 330.

paragraph: KUL. Therefore, the clauses in this paragraph (at least the last two) cannot be interpreted as illustrations of the uses and meanings of the KUL sign.

In sum, none of the interpretations of *Al-Hiba* 29 that have been proposed to date are adequate; the question remains: what kind of text is *Al-Hiba* 29? A simple answer presents itself upon closer inspection of the only fully intelligible paragraph in the document, that is, § 2 (col. i 6-10), which reads as follows:

6. ¶ amar-^diškur
7. amar-am₆
8. amar ^diškur-kam
9. im ^rzur¹-re₂-^rdam¹
10. im [ur₃]-r[e₂]-^rdam¹⁵⁰

Civil had the following to say about this passage:

The topic is a personal name. Line 7 gives the first element of the name; line 8 repeats the whole name making the genitive element explicit; line 9 has the two constituents of the name in inverse order. Since both zur and amar end in r, the actual reading of the sign is uncertain.⁵¹

However, Civil's analysis was biased by his assumptions about the nature of this text (see above), which led him to focus overly on the text's supposed explanatory features. In doing so, Civil failed to note the passage's most salient feature, namely that it seemingly functions as a nursery rhyme. The passage has a clear rhythmic structure and it contains the sorts of puns and non-sense verses that are usually encountered in nursery rhymes.

This paragraph demonstrably plays with the meaning of the personal name Amar-Iškurak, «Calf of (the god) Iškur», and its two components (*i.e.* amar and iškur); the values of the AMAR sign (*i.e.* amar and zur); two of the values of the IM sign (*i.e.*

⁵⁰ For this restoration, see below, with note 54. Lines 9-10 may alternatively have to be read: im ^rzur¹-ru₉-dam / im [ur₃]-^rru₉¹-dam (cf. Lambert 1992: 257). However, the assimilation of the /e/ vowel of the morpheme {ed} to a preceding /u/ with certain verbal bases (see Jagersma 2010: 659-660) is only attested in later periods.

⁵¹ Civil 1983a: 562.

iškur and im);⁵² and, finally, the phonetic resemblance between the antithetic expressions im zur, «to break clay (to open)».⁵³ and im ur₃, «to smear clay (to seal)».⁵⁴ All of this word-play results in a brief, playful rhyming text akin to a nursery rhyme:

6.	'amar'iškurak	He is Amar-Iškurak
7.	'amar'am	he is a calf
8.	'amar'iškurakkam	he is a calf of Iškur
9.	'im zureddam	clay is to be broken
10.	'im'ureddam	clay is to be smeared

However, while it shares all the telltale features of nursery rhymes (nonsense content, wordplay, rhyming), this short composition was not intended for children.⁵⁵ Rather, it originated in a school setting for didactic purposes. Therefore, lacking an exact equivalent in English, we could call this kind of composition an “*edubba'a* rhyme” (modeled on the designation “nursery rhyme”), from the Sumerian term for scribal school: e₂-dub-ba-a.⁵⁶

§ 2 of *Al-Hiba* 29 suggests the possibility that *Al-Hiba* 29 is, in fact, a collection of such *edubba'a* rhymes, which were specially devised for scribal training, exploiting the mnemonic techniques and compositional mechanisms that are typical of nursery rhymes. Although too little of this intriguing text is understood to make a definitive case, the portions of it we can make sense of seem to support this hypothesis. For instance, the above-quoted § 6 in column iii, although only partially intelligible, looks like a rhyme playing with the values ġiri₂, sum_x, and tab₂ of the ĠIR₂ sign:

⁵² For the attested meanings of the IM sign as a logogram with the value /'im/ in the Pre-Sargonic texts from Lagash, see Meyer-Laurin 2011: 60.

⁵³ See note 43 above.

⁵⁴ See GSF 1127 s.v. with note 3578 and the literature cited therein (especially, Huber 2000). For ur₃ in the sense of ‘to smear’, see also i₃-be₂ ħe₂-ma-ur₃-e, «may he smear that fat on it (*i.e.* on Amar-Zuenak’s head)», in TMH 6 1: 18 (Ur III incantation; cf. Rudik 2011: 231 and 233).

⁵⁵ Incidentally, no nursery rhymes in Sumerian or Akkadian are attested, as far as I know.

⁵⁶ On this term, see most recently Attinger 2018 (with previous literature).

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| 4. ġiri'am | He was a dagger |
| 5. ġeš'er'am | he was a <i>tree-trunk</i> ⁵⁷ |
| 6. summa'am | he was slaughtered |
| 7. tabba'am | he was burnt |
| 8. tumḥa'am | he was ... |

This paragraph can perhaps be paraphrased as follows:

He was a warrior (lit., dagger), he was strong like a *tree-trunk*, nevertheless, he was slaughtered (as can happen to warriors) and (his corpse) burnt (for even the strongest of logs can be consumed by fire); ...

Admittedly, this interpretation is speculative and it depends on several assumptions, but it makes sense. The only viable alternative would be that the passage is a collection of copular clauses with no connection to one other that have been strung together for no obvious reason.⁵⁸ But the hypothesis that it represents, like § 2 above, a short rhyming text playing with sign values seems much more probable.

Al-Hiba 29 thus appears to attest to a new textual genre: the *edubba'a* rhyme, which provides didactic instructions on the readings of logograms in a playful way. But of course, more work on this difficult text will be required if we are to arrive at definitive conclusions about its content and the purpose it served. In the meantime, it is a great pleasure to dedicate the first study of *edubba'a* rhymes to Simonetta Graziani.

⁵⁷ Assuming that ġeš-er (= /ġeš'er/) is the same word as ġušur, 'beam, log' (etymologically, ġeš-ur₃ [= /ġeš'ur/], 'roof-beam'). If my hypothesis is correct, then the spelling ġeš-er could provide the pronunciation of the term in the Pre-Sargonic dialect of Lagash.

⁵⁸ It is true that some of these copular clauses are somewhat related by the fact of containing values of the ĠIR₂ sign (see above), but this characteristic does not apply to all of them.

Appendix

For the convenience of the reader, a revised transliteration of *Al-Hiba* 29 follows:

- (§ 1)
- Col. i 1. [𐎧 ...]
 2. [...]
 3. [...]-^ram₆¹
 4. [r]i₂-^rda¹-am₆
 5. tir en-na-kam
- (§ 2)
6. 𐎧 amar-^{di}škur
 7. amar-am₆
 8. amar ^{di}škur-kam
 9. im ^rzur¹-re₂-^rdam¹
 10. im [ur₃]-r[c₂]-^rdam¹
- (§ 3)
- Col. ii 1. [𐎧] ^rKUL(= nuġun?)-am₆¹
 2. ^rX¹-^ram₆¹ (or ^rX¹(.) [X]-^ram₆¹)
 3. ra-ba-am₆
 4. ħenbur ša_r-ra-am₆
 5. mes a ede_x(E₃.E₃)-dam
- (§ 4)
6. 𐎧 BALAG BALAG^Ĝ-*inversum*
 7. AŠ GANA₂
 8. bu-ba-am₆
 9. bum₂(BALAG^Ĝ)-ħa_x(SAG^Ĝ×ĤA)-nam
- (§ 5)
10. 𐎧 NI.DU
 11. ^rNI¹.MI.NI
 12. NI.^rMI²¹. [X]
- Col. iii 1. ^rEREN¹.A
 2. NI.DU
 3. u₅-D[U]

		(§ 6)
	4.	¶ ġiri ₂ -am ₆
	5.	ġeš-er-am ₆
	6.	su ₄ -ma-am ₆
	7.	tab ₂ -ba-am ₆
	8.	tum ₃ -ḥa _x (SAĜ×ḤA)-am ₆
		(§ 7)
	9.	¶ NE-am ₆
	10.	NE-am ₆
	11.	NE-am ₆
	12.	ĜÊŠ. ¹ GIBIL ¹ -am ₆
	13.	[r̄]e ₆ -dal-am ₆
Col. iv	1.	N[E...]
	2.	¹ X ¹ [...]
	3.	da- ¹ X ¹ (.[X])
	4.	lu ₅ -ma-am ₆
	5.	UD(.)NE-am ₆
	6.	za-ḥa-am ₆
	7.	ḥa _x (SAĜ×ḤA)-ra-am ₆
	8.	bu-bu-ul ¹ A ¹ (erased)
	9.	a-NE
	10.	AN(-)ḥa _x (SAĜ×ḤA)-be ₂
	11.	a-mul
	12.	a-NE
Col. v	1'.	[...]AN[...]
	2'.	N[E...]
	3'.	da(-) ¹ AK ¹
	4'.	NE
		(§ 8?)
	5'.	¶ TUM
	6'.	du-u ₂
	7'.	da-m[a]-a[m ₆]
	8'.	¹ e ¹ -ge-er
	9'.	ḥa-a[š ₂]
		(§ ...)
Col. vi	1'.	¶ [...]
	2'.	um-[...]

- 3'. [X B]U 'X'
 4'. [X] BU [X]
 (rest of column broken)

Reverse

- Col. i (broken)
- Col. ii 1. ri₂-r[i₂(-X)]
 (rest of column broken)
- Col. iii 1. 'zi¹-am₆

 (§ 1')
 2. ¶ 'X'
 (break: 2/3 lines)
 1'. za- [...]
 2'. e-er-'X'
 3'. ri₂-'X'([...])
 (rest of column broken)
- Col. iv 1. ([...])'da¹(-)TU[N₃]-am₆

 (§ 2'/3')
 2. ¶ 'LAGAB×A¹-am₆
 3. aš₁₁(AŠ-*tenû*)-ti-am₆
 4. 'X' [...]
 5. KU-nu₂-am₆
 6. [X].DU-am₆
 (rest of column broken)
- Col. v 1'. UŠ×KID₂-am₆
 2'. UŠ×KID₂-'da¹-am₆
 3'. 'X(.)X¹-[a]m₆
 4'. [t]u-š[a₄]-'am₆¹
 (rest of column broken)
- Col. vi 1. DU.DU
 2. DU.'DU'
 3. zi
 4. ḫa-luḫ
 (end)

Abbreviations

- 2H-T = Prefix for field numbers of inscribed objects from the second season of excavations at al-Hiba/Lagash.
- 4H-T = Prefix for field numbers of inscribed objects from the fourth season of excavations at al-Hiba/Lagash.
- Al-Hiba* = Biggs 1976; 1992.
- CDLI = Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative (<https://cdli.ucla.edu/>).
- CUSAS = Cornell University Studies in Assyriology and Sumerology.
26: Westenholz 2014.
- DP* = Allotte de la Fu   1908-1920.
- ETCSL = Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature (<https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/>).
- GSF* = Attinger 2021.
- LAK* = Siglum of signs in Deimel 1922.
- MSL = Materials for the Sumerian Lexicon.
10: Landsberger - Reiner 1970.
14: Civil 1979.
15: Civil 2004.
- N = Museum siglum of tablets from Nippur in the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.
- Nisaba = Nisaba. *Studi Assiriologici Messinesi*.
11: al-Rawi - Verderame 2006.
- P = Prefix of CDLI numbers.
- RTC* = Thureau-Dangin 1903.
- SLT* = Chiera 1929.
- TMH = Texte und Materialien der Frau Professor Hilprecht Collection, Jena.
6: van Dijk - Geller 2003.

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Figures

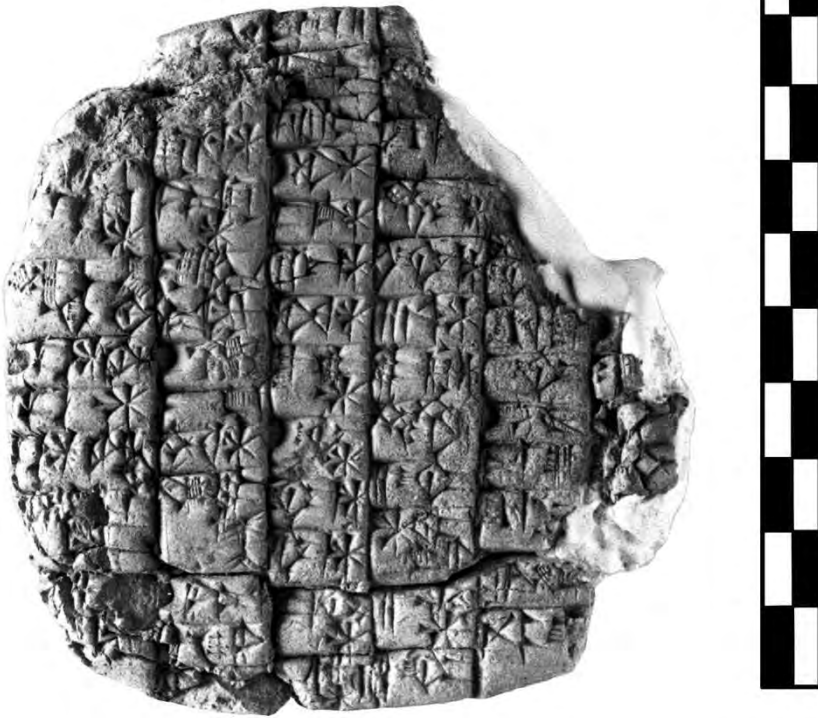


Fig. 1 - 2H-T 7, obverse, front view.



Fig. 2 - 2H-T 7, obverse, side view.

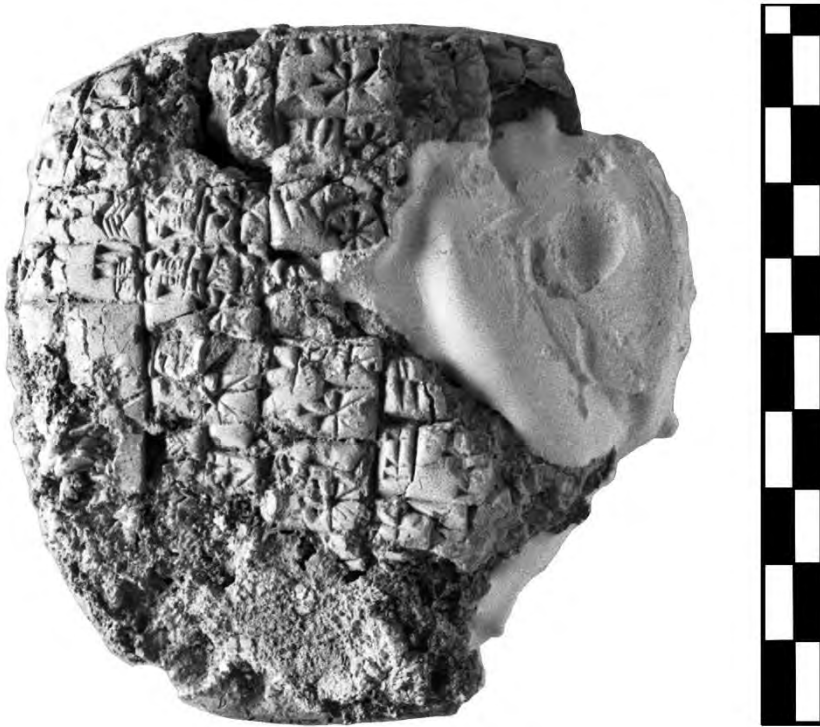


Fig. 3 - 2H-T 7, reverse, front view.

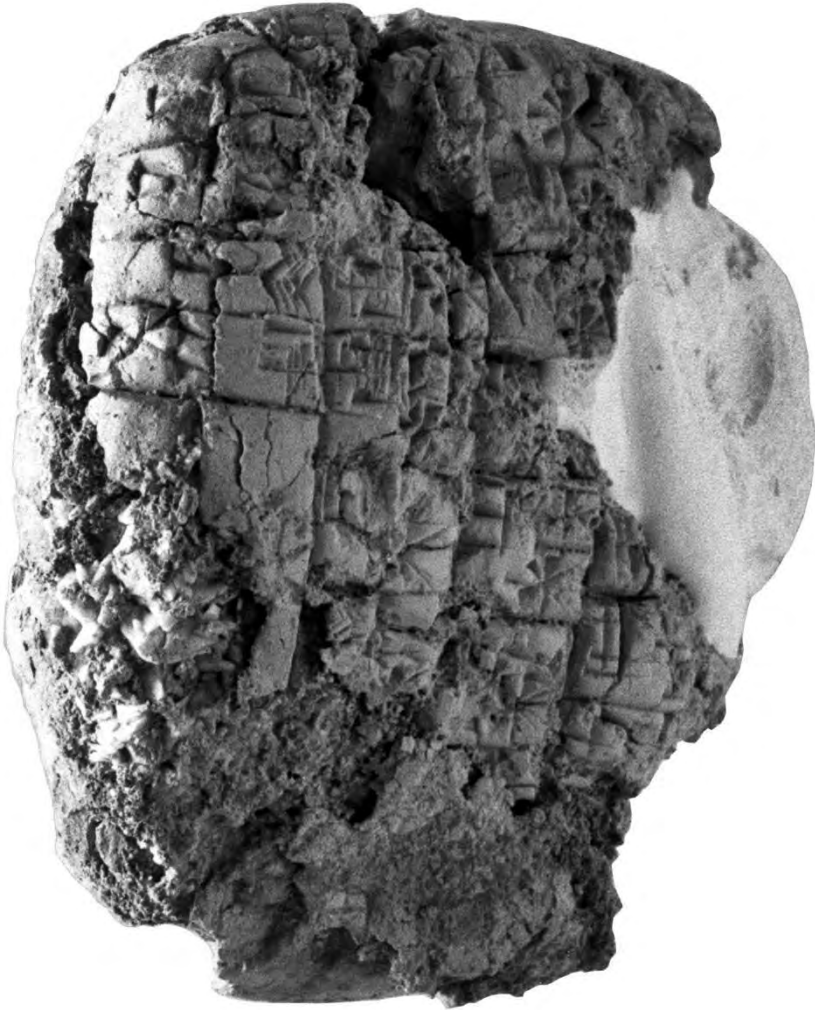


Fig. 4 - 2H-T 7, reverse, side view.

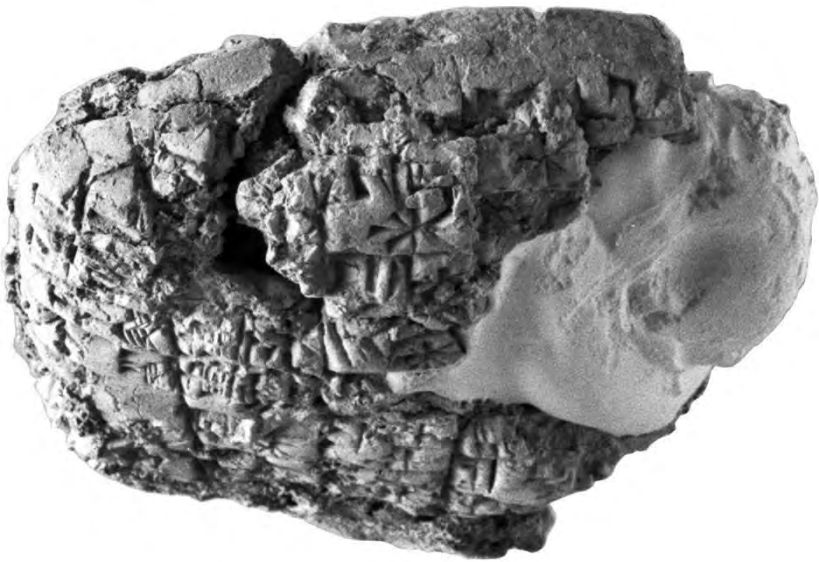


Fig. 5 - *2H-T 7, reverse, view from above.*

The “Westbau” Enigma in Hattusa’s Oberstadt: An Update

CLELIA MORA

In the remains of the so-called “Westbau”, a building placed in the “Upper city” of the Hittite capital, a great deposit of about 3400 sealed *cretulae*¹ and a number of sealed tablets bearing the texts of royal land grants were found during the 1990-91 excavations. The *cretulae* bear the impressions of seals of kings, princes and officials. All these seals can be dated to the imperial era, mostly to the 13th century B.C. There are two main questions raised by this great discovery: what type of objects did the *cretulae* seal? Why were these *cretulae* found in the same building as royal grants dating back to previous centuries?

In this article, which I hope my dear friend Simonetta will appreciate, I would like to discuss a topic I have already dealt with in some previous papers. In light of recent remarks and proposals, it seems to be the right time to return to this subject. Administrative and archival practices, and their functioning, are important and interdisciplinary issues: dealing with these topics in a volume dedicated to a Mesopotamian history scholar might also be useful to have further suggestions and comparison data by colleagues from other research fields.

¹ Cf. the definition proposed by Fiandra, Frangipane 2007: 16 «all the objects made of malleable material, particularly clay, and bearing seal impressions, should be unified and identified by the Latin term *cretula*».

A recent in-depth study on the topic addressed here was proposed by Theo van den Hout in his very recent volume *A History of Hittite Literacy*,² in his analysis, van den Hout proposes a very new and interesting solution to the problem posed by this particular and enigmatic find. The first part of the article will therefore be dedicated to the presentation of the problem and a brief summary of the hypotheses of explanation; comments and insights will follow, with focus on still open problems.

Deposits of *cretulae* dating back to the Hittite era and bearing one or more seal impressions have been discovered in various Anatolian sites. Three deposits have been found in the Hittite capital so far: the depot of Building D at Büyükkale, in the northern part of the city (containing about 200 pieces);³ a smaller deposit (83 pieces) located in Tempel 8⁴ in the southern part of the city (“Oberstadt”); the most important find, the discovery of which dates back to the years 1990-91 (during the excavations directed by P. Neve), is represented by the so-called “Westbau-Archiv” (in the northern part of Oberstadt itself), containing, as mentioned above, about 3400 sealed *cretulae*.⁵ All three archives share a feature of great interest: sealed tablets containing the texts of royal land grants dating back to the 16th-15th centuries BC were found in the same location (28 tablets in the richest deposit in Westbau, 15 in Building D, 10 in temple 8). Moreover, a group of 37 *cretulae*, but not accompanied by tablets, was found in the northern deposits of temple I, in the northern area of the capital.⁶

² van den Hout 2020 (cf. Chapter 11: “The Seal Impressions of the Westbau and Building D, and the Wooden Tablets”).

I would like to thank Massimiliano Marazzi for discussing some of these topics with me and for giving me some suggestions.

³ Cf. Güterbock 1940 and 1942.

⁴ Dinçol, Dinçol 2008.

⁵ Herbordt 2005; Herbordt, Hawkins, Bawanypeck 2011.

⁶ Herbordt 2005: 18 ff., van den Hout 2021: 220. During the 2006-2008 excavations, a large house was found in the Hittite capital called (according to information provided by texts found there) “Haus des GAL MEŠED”. Here, in addition to some (fragmentary) texts dated to the 15th century, and some *cretulae* with traces of seals (probably datable to the same period or shortly after), two fragments of donation tablets were found (Wilhelm 2013; 2017).

Other finds of *cretulae* bearing the names of high-level personalities have been found in other Anatolian sites;⁷ among these is a very interesting discovery in Tarsus: a land-grant tablet dating to the Middle Hittite period was kept with a number of late imperial sealed *cretulae* (one of which bearing the seal of the queen Puduhepa, wife of King Hattusili III). Starting from the period of the first discovery in the Hittite capital (the depot of Building D) in the 1930s, explanations have been sought for the fact that documents at least two centuries older were preserved together with *cretulae* bearing impressions of seals dating back to the 14th-13th centuries (mainly to the most recent century). Since, for obvious reasons of dating, it cannot be assumed that the *cretulae* were attached with a system of cords to the oldest documents (as mentioned above, the seals are largely dated to a later period), what relationship could there be between the two types of documents?

Several proposals for explanations have been put forward: for the sake of brevity, I report only a few, referring in any case to the very updated and detailed review by van den Hout 2020: 222-227. Most of the hypotheses, albeit in different ways, refer to the early interpretations of Güterbock and Bittel regarding the deposit discovered in building D in Büyükkale, namely that the more recent *cretulae*, most of which still show traces of the forum and of the cord with which they were tied to some object, were evidently attached to tablets of a perishable material, namely wood. And therefore, according to many scholars, from a certain period onwards, the royal grants would have been written on a different medium than the ancient clay documents.⁸

The first objection that can be raised to this interpretation concerns the nature of the wooden supports, generally indicated as tools of provisional use also in Hittite texts (cf. Mora 2007, van

⁷ For an overview cf. Herboldt 2005: 21ff.

⁸ Among the most interesting and detailed, I would like to mention in particular the opinions of Marazzi, (2000 and 2007); Herboldt 2005: 39, Herboldt *et al.* 2011: 29; Singer 2013 paper, which focuses on administrative aspects, however, shares the hypothesis of a transition from clay to wood as regards the support material of the donation texts. The proposals of the various scholars who converge on this hypothesis actually have different facets, also to respond to any objections.

den Hout 2007; 2020, Ch. 10): how is it possible that they were instead used for very important legal documents, which presumably were supposed to have a long life?⁹ Furthermore (Mora 2012; van den Hout 2012; 2020), why were the later *cretulae* preserved and those that had been attached to 16th-15th century charters not preserved? Van den Hout (2012 and 2020: 227) adds another argument that seems very valid and convincing: if the most recent charters were written on wooden tablets, and if the *cretulae* that were found were their sealing system (with the royal seals also “hung” with ropes, such as the proponents of this thesis propose), computing the number of the *cretulae*, the counts do not add up. Considering at least 4 witnesses (and 4 *cretulae*) per document, there should have been 341 sealed documents. Therefore, there is no explanation for the presence of 1438 of the 1779 royal *cretulae* (since one obviously cannot imagine more than one royal seal per document). On the basis of this observation, the traditional hypothesis of wooden tablets with hanging *cretulae* seems to lose validity.

Van den Hout therefore proposes an alternative interpretation (2020: 227-233), which I will try to summarize here. With reference to the data presented in the publication of the royal seals found in the “Westbau”¹⁰, van den Hout firstly underlines the presence (documented by the impressions) of different seals belonging to the same king and also the use, on some *cretulae*, of two different royal seals (this would be a documented practice even in medieval Europe, to avoid counterfeiting). There was therefore an evident need for checks for the authenticity of the seals of kings and of the highest offices of the state. Hence van den Hout’s interpretation: «I suggest we see the hoards of seal imprints of the Westbau and Bldg. D in the Hittite capital as reference collections» (p. 230). In his opinion, the sealed *cretulae* had been detached from the original documents to be used as tools to check the authenticity of seal impressions affixed to the

⁹ Cf. van den Hout 2007: 342: «Why did the administration switch from clay to wood in the case of documents that they intended to keep indefinitely and apparently had an important legal status?» (The same observation is taken up by the author in the book of 2020, Ch. 11).

¹⁰ Herbordt *et al.* 2011: 28-32, 41-42

new documents.¹¹ And again on p. 230: «The charters found at these locations must therefore have lost their original evidentiary value and were only kept for their royal seals». This interpretation seems very interesting and makes the hypothesis of the use of wooden supports no longer necessary.¹² Furthermore, this explanation would solve some of the problems highlighted above and could explain the enigma related to the conservation of these materials. However, the preservation of such a large number of *cretulae*¹³ to verify the authenticity of the seals and counter forgeries does not seem to be a very practical system; perhaps a simpler system could be devised, *e.g.* the affixing of the seals of the kings and the most important officials on some blocks of clay that could always be kept at the disposal of the officials in charge of the controls, or the creation of special *cretulae*, not yet damaged by use.¹⁴

For these reasons I consider it appropriate to update some of my previous hypotheses which interpreted these deposits of *cretulae* as the results of operations connected to the incoming and outgoing of valuables goods pertaining to the royal family and to prominent figures of the court. In a paper from 2007, and later in 2012, I assumed there was a link between the Hittite “inventory texts” and the archives of *cretulae* in the Hittite capital. This hypothesis was also based both on the proximity between the repositories of economic/inventory texts and the deposit of *cretulae* in building D of Hattusa, and on the fact that a number of lumps of clay found in the Westbau have a trace of leather on the back (Hittite inventory texts often mention leather bags as containers of different objects). Furthermore, I pointed out a

¹¹ On pp. 229-230 van den Hout refers to a Neo-Assyrian letter from the time of Sargon II in which a similar practice is mentioned.

¹² «This proposal also relieves us the onus to find an explanation for the alleged shift from clay to wood in the Hittite chancellery practices» (van den Hout 2020: 230).

¹³ Which have already been used and therefore were not always perfectly legible.

¹⁴ That is, every time a new seal was produced, a *cretula* could also be created bearing its imprint; furthermore, it should be noted that no deposits of *cretulae* of this type have been found in the North Syrian region, where the use of the seals of the great Hittite kings and court officials to certify legal, administrative or commercial documents was equally frequent and important.

certain overlap between the names of the dignitaries on the “Westbau” seals and the names of dignitaries mentioned in the inventory texts (with special reference to “group 6” in Siegelová’s edition of the inventories,¹⁵ which record luxury objects); the percentage of correspondence rises (to more than 30%) if we consider the texts in group 6 in Siegelová’s edition, which record luxury objects and metal artefacts delivered by (or assigned to?) local communities; these texts are characterized by the formula «PN (*i.e.* dignitary name) ĪDE» (which means ‘he knows it’ > ‘he saw/checked it’, but perhaps also ‘he sealed it’).¹⁶

Based on these and other considerations, I assumed that the Westbau had the function of a “Depot/Schatzkammer” where the members of the royal family and the most affluent families could have stored not only the containers with their luxury goods, but also the grant-documents which attested land ownership (consider that there are no preserved copies of such documents¹⁷). What was the function of the more recent *cretulae* then? In my opinion, these *cretulae*, bearing the names of the officers-controllers, might have sealed the temporary documents – perhaps written on wooden tablets – that referred to the acquired assets. I especially referred (cf. Mora 2007: 537-538) to the inventory text IBoT 1.31, from which it seems that the registrations of the goods took place in three phases: receipt of the material; drafting of the lists of goods on a temporary (wooden?) support (GIŠ.HUR); moving the assets to the final location, with the drafting of data on clay tablets (traces of which remain in some of the inventory texts). The preserved *cretulae* therefore could have sealed the (wooden) documents used for the first registration of incoming goods.

In my opinion, therefore, royal grants were not written on wooden supports in the late period, and likely they were no longer written in the traditional form. Starting at least from the reign of Hattusili III, a series of documents granted exemptions and privileges to religious institutions, families and high-ranking people: these documents partly take up traditional terminology,

¹⁵ Siegelová 1986.

¹⁶ Mora 2012 and Mora 2007.

¹⁷ Cf. van den Hout 2002: 870ff.

but they also seem to be meant for a changed political and social reality.¹⁸

At this point, however, a question still remains open: why then were the old royal grants and other valuable assets of eminent families stored in buildings that we could define as “public”?¹⁹ Some hypotheses can be proposed. It is possible that in the final part of the 13th century, some descendants of the families who owned the land titles deeds lived in the palace either because they were part of the court and/or for security reasons. Hence, the palace deposits were also used for the safekeeping of their goods and property documents²⁰ (the seals of the witnesses attached to the tablets of the grant documents may have been detached, given that their owners were all dead?).

But the lack of the seals of the ancient witnesses (which cannot be accidental and due only to wear), may also lead us to another explanation, namely that the old grants had been requisitioned by the Palace.²¹ The case of Room 3 of the Westbau is very interesting in this regard: in the south-west corner of this room, 9 ancient royal grant, 30 sealed *cretulae* bearing royal seals and 7 *cretulae* with seals of high dignitaries were found.²² The royal seals date from the reign of Mursili II onwards. For reasons that we do not know, but probably linked to periods of economic or political crisis, the Palace may have re-acquired assets previously granted to eminent families and therefore confiscated the relative documentation.²³

It might seem too complex and daring an interpretation, but if old charters belonging to important families were kept in a

¹⁸ For a survey, with bibliographical references, cf. Mora 2008: 314-323.

¹⁹ See above regarding the places of discovery within the capital city.

²⁰ Cf. Mora 2012: 68. This situation seems to resemble, with due caution and taking into account the differences of place and time, the case of private legal documents found in public structures in the Neo-Assyrian era: cf. Fales 2001; 2003; 2017, with references.

²¹ Cf. Mora 2012: 67.

²² Cf. Herboldt 2005: 15-16; Herboldt, Hawkins, Bawanypeck 2011: 13.

²³ In this regard, the procedures to be followed for those who received a precious gift from the king might be very interesting: according to the “Instructions from Temple Personnel” (column II, § 8: cf. Taggar-Cohen 2006, also quoted by van den Hout 2020: 189-200), the recipient must always account for it, and cannot leave it in his estate.

public building after more than three centuries, there must be an explanation. It is also necessary to remember that land donation texts are among the few Hittite documents of which no copies have been found (see above), and therefore it does not seem possible that a copy was kept in another location.

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Iside verso l'Impero: metamorfosi di una dea

ROSANNA PIRELLI

All'indomani della conquista di Alessandro Magno, l'Egitto entra in una nuova fase della sua storia, una fase nella quale il paese smette di essere, e per un lunghissimo periodo, il centro del proprio universo, mentre le sue millenarie tradizioni varcano definitivamente i confini della Valle del Nilo e del Mediterraneo orientale per giungere progressivamente fino alle estremità più occidentali dell'Impero romano; già prima dell'inizio del periodo tolemaico, Iside aveva cominciato a solcare i mari, per giungere prima ad Atene e poi a Delo e prendere successivamente la strada per i porti dell'Italia meridionale, penetrare da lì a Roma e nel resto della Penisola e, infine, in tutto l'Impero.

La natura di Iside, le trasformazioni da lei subite nelle fasi più recenti della sua storia (tra il IV secolo a.C. e il IV d.C.) e le modalità di appropriazione dei culti egiziani da parte dei popoli del Mediterraneo Antico sono state oggetto, anche in tempi recentissimi, di numerose analisi e studi che hanno identificato in maniera chiara e precisa le “mutazioni” successive dell'immagine di Iside e delle divinità a lei connesse e i rapporti che gli dei egiziani avevano allacciato e intrattenuto con le entità divine incontrate localmente nei paesi di accoglienza.¹ Il presente contributo,

¹ I primi studi sistematici sul “fenomeno isiaco” erano confluiti per la maggior parte nei volumi della serie *Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'Empire romain* (EPRO), pubblicati da Brill fino agli anni '90; la serie è stata successivamente sostituita dalla collana *Religions in the Graeco-Roman World* (RGRW), edita anch'essa da Brill e tutt'ora attiva, mentre in anni ancora più

pertanto, piuttosto che lasciare le sponde del Nilo per seguire questi itinerari già autorevolmente esplorati, si prefigge di tracciare un quadro (seppur sintetico) delle “metamorfosi” che Iside subì invece in patria nel corso del I millennio a.C., con particolare attenzione alle sue fasi finali.²

Ancora nel 2010, Malaise lamentava che «*curieusement, on ne possède guère l'équivalent de recherches approfondies sur la nature de ces mêmes divinités en terre nilotique à la fin de l'époque pharaonique et gréco-romaine...*».³ Obiettivo del convegno *Isis on the Nile* e del relativo volume di Atti, nel quale è inserito il contributo di Malaise, è stato proprio quello di colmare, e con successo, questa lacuna. L'argomento offre tuttavia ancora interessanti spunti di riflessione, alcuni dei quali vorrei suggerire in questo contributo.

Una delle questioni più dibattute nello studio del fenomeno isiaco riguarda proprio il grado di continuità tra la tradizione faraonica e quella ellenistica, vale a dire il ruolo che ebbero la “Iside delle origini” e lo sviluppo millenario della sua teologia nel definire le caratteristiche e le prerogative della dea ellenistica e poi romana.⁴

recenti è stata inaugurata un'altra collana, *Bibliotheca Isiaca*, allo scopo di fornire un costante aggiornamento sui temi in oggetto e sulle nuove scoperte. Alcune sintesi efficaci sull'argomento erano state inoltre già pubblicate alla fine del secolo scorso anche in altre sedi, una delle quali rappresenta ancora oggi un punto di riferimento fondamentale per gli studi isiaci, vale a dire il catalogo della mostra di Milano del 1997, edito da Arslan, in collaborazione con Tiradritti, Abbiati Brida e Magni.

² Per esigenze di brevità, ci si concentrerà su quello che potremmo definire il culto ufficiale, mentre numerosi studi hanno evidenziato in tempi recenti l'esistenza in epoca tarda e tolemaica di tradizioni locali anche notevolmente diverse da quelle comunemente riscontrate a livello nazionale. A riguardo, si vedano, per esempio Versluys 2010: 7-36 e Kaper 2010: 149-180, e i numerosi richiami al doppio canale, nazionale e locale, della redazione dei Manuali Mitologici in Jørgensen 2014.

³ Malaise 2010: 1.

⁴ Si riportano alcune delle recenti posizioni a riguardo: «While few would deny that the Egyptian milieu whence Isis emerged contributed substantially to the formulation of her Hellenistic *persona*, questions concerning the degree to which the authors (or redactors) built upon her original Egyptian features or introduced new elements into her character through the process of *interpretatio graeca* continue to provoke scholarly discussions stressing either the “Egyptian”

Le fonti cui fare riferimento sono, per un verso, i documenti in lingua egiziana, provenienti da templi, statue, testi funerari e manuali mitologici di epoca tarda, tolemaica e romana⁵ e, per l'altro, l'innologia in lingua greca in Egitto, che trova riscontro nelle Aretalogie isiache diffuse nel resto del Mediterraneo.⁶

In una prima fase, i cambiamenti della *persona* di Iside vanno di pari passo con l'evoluzione delle prerogative di Osiride che, nel corso del I millennio a.C., va a occupare progressivamente uno spazio sempre più ampio all'interno del Pantheon egiziano, dove si opera nel tempo una «fusion téologique» con Amon,⁷ nel dominio del quale (Tebe) gli vengono dedicate una serie di cappelle già a partire dal Nuovo Regno.

Iside dal canto suo, se per un verso appare ancora come sposa fedele e premurosa che svolge la propria funzione di sostegno e protezione del consorte, d'altra parte, viene sempre più spesso associata al ruolo di madre che protegge e garantisce l'erede, in continuità con una tradizione che in realtà affonda le sue radici già nel Medio Regno.⁸ In questa funzione, la sua figura assume progressivamente preminenza nel corso delle ultime dinastie indigene e poi nel periodo tolemaico, e abbandona nel tempo quella posizione di subalternità rispetto a Osiride che aveva prevalentemente contraddistinto la sua persona e il suo culto almeno fino alla XXVI dinastia.

or Greek' sides of the goddess» (Dousa 2002: 151); «L'origine des épiclèses grecques d'Isis peut certes être trouvée dans un fonds pharaonique,⁷⁸ mais cela n'est pas systématique et les mythes égyptiens peuvent servir à conforter *a posteriori* l'attribution récente de tel ou tel trait à la divinité.⁷⁹ Les circonstances politiques peuvent aussi jouer un rôle dans le développement de certaines formes locales de la déesse.⁸⁰... Les Isis spécifiques qui apparaissent dans les titulatures thébaines tardives sont relativement peu connues, mais en regroupant les attestations ici, il est possible de se rendre compte qu'il ne s'agit pas là de phénomènes très isolés et que ce sont ces aspects de la déesse qui fournissent probablement le plus de liaisons avec le développement de la religion isiaque» (Coulon 2010a: 136).

⁵ Jørgensen 2014.

⁶ Per brevità, non potremo esaminare in questa sede anche l'innologia isiaica, ma vi si farà riferimento quando necessario. Per una sintesi del dibattito scientifico su questi testi e per un'ampia bibliografia di riferimento, si veda Dousa 2002: 149-184.

⁷ Coulon 2010b: 14.

⁸ Münster 1968: 185.

Gli aspetti nuovi, che andranno a caratterizzare la figura della dea in epoca tolemaica, sono già in buona misura veicolati dai testi e dalle immagini che decorano i santuari di epoca faraonica fin dal Nuovo Regno, ma che conoscono un più pieno sviluppo tra la XXVI e la XXX dinastia e, mentre testimoniano di un nuovo equilibrio che si viene a stabilire tra Iside e Osiride, preparano la successiva assimilazione della coppia divina alla coppia regale dell'Egitto tolemaico. È soprattutto a Iside, più che a Osiride, che saranno in questa fase intitolati i nuovi e meno nuovi grandi santuari che vanno a costellare il «religious landscape» del paese da sud a nord: Philae, Qoptos, Dendera, Behbeit el-Hagara, Alessandria, per citare solo quelli dei grandi centri della Valle del Nilo e del Delta.

Il percorso piuttosto articolato che la dea compie in questo millennio dà origine a un'entità divina estremamente complessa o, nelle parole di Coulon, «d'une complexité presque inextricable»;⁹ in essa vanno a confluire tutte le prerogative che avevano contraddistinto la teologia isiaca e le sue trasformazioni nelle fasi precedenti: l'antico aspetto funerario, quello di madre che protegge i suoi figli, e quello di divinità primordiale e dinastica che aveva dato origine all'Egitto sulla cui monarchia vegliava garantendo la legittimità dell'erede al trono.

Come emerge da uno studio di Venit del 2010,¹⁰ la funzione funeraria di Iside – ben attestata in tutte le necropoli egiziane dell'epoca tolemaica – appare ancora intrinsecamente legata alla tradizione faraonica, che le attribuisce un ruolo relativamente marginale rispetto a quello delle divinità maschili: Iside è spesso in compagnia di Nephtys, Anubis e Horus, in scene in cui si alternano rituali funebri connessi a Osiride a momenti di adorazione della divinità solare, di cui il dio è ormai entità complementare. Queste prerogative si conservano intatte anche in epoca romana, sebbene Iside assuma in questo periodo un ruolo più autonomo e definito anche in virtù del suo rapporto con Horus e con le divinità primordiali.

L'aspetto funerario della dea si manifesta accanto a Osiride anche nei numerosi santuari (seppur non più realizzati con la

⁹ Coulon 2010a: 146.

¹⁰ Venit 2010: 89-98.

monumentalità dei periodi precedenti) che gli sono dedicati nel corso del I millennio in tutto il paese. A Karnak, in particolare, in una serie di “cappelle”,¹¹ numerose delle quali fatte edificare tra il III Periodo Intermedio e l'Epoca Tarda dalle Divine Adoratrici di Amon,¹² Osiride vi è venerato come ‘Osiride Signore dell'Eternità’ o ‘Osiride Unennefer, Signore degli alimenti’, o ancora ‘Osiride di Qoptos’ che presiede alla necropoli di nord-est, il ‘Grande Luogo’. Dall'analisi del programma figurativo e testuale delle cappelle, emerge il ruolo attivo delle Divine Adoratrici come protettrici di Osiride, un ruolo del tutto assimilabile a quello di Iside, la quale peraltro è invocata, in questi luoghi, anche come ‘Iside la vedova’. L'epiteto rimanda evidentemente alla fondamentale funzione della dea nelle celebrazioni di Khoiak, che mettevano in scena, nel IV mese dell'inondazione, la morte e la rinascita di Osiride collegandola al ciclo naturale delle stagioni che consentivano, dopo la piena del Nilo, la semina nella terra ormai fecondata e la rinascita della vegetazione. A tal riguardo, può essere utile ricordare la figura di un sacerdote, Amenemhat figlio di Padias (databile tra la XXX dinastia e l'inizio dell'epoca tolemaica), associato a una forma molto particolare di Iside, vale a dire ‘Signora di *w3ḏw3ḏ*’ (Signora della vegetazione). In Alto Egitto, l'epiteto trova riscontro in una scena della Porta di Iside a Dendera, dove la dea è definita, tra l'altro, ‘Signora delle piante che fertilizza i pascoli’, ‘Sovrana e padrona dei campi’, ‘Signora dell'inizio dell'anno, la primordiale [e pa-

¹¹ Per la complessa natura e le funzioni di queste cappelle e di quelle parallele sulla riva ovest di Tebe (a Djeme), si rimanda al denso contributo di Coulon (2018: 312-315); qui ci si limiterà, per ragioni di spazio, a un brevissimo cenno.

¹² L'istituto sacerdotale delle ‘Divine adoratrici di Amon’ rappresenta un'evoluzione del sacerdozio istituito all'inizio della XVIII dinastia da Ahmose I in favore della sua ‘Grande Sposa regale’ Ahmose Nefertary. Si tratta in quel caso della ‘Sposa divina di Amon’, un tipo di sacerdozio che, a differenza di quanto avverrà nel III Periodo Intermedio, non richiedeva il nubilato e prevedeva la trasmissione della carica di figlia in figlia. Le Divine adoratrici erano invece tenute al nubilato e alla castità perché erano considerate unite in matrimonio con il dio Amon e a lui totalmente consacrate: la carica veniva, infatti, trasmessa per adozione: Yoyotte 1961: 43-52 e, più recentemente, Ayad 2009; sull'iconografia di queste sacerdotesse, vd. Pirelli 2007: 100-109.

drona] dei cereali’;¹³ epiteti simili si trovano inoltre in più di un’occasione negli Inni di Philae (prima metà del III secolo a.C.),¹⁴ mentre in Basso Egitto, l’aspetto agreste e il potere della dea sulla natura e sui campi sarà ripreso, per esempio, negli Inni di Isidoro a Medinet Madi, all’inizio del I secolo a.C.¹⁵ Questo aspetto non risulta tra le principali prerogative della dea in epoca faraonica, ma non va dimenticato che l’identificazione di Iside con la stella Sothis, simbolo dell’inizio dell’inondazione e quindi della rinascita della terra, risale già all’Antico Regno;¹⁶ in epoca tolemaica e romana, comunque, diviene un tratto piuttosto rilevante della dea, rispecchiato anche dalla sua nuova iconografia.¹⁷

Anche l’altro fondamentale aspetto di Iside, vale a dire quello di ‘madre divina/del dio’ e di divinità della famiglia, che protegge i suoi figli,¹⁸ conosce in questo periodo un notevole sviluppo:¹⁹ ancora una volta, le prerogative e le epiclesi della dea possono essere ricondotte in buona parte ai suoi ruoli ed epiteti tradizionali, ma il legame così marcato con i sovrani tolemaici consolida ulteriormente il doppio livello politico e universale della sua funzione. È soprattutto come madre del dio, che Iside assume un ruolo fondamentale nella legittima successione al trono d’Egitto e nel rinnovamento del potere regale, che trovano una chiara espressione nei templi a lei dedicati e in particolare nei *mammisi* annessi ai grandi santuari, dove si celebra la nascita di Horus come erede al trono.²⁰ Qui Iside è frequentemente definita ‘Iside la grande, madre del dio’ e rappresentata mentre

¹³ Coulon 2010a: 145.

¹⁴ Žabkar 1983; *id.* 1988.

¹⁵ Vogliano 1936, in Bresciani 1997: 41 e nota 2.

¹⁶ Su questo argomento, si veda anche Dousa 2002: 152-156.

¹⁷ Per una sintetica esposizione sulle trasformazioni dell’iconografia di Iside in epoca ellenistica e romana, vd. Malaise (1997: 86-95) e bibliografia citata.

¹⁸ All’aspetto materno della dea, rimanda una delle più ricorrenti immagini diffuse soprattutto da Epoca Tarda, vale a dire quella comunemente definita in egittologia ‘Iside lactans’: innumerevoli statuette e bronzetti di questa particolare forma della dea erano dedicati come ex-voto dai fedeli nei molteplici luoghi in cui si celebrava il suo culto.

¹⁹ Bricault, Versluys 2014: 31.

²⁰ Per una sintetica illustrazione del *mammisi*, si vedano: Daumas 1977: 462-475; Kockelmann 2011.

allatta l'infante divino/regale²¹ ritratto con la treccia dell'infanzia e la doppia corona.

Il particolare legame tra Iside e i sovrani tolemaici è ben rappresentato anche dalla forte commistione di elementi regali e divini che contraddistingue le immagini della dea e delle regine: statue di queste ultime, per esempio, le ritraggono incedenti, e non con le gambe unite secondo la tradizionale iconografia delle figure femminili, e con la croce della vita nelle mani, un simbolo che in epoca faraonica era appannaggio degli esseri divini.

In realtà, l'attribuzione alle sovrane di emblemi e prerogative delle divinità femminili è un fenomeno documentato sin dall'Antico Regno,²² mentre quello contrario, vale a dire l'attribuzione di emblemi regali a divinità femminili, diviene più regolare nel corso del Nuovo Regno, quando le dee (ma anche gli dei) tendono ad adottare l'ureo sulla fronte e il nome nel cartiglio;²³ in questa fase comunque assistiamo a un più generalizzato fenomeno di complementarità tra regine e dee, dal momento che la sovrana assume in pieno il ruolo di controparte femminile del faraone in quanto sovrano divino:²⁴ converrà soffermarsi brevemente su questo punto che presenta elementi di novità sia per le regine sia per la dea Iside.

Sin dal Nuovo Regno, Iside assume frequentemente gli emblemi propri della dea vacca Hathor, per cui, accanto all'immagine tradizionale che la raffigura con il simbolo del trono sul

²¹ Le più antiche rappresentazioni dell'allattamento dell'erede da parte di una divinità femminile e della nascita divina risalgono all'epoca faraonica. Tuttavia, a differenza dell'allattamento che è già documentato nella V dinastia (vd. ad esempio blocco nel tempio a valle del complesso funerario di Sahura a Saqqara, dove il sovrano è allattato dalla dea Nekhbet: Ćwiek 2003: 177, fig. 45), la nascita divina non è attestata prima del Nuovo Regno (nel tempio di Hatshepsut a Deir el Bahari, per esempio, Naville 1897: plates XLVI-LV), anche se indagini recenti nel complesso funerario di Sesostri III (Oppenheim 2021: 133-158), fanno ipotizzare l'esistenza di simili raffigurazioni già nel Medio Regno. In questi esempi più antichi, i protagonisti sono il principe ereditario/titolare del tempio, la sposa del faraone/padre e il dio Amon-Ra che assume le sembianze dello stesso faraone.

²² Le acconciature delle regine possono essere completate dalla spoglia di avvoltoio, simbolo della dea Mut; nel Medio e Nuovo Regno, la regina adotta elementi dell'iconografia della dea Hathor.

²³ Troy 1986: 69; Coulon 2010b: 16.

²⁴ Su questo argomento, vd. Pirelli 2003; *ead.* 2005.

capo, la dea è ritratta spesso con corna e disco solare, applicati direttamente sulla parrucca oppure inseriti in una sorta di modio o ancora al centro di una coroncina di urei; l'acconciatura può essere talora completata dalla spoglia di avvoltoio che copre la parrucca; l'abbigliamento è sempre molto semplice ed è costituito da un lungo abito aderente che giunge alle caviglie. Più variabile, nello stesso periodo, è l'iconografia delle regine: l'abito è generalmente molto semplice, aderente con bretelle, ma da epoca amarniana si utilizza anche una tunica ampia dalla ricca plissettatura, talora completata sulle spalle da una stola fissata all'altezza del petto con un nodo, che caratterizza, per esempio, l'abbigliamento di Nefertity (sposa di Akhenaten) e di Nefertary (sposa di Ramses II), e nel quale possiamo agevolmente individuare una prima forma del nodo isiaco.²⁵

Altrettanto vari e talora molto elaborati si presentano parrucche e copricapi delle regine:²⁶ uno di questi, in particolare – definito da Malaise «coiffure hathorique emplumée»²⁷ – diviene un tratto distintivo di numerose sovrane: sulla parrucca tripartita o quella corta, poggia una coroncina di urei, a sua volta sormontata da corna e disco solare, completati da una doppia piuma;²⁸ quest'ultimo simbolo può presentarsi anche solo o con disco solare senza corna. Dalla indubbia connotazione solare, l'emblema è connesso a divinità femminili contraddistinte dall'epiteto 'Ochio di Ra' – prime tra queste Hathor e Maat –, che viene nel tempo esteso a numerose altre dee.²⁹ Lo stesso copricapo fu adottato, tra il III Periodo Intermedio e l'Epoca Tarda, anche dalle Divine Adoratrici di Amon³⁰ che, sebbene prive del ruolo materno in relazione al giovane Horus, in quanto nubili e tenute

²⁵ Nel corso del Nuovo Regno, comunque, lo stesso abbigliamento è attestato anche per figure regali maschili: si veda ad esempio la raffigurazione di una statua di Amenhotep III nella TT 277 di epoca ramesside (https://osiris.net.net/tombes/nobles/ameneminet277/e_ameneminet277_02.htm).

²⁶ Pirelli 2003.

²⁷ Malaise 1976: 215-236.

²⁸ Sul significato della doppia piuma, vd. Malaise 1976: 215-236; Budde 2002: 209-244.

²⁹ Sull'argomento, vd. per esempio Pirelli 2005: 77-90.

³⁰ vd. *supra*, nota 13.

alla castità, riprendono nella propria iconografia numerosi tratti delle sovrane del Nuovo Regno.

Non è difficile mettere in relazione l'iconografia descritta più sopra con quella successiva delle regine tolemaiche e della dea Iside: se l'abito panneggiato e con il nodo isiaco non è l'unico tipo di abbigliamento delle sovrane, il copricapo «hathorico con piume» ne diviene invece un emblema pressoché costante. Tuttavia, come ha dimostrato recentemente Veymiers (2014), quello che Plutarco per primo aveva definito *basileion* non è in origine il copricapo di Iside poi adottato dalle regine tolemaiche, ma il contrario: la prima a essere ritratta con questo tipo di emblema fu Berenice II (metà del III sec. a.C.), mentre bisognerà aspettare l'inizio del II sec. a.C. perché il copricapo sia stabilmente utilizzato nell'iconografia isiaca come uno degli emblemi distintivi della dea.³¹ Nel suo contributo, Veymiers analizza la complessa simbologia del *basileion* che avrebbe come primo referente il ruolo dinastico della regina tolemaica in quanto madre del nuovo Horus, in stretta relazione dunque con il ruolo delle spose regali del Nuovo Regno, madri del sovrano divino.

Se tuttavia le regine del Nuovo Regno possono aver adottato la «coiffure hathorique emplumée» per il loro chiaro legame con Hathor e Maat, le più tarde Divine Adoratrici sembrano assumere anche un altro referente per definire il proprio *status* regale e divino, che ora appare appunto incarnato da Iside. Tale legame è documentato sia dal programma edilizio dedicato a Osiride (e Iside) a Karnak cui si accennava più sopra, sia da documenti coevi di funzionari al servizio delle sacerdotesse, nei quali la dea è invocata come divinità sovrana, ed è ulteriormente ribadito dalla fraseologia usata per descrivere Iside nei più tardi inni tolemaici di Philae,³² dove la dea è definita tra l'altro 'Sposa divina, Divina adoratrice, Mano del dio',³³ titoli che contraddi-

³¹ Sul portale di Evergete a Karnak, per esempio: mentre, nella stessa raffigurazione, Arsinoe II, presente insieme al consorte Tolomeo II, indossa un tipo particolare di emblema composto dalla corona rossa sormontata dal disco solare con piume (Veymiers 2014: 198-199, fig. 9.3).

³² Coulon 2010: 123. Per la traduzione degli inni, vd. Žabkar 1988.

³³ Il ruolo di 'mano del dio', vale a dire di colei che favorisce la masturbazione di una divinità maschile, è già attribuito a Iside in un testo narrativo della fine del Nuovo Regno, *La contesa fra Horus e Seth*: «Allora lei portò alcuni un-

stinguono specificamente la natura e il ruolo delle sacerdotesse tebane.

A tal riguardo si potrebbe avanzare, sul senso del *basileion*, un'ipotesi non alternativa a quella di Veymiers ma a essa complementare: la presenza della doppia piuma, quale complemento dell'emblema hathorico/isiaco, avrebbe potuto evocare anche un altro ruolo fondamentale delle regine e delle Divine Adoratrici, vale a dire quello di consentire, nella loro funzione di 'mano del dio', la rigenerazione del demiurgo e per esso del cosmo.³⁴

I già citati legami delle sacerdotesse di Amon con Iside potrebbero avvalorare l'ipotesi che le sovrane tolemaiche abbiamo cercato proprio nell'iconografia e nelle funzioni di queste sacerdotesse, piuttosto che in quelle delle regine del Nuovo Regno, un segno della propria identificazione con un'entità divina femminile che aveva ormai avvocato a sé quelle prerogative cosmiche che erano state proprie di altre divinità quali Hathor, Tefnut o Maat, inducendo infine una nuova metamorfosi nella sua iconografia.

Qualunque sia la realtà che si cela dietro l'adozione del *basileion*, possiamo comunque concordare con Veymiers che, in piena epoca tolemaica, esso rimandi «tantôt à la déesse et à son culte, tantôt aux reines et à leur autorité, pouvant même servir à évoquer globalement le pays égyptien».³⁵ Dopo la fine della dinastia tolemaica, il *basileion* perde il suo legame con la regalità femminile egiziana,³⁶ ed è pronto a trasformarsi in un nuovo emblema, che recherà, al posto della doppia piuma, due (talvolta tre) spighe di grano, insieme a tutta un'altra serie di simboli³⁷ con i quali Iside sarà condotta, nei luoghi dell'impero, quale vei-

guenti dolci e li applicò al pene di Horus. Quindi lo rese rigido e fece scendere il suo seme in essa (una giara)»: sulla possibile interpretazione del testo, alternativa alla traduzione di Gardiner (1931), comunemente accettata, vd. Jørgensen 2014: 144.

³⁴ Già Yoyotte nel 1961, aveva sottolineato questo aspetto definendo la divina adoratrice come «épouse mystique» di Amon, la cui funzione era quella di assicurare la «fécondité cosmique».

³⁵ Sull'argomento, vd. Veymiers, 2014: 236.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Per essi, si faccia riferimento al già citato contributo di Malaise 1997.

colo non solo delle risorse alimentari e delle materie prime pregiate, ma anche dei valori universali di cui, agli occhi del resto del Mediterraneo, l'antico e saggio popolo egiziano era portatore.

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Nergal's Rituals in Neo-Assyrian Religious Policy

SIMONETTA PONCHIA

In the Neo-Assyrian period the pantheon, with its deep roots in the long history of Mesopotamia and adjacent regions, was involved in the theological changes operated by the Assyrian kings and their scholars, especially in the framework of the religious-ideological elaboration centred on the national god Aššur, and the fixation of the cultic calendar and ceremonies whose protagonist was the king. As to Nergal, it was mostly the martial character of the god that had specific relevance, regarding two matters especially: military activity and the protection of the king, the crown prince and royal succession. On the other hand, as a many-sided figure with both heavenly and chthonic aspects, the god was particularly well-suited for theological speculation. The documents concerning some of the places where Nergal was worshipped are used here as a first guideline in the attempt to single out premises and developments of devotion to the god and to find traces of the experts' and priests' complex task of preparing and conducting the god's rituals. These rituals were the expressions of an attentive process that involved extracting the essence of traditions, comparing them with mythological and theological principles, and adapting them to ceremonial occasions. The crucial question, to which only a partial answer can be provided, is how these rituals can be interpreted as part and parcel of the construction of a liturgy that was centred on the national god Aššur.¹

¹ This note is dedicated to Simonetta Graziani as a small token of my great esteem of her scholarly activity, in which she showed wisdom and competence as well as cheerfulness and generosity, and of our long-time friendship.

1. Places where Nergal was worshipped

1.1 Hubšal

The long tradition of Nergal's veneration in the Syrian and Upper Mesopotamian milieu may be exemplified by the case of the sanctuary of Nergal at Hubšalum. The god is known from the Mari documents as supporting the king, receiving dedications of swords, guaranteeing international treaties, etc.² A thousand years later in Neo-Assyrian times, Nergal ša Hubšal was recorded in the texts of the *tākultu* ritual.³

This state ritual, consisting of a divine banquet and divine blessing for the city of Assur and the king, had the function of reinforcing the unity of Assyrian territory, as has often been remarked and most recently stressed in the re-edition of the text in the SAA series.⁴ This goal of the ritual was strengthened by reference to an ancient, multi-layered and composite religious memory, that included and blended elements of various origins and times. In the first millennium, this religious tradition also included the resurfacing of Hurrian elements as recently highlighted by B. Pongratz-Leisten in her introduction to the SAA 20 volume and exemplified in particular by a version of the *tākultu* from Sennacherib's time (SAA 20 no. 38) which, among others, lists the gods of Subartu, and a version from Assurbanipal's time

² See Ponchia, Luukko 2013: xxxii-xxxv for reference. Hubšal has been tentatively located in the Sinjar area, perhaps on an oasis to the south of the Jebel Sinjar in the vicinity of Andarig; see Durand 2000: 133-136, on the identification of Nergal and Amûm and the area of veneration of the gods. Letter ARM 26/2, 419 informs about the provisioning of water for the temple of Nergal of Hubšalum, by the digging of a well, and the satisfaction of Atamrum of Andarig; Hubšalum appears also as an important site in military tactics, cf. ARM 26/2, 508.

³ Together with other hypostases of the god (3 R 66 r. iii 10 and STT 88, see Frankena 1954: 105 for an index; Menzel 1981: 128; and recently SAA 20 no. 40: r. iii 10 and 38: r. i 2).

⁴ SAA 20. In the introduction to the volume B. Pongratz-Leisten (p. XLIV) also stresses the difference from the *akîtu*-festival and the specific function of this ritual in the representation of the empire: «The *tākultu* has an unambiguous centripetal effect, drawing divine focus to the imperial center and thereby enhancing the ideological value of regular deliveries to the Aššur temple». In the present article the distinct spellings of Assur for the town and Aššur for the god have been adopted.

that includes a section listing Hurrian divinities of the Habur area (40 ii 38'-41').⁵ Devotion to Nergal in the Hurrian milieu is in its turn clearly attested by a foundation tablet bearing the inscription of king Atal-šen who built the temple of Nergal at Habilum.⁶ Although the *tākultu* ritual thus provides hints of the persistence of elements of (and the interest in incorporating) the rich and ancient religious background, it is difficult to evaluate how much of the ancient devotion to Nergal, in the Syrian and Hurrian milieu, might have filtered through to later times – and, in general, if the references recorded in the later texts represented the inclusion of elements of a deep-rooted and still-alive local devotion, or if instead they were mainly fruits of a learned reconstruction operated by the Assyrian scholars.

1.2 Huzirina/Sultantepe

Some clues regarding the importance of local sanctuaries and the activities conducted there, seemingly also using syncretistic methods in the ritual practices, can be observed by considering the remains of a library unearthed in 1951, in Huzirina, modern Sultantepe, in the northern part of Assyria (Upper Balikh).

From the tablet collection of this site comes the currently only known copy of the Neo-Assyrian version of the poem of *Nergal and Ereshkigal*, devoted to the god's underworldly character.

⁵ Pongratz-Leisten, in SAA 20: XLIII.

⁶ RIME 3/2.7.2. A recent evaluation of the evidence concerning Salmanu and Nergal has been proposed by H. Kühne on the basis of archaeological documentation. He considers the concordance of a lion pillar, likely originating from Sheik Hamad, with the evidence from the temple of Tall Rimah, where two pillar basements in the shape of a lion head with a blade protruding from the open mouth show the same iconography. He assumes that the Sheik Hamad pillars come from the Salmanu temple in that town and that Salmanu was a variant figure of Nergal of Hubšalum, a Hurrian god «representing the traditional religion of the steppe inhabitants». Due to this character, the god would have merged both with Salmanu in Dur-Katlimmu and with Adad, as attested by the evidence from Tell Rimah (Kühne 2017). The question is however complex as discussed in Radner 1998, and Salmanu, the patron god of Sheik Hamad whose name is the theophoric in royal names and who could be recognized as a manifestation of the national god Aššur, might have contributed to strengthen the Assyrian identity of the town that had been the centre of Hani-galbat viceroyalty (Radner 1998: 51).

Nergal is also mentioned in a fragmentary tablet, STT 43 (= SAA 3 no. 17 and RIMA 3.0.102.17), concerning a campaign against Urartu and tentatively attributed to Shalmaneser III. The text could be interpreted as a royal inscription, a letter to the god, or a hymn of triumph, maybe performed as part of specific rituals, such as those of Milqia and Assur that are mentioned in the text.⁷ Nergal is mentioned in a sentence likely related to the military symbolism of standards and it is notable that the blessing of the war gods is invoked by the people of Assyria (UN.MEŠ KUR.Aš-šur^{ki}), thus suggesting a public ceremony: «March, O lord of the kings, crush [the enemies of Aššur]. Let the god Nergal (d.MAŠ.MAŠ) march before you (*ina pānīka lillik*), let the god Girra [come behind]» (lines 28 f.).

Other documents attest instead to the organization in the town of the cult of another god, which might be associated with Nergal on account of his characteristics, *i.e.* Zababa, who is a warrior god of Kish⁸ also well attested in the Hittite pantheon.⁹ These documents illustrate royal intervention in cultic matters, and – irrespective of the question concerning the similarities of the warrior gods Nergal and Zababa and their theological evaluation – provide an extremely interesting example of the implementation of Assyrian religious policy and are therefore worth quoting. A royal decree allows us to get a glimpse of how the management of sanctuaries was organized and especially of the connections with Assur and its clergy. The grant STT 44 (SAA 12 no. 48), from Sultantepe, seemingly assigns to the temple of the divine couple Zababa and Baba in Huzirina some ‘Assyrians’ and a certain Ken-Adad – who was previously priest of Adad, another

⁷ In a damaged portion the celebration of a festival for Ištar of Arbela, perhaps in Milqia, and a lion hunt in Assur are mentioned.

⁸ Known from 3rd mill. documents, Zababa has a long tradition in Mesopotamia as a warrior god, son of Enlil as illustrated in Old Babylonian texts, and as such venerated until Seleucid times (Sallaberger 2017: 164-168). His spouse Baba/Bawu is also associated with Ištar. For additional references see also Ponchia 2012: 634f.

⁹ In Hittite texts the akkadogram ZABABA designated various Anatolian war gods (see Mouton 2017: 168f.). He had a temple in Hattusa, perhaps already during the Old Kingdom, and is mentioned in the Annals of Tuḫdaliya I/II, etc., in international treaties, in god lists, and in the representation at Yazilikaya together with Nergal (see also Tremouille 2008: 251, 253f., 259f.).

god associated with warriors' onslaught, at Assur – as *šangû* and head of the temple personnel. Although the date of the document is not preserved, it may be compared with a grant from Assur possibly emanated by Sennacherib, SAA 12 no. 87 – which records the allotment of people to the [temple] of Zababa and Baba in Assur in front of the Tabira Gate,¹⁰ and the performing of an oracular query to ascertain if Zababa is the son of Aššur, likely in the framework of a program of connecting the gods of the Enlil circle to Aššur.¹¹ It may thus be hypothesized that this was a coordinated effort involving the organization of the central and peripheral cultic seats, in the framework of the construction of an orthodox and officially established theological interpretation.

Other relationships of the personnel operating in Huzirina/Sultantepe are provided by the colophon of STT 87, a fragmentary prayer for, or a hymn praising the city of Assur; it says that the tablet was copied by Mutaqqin-Aššur, an apprentice scribe, [son of] a scribe from Assur, [son of] a young apprentice, [son of] a scribe from Kutha, who might represent a link with the Babylonian tradition of Nergal.¹²

¹⁰ The text is reconstructed as follows in SAA 12: *ša-[lam̃ d.]ZA.BA₄. BA₄ u d.BA.Ú ki-ma si-ma-ti-šû e-pu-uš-ma [x x x x]-ma ina IGI KÁ.GAL-URUDU.NAGAR, «I made the sta[tue of] Zababa and Babu conforming with his dignity, [...], and built a [(...) temple for th]em before the Tabira Gate» (ll. 3'-4'). To the temple 41 tillers from Arbela were allotted. Sallaberger 2017: 168 associates with this temple the entry of BM 77433: 15 (see George 1992: 224), however the other temples in the list are located in the Babylonian region. A short inscription RINAP 3 no. 177 on three stone blocks from Assur says: «I, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, built (this) temple for the god Zababa».*

¹¹ Cf. Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 221-227.

¹² Namely: Mutaqqin-Aššur son of Aia-nuhši-ušur, scribe of Assur, son of Šamaš-šumu-iddina, young apprentice scribe, son of Nabû-kabti-ahhešu, scribe of Kutha. The colophons provide some clue of the local scholars' devotion to Nergal and underworld gods as suggested by some personal names and patronyms of the scribes: Qurdi-Nergal, Iddi-Meslamtaea, Nergal(?)-tukulti, among various names with other theonyms, also including Mušallim-Baba, the priest of Zababa and Baba of the inner cities of Arbail, Harran and Huzirina (STT 64). Iddi-Meslamtaea, son of the priest Ašû, copied various incantations, and in the colophon of STT 33, a tablet of *Ludlul* that he copied in 701, invoked Lugalgirra against one who might take away the tablet. As to the connection with Babylonia, another link is evidenced by Gabbay 2014a: 121: the author of the

Considered together, these documents suggest that the literary texts mentioned above may have been part of the repertoire of this family of scribes – whose quite recent past was in Assur, but who had connections with the Babylonian tradition – and have relevance for the local cult of a warrior god, possibly involved in theological changes and adaptations. Even the administrative level was entrusted to a *šangû* from Assur (see SAA 12 no. 48). At the same time it appears that the religious devotion included the gods, as well as the expertise, of the Babylonian tradition.

1.3 Me-turan and Kutha

A temple of Nergal was present in Me-turan, to the south-east of the Assyrian core region. The town was besieged and conquered by Shalmaneser III before he advanced southward in support of the Babylonian king Marduk-zakir-šumi, who had asked the Assyrian for help to defeat his rebel brother.¹³ The temple is commemorated in inscriptions and archaeologically attested.¹⁴ It was built according to the Babylonian pattern of the *Breitraum* cella.¹⁵

From the temple of Nergal in Me-Turan comes a partly preserved bluish marble axe-head, dedicated by a *ša rēši* of Sargon.

Sultantepe tablet STT 232 was Nabû-eṭir-napšati, a descendant of the Ḫarriru family, who copied a tablet from Babylon that probably belonged to the Šumlibši family (scribe of Shalmaneser III's time, on whom see below). The tablet contained rituals to be performed for the renewal of a door, presumably in a temple (Maul 1988: 52).

¹³ Cf. *e.g.* the more extended version inscribed on the Balawat Gates, RIMA 3. 102.5: iv 1-5. The war continued with a second campaign, which included acts of devotion performed by the Assyrian king in Kutha and in Babylon. In the inscriptions of Adad-nirari III (RIMA 3 0.104.8) and Tiglath-pileser III (RINAP 1 no. 24) reference is made to the cultic practice of the reception by the king of the leftovers of Nergal of Kutha, together with other Babylonian gods.

¹⁴ Assurbanipal left inscriptions in Babylonian script on bricks commemorating the restoration of the courtyard and the processional way of the E.ša.hul.la temple (George 1993: 144, no. 1020) dedicated to Nergal lord of Sirara (RIMB 2 B.6.32.22).

¹⁵ It also included bronze reliefs decorating a door and kept a cache of some 250 tablets. A copy of the Erra Epic is among the finds from this site. See Postgate 1981 and Miglus 2009: 160-161.

The dedication reads: [*ana Nergal*] *ašarēd ilāni lā ādir kakki šašme* [x x x x *kaš*]-*kaš ilāni lā gāmil lemnūti* [*āšib É.ŠÀ*].*HÚL ša qereb mêturni* «[For Nergal], foremost of the gods, fearless in battle and warfare, [... most pow]erful of the gods, who does not spare the wicked, [who dwells in E-ša]-hul, which is in Mê-Turan (...)» for the life and well-being of the dedicator.¹⁶

P. Miglus hypothesizes that after his campaign to Babylonia, Shalmaneser imported into Assyria the architectural models of Me-turan and the major Babylonian centre of the Nergal cult, Kutha, that were however variously interpreted and adapted.¹⁷ More in general, it seems that the reception of elements of the Babylonian cult of Nergal was interpreted according to an Assyrian image of the warrior god, and seemingly considered in the framework of a wide-ranging theological reflection involving his various aspects, that also included the chthonic aspect of neth-

¹⁶ IM 95520, Haddad 581, edited in al-Rawi 1994. From the vicinity of the temple comes a fragment of a prism in Neo-Babylonian script with a version of Sargon's standard inscription (*ibid.*).

¹⁷ Miglus 2009: 165. In Shalmaneser's Balawat inscription: *ikšudamma ana uru.Kuta āl qarad ilāni šaqē d.Utulu ina bāb Ekur ašriš uškēmma niqēšu ušamḫir(a) uqa''iš(a) qišāte*, «He reached Cuthah, city of the hero of the gods, the exalted divine Utulu. He bowed down humbly at the gate of the temple and made sacrifices and offerings». (RIMA 3 A.0.102.5 v 4). The inscription continues narrating the king's pious acts in Babylon and Borsippa. Notable is the use of the theonym Utulu (Uttulu), which is usually associated with Ninurta, but might here refer to Nergal, the major god of Kutha (see Krebern timer 2016: 517f.). On the ritual importance of Kutha cf. also Assurbanipal's inscription K 2631+, for the restoration of the Emeslam, which opens with a dedication to Nergal. The introduction is closed by the wish: «Aššur (AN.ŠÁR), Mullissu (NIN.LÍL) and Nergal (U.GUR), great gods who strengthen the foundation of my kingship, [encouraged?] me to take vengeance of the kings my forefathers over all my enemies (lines 10f.)». According to a temple list from Kuyunjik, Nergal is entitled to part of the wall of Cutha that is called: «Nergal is the king who wages war» (George 1993: 51 l. 23). It can also be remarked that Kutha represented an important enclave from a military point of view, as evidenced by Sennacherib's detailed account of his first campaign against Marduk-apla-iddina on clay cylinders from Tarbišu (and in a version from Nineveh and Assur) RINAP 3 no. 213. Kutha was the place where enemy troops were concentrated and from where they launched their attack against the Assyrians, and it was the place against which Sennacherib unleashed his assault after his generals had been defeated at Kish. The conquest of the stronghold of Kutha opened the route to Babylon.

erworld divinity especially venerated in Kutha. Royal inscriptions attest to the Assyrian kings' homage to the god of the local temple of Emeslam ('House, warrior of the Netherworld'). A letter to Esarhaddon refers to the planned restoration work (SAA 10 no. 364) and Assurbanipal celebrates his interventions in the temple.¹⁸ The respect given to local manifestation of the god can be also gauged from a Neo-Babylonian letter, SAA 18 no. 157, in which an unknown sender from Kutha informs that the Chief Taylor had ritually repaired the wall of the town and addressed a plea to Nergal claiming that Šamaššumu-ukin was responsible for the damage, not the Assyrians.

1.4 Tarbišu

The name of Shalmaneser III is recorded in another cultic centre located closer to the Assyrian capital: Tarbišu. The inscription on cylinders found in the temple (RINAP 3 no. 213)¹⁹ recounts that Sennacherib undertook a complete reconstruction of the temple of Egallammes with an enlarged and innovative plan. The sanctuary was dedicated to Nergal, *bēl emuqān šīrāti dandannu gitmālu ašared la mahri*, 'lord of elevated force, strongest perfect lord, first in rank without rival'. The cult was already practiced before, as we learn from the same inscription,²⁰ in

¹⁸ For instance, RINAP 5/1 no. 12: i 13'-25'; no. 23: 61-63, and especially RINAP 5/2 no. 227 with dedication to Nergal dwelling in the Emeslam (<http://oracc.org/rinap/Q007635/>). A foundation inscription of Šulgi, dedicated to the Meslam temple of Nergal, has been found in Nineveh, possibly recovered in the restoration works and perhaps re-used as an amulet (Katz 2003: 349).

¹⁹ The cylinders were unearthed under the pavement at the NW and SW corners of the main room of the temple and bear Sennacherib's earliest annalistic account. Frahm 2003: 158-160 hypothesises that its authorship may be attributed to Nabû-zuqup-kenû, although this cannot be proven. See also the shorter inscriptions on clay cones and bricks RINAP 3 nos. 214-217. Later, the temple was also mentioned in Assurbanipal's inscriptions: he records the erection of a standard of Nergal (*giš.šurinnu*) at the gate of the temple of Tarbišu, after describing the renovation work in Arbela and Milqia on Ištar's temples (K 891; L³). See also the letter SAA 10 no. 93 for cultic ceremonies performed by the king in the town.

²⁰ For a description of the archaeological remains, see Miglus 2009. The temple included the cellas of Nergal and Laš.

which Sennacherib narrates that the temple was built by Shalmaneser III, who also dedicated a mace-head to the god, similarly to the dedication at the Tabira Gate in Assur (RIMA 3.102.96).²¹

Tarbišu appears to be linked to Nineveh in inscriptions describing the gates of the capital and mentioning the name of the Nergal gate, which is: *Erra šāgiš zāmāniya abul Nergal ša Tarbiši*, 'Erra destroyer of my enemies, the gate of Nergal toward Tarbišu'.²² At this gate was found an inscription mentioning the building of the Ešahulezenagmukan, 'House of joy and gladness for the festival of the beginning of the year', a new *akītu* house, that may be a clue to the performing of ceremonies involving the gate of the god (RINAP 3 no. 37).²³

Tarbišu was also the seat of a palace and Esarhaddon narrates that he transformed the local palace *šeḫru* into the *bēt rēdūti*, the palace of royal succession on which he invokes the blessing of Nergal and Laš.²⁴ The ceremony is dated to 672, when the loyalty oath concerning Assurbanipal's succession was stipulated.

Thus it seems that Nergal's sanctuary was connected not only with the Nineveh seat of kingship, but more specifically with the succession of the crown prince, perhaps insofar as this was a critical passage and the protection of a martial god was particularly important.²⁵ In Assurbanipal's coronation hymn the gods are called to bless the new king: *kak qabli u tāḫāzi mulla qātuššu innaniššuma niše šalmāt qaqqadi lēpuša rē'ūssin*, «place in his hand the weapon of war and battle, give him the black-headed people, that he may rule as their shepherd!» (r. 17-18). Nergal is invoked

²¹ See RIMA 3.102.96; Miglus 2009: 159; Niederreiter 2014: 571 (where a general and chronologically ordered presentation of this class of objects is given). The royal cult of the god is also attested by a stone vessel dedicated by Bēl-lū-balaṭ, *turtānu* and *nāgīru*, during the reign of Shalmaneser III or Šamši-Adad V (cf. SAA 10, p. 70; RIMA.0.102.2001). For Assur, see below.

²² RINAP 3 nos. 15-18 and table p. 18: 151. Tarbišu is also mentioned in the Bavian inscription RINAP 3 no. 223. On the gates of Nineveh, and their relations with town walls and roads, see Reade 2016.

²³ Frahm 2000 mentions the possibility that this *akītu* belonged to Nergal and Ereškigal.

²⁴ RINAP 4 no. 93 (barrel cylinder from Assur). See also the short inscriptions from Tarbišu nos. 94 and 95.

²⁵ See Ponchia 2012.

as the god who gives the king luminous splendour and is called Erra in his hypostasis against ill-wishers: *ša ana šarri ina libbišu ikappudu lemutti Erra ina šibti šaggašti uqa'a ressu*, «he who in his heart plots evil against the king – Erra will call him to account in a bout of plague» (SAA 3 no. 11: r. 11-12). From Tarbišu comes a six-column tablet which includes the myths of Erra and Anzu, both dealing with warrior gods such as Ninurta and Erra/Nergal and with critical junctures in the transfer of power.

This first survey illustrates the predominantly military character of Nergal's cult and suggests a link with local traditions and sanctuaries that were in any case involved in various relationships with the royal cult. Fundamental in these relations was the role of Assur and of the theologues operating therein.

1.5 Assur

Let us finally concentrate on Assur, the very heart of Assyrian state religion.²⁶

As noted by Miglus 2009, Shalmaneser III fostered the cult of Nergal in Assur too, where Nergal probably had the patron role at the Tabira Gate (cf. RIMA 3.102: 46-48), where a royal statue was erected (RIMA 3.102.40: iii 10)²⁷ to commemorate the rebuilding of the town walls.²⁸ Together with the presence of a mace-head coming from the booty of a king of Namri and inscribed with a dedication to Nergal (Ass 10265, RIMA 3.102.94), and of a collection of 21 such objects, this also suggests the per-

²⁶ For a chapel of Nergal in the Ešarra see the entry of the *Götteradressbuch*: «Gaz-si-summu(?); the seat of Nergal; the slaughterhouse (lú.*tabi*hi) [...]» (Menzel 1981: 49, text 149 and George 1992 no. 21: 16'). There has been debate about whether this may be identified with the *bīt Dagan* mentioned in the rituals of Shebatu and if the *bīt Dagan* was a chapel in the Ešarra temple, or was located in the Old Palace, in the part where the ancestors cult was celebrated (Pongratz-Leisten in SAA 20: LI-LIV).

²⁷ The statue was found broken and displaced at the entrance of a Parthian building (RIMA 3: 117).

²⁸ Shalmaneser III undertook substantial works in the main Assyrian cities; in his inscriptions he records works conducted in Assur, including on the city wall and the temples of Aššur (A.0.102.13, 18, 53, and 103), Anu-Adad (A.0.102.39, 54, 93, and 102), and Šarrat-niphi (A.0.102.49-52) (RIMA 3: 5).

formance of some ceremonies at the Tabira gate.²⁹ The object dedicated by Nergal-ereš explicitly connects Nergal with Assur: it is dedicated to Nergal *a-šib* URU.BAL.TIL, 'Nergal dwelling in Assur', on occasion of a conspicuous offering of cattle, flour and wine to Aššur and Adad, in 775 BC.³⁰

The dedication by kings and high officials of mace-heads in Nergal's sanctuaries, not only at the Nergal gate in Assur, suggests the performance of military ceremonies, such as the dedication of votive gifts,³¹ in connection with campaigns, as well as in rituals performed in local sanctuaries. However, it remains a hypothesis that these ceremonies may have been connected to the cult of Aššur, the god who inspired and ordered the military

²⁹ The inscriptions are engraved on clay cones and a clay hand, some of them from the gate area. The group of 21 mace-heads was unearthed by Andrae in the south-west part of the gate, in an interior room. Miglus 2009: 164 stresses the presence of a mace-head dedicated by Nergal-ereš, governor of Rašappa, Suhi and Laqê in 775 BC (RIMA.0.104.2007), and another one dedicated by Bel-ilaia, governor of Arraphe and *limmu* in 769 (Nassouhi 1927: 14. 17, Abb. 2). Niederreiter 2014: 573 observes that these dedications by functionaries of the *ša rēši* rang are parallel to that of the MA Libur-zanin-Aššur to Ištar and maintains that they represented the range and power of the dedicators. The author notes the evolution of the characteristics of these objects, which include for the later exemplars an ownership label sometimes written in Aramaic, and fundamental differences in the places of discovery: those of the 9th and early 8th cent. come from sacred areas, whereas the later ones were discovered in royal palaces. On the basis of these various elements, he concludes that there is a clear difference between the mace-heads dedicated in Tarbišu or at the Tabira gate during cultic ceremonies and the later exemplars which served to attest the status of their owners and hypothesizes that they symbolized the assignation of the status of court officials by the king (p. 584). Other mace-heads come from the temple of Aššur; see Pedersén 1997: 23 and Gries 2019: 148, who discusses their dedication to gods: «Three inscribed mace-heads probably date to the Neo-Assyrian period. Two of them bear fragmentary inscriptions of Shalmaneser III, which can be completed by a dedicatory inscription to Nergal (RIMA 3 A.O.102.94; Muhle 2018: cat. 26. 27). The name of the god is not preserved on any of the mace-heads. Because of the find spot, it seems reasonable to conclude that they are dedications to Aššur. The inscription on the third mace-head is illegible».

³⁰ Niederreiter 2009. The scholar notes the connection between the large offering to Aššur and Adad and his second eponymy, since Aššur and Adad are the gods of the casting of the lots for the eponymy.

³¹ Since one of the mace-heads seem to be part of booty (at least this can be evinced from A.O.102.94),

campaigns, and thus been measures to enhance the centrality of the national god;³² the nature of these rituals and the relations between the military role of Assyrian officials and their homage to the centralized organization of the Assyrian realm cannot be properly defined on the basis of the available evidence.

In Assurnāširpal II's and Shalmaneser III's endeavours Assur appears as the centre of a theological and seemingly syncretistic elaboration and the clergy of Assur probably also had an important role in other Assyrian centres and hubs of the Assyrianization policy. However, although they can be credited with important interventions in the cultic sphere, the specific theological significance of their acts cannot be clearly distinguished.³³

The relation of the cult of Nergal with Aššur can be also gauged when considering some later attestations, that, although of problematic interpretation, at least suggest the continuity of the cult of Nergal in the seat of Aššur after the end of the Assyri-

³² After the royal seat had been moved to Kalhu by Assurnāširpal II – who, on the other hand, also conducted repair work in Aššur's temple. See also KAL 3 23. He also introduced or defined the ritual complex of the months Shebatu and Elulu in Assur for Ninurta. See Pongratz-Leisten in SAA 20: XLVII.

³³ An extremely interesting text attributed to Shalmaneser III and seemingly allegorically dealing with a military triumph in a ritual framework that had the cultic personnel of Assur as protagonists, and also including literary allusions to the Sumero-Akkadian repertoire, is LKA 62 on which see recently Fink, Parpola 2019. The investigation should also take into consideration the relation Ninurta – Nabû and that of their sanctuaries in Kalhu. Colophons of texts from the Ezida attest to a family of scribes of Babylonian origin, starting in the reign of Assurnāširpal II. As to the link of the Assyrian scribes with Babylonia, it may be considered that Issaran/Anu-rabû-mudammiq, chief priest of Assurnāširpal II was son of Tappu, a *šatammu* of Der, grandson of *Hu-za-li* with the same title (from the colophon of a stone tablet with hemerologies from Kalhu ND 5545, see PNA 2, 485 *s.v.* Huzālu). The possibility of a different genealogy is proposed by Wiseman and Black in CTN 4, 5: Anu-rabû-šumu-ukin, Anu-rabû-mudammiq, Nabû-mudammiq, Babylia, Marduk-[]. The authors conclude that if the colophons are correctly interpreted «there is evidence for six generations of the same highly-placed scribal “family” with Babylonian connections, with the youngest member a royal scribe of Adad-nerari III and his great-grandfather an official of Assur-našir-apli II, which is chronologically perfectly plausible». A list of the various connections between Babylonian and Assyrian scribes, script, texts, copies and places is impossible here, but would show a quite dense network of relations.

an empire.³⁴ This may be connected with the importance of the local cult of the god, which had profound roots in the town,³⁵ as well as in the Jezirah's past,³⁶ but also perhaps with the role of the Aššur's priests.

This first excursus through the places of Nergal's worship shows traces of a polyphonic scenario and the possibility of theological or ritual association with other gods based on locally rooted traditions, or fostered by specific royal dispositions. Although on the basis of the available sources it is quite risky to proceed beyond the level of hypotheses when attempting to interpret religious policy, two main points derived from this general background are worth investigating from other, more specific perspectives: the first is the mobility of cultic personnel and the connection between cultic centres and with Assur especially; the second is the general importance of the protective role of this formidable warrior god in imperial theology. Rituals connected with the god's role in the military sphere therefore constitute the next step in this investigation.

2. Nergal's rituals

Evidence pertaining to the military field makes concrete the relationship between Aššur, Nergal and other gods: Nergal is the

³⁴ Schaudig 2018: 630-632, instead connects the debated function of temple A to the destruction of the town in 614 and suggests the possibility that it was dedicated to the cult of Nergal as god of destruction, to whom Nabopolassar, the conqueror of Assyria, showed a particular devotion in his inscriptions. This attribution would be supported by the presence of a statue of Herakles, who is identified with Nergal, in the cella of the later Parthian temple.

³⁵ Dirven 2014: 15 maintains that in the new temple, which was built on the foundations of the NA sanctuary of Aššur, the ancient cult was revived, although probably in a different form in the context of a more general remembrance of Assyrian religion: «Aramaic inscriptions from the Parthian temple make mention of Assur, Sherua, and ancient deities such as Nanaia, Nabû, and Nergal».

³⁶ Concerning Hatra, Dirven (2014: 21) states that religious practices attested by 14 small shrines in the domestic area of the town show the continuity of ancient Babylonian traditions in Parthian times. They were used for family banquets in honour of ancestors and deceased kings and the Babylonian gods Nergal and Zaqiqu had a prominent role. Interesting innovations are the association of Nergal with dogs and his representation as Herakles.

standard which guides Aššur's army, as expressed in Assurnasirpal II's inscriptions, for instance in the nexus Aššur and d.ÛRI.GAL *ālik pānīya*, «the divine standard which goes before me» (A.0.101.1: ii 25), repeated in the version of the Great Monolith (A.0.101.17: ii 84),³⁷ and by Shalmaneser III: «With the exalted might of the divine standard/Nergal (ÛRI.GAL *ālik pānīya*) who goes before me and with the fierce weapons which Aššur my lord gave me ...» (RIMA 3 A.0.102.1: 57'; 2: i 44). As a standard which guides Assyrian troops, Nergal is emblem of a section of the army, together with Adad and Ištar (cf. Sargon II: *ana Zikirte u Andia ša d.ÛRI.GAL* (Nergal) *Adad urigallī ālikūt mahrīya ušatriša nīršun*, «To Zikirte and Andia, where Nergal (and) Adad, the standards that go before me, directed their yoke» (TCL 3 l. 14).³⁸

Especially in this form, Nergal is mentioned in rituals in which royal actions are assimilated to those of the gods through a process of mythologization, in which scholarly activity took the form of an intense endeavour of interpretation and adaptation of religious and cultic traditions to royal ideology and also of innovation.

A case in point from this perspective is the ritual K 9923 and duplicates, most recently re-edited as SAA 20 no. 18. It mentions standards and chariots carrying them (GIŠ.GIGIR *ša d.MAŠ.MAŠ*), that can be identified with those illustrated in the reliefs, and celebrates victory over the enemy.³⁹ In 1997 Pongratz-Leisten analyzed it as part of the celebration for the *akītu* of Ištar

³⁷ See also «with the supreme might of the divine standard (d.ÛRI.GAL) which goes before me I fought with them, brought about their defeat, broke up their band(s)» (ii 27f.; see also A.0.101.17: ii 90 and iii 30 where the third campaign against Zamua is narrated). For a more complete list of attestations, see Ponchia, Luukko 2013: LV-LXI and LXIX-LXXIV for a general presentation of rituals in which Nergal is mentioned.

³⁸ Cf. also the reference which ends the account of the campaign: *ina narbī ša d.U.GUR dandan ilāni ālik idīya nāšir karašīya ...* «With the greatness of Nergal, the most powerful amongst the gods, who goes at my side (and) protects my camp ...» (TCL 3 l. 417, now RINAP 2 65).

³⁹ In his 1992 edition Deller defined it as a *Kriegsritual* which was performed on the battlefield and maintained that the *erāb āli* ceremony proceeded into the military camp, *ana madakte*. In Pongratz-Leisten *et al.*, 1992: 341-46, Deller read: LÚ *ša É.HUB ša d.MAŠ.MAŠ*, and interpreted «the field priest of Nergal», again a character who suggests a war context.

of Arbela, during which a triumphal procession returned from the *akītu* temple situated in Milqia and entered Arbela (*erāb ālī*).⁴⁰

Other rituals have military campaigns as their scenario. An example is a ritual prescribed for: *ūm šarru ana šālti u tāh[āzi]*, that may be interpreted as «when the king [goes] to battle». ⁴¹ It prescribes the placing of portable altars for Ištar, Šamaš and Nergal, and performing of offerings and libations. It moreover includes the preparation of an image of the enemy in wax/tallow and an action by a *ša rēši*.

The magical sphere in which Nergal was involved in apotropaic rituals pertaining to military activity can be gauged from text 82-3-23, 1, a *namburbi* ritual more specifically directed against headache, plague and pestilence menacing the king's troops and horses.⁴² The official character of the ritual is revealed by the participation of the king in the ceremony. Instructions prescribe the singing of various *eršemma* together with certain actions such as offerings, libations etc., ending with the preparation of an ointment that was seemingly intended for placing on a leather pouch on horses' neck and anointing thresholds and doors. Nergal appears as the addressee of cultic songs especially in his protective role against pestilence.⁴³ Another *namburbi* prescribes offerings and prayers to Nergal and the gods of the steppe, and

⁴⁰ Pongratz-Leisten 1997. In the same tablet mention is made of a libation on a lion, but the passage is fragmentary (cf. SAA 20 no. 18: r. 4). Another ritual in which standards (d.ÛRI.GAL) are mentioned is K 3455+ (SAA 20 no. 16) celebrated in the *equ* of Ištar.

⁴¹ K 6207 + 6225 (BBR 57), Elat 1982: 22-24.

⁴² Caplice 1970, no. 37.

⁴³ As noted by Caplice, among the laments, the one with the incipit a.gal.gal buru₁₄ sù.sù «Great waters drowning the crops» (l. 25) can be recognized as a *balag*-lamentation to Nergal that has reached us (Böllenrücher 1904, no. 6 = K 69, and Cohen 1988: 500-518; see also Gabbay 2014a: 148). The king should also sing the hymn umun.e.gir.ra.dim.me.er.gal.gale.ne, «Lord, the strong one of all the great gods», which recalls Nergal's epithets in royal inscriptions and hymns (*dandan ilāni*), e.g. in the bilingual hymn K 4809+ (Böllenrücher 1904, no. 5) from Assurbanipal's library (Seux 1976: 78): *nir-gal dingir gal-gal-ene, etelli ilāni rabūti*.

to Šamaš, to protect the king or prince from the evil portended by an accident with the chariot or during a campaign.⁴⁴

Despite the difficulties in defining the developments of these rituals it can be affirmed that, by mentioning or alluding to mythology, they link the war scenario and military practices with the official cult.

In the ritual prescriptions collected in KAR 215+ (= SAA 20 no. 15)⁴⁵ Nergal is mentioned in a couple of paragraphs. The first, reconstructed from VAT 8005 (= SAA 20 no. 37), contains a prescription concerning offerings of salt to the god in Tarbišu and connected with *tākultu* ceremonies.⁴⁶ In r. iii 1-9 instructions are given for the reception of a message coming to Assur from a campaign (*issi hūli*) and its transmission to the Inner City, where we may suppose it was presented to the god. In the following lines the case is considered of a sealed message sent from the Inner city of Assur to Nergal, whether in Nineveh, Kalhu or [in an enemy country]. The content of this provision is not preserved and it is not clear if the appeal to Nergal is due to his role as a warlike god, or is simply another clue of the primary role of the Assur clergy in cultic matters. It seems also worthy of note that the tablet was copied by a high priest of Aššur, son and 4th generation descendant of priests of Nergal, whose forefather was a priest of Aššur.⁴⁷ Such a specific instruction may therefore be due to the copyist's ancestors' roles as priests of Nergal, and the connections, both ritual and practical, between the temples and their personnel.

⁴⁴ K 2296+ (= Mayer 1976: 519-522), Maul 1994: 387-399. In particular for Nergal is prescribed the recitation of the conjuration *atta Nerigal gašru ilāni ahhēšu* (l. 25). The god is invoked as lord of the steppe, night and path. His spouse Ereškigal is also mentioned as goddess of battle.

⁴⁵ Pongratz-Leisten has recently described the text as «some kind of an excerpt tablet combining ritual prescriptions for the 7th and 8th of Nisan and for the *tākultu* ritual» (p. LXI).

⁴⁶ A text with similar structure is SAA 20 no. 38 from Sultantepe. For the interpretation of the ritual, especially thanks to the cultic commentary SAA 3 no. 37, see Pongratz-Leisten in SAA 20: LXI-LXIII.

⁴⁷ Namely: Marduk-[...]-ilani, great priest of Aššur, son of m.ru-qa-ba-a-a priest of Nergal (LÚ.SANGA ša d.MAŠ.MAŠ), son of Urdu-Aššur, ditto, son of Nergal-kuzub-ilani, ditto, [son] of Aššur-bel-ilani, ditto, [son of ...], priest of Aššur.

Finally, it is appropriate to mention another attestation of Nergal in a liturgical ritual closely connected to the representation of Assyrian kingship, although the identification of the god is considered problematic. Text A 485 + A 3109 from Assur (= SAA 20 no. 1) prescribes actions to be performed within the Shebat cultic cycle. Some of the prescriptions mention a god d.MAŠ.MAŠ, for instance in the pairs Aššur and Mullissu, Adad and d.MAŠ.MAŠ, as the recipient of offerings and invocations (l. 12), or in the list of the gods who go to the house of Dagan (r. 20). A similar association is present in K 9622+ (SAA 20 no. 2). Distinct writings are used in BM 121206 (SAA 20 no. 52), an amulet-shaped or display tablet, which contains cultic prescriptions and indications concerning the Shebat cycle and the *akītu*. S. Parpola renders the name as Mašmaš rather than Nergal, since in K 252 (SAA 20 no. 40: v 15'-28') both names are listed in the same section, in the forms d.MAŠ.MAŠ and d.U.GUR respectively, thus suggesting reference to two distinct gods. However, it may be noted that the form d.MAŠ.MAŠ is used elsewhere to denote the standard representing Nergal; the pairing with Adad, also known in this guise of military emblem, may support this interpretation. On the other hand it should also be considered that Nergal is known in different hypostases, as shown by comparisons of cultic and literary texts, together with the long and complicated history of the renderings of his name.⁴⁸ It could therefore be hypothesized that in these prescriptive texts different images and symbols of the same god are referred to and, in particular, that the god's military aspect had a specific place in cultic ceremonies and apparatus.

All in all, these rituals not only connect the actual scenario of war with its archetypical mythological representation and theological fundament, but also the battlefield with the centre of the

⁴⁸ On the writings of Nergal's name, see the summary in Ponchia, Luukko 2013. In BM 121206 (SAA 20 no. 52), in which Nergal is listed among other deities, in various occasions, the writing U.GUR is chosen in the list of «the gods whose places Sennacherib (...) put in the mouth of the people through extispicy and their cups of veneration» (r. iv 24'-26', Parpola's translation), whereas the writing MAŠ.MAŠ is chosen in the prescription concerning the rituals of the 13th of Iyyar and the moving of Ištar to the Akītu: «Aššur, Mullissu, Mašmaš (and) Adad go to the Akītu» (v. 23'-24').

kingdom and its divine personification, the god Aššur. Let us therefore briefly return to the crucial issue of the cultic organization and its actors in order to further consider the theological implications concerning Nergal's cult in the framework of Assyrian imperial religion.

3. *The organization of the cult*

From the clues collected above we can try to develop some general reflections and suggestions. First of all it seems that a local substratum of Upper Mesopotamia religious and mythological traditions still persisted in Neo-Assyrian times, although its importance and pervasiveness cannot be precisely stated. It appears moreover that various links connect Nergal's rituals and personnel to Aššur. The cult of Aššur as the god representing Assyria and its kingship had obviously the most important role, as well as a distinctive character. Royal religious policy operated on this multifaceted scenario, on the one hand developing the image and cult of the national god, on the other hand fostering the cult's adaptation to the prestigious Sumero-Akkadian tradition and absorbing local manifestations. The protagonists of this adaptation and of theological reflection were priests and scholars who had to mediate the construction and interpretation of cults and rituals between these various instances.⁴⁹

The sources allow us to attribute to Shalmaneser III a particularly active role in the work of integrating the Assyrian national religion and Babylonian theology, probably pushing further a development already begun with his predecessors.⁵⁰ For instance, a major scholar was Šumu-libši, *galamahhu* of the Esangil, who, according to colophon BAK 502, was scribe at the time of Shalmaneser III and the Babylonian king Nabû-apla-iddina,⁵¹ and

⁴⁹ On the topic of shared tradition, see Pongratz-Leisten in SAA 20: LXV-LXVII, concerning the relations of the cults of Ištar with Sumero-Akkadian and Hurrian mythology.

⁵⁰ Cf. especially Assurnasirpal II and the mythology of Ninurta, on which see e.g. Annus 2002.

⁵¹ The colophon adds that the tablet (CT 16 no. 38, in Assyrian script) is a copy from a Uduḡ-ḫul tablet that was originally written by a member of the

whose descendants operated in Assyria.⁵² The fact that families of scribes – with different specializations but with a Babylonian ancestry – were active in various towns corroborates the hypothesis of a program of, or at least an inclination towards, the diffusion of ritual practices and text collections corresponding to the prestigious Mesopotamian tradition, although reformulated according to Assyrian beliefs and interests.

In this endeavour, the problems Assyrian theologians and priests had to deal with were twofold: first, they had to provide an orthodox liturgy in multiple ceremonial occasions vis-à-vis a complex tradition and take care of their standardization; second, they had to check the orthodoxy of various gods' cults vis-à-vis Aššur's theology, a very particular task that involved special difficulties deriving from the transcendent nature of Aššur.

As to the first level, it may be considered in general that the result of the specialists' work and the coordination of their activities was a varied corpus of apotropaic and propitiatory rituals and prayers that inherited and reworked the earlier tradition, in particular Sumerian and Babylonian, as shown by the *šūila*, *eršemma*, *eršahunga*, *balag* Sumerian and bilingual compositions, in which litanies with various names and epithets of a god, or the names of identifiable gods, are often mentioned,⁵³ and which are prescribed as *legomena* of various rituals.

The role of Aššur's priests in the mediation required by these interventions was probably fundamental and was accomplished especially thanks to connections that existed between the priests of different gods, with possible differences also due to their sector of specialization. In some cases it is possible to find traces of the special roles of scholars, who were sometimes from other

Šumu-libši family. The copy was collated and made by the chief scribes of As-surbanipal and scribes from Arbela.

⁵² Colophon BAK 500 (on the copy of a war ritual) provides the following genealogy: Nabû-zeru-iddina *aštalû* of Sin son of Arad-Ea *galamahhu* of Sin in Harran, descendent of Šumu-libši, *galamahhu* of the Esagil in Babylon. The tablet 81-2-4, 306 is a copy of a war ritual that includes the performing of *eršemma* and *eršahunga* chants (see Elat 1982: 11-18 and 22 and Gabbay 2014a: 124f.). See also BAK 499.

⁵³ Cf. e.g. *eršahunga* n. 34 in Maul 1988. For a list and general presentation of hymns and prayers to Nergal, see Ponchia, Luukko 2013: LXIII-LXIX, with previous bibliography.

towns, in cultic elaboration. According to Gabbay, in the rituals of the *kalû*: «While the Nineveh material exhibits mostly the expected Babylonian tradition, with very few local allusions, some of the tablets from Assur and Nimrud incorporate local traditions related to those cities and their gods». ⁵⁴ It appears therefore that the case of Nergal is an example of a more general praxis, since, as seen above, the scholars and priests that took care of his cult, or of the texts concerning the god, appear to have some interesting connections with Babylonian religious centres, or with other Assyrian cities and sanctuaries. ⁵⁵ Moreover,

⁵⁴ Gabbay 2014a: 129 (with previous bibliography). The scholar also refers to a study by Maul of *šūila* prayers (1998: 190-191), among which it is possible to identify traces of the pre-Sennacherib identification of Aššur with Enlil, rather than with Marduk. From these clues it emerges that the serialization of the *kalûtu* series was a complex work with various phases (see *ibid.* p. 134).

⁵⁵ Other tiny clues to these relations are provided by the following instances. The colophons of texts KAL 4 no. 53, a ritual to obtain an oracular verdict, and KAL 4 no. 64, a *šūila* prayer to Nabû, associate Aššur and Nergal in the profession of the priest Nergal-šumu-lišir. The tablets were copied from older originals by Aššur-šakin-šumi, son of Šumâ / Nergal-šumu-lišir, priest of Aššur and Nergal, and whose trust is placed in Nabû, Lord of the scribal house (see KAL 4, p. 122 for the identification of Šumâ with Nergal-šumu-lišir and further details). He might be the same person that witnesses the grant of people by Sennacherib to the *akîtu* temple of Assur, in the 22nd year of the king's reign. In this text, however, his title is only partially preserved: «[] of Aššur» (SAA 12 no. 86: r. 17). Concerning Aššur-šakin-šumi, who did not belong to the family of the *Beschwörungspriester* of Assur Baba-šuma-ibni, S. Maul notes that he was perhaps in his youth assistant and collaborator of Kišir-Aššur, one of the main characters of that family (Maul 2010: 216-217). The text has an earlier copy (LKA 138) and a partial duplicate from Sultantepe (STT 73) (see KAL 4, p. 104). As illustrated by May (2018a), a family of scribes and priests of Baba from Assur, with a high frequency of this theophoric in their names, copied medical texts and the Erra epic (see tablets of Babu-ahu-iddina son of Gula-zeru-ibni, according to May possibly educated in the house of the *Beschwörungspriester* in Assur). Another colophon, added to the incantation BAM 148, attests that the tablet was «copied by [Remut]-Baba apprentice physician(?), [son of Gula]-zeru-ibni, priest of Baba, [who is in the midst] of Assur». This suggests the interest for the healing goddess that can well be understood in a circle of physicians and the connections with Erra/Nergal in his protective stance against pestilence, thus providing other clues concerning the relationships between these deities, as noted for Hurzihina. An interesting case is also the *balag*-composition KAR 99+, which contains an *ešemma* prayer (edition and discussion in Gabbay 2014b, no. 92 and chap. I.4). Quite exceptional in respect to

although incompletely preserved, the rituals pertaining to war illustrate the connection between royal and temple liturgy on one side, and routine or occasional celebrations in specific war and battle contexts on the other.

This leads us to briefly consider the other problem: the orthodoxy vis-à-vis Aššur's theology. B. Pongratz-Leisten has recently observed that the Assyrian *tākultu* rituals express a process she defines as hyphenation (after an expression coined by J. Assmann for Egyptian religion). This process was aimed at establishing «the unlimited potential of Aššur's agency and its ability to absorb other gods as extensions of his body and his scope of action» (SAA 20: XLVI f.). When comparing this intriguing perspective of theological elaboration developed through the ritual practice with the mythological texts, it seems that the theologians of Assur expressed both Aššur's supreme power in the cosmos, and his transcendence over all divine figures.⁵⁶

The rituals of Nergal as a warrior god had the specific aim of keeping at bay hostile forces on the battlefield, but also in case of plague. This is quite clear from the conclusion of the myth of Erra and the use of the text as an amulet. In this myth, the apotropaic function of praying and reciting the tale of the god goes together with the reflection on violence which is embodied by Erra and forms the complex personality of Nergal, the god that more than any other personifies the principles of rage and violence and of protection.

In the specific case of Nergal, with his protective capacity, especially in the riskiest situations, including the transfer of power,

the text's genre is the succinct narrative section describing Nergal's destructive action carried out to comply with Enlil's command, thus referring to mythology and possibly hinting at the identification of Aššur and Enlil. This brief description is followed by usual section invoking the god's pacification. The incomplete colophon mentions a patronymic whose profession was seemingly associated with the god Aššur.

⁵⁶ This was for instance expressed in Sargon II's Letter to Aššur with the account of his eighth campaign that was likely intended for a public ceremony, though no details are known concerning its performance: «Trusting in the strong support of Aššur, father of the gods, Lord of lands, king of the totality of heaven and earth, begetter <of all>, lord of lords, to whom from eternity Marduk the Enlil of the gods has given the gods of land and mountains of the four quarters to honor him – no one escaping ...» (ll. 314f.).

the theological reflection was inscribed in the conceptualization of the divinely motivated universal construction of the empire. This role is fundamental in the imperial perspective, in which interest seems to move from Nergal as a warlike god to his embodiment of the principle of strength and protection. Therefore, Nergal's mythological and ritual repertoire, as transmitted through tradition, probably had an important place in the theology of Aššur as theology of the empire, and the eminent role of the latter gods' priests also in peripheral contexts is quite understandable. There, the warrior god's functions were interpreted, illustrated and venerated in the light of the official religion through the work of experts linked to the centre.

Thus, we may conclude that Nergal could be connected to various traditions, both of more erudite Babylonian origin and of diverse local origins; his representations were also placed and rituals performed in military scenarios, and his protective function was often invoked in addition to his offensive power. He was therefore a divine figure of particular interest who connected various levels of religious reflection and performance, as well as centre and periphery. The clues collected here illustrate methods and ways through which a religious policy that aimed at cohesion was spread and implemented, that may represent an example of a certainly more widely applied strategy involving various deities, sanctuaries, and cultic personnel.

Abbreviations

- ARM 26/1-2 = Jean-Marie Durand, *Archives Royales de Mari XXVI/1-2*, Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1988.
- BAK = Hermann Hunger, *Babylonische und assyrische Kolophone* (Alten Orient und Altes Testament 2), Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1968.
- CTN 4 = Donald J. Wiseman - Jeremy A. Black, *Literary Texts from the Temple of Nabû*, Oxford: British School of Archaeology, 1996.
- KAL 3 = Eckart Frahm, *Historische und historisch-literarische Keilschrifttexte aus Assur*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009.
- KAL 4 = Stefan M. Maul - Rita Strauß, *Ritualbeschreibungen und Gebete I*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011.

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Un sigillo paleo-babilonese con scena di danza da Abu Tbeirah (Iraq meridionale)

LICIA ROMANO - FRANCO D'AGOSTINO*

Questo breve articolo, dove viene presentato al lettore un sigillo raffigurante una scena di danza, è dedicato con affetto e stima alla nostra Collega Simonetta Graziani, sperando che il suo contenuto possa incontrare il profondo interesse che lei ha sempre dimostrato per la storia della danza (e per la danza stessa).¹

1. Introduzione

Nel settore NE del sito di Abu Tbeirah, durante la campagna del 2019, per la prima volta gli scavi hanno permesso di rilevare la presenza di attività databili tra la fine del III e l'inizio del II millennio a.C. Il settore NE, l'area del sito che mostra una maggiore elevazione e quindi presumibilmente un'occupazione più lunga, già durante la *survey* del 2012 aveva prodotto alcuni frammenti di ceramica appartenenti alla Terza Dinastia di Ur III, in numero limitato e assai deteriorati a causa della salinizzazione e dell'erosione di superficie. Gli scavi effettuati nell'Area 6, sul versante sud-occidentale del settore NE, hanno cominciato a portare alla luce dal 2017 alcune fondazioni in mattoni cotti e crudi di una struttura, denominata E1, che è stato possibile datare come *ter-*

* FDA è autore del § 1, mentre LR per i §§ 2, 3 e 4.

¹ Si veda Graziani 2018.

minus post quem, sulla base di due mattoni iscritti di Amar-Suena reperiti nella struttura stessa,² almeno al periodo del terzo re della Dinastia incentrata su Ur (fig. 1). Ora, ampliando l'area di scavo durante la campagna del 2019, sono state rilevate attività antropiche, tra cui alcune tombe, che tagliavano le fondamenta della struttura dall'alto. Poiché non è stato possibile reperire alcuna superficie abitativa di pertinenza della struttura E1, e soprattutto non essendo stato finora evidenziato alcun chiaro collegamento delle tombe alla struttura stessa, è impossibile determinare se le sepolture appartengano ad una struttura ormai erosa (sub-pavimentali) oppure siano relative ad un contesto cimiteriale.³

Due di queste tombe presentano la tipologia *ridged dome-like sarcophagus*, che è stata frequentemente reperita da L. Woolley ad Ur e da lui datata al periodo di Larsa: una delle fosse, scavate nella parte occidentale dell'area (riempimento: US 1609; taglio: US 1610) conteneva un anello in lega di rame conservato solo in parte (AbT.19.60) e un sigillo cilindrico di clorite² verde chiaro (AbT.19.59) – plausibilmente il contesto può essere interpretato come una tomba saccheggata.

Le dimensioni del sigillo sono 1,9×0,9 cm, con una perforazione centrale di ca. 3 mm di diametro (figg. 2-3). La raffigurazione occupa tutta la superficie verticale ed è composta da un singolo registro delimitato in basso da una linea orizzontale. In essa, due individui si tengono per mano mentre ballano su un piede solo, e nel fare questo superano la linea di fondo del registro; l'altra gamba è piegata e tenuta dai due danzatori con l'altra mano. La scena è ulteriormente arricchita da una falce di luna sopra la coppia e dalla raffigurazione di uno scorpione sotto di essa, mentre il duo danzante è incorniciato da un lato dalla rappresentazione di un serpente e dall'altro da uno stendardo a spirale che termina superiormente con due protomi animali e una testa di mazza arrotondata.

² Si veda D'Agostino, Romano 2020.

³ Bisogna sottolineare che alcune di queste attività dell'inizio del II millennio a.C. tagliano direttamente le fondamenta dell'edificio E1 e non risultano sempre allineate alla struttura precedente, e che la stratigrafia dell'area NE è ulteriormente complicata da numerose tombe moderne.

2. L'iconografia del sigillo

La datazione del sigillo al periodo Isin-Larsa, o primo periodo paleo-babilonese (nel prosieguo ci si riferirà alla datazione del sigillo come paleo-babilonese), non si basa solo sul contesto: nonostante l'estrema varietà di stili dell'epoca e la presenza di numerosi laboratori locali (si veda Ghailani Werr 1988: 58), nel caso del sigillo di Abu Tbeirah la datazione stratigrafica è infatti confermata altresì da confronti che saranno discussi nell'analisi che segue.

2.1 Lo scettro dalle protomi leonine

Il cosiddetto *Doppellöwenkeule* è una sorta di scettro che si ritrova abbastanza comunemente nell'iconografia paleo-babilonese, in particolare nella glittica e nelle placche fittili della prima fase del periodo:⁴ è rappresentato da solo o in associazione a una divinità femminile o maschile,⁵ a enfatizzare il loro aspetto guerriero. In queste raffigurazioni, le due protomi animali sono talvolta piuttosto schematiche e non risulta sempre possibile identificarle chiaramente come teste di leone, come avviene per esempio anche nella rappresentazione stilizzata del sigillo di Abu Tbeirah: le due teste, almeno teoricamente, potrebbero essere interpretate come teste di serpente, sebbene la presenza di orecchie sopra le mascelle aperte impedisca nel nostro caso qualsiasi dubbio sull'interpretazione corretta.⁶ Quando la mazza con le protomi leonine è associata a una divinità maschile, questa viene solitamente identificata con il dio Nergal,⁷ mentre la controparte divina femminile, che risulta essere più frequentemente attestata

⁴ Si veda Collon 1982: 44; Matthiae 2000: 113.

⁵ Si veda per es. Ghailani Werr 1988: pl XLIII 7-8, da Ur (solo); *ibid.* pl. VI 1, 3, 5, 10; pl. VIII 8; pl. XVIII 8; pl. XXII 5; pl. XXV 7, 9; pl. XXVIII 1-2 (divinità femminile); *ibid.* 14, pl. V 8, pl. VI 8 (divinità maschile).

⁶ Mentre nel repertorio iconografico dell'epoca le rappresentazioni di serpenti intrecciati risultano attestate frequentemente, è tuttavia assente il bastone con doppia testa di serpente; esiste poi una differenza sostanziale: quando i due serpenti sono rappresentati intrecciati, sono rivolti verso l'interno come nel simbolo del caduceo (Black, Green 1992: 167-168).

⁷ Black, Green 1992: 19 fig. 13; 169.

nella glittica paleo-babilonese (Moorey 1973: 78), può essere identificata con la dea Ištar (Matthiae 2000: 116).

Il simbolo, quindi, se rappresentato da solo, può riferirsi simbolicamente a uno dei due dei. Sebbene sulle raffigurazioni dei *kudurru* più recenti l'identificazione con Nergal appaia plausibile,⁸ un recente articolo di K. Kleber propone anche per periodi successivi l'identificazione dello scettro a doppia testa di leone con la divinità non antropomorfa neobabilonese Huṭāru, «symbol of authority of the goddess Ištar» (Kleber 2018).

2.2 Il serpente, lo scorpione e la mezzaluna

Tre motivi di riempimento fanno parte della scena: un serpente, una falce di luna e uno scorpione. Il serpente occupa il sigillo per la sua intera altezza e potrebbe essere stato concepito come una ulteriore delimitazione della scena principale. I serpenti sono frequenti nell'iconografia mesopotamica e sono associati sia a divinità femminili sia a divinità maschili: non sempre è possibile riconoscerne un significato più specifico in assenza di associazioni iconografiche chiare,⁹ sebbene sia stato spesso sottolineato il legame del serpente con il concetto di fertilità.¹⁰ Lo stesso si potrebbe dire dello scorpione, generalmente associato alla dea Išhara.¹¹ La consueta interpretazione del serpente e dello scorpione come simboli di fertilità potrebbe anche essere giustificata in relazione all'atmosfera gioiosa suggerita dai due personaggi danzanti.

Identificata come il simbolo del dio Sîn durante il periodo kassita, la falce di luna sulle scene glittiche appare associata anche ad altre divinità o può anche essere rappresentata di per sé. A causa di questa grande varietà di interpretazioni possibili, va considerata anche una lettura della luna e dello scorpione come elementi di "location", tali cioè da caratterizzare temporalmente

⁸ Koch *et al.* 1990; Black, Green 1992: 19 fig. 13; 169.

⁹ Per il simbolo del serpente si veda in generale il già citato Black, Green 1992: 167-168.

¹⁰ Sul rapporto tra ofidi e fertilità si veda *e.g.* Battini 2009: spec. 127 e nota 13, con ulteriore bibliografia.

¹¹ Sull'iconografia della dea Išhara e «il suo potere come dispensatrice di fertilità» si veda Matthiae 2010: 284-286.

e topograficamente l'ambiente della scena – la Luna/Sîn per il cielo notturno (?) e lo scorpione per la terra.

2.3 La coppia danzante

Prima di analizzare il movimento dei due danzatori sul sigillo, va sottolineato da subito che i due personaggi sono raffigurati in modo diverso. L'uomo a sinistra ha la barba appuntita e dei capelli corti divisi in cinque linee orizzontali, forse per rappresentare in modo stilizzato una pettinatura riccia o ondulata. L'assenza di una chiara indicazione del sesso e la rappresentazione quasi del tutto identica dei due corpi fa propendere per un'identificazione anche del secondo personaggio come maschile: l'uomo a destra ha una pettinatura completamente diversa dal suo compagno, apparentemente terminante con una corta coda di cavallo. Entrambi i ballerini, infine, sono nudi, come è tipico nelle scene di danza sui sigilli babilonesi (Matoušová 1978: 154).

La scena della danza,¹² incorniciata com'è da un serpente e dal bastone a doppia testa di leone, è chiaramente il fulcro del sigillo. La peculiare e vivace danza *à cloche-pied* ricorda visivamente la Tarantella¹³ dell'Italia meridionale, sebbene D. Collon abbia preferito paragonarla al *Charleston* (Collon 2003: 96). La stessa scena di danza è infatti raffigurata in due registri di sigilli in clorite (BM 86269 – fig. 4 no. 2) datati all'età paleo-babilonese,¹⁴ e in diversi altri sigilli cilindrici raccolti da M. Matoušová (1978: figg. 4-5). Nel registro inferiore, il sigillo BM 86269 raffigura la vittoriosa attività militare di un re, che presenta il suo successo a

¹² Per un'analisi recente e accurata delle scene di danza, con la raccolta di un'ampia bibliografia sull'argomento, si veda Graziani 2018; sulle scene di danza del periodo paleo-babilonese si veda lo studio di Matoušová (1978), dove le scene vengono divise in tre categorie principali sulla base del numero dei personaggi e dell'identificazione di 11 stili differenti (il tipo di danza rappresentato nel sigillo di Abu Tbeirah è qui definito *à cloche-pied*, Matoušová 1978: 154, e si propone che sia di origine egiziana, Matoušová 1978: 158-159).

¹³ Il nome di questo ballo tradizionale dell'Italia meridionale, come è noto, deriva dalla parola "tarantola", un tipo di ragno velenoso il cui morso si riteneva localmente che portasse a movimenti convulsi, quali quelli rappresentati nella scena del sigillo.

¹⁴ Si veda Collon 1983: 153 no. 679 (Periodo IVd, "The Mari Period").

una divinità femminile in trono, mentre nel registro superiore è raffigurata una battaglia tra personaggi mitologici vicino a due uomini nudi che danzano come nel nostro sigillo di Abu Tbeirah – tra gli altri dettagli del sigillo BM 86269, una falce di luna e un serpente rappresentano ulteriori elementi iconografici in comune con la rappresentazione di AbT.19.59 (Collon 2003: 96). Nel registro inferiore, infine, è rappresentata una terza danzatrice di dimensioni minori con le gambe flesse, in una sorta di *demi plié* come suggerito da S. Graziani (2014-15: 401).

M. Matoušová (1978: 159) descrive i diversi tipi di danze attestate nella glittica paleo-babilonese e, riguardo alla danza à *cloche-pied*, scrive:

La danse composée de sauts en cercle autour d'un ax ou bien en cercle par les couples, était un exercice exigeant, du point de vue des forces physiques, et elle était probablement exécutée par des danseurs professionnels. Il s'agissait d'une danse de caractère purement rituel.

In effetti, nei sigilli descritti da Matoušová¹⁵ la danza à *cloche-pied* è associata a molte scene diverse e motivi di riempimento (Romano 2022): la maggior parte delle scene raffigura due danzatori (16 su 21), mentre un danzatore è rappresentato in quattro sigilli e solo in un caso sono attestati tre danzatori. Un solo sigillo raffigura una danzatrice con l'attributo divino della corona a corna, mentre in tutti gli altri casi i partecipanti appaiono come esseri umani – si noti che, in generale, questo tipo di danza è più frequentemente associato a una dea femminile. Un caso particolare è il sigillo presentato nella fig. 5: qui una scena introduttiva con una dea femminile con le mani alzate è associata a una coppia danzante, una scimmia e un bastone (?) e accompagnata da una lode al dio Iškur.¹⁶

¹⁵ Non è stato possibile controllare tutti i sigilli citati nell'articolo a causa di alcune inesattezze nei riferimenti presentati (e.g. il sigillo citato come "Brett No. 148: Pl. xiv" e "Boehmer: Pl. 34 fig. 472" in Matoušová 1978: 161).

¹⁶ Il nome del proprietario del sigillo è assente, come è tipico per la fase finale del periodo paleo-babilonese (Collon 2003: 105).

2.4 Interpretazione e conclusioni

Le scene di introduzione sono il motivo tipico del primo periodo paleo-babilonese, sebbene si riscontrino altresì frequentemente scene di lotta e altre battaglie mitiche (Matthiae 2000: 112-114), mentre sono presenti anche altri tipi di scene, come ad es. la già citata vittoria in relazione ai festeggiamenti rappresentati in BM 86269. Anche i balli, in generale, sono abbastanza spesso rappresentati nella glittica del periodo.¹⁷ Il sigillo di Abu Tbeirah sembra quindi essere coerente con il repertorio iconografico della glittica del primo periodo paleo-babilonese, sebbene la danza sia l'argomento principale solo in pochi casi. Il significato di questa singolare rappresentazione potrebbe, tuttavia, essere meglio chiarito attraverso l'identificazione del dio simboleggiato dal bastone a doppia testa di leone. A questo riguardo, tra gli dèi Nergal e Ištar, che, come abbiamo visto, rappresentano le due divinità cui la simbologia del sigillo rimanda, la dea sembra essere la più plausibile: lo scettro, che è una chiara allusione ai suoi aspetti guerrieri, è infatti più frequentemente associato a lei durante il periodo paleo-babilonese (Collon 2007: 104). Vale ricordare che tra i vari tipi di danze attestate nel repertorio glittico babilonese antico, Matoušová (1978: 159) è convinta, a causa della sua frequente associazione con una divinità femminile, del collegamento tra la danza *à cloche-pied* e le attività culturali di Ištar. Inoltre, la presenza di un serpente (ed eventualmente anche dello scorpione) potrebbe riferirsi ad aspetti legati alla fertilità della figura religiosa di Ištar, associazione già evidenziata da L. Battini nel caso di una placca fittile da Isin, in cui la dea è rappresentata con una testa di toro, serpenti e armi che fuoriescono dalle sue spalle.¹⁸ Il serpente è presente anche nel già citato sigillo BM 86269 (fig. 4 no. 2), dove, come sottolineato più su, la scena della danza della *Tarantella* è associata a un re che presenta la sua vittoria a una dea. La falce di luna che accompagna le celebrazioni tra cui la

¹⁷ Si vedano ancora Matoušová 1978 e Graziani 2018.

¹⁸ La placca è datata al regno di Enlil-Bani, 1860–1836 secondo la cronologia media, Battini 2009; si veda ancora Matoušová (1978: 159): «Selon les symboles (scorpion, serpent, lézard, oiseau, lion club, cruche et palmier) ils dansent durant les rites du culte d'Ishtar et durant les rites de la fécondité et de la fertilité».

danza *à cloche-pied* è attestata in cinque dei sigilli riportati nella citata tabella in Matoušová 1978.

Il motivo principale del sigillo, la coppia danzante, può essere messo in relazione alla dea anche sulla base delle fonti cuneiformi. Il *Poema di Agušaya* (Foster 2005: 96 e sgg.), datato al regno di Hammurabi, narra la creazione di un *Doppelgänger* di Ištar, chiamato *Šaltu*, lett. ‘discordia, scontro’, da parte di Ea, che usa *Šaltu* per rendere la dea Ištar consapevole del suo terribile comportamento (Hawthorne 2015). Sebbene il testo non sia completamente conservato, sembra che Ištar non sia in grado di sconfiggere il suo avversario e capisca che *Šaltu* rispecchia le sue stesse caratteristiche. Quindi, si addivene ad un accordo tra le due divinità: Ea le assicura che si sbarazzerà di *Šaltu* e Ištar promette di modificare il suo comportamento. Ea poi «ordina una festa annuale in cui la gente balli follemente per le strade in memoria di Ištar/Agušaya» (Foster 2005: 96). Le danze folli sono descritte nel poema come ‘vorticosi’,¹⁹ alludendo ai movimenti circolari dei danzatori: sebbene questo tipo di danza sia spesso associato ai movimenti dei *darwish*, il termine ‘vortice’ potrebbe indicare il movimento caotico di due persone che ballano (formando un cerchio?) insieme, mano nella mano, saltando su un piede e probabilmente emettendo del rumore quando battono coi piedi sul pavimento. La danza *à cloche-pied*, d'altronde, era già stata collegata al culto di Ištar da Matoušová (1978: 159), come detto, per la frequente associazione della danza con una dea femminile.

Un'ulteriore, seppur ipotetica, correlazione tra la rappresentazione sul sigillo e il *Poema di Agušaya* potrebbe essere rappresentato dall'iconografia dei due danzatori. Come detto più su, uno dei due ha capelli e barba mossi mentre l'altro è caratterizzato da un aspetto più giovane, e queste caratteristiche dei due uomini che attuano la danza sacra potrebbero essere messe in relazione da un lato con la descrizione di Ištar nel Poema come

¹⁹ Si veda CAD G s.v. *gūštu*, ‘whirl-dance’ (p. 143 sg.) e *gāšu*, ‘to whirl, to dance’ (p. 58 *ad gāšu* B, forse in relazione a *gāšu* A, ‘to go, to come, andare e venire’), per cui si veda Gabbay 2003: 104; Ambos 2012. Si noti che il termine *gūštu* è in relazione semantica con *nigittu*, ‘hop-dance’, e rappresenta un gioco etimologico con il nome della dea *Gušea* (Ištar); anche Graziani 2018: 401.

giovane uomo²⁰ e dall'altro con la menzione nello stesso testo degli "straordinari" capelli di *Ṣaltu* (Foster 2005: 99). Questa differenza nella rappresentazione dei danzatori non è però presente negli altri sigilli con lo stesso tema, per cui l'identificazione con i due personaggi mitici resta solo una suggestione da verificare.

Sebbene al momento non siano disponibili datazioni al 14C attendibili, l'iconografia del sigillo di Abu Tbeirah testimonia la presenza nel sito di una limitata occupazione in epoca paleo-babilonese, le cui tracce sono state quasi completamente obliterate dall'erosione. La ricchezza dei corredi rinvenuti nelle tombe dell'Area 6, tra cui quella plausibilmente saccheggiata in cui è stato rinvenuto il sigillo, possono rendere ragione della ricchezza dell'area nel versante sud-occidentale della parte più alta del sito. Sebbene la natura dell'edificio tagliato dalle fosse e dalle tombe di epoca successiva sia ancora sconosciuta, esso aveva plausibilmente un carattere istituzionale, come suggerisce la scoperta dei mattoni iscritti di Amar-Suena nelle sue fondamenta (D'Agostino, Romano 2020). Ulteriori scavi degli edifici E1 ed E2 aiuteranno a comprendere meglio il contesto cui il sigillo era correlato.

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²⁰ Foster 2005: 104; la doppia natura di Ištar e i suoi aspetti maschili sono ben noti dalla tradizione letteraria e religiosa babilonese (Harris 1991; Hawthorn 2015: 456).

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Figure

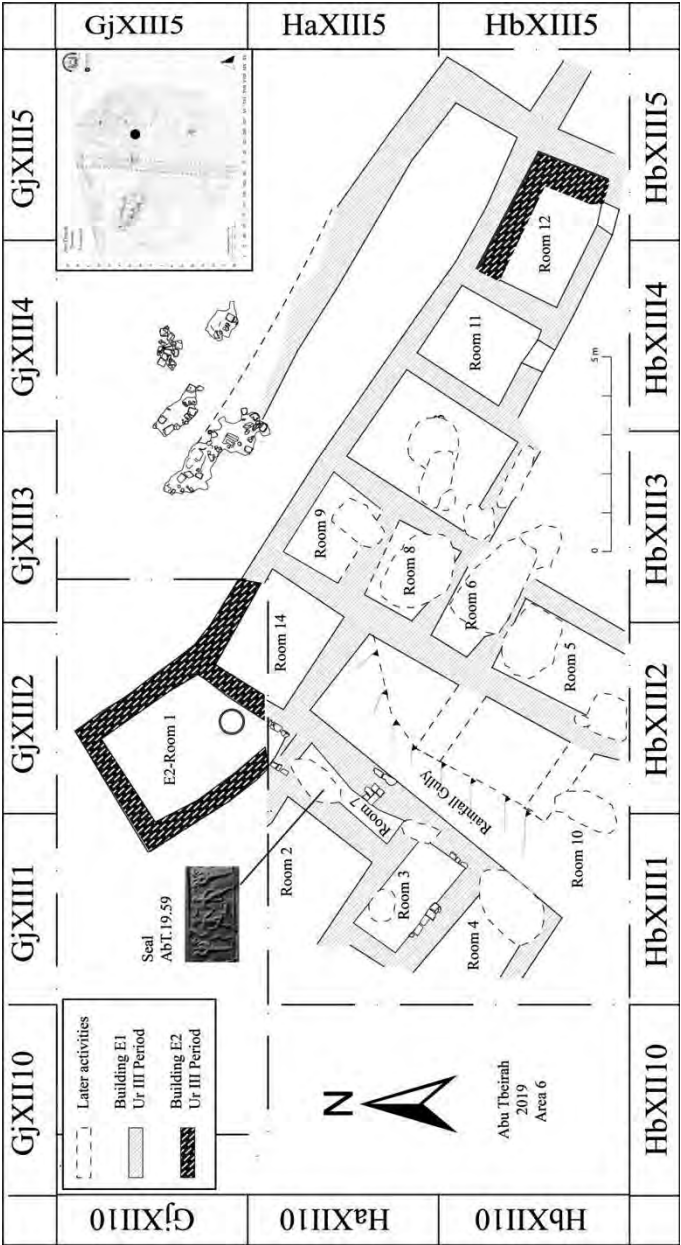


Fig.1 - Pianta Settore NE.

Un sigillo paleo-babilonese con scena di danza da Abu Tbeirah (Iraq meridionale)



Fig. 2 - AbT19.59 Foto.



Fig. 3 - AbT.19.59 Impronta.



Fig. 4 - BM 86269.



Fig. 5 - *Moortgat 1940 Taf. 45 no. 358.*

On Wood Statues, Beds, and Daughters-in-law

LORENZO VERDERAME

This paper is the result of a long turn.¹ It started as a survey of wooden statuary evidence in third millennium Mesopotamia and ended to emend the few references in this respect. In fact, the sign NU₂ is very similar to ALAN and has been systematically confused with the latter in the passages here discussed. Thus, the close analysis of the texts resulted in no references to ‘wood statues’ (^{ĝi}s³alan) and an abundance of ‘beds’ (^{ĝi}s³nu₂) in the Neo-Sumerian corpus. A collateral outcome is a discussion of the ceremony of the ‘installation of the bed’ (^{ĝi}s³nu₂ gub-ba) performed in relationship with the daughter-in-law (e₂-ĝi₄-a). It is my pleasure to offer this multifaceted paper to Simonetta Graziani in occasion of her jubilee.

1. U. 30128

U. 30128 is a small, almost complete, Neo-Sumerian tablet excavated by Woolley in Ur and now kept in the British Museum.² The tablet has been catalogued in Nisaba 5 together with the other Neo-Sumerian tablets from Woolley’s excavation still un-

¹ I am grateful to Franco Pomponio who read the draft and provided helpful comments and to Angelo Colonna for the Egyptian wooden statuary references.

² An image of the text is available on the portal Ur Online of the British Museum (<http://www.ur-online.org/subject/52387/>) as well as on BDTNS (167046) and CDLI (P331657).

published and to be returned to Iraq.³ The tablet measures 45×48×25mm and it is covered with seven lines of writing on the obverse and five on the reverse. It presents peculiar features both on the shape and the content. The tablet is different from the squared small tablets coming from Ur. It is thick and its angles are smoothed. The document, which records a series of goods, but bears no names or date, may well be a memorandum. The list of goods in the obverse and the reverse are identical but for two lines.

Obv.

¹ 10 še gur	Ten <i>gurs</i> of barley,
² 1 GA ₂ .TIR	one ..., ⁴
³ 4 ġi ^š DU.DA	four ..., ⁵
⁴ 4 ġi ^š gu-za	four stools,
⁵ 4 ġi ^š nu ₂	four beds,
⁶ ʾ22(+x)ʾ dug	twenty-two jars,
⁷ ʾx+1ʾ tu ^g 2ʾbar ² ʾ-si	[...] sashes.
⁸ blank	

Rev.

¹ [(x)] ʾšeʾ gur	[...] <i>gurs</i> of barley,
² [...]	[...]
³ [(x)] ġi ^š gu-za	[...] stools,
⁴ 4 ġi ^š nu ₂	four beds,
⁵ (x?) dug	... jars.
blank	

³ D'Agostino, Laurito, Pomponio 2004: 31 no. 176.

⁴ This term is not otherwise documented; see, however, the entry ^gi^špa^šg^š-tir-zum in UR5-ra IX a5 (MSL 7, 41) and VIII 112 (*Emar* 6/4, 86 Annexe II l. 4', MIN-tir-šum).

⁵ Ġi^š.DU appears together with other wood objects (ġi^šDU.Ġi^š.AM, CUSAS 6 1537 A+B: o. 5; see also Ġi^š.DU×MIN, Vicino Oriente 8/1 30: o. 2, RO 11 99 09: r. 7?), as an object(?) for which silver nails are made (11 ġin₂ ku₃-babbar \ 72 un^udu^ggag Ġi^š.DU, AUCT 1 146: o. 2, r. 1), and as part of the personal name Lugal-Ġi^š.DU (*STA* 20: o. ii 3); see also ITT 2, 752: o. 13 ((PN) a₂-Ġi^š.DU-ni-im nu-[u₃]-tila) and Nisaba 19, 297: 2' ([...] ʾmaʾ-<na> Ġi^š.DU(-)[...]). ePSD equates ġi^šdu-da with Akkadian *dūdu* 'kettle'; besides this equation is not documented in the lexical lists, the *dūdu* is made of metal, usually bronze (*siṣarru*) or copper (*erū*), see CAD D s.v. A 170.

The text, lacking the date and name of officials, offers no element of analysis,⁶ and, in fact, it has not attracted the attention of any scholar till now. I have stumbled upon U. 30128 while collecting references as part of a large project on statuary. The entry in the catalogue Nisaba 5 mentions a ‘wood statue’ (^{giš}alan),⁷ which would be one of the few references to this type of objects.

2. Wood statue or bed?

In third millennium cuneiform sources, references to wooden statues would be limited to three other cases. The first two are Neo-Sumerian documents, one recording an entry of sheep skins to make various objects, including the cushion (^{ša}3-tuku^u5) of a (chair? of a) wooden statue (^{giš}alan),⁸ and one recording an offering of flour and *eša*-flour «for the festival of the ... wooden statue».⁹ The third one is a fragment of a list of workers from Sippar, where, between the herald (ⁿⁱgir) and the *gal-sukkal*, is listed I-lu-DIĜIR, ‘that of the statue’ (^{šu} ^{giš}alan).¹⁰

			?
U. 30128	U. 30128	CT 50, 74	Nisaba 24, 25

Tab. 1 - The sign NU₂ in the discussed documents.

This is how the editors of the texts read the signs. BDTNS and CDLI followed them.¹² A closer look to the sign on the tablet

⁶ One may wonder whether the text is an exercise.

⁷ D’Agostino, Laurito, Pomponio 2004: 31 no. 176.

⁸ 145 ½ kuš udu \ ^{gi}pisaĝ-dub u₂-ninni₅ šu-ub-ud₅ u₂-ninni₅l u₃ ša₃-tuku₅ ^{giš}alan ba-a-si; *L’uomo* 55 (044793/P112474): o. ii 9-10. For ša₃-tuku₅ as seat cushion, see Verderame 2012: 165.

⁹ 1 sila₃ zi₃ 1 sila₃ eša \ sizku₂ ^{giš}ala[n gub²-b]a; Nisaba 24, 25 (069073/P375983): r. i 10-11.

¹⁰ AŠ I-lu-DIĜIR \ šu ^{giš}alan; CT 50, 74 (176319/P212980): i 5’6’.

¹¹ I have not been able to collate the tablet. However, there is no doubt that in the passage of Nisaba 24, 25: r. i 11, the reading is nu₂ for the numerous parallels to the sizku₂ ^{giš}nu₂ gub-ba; see the discussion below.

¹² Sites accessed 19/12/2021.

shows, however, that, in all these cases, the sign is NU₂ and not ALAN.



Tab. 2 - Examples of the ALAN sign in Neo-Sumerian sources.

Thus, the references to ḡis^{is}alan in the following texts should be emended ḡis^{is}nu₂:

<i>Text</i>	<i>BDTNS</i>	<i>CDLI</i>	<i>Lines</i>	<i>Previous reading</i>	<i>Emended</i>
U. 30128	167046	P331657	o. 5, r. 4	ḡis ^{is} alan	ḡis ^{is} nu ₂
L'uomo 55	044793	P112474	o. ii 9-10	ša ₃ -tuku ₅ ḡis ^{is} alan	ša ₃ -tuku ₅ ḡis ^{is} nu ₂
Nisaba 24, 25	069073	P375983	r. i 10-11	sizkur ₂ ḡis ^{is} ala[n] gub ² -b]a	sizkur ₂ ḡis ^{is} n[u ₂ gub-b]a
CT 50, 74	176319	P212980	i 5'-6'	šu ḡis ^{is} alan	šu ḡis ^{is} nu ₂

The reference in *L'uomo* 55: o. ii 10, refers to the mattress of a bed (ša₃-tuku₅ ḡis^{is}nu₂) and in CT 50, 74: i 6', to an official in charge of the royal or divine bed (šu ḡis^{is}nu₂).¹³

3. 'The installation of the bed': A marriage ceremony

As for Nisaba 24, 25: r. i 11, the 'offering for the installation of the bed' (sizkur₂ ḡis^{is}nu₂ gub-ba) for the daughter-in-law (e₂-gi₄-a) is documented in five texts from Puzriš-Dagān:¹⁴

¹³ References to beds in Old Akkadian sources are scarce. CT 50, 74: i 5' aside, the name I-lu-DIĜIR appears only once (CTMMA 1, 7: r. iii 12-13, Iṣ-ṭup-DIĜIR \ DUMU I-lu-DIĜIR) and we have no clues for the title or duties of the šu ḡis^{is}nu₂.

¹⁴ For this ceremony see Such-Gutiérrez 1998 and 1999; Such-Gutiérrez discusses all the documents here mentioned, but BPOA 7, 2551, which has been published in 2009. In his studies on the Ur III brides, Michalowski believes that e₂-gi₄-a means 'bride', see for instance Michalowski 1977: 51 («Dabur-haṭṭum, the 'bride' (é-gi₄-a) of the ruler of Hamazi»); see, most recently, also Klein, Brenner 2013: 612 («For Waqartum as wife of the city-governor Urmes ... Wa-qar-tum é-gi₄-a Ur-mes ensi₂»). However, the interpretation of e₂-gi₄-a as 'bride'

<i>Text</i>	<i>BDTNS</i>	<i>CDLI</i>	<i>Date</i>
BIN 3, 382	016390	P106188	AS 9/XI/17
OIP 121, 576	047291	P124306	AS 9/XI/17
Trouvaille 16	002410	P134689	ŠS 1/XII/12
AUCT 3, 196	029957	P104418	ŠS 9/XI/17
BPOA 7, 2551	168444	P391013	[x/x]/9

BIN 3, 382, records an offering for ‘the installation of the bed’, between those to the goddess Inanna of Uruk and to Šaušga of Ninive.

Obv. 3) 1 gu₄ niga 2 udu niga 4-kam us₂ 4) sizkur₂ nu₂ gub-ba 5) e₂-gi₄-a
Ur-^dIškur ensi₂ Ha-ma-zi₂^{ki 6)} Šu-^dNin-šubur ra₂-gaba maškim

1 fattened ox, 2 fattened sheep of fourth quality – offering for the installation of the bed of the daughter-in-law of Ur-Iškur, governor of Hamazi; Šū-Ninšubur, the rider, is the responsible.

The text OIP 121, 576, is a duplicate of BIN 3, 382, but it is sealed by Addakala.¹⁵

A similar offering is made for the daughter-in-law of Šarrum-bāni in Trouvaille 16:

Obv. 9) 2 udu [...] Rev. 1) 3 udu niga 2) sizkur₂ ḡi^šnu₂ gub-ba 3) Lugal-ma₂-
gur₈-re maškim 4) mu e₂-gi₄-a Šar-ru-um-ba-ni-še₃

Two sheep [...], three fattened sheep – offering for the installation of the bed – Lugal-magure is the responsible – for the daughter-in-law of Šarrum-bāni.

AUCT 3, 196, is a small sealed tablet recording only the offering of one fattened ox for the daughter-in-law of Arwītum:

Obv. 1) 1 gu₄ niga 2) sizkur₂ ḡi^šnu₂ gub-ba 3) e₂-gi₄-a Ar-wi-tum 4) ^dŠu-^dSuen-
la-ma-ha-ar sagi maškim 5) a₂-ḡi₆-ba-a 6) u₄ 17-kam Rev. 1) ki ^dŠul-gi-i₃-li₂-ta
2) ba-zi 3) ḡiri₃ ^dNanna-ma-ba ša₃-tam u₃ Šu-Ir₃-ra dub-sar 4) iti ezem-An-

or ‘wife’ is confuted by the fact that governor’s wives are consistently recorded as dam ensi₂ in the Neo-Sumerian sources and that in AUCT 3, 196: o. 3 (see below) is mentioned the e₂-gi₄-a of Arwītum, a woman.

¹⁵ 1) Ad-da-ka-la 2) dub-sar 3) dumu Ni₃-erim₂-ga-[sug-/ga].

na ⁵⁾ mu ^dŠu-^dSuen lugal<<-e>> Uri^{ki}-ma-ke₄ ⁶⁾ e₂ ^dŠara₂ Umma^{ki}-ka
mu-du₃ ^{L.h.c. 1)} 1 gu₄
^{Seal I 1)} ^dŠu-^dSuen ²⁾ lugal kala-ga ³⁾ lugal Uri^{ki}-ma ⁴⁾ lugal an-ub-da limmu₂-
ba ^{ii 1)} ^dNanna-ma-ba ²⁾ dub-sar ³⁾ dumu U₂-na-ap-še-en₆ ⁴⁾ arad₂-zu

One fattened ox – offering for the installation of the bed of the daughter-in-law of Arwītum; Šū-Su'en-lā-mahar, the cupbearer, is the responsible.

Night offering of the day 17. From Šulgi-ilī, delivery via Nanna-maba, the *šatam*, and Šū-Erra, the scribe.

Month of the festival of An, year (when) Šū-Su'en, king of Ur, built the temple of Šara in Umma. (Total) 1 ox.

(Seal) Šū-Su'en, mighty king, king of Ur, king of the four quarters: Nanna-maba, the scribe, son of Unapšen, your servant.

Similar to AUCT 3, 196, is BPOA 7, 2551, a small unsealed tablet recording two entries among which one for 'the installation of the bed':

Obv. 1) 3 udu niga sig₅ us₂ ²⁾ 1 udu niga 3-kam us₂ ³⁾ 2 udu niga ⁴⁾ 3 udu
⁵⁾ sizkur₂ ^{giš}nu₂ gub-ba ⁶⁾ e₂-gi₄-a [...]

Three fattened sheep of lower quality, one fattened sheep of third quality, two fattened sheep, three sheep – offering for the installation of the bed of the daughter-in-law of [...].

The quantity of the offerings differs consistently from one text to another, as the following table shows:

<i>Text</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>e₂-gi₄-a of</i>	<i>Offerings</i>
BIN 3, 382	AS 9/XI/17	Ur- ^d Iškur ensi ₂	1 gu ₄ niga
		Ha-ma-ziz ^{ki}	2 udu niga 4-kam us ₂
OIP 121, 576	AS 9/XI/17	[=	=]
Trouville 16	ŠS 1/XII/12	Šar-ru-um-ba-ni	2 udu [...] 3 udu niga
AUCT 3, 196	ŠS 9/XI/17	Ar-wi-tum	1 gu ₄ niga
BPOA 7, 2551	[x/x]/9	[...]	3 udu niga sig ₅ us ₂
			1 udu niga 3-kam us ₂
			2 udu niga 2 udu

4. Whose daughter-in-law?

It must be noted that these offerings, performed for or on behalf of the daughter-in-law, focus on the father/mother-in-law rather than the future bride and groom. So, the point is who are these important in-laws mentioned in the texts? In the documents recording the offerings for the *e₂-gi₄-a*, only three names are preserved.

4.1 *Ur-Iškur*

Ur-Iškur is the well-known *ensi* of Hamazi and this is the title he bears in the texts – all from Puzriš-Dagān – mentioning the daughter-in-law (*e₂-gi₄-a*) of Ur-Iškur.¹⁶

- AUCT 3, 84 (029854/P104315; AS 9/XI/15): delivery of seventeen sheep for the kitchen «when Ur-Iškur, governor of Hamazi, took his daughter-in-law».¹⁷
- Torino 1, 261 (009577/P100215; AS 9/XI/19): issue of three billy goats as «provisions for the daughter-in-law of Ur-Iškur, governor of Hamazi»;¹⁸ the officials are the same of BIN 3, 382 and OIP 121, 576: Šū-Ninšubur, the rider, is the *maškim*, and Addakala, the scribe, is the *ĝiri₃*.
- Ontario 1, 160 (047479/P124573; AS 9/XI/18) is a recapitulative account recording the entry of Torino 1, 261, among others.¹⁹
- PDT 1, 454 (013161/P125870; ŠS 7/XI 29) records the issue of ten sheep and ten billy goats (grass-fed), for «Tabūr-hatṭum, daughter-in-law of Ur-Iškur, when she went to Hamazi».²⁰

¹⁶ Such-Gutiérrez 1998: 199-200.

¹⁷ 17 udu *e₂-muḫaldim* \ *u₄* Ur-^dIškur *ensi₂* \ Ha-ma-zi^{ki}-ke₄ \ *e₂-gi₄-a-ni* ba-an-tum₂-ma-a (AUCT 3, 84: 1-4).

¹⁸ *igi-kar₂* *e₂-gi₄-a* Ur-^dIškur *ensi₂* Ha-ma-zi^{ki} (Torino 1, 261: o. 2).

¹⁹ 3 udu *niga* \ *igi-kar₂* *e₂-gi₄-a* Ur-^dIškur *ensi₂* Ha-ma-zi^{ki} \ Šū-^dNin-šubur *ra₂-gaba* *maškim* (Ontario 1, 160: o. 1-3)

²⁰ 10 udu *u₂* \ 10 *maš₂-gal* *u₂* \ Ta₂-bur-hatṭum *e₂-gi₄-a* Ur-^dIškur \ *u₄* Ha-ma-zi^{ki}-še₃ *i₃-ĝen-na-a* (PDT 1, 454: o. 1-4).

The last document provides us two important pieces of information: first, it records the name of the future bride, Tabūr-haṭṭum; second, it informs us that, seven years after the e₂-gi₄-a ceremony (AS 9/XI/15-19), Tabūr-haṭṭum was still in the status of daughter-in-law and has not yet moved to Hamazi (ŠS 7/XI 29). The suspended status of Tabūr-haṭṭum is documented by another document dated ŠS 2/XIII/-, Trouville 87 (002481/P134760), where a bronze ewer is presented as a gift to «Tabūr-haṭṭum, daughter-in-law of the governor Ur-Iškur».²¹ To the same year is dated another document, PDT 1, 449 (013156/P125865; ŠS 2/II/11), recording the delivery of a large number of sheep (2714) by Ur-Iškur, governor of Hamazi, perhaps related to the gifts exchanged before the marriage. Tabūr-haṭṭum is never qualified, but indirect evidence suggests that she was a princess.²²

4.2 *Arwītum* (AUCT 3, 196; ŠS 9/XI/17)

Arwītum (Ar-wi/bi₂-tum) is a feminine name²³ and it appears in relationship with the e₂-gi₄-a in other two occasions. One is a fragmentary passage in a text dated to ŠS 9/XI/18, thus contemporary to AUCT 3, 196.²⁴ The other is an entry in a document whose date is lost: «three fattened sheep to the daughter pi₂-ši-tum,²⁵ daughter-in-law of Arwītum, when Nanāja libated beer».²⁶ With a different writing (Ar-bi₂-tum),²⁷ she is qualified as wife (dam) of Hun-habUR,²⁸ an important official, documented

²¹ I šen-dil₂ šu-niġin₂ zabar \ Ta₂-bur-haṭ-ṭum e₂-gi₄-a Ur-^dIškur ensi₂ \ in-ba (Trouville 87: o. 1-3).

²² See most recently Weiershäuser 2008: 264.

²³ See Such-Gutiérrez 1998: 201 note 18.

²⁴ YOS 15, 161 (187643; PD, ŠS 9/XI/18): r. 17 ([... e₂]-gi₄-a Ar-wi-tum).

²⁵ The word pi₂-ši-tum ('The white one') may well be an apposition of dumu-munus or a personal name, although the name is expected to precede dumu-munus.

²⁶ AUCT 3 508 (030249/P104713; PD, [x/x/x]): r. 7-9 (3 udu niga dumu-munus pi₂-ši-tum \ e₂-gi₄-a Ar-wi-tum \ u₄ ^dNa-na-a kaš in-na-ni-de₂-a).

²⁷ See Such-Gutiérrez 1998: 201 note 18.

²⁸ BIN 3, 48 (016056/P105854; AS 2/IV/25): r. 1-2 (Ar-bi₂-tum \ dam Hun-ha-ab-UR).

from Š 43 to AS 2, who bears the title of ‘general’,²⁹ is the overseer of the booty from the Martu land,³⁰ and is active in Harši.³¹ The mention of Arwītum in the e₂-gi₄-a ceremony instead of his husband, Hu-un-ha-ab-UR, may imply that the latter was dead by the time. One document records the name of a son of Hun-habUR, Iddin-Su’en, who may be the future groom of our text.³²

4.3 Šarrum-bāni (Trouvaille 16; ŠS 1/XII/12)

Šarrum-bāni is a common name. Among the people bearing this name we have a nu-banda₃, a lu₂-kin-gi₄-a lugal, and a šakkan₆;³³ the last two appears together in documents from Irisağrig.³⁴ According to the previous cases, Šarrum-bāni the ‘general’ is the most eligible candidate as father-in-law of Trouvaille 16. He is documented from AS 4 to IS 6 in different archives:

<i>Text</i>	<i>BDTNS</i>	<i>CDLI</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Archive</i>	<i>Line</i>
Nisaba 33, 314	204204	P517490	AS 4/XII/25	PD	o. 2
Nisaba 8, 161	165685	P320580	AS 7/I/20	PD	o. 2
MVN 3, 257	018200	P113817	ŠS 3/IV/-	?	r. 1
Nisaba 15/2 833	173301	P388013	IS 2/IX/6	Irisağrig	o. 3
CUSAS 40-2, 229	200371	P515013	IS 6/II/15	Irisağrig	o. 2

²⁹ Trouvaille 86 (002480/P134759; PD, Š 46/VII/17): o. 6 (Hu-un-ha-ab-UR [šakkan₆]).

³⁰ Nisaba 30, 16 (003951/P130506; PD, Š 46/XII/7): o. 5-6 (nam-ra-ak kur mar-tu \ ġiri₃ Hu-un-ha-ab-UR).

³¹ TJAMC IES 337 (014300/P134093; PD, -/-/-): r. 3-4 (ugula Hu-un-ha-ab-UR \ ša₃ Ha-ar-si^{ki}).

³² Studies Levine 115-119 (074217/P292620; PD, AS 2/XI/-): iii 39. Note that a Iddin-Su’en is recorded as ‘prince’ (dumu lugal) in an undated text from Ġirsu, OBTR 87 (001357/P123022): o. 2.

³³ Among the homonyms documented only once is a gala in Puzriš-Dagān (Šar-ru-um-ba-ni \ u₄ nam-gala-še₃ i₃-in-ku₄-ra-a, AUCT 3, 42: o. 2-3) and, in Garšana archives, the šabra of E₂-dŠu-^dEN:ZU (CUSAS 6, 1546: o. 3) and a ku-rušda (CUSAS 3, 984: o. ii 4).

³⁴ Nisaba 15/2, 833; CUSAS 40-2, 229 (see below).

Šarrum-bāni ‘the general’ is mentioned in a seal of one of his subjects (Iddin-Ea) and one of his sons ([...]Enlil) as well.³⁵

According to CTMMA 1, 17 (AS 4/VII-): o. ii 13, the wife of a Šarrum-bāni is a princess (dumu-munus lugal).³⁶ The name of the wife of Šarrum-bāni, the general, is now documented in a recently published document, Nisaba 33, 314 (AS 4/XII/25), where one fattened sheep is delivered to the temple of Inanna «when Geme-Enlila, the wife of Šarrum-bāni, the general, gave birth».³⁷

If we accept that the unnamed ‘princess’ wife of Šarrum-bāni mentioned in CTMMA 1, 17 (AS 4/VII-): o. ii 13 is the same Geme-Enlila, wife of Šarrum-bāni the general, mentioned in Nisaba 33, 314 (AS 4/XII/25): o.2, then Geme-Enlila is a princess.³⁸

<i>Texts</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>e₂-gi₁-a of</i>	<i>Name of the e₂-gi₁-a</i>
BIN 3, 382	AS 9/XI/17		
OIP 121, 576	AS 9/XI/17		
AUCT 3, 84	AS 9/XI/15		
Torino 1, 261	AS 9/XI/19	Ur- ^d Iškur ensi ₂ Ha-	Tabūr-haṭṭum
Ontario 1, 160	AS 9/XI/18	ma-zi ₂ ^{ki}	
Trouvaille 87	ŠS 2/XIII/-		
PDT 1, 454	ŠS 7/XI 29		
Trouvaille 16	ŠS 1/XII/12	Šar-ru-um-ba-ni	?
AUCT 3, 196	ŠS 9/XI/17	Arwītum	Piṣītum(?)

³⁵ «Šarrum-bāni, the general – Iddin-Ea, your servant», CBCY 3, NBC 8507 (077694/P299863; IS 2/VI/-); «Ibbi-Su’en, [...]Enlil, son of Šarrum-bāni, the general, your servant» CBCY 3, NBC 11193 (078168/ P301801); both seals are documented on two still unpublished tablets from Nippur kept in the Yale Babylonian Collection.

³⁶ See Weiershäuser 2008: 172.

³⁷ Nisaba 33, 314: tabl. o. 2-3 // env. o. 2-r. 1 (u₄ Gemez-^dEn-lil₂-la₂ / dam Šar-ru-um-ba-ni šakkan³) in-tu-da-a).

³⁸ Two royal women named Geme-Enlila are known: the daughter of Šu-Su’en and Kubātum, who becomes *lukur* of Ninurta, and the wife of Ibbi-Su’en; they are usually considered as two different persons, see Such-Gutiérrez 2003: 156-157, with previous bibliography. Nisaba 33, 314, raises some problems on chronology and prosopography that can’t be treated here and will be discussed elsewhere.

5. Wood statues in Mesopotamia?

What about wooden statues? Sumerian literature offers few, inconsistent evidence. In *Lugalbanda and Anzu*, Lugalbanda promises Anzu that he will have his statues made by woodcarvers (ĝiš-dim₂).³⁹ In the dialogue *Date Palm and Tamarisk*, the Tamarisk states that from his «body (lit. flesh) the bodies of the gods are made».⁴⁰ As for archaeological evidence, the total absence of remains can't be an *a priori* argument against the existence of wood statuary in Mesopotamia.⁴¹ From ancient Egypt we have several statues made entirely of wood.⁴² In classical antiquity, on the other hand, composite statues with the exposed parts (head, arms, legs/feet) made of stone (acrolith) or ivory (chryselephantine) on a wooden structure, were widespread. As for Mesopotamia, several spare parts (heads, wigs, etc.) made of stone and metal are evidence for composite statues⁴³ whose structure could have been of wood over which the exposed parts were made of copper or stone.⁴⁴

³⁹ alan-zu/ĝu₁₀ ĝiš-dim₂-ba um-mi-dim₂ (*Lugalbanda and Anzu* 181 // 198). The interpretation of ĝiš-dim₂ as 'woodcarver', proposed by Wilcke 1969: 183, is based on similar constructions (ku₃-dim₂ 'precious stone/metal smith', za-dim₂ 'stone cutter') and would be documented only in these two passages. In Neo-Sumerian sources ĝiš-dim₂ is an object made of wood (ĝiš³-dim₂), probably a post or pole. In lexical lists, ĝiš-dim₂ is equated to the musical instrument ĝiš-gu₃-de₂ (*inu*): ĝiš-dim₂ = MIN (*i*-[*nu*]), U₁₅-ra VII B 127 (MSL 6, 126), the section begins with ĝiš-gu₃-de₂ = *i*-[*nu*] (U₁₅-ra VII B 117); see Krispijn 1990: 13-14.

⁴⁰ su-ĝu₁₀ su diĝir-re-e-ne-ke₄ ĝa₂-ke₄ ... su diĝir-re-e-ne ab-be₂-ze₂-en (*Date Palm and Tamarisk* 3, 16); see Streck 2004: 260.

⁴¹ For remaining archaeological evidence on statuary and the causes for their scarcity see most recently Verderame 2021a.

⁴² See Hornemann 1951/69; Vandier 1958; and, most recently, Harvey 2009.

⁴³ For ancient Mesopotamian statuary see Spycket 1981; for composite statues see Verderame 2021b: 343; Verderame 2022.

⁴⁴ This hypothesis is supported by the references to the wood in the *mīs pī* ritual.

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*Ladies and Horses in Nuzi**

CARLO ZACCAGNINI

1. Introduction

In this brief note I discuss four Nuzi women who are attested in documents from the palace archive dated to the last period of the city, soon before its destruction (ca. 1350 BC): the queen – never mentioned by her name, Allašihuri – a high-ranking court lady, and two women of the palace entourage: Allašikunni and Yamaštu. Common to all of them is that they have horses and chariots at their disposal. To be more precise, the queen and Allašihuri are attested among the participants in the royal parades of Nuzi, on a chariot pulled by a pair of horses; Allašikunni and Yamaštu, who do not take part in the royal parades, are once included in a list of men who have ‘fully harnessed horses’, *i.e.* horses trained to be yoked to a chariot. No other woman at Nuzi is known as having a horse to ride or to stand on a two-wheeled chariot, on private or public occasions.¹

* For Simonetta, a very modest token of long-lasting friendship and scientific appreciation.

¹ A different case is that of the woman Azuya, whose rich and diversified movable assets are recorded in the memorandum HSS XV 145. Among them, mention is made of «a pair of horses which he (=?) was driving, and other horses (which) he removed from the herd and took away by an act of robbery» (ll. 10-15). In the preceding lines, the same document mentions various components of the standard equipment of the Nuzi chariots: «[1] yoke for a chariot, one pair of wheels» (ll. 2-3), «1 set of armour for a horse, whose pads(?) are

2. The queen

HSS XV 102, an administrative tablet from the palace archives of Nuzi, is a short delivery note of four horses of different types. Among them, «1 (black) *barittannu*-horse was given to the queen» (ll. 5-6). We ignore for what purpose a single horse was given to the queen but it is not irrelevant to note that also the other horses mentioned in this text are individually recorded as single animals and not as possible components of pairs to be yoked to war or parade chariots: lines 1-2 mention «1 black *akkannu*-horse for a coach (*uatnannu*)»,² and lines 7-11 mention «1 *babrunnu*-mare» and «1 new (*eššu*(GIBIL)) *amkamannu*-mare» – the latter implicitly not (yet) trained to draw a chariot.

Even if horse riding was well known in Nuzi,³ it seems unlikely that the queen mounted a horse. In her participation to royal parades, in which she was always placed in the second position of the king's retinue after the king and his bodyguard, she stood on a chariot led by a chariot driver: she was often accompanied by another chariot and almost always by an escort horseman.⁴ Therefore, the black horse delivered to the queen in HSS XV 102 was probably destined for her escort, on the occasion of some private or public event, and not by the queen herself.

3. *Allašihuri*

Another woman sometimes was included among the exclusively male participants in the royal parades which took place in Nuzi.

of bronze and whose side covers (?) are also of bronze» (ll. 7-9). It is to be excluded that these horses and the items related to a war chariot were used personally by Azuya. [Hereafter, in quoting the texts published in the "Harvard Semitic Series" I will omit the siglum HSS].

² Zaccagnini 2020a: 207.

³ See the letter XIV 14: 3-7: «Now have the vizier and the temple administrator mount a pair of good horses (*ina ištēnūti sīsē damqāti šurkiššunūti*), and send them to PN, to the city of Zizza», and the mention of «2 men of the city of Purulliwe, horseriders (*rākib sīsē*)» in the long inventory XV 145: 25-26, quoted above, note 1. Cf. Zaccagnini 2020a: 151 with ns. 49-50.

⁴ 2 chariots + 1 escort horseman (XVI 443: 4; XIV 52: 5); 1 chariot + 1 escort horseman (XIV 48: 3; XIV 46: 3; XIV 53: 3); 2 chariots (XIV 49: 3; XV 239: 2). Cf. Zaccagnini 2020a: 160.

As an alternative and substitute to the queen, five times the texts mention Allašihuri, a high-ranking lady of probable Ḫanigalbatean/Mittanian origin. If we accept my reconstruction of the antecedents of her arrival from Ḫanigalbat to the country of Arrapḫe, and her presence at Nuzi,⁵ she was a foreign princess – the only woman aside from the (king's wife) queen – included in the elite of the royal milieu. Therefore, it is well conceivable that the political reasons supporting the official presence near the king of Arrapḫe of a high-ranking female representative of the Ḫanigalbatean/Mittanian overlord would exclude the contemporary presence of the king's own wife on a public scenery. Female rivalries or jealousies are not to be ruled out but are left to our imagination.

Only once, on the occasion of the great feast of Ištar of Nineveh, Allašihuri is present together with the queen in a great parade, albeit further back in the retinue (12th position, while the queen is in her usual 2nd position).⁶ In any case, she was always equipped with a chariot, on which she stood together with her chariot driver.⁷

Allašihuri is only attested in two other texts: XVI 115: 6-7, a monthly ration list of wheat and emmer for women residing in the palace, and XVI 331: 2, the only woman in a list of «26 men who are *pišanni* (=?) and have been placed in Nuzi» (ll. 27-28).⁸ The context and the meaning of this document are obscure but it is interesting that the men listed before and immediately after Allašihuri are well-known members of the palace and military elite, most of whom are equipped with chariots or pairs of horses.

The sequence of names in XVI 331: 1-12 corresponds to that in XVI 332: 2-12 (both texts are sealed by the vizir (*sukkalhu*) Akiya): Tatip-tešup (l. 1) is a 'king's son', frequently mentioned in royal parades, in which he is equipped with one or two or even three chariots;⁹ Urḫa-tati (l. 3) is a 'king's son' (XV 332: 2); Nai-tilla son of Teššuya (l. 4) is a chariot driver equipped with 2

⁵ Zaccagnini 2020a: 168, with discussion of XV 91, a record of four ceremonial chariots delivered to high Ḫanigalbatean noblemen arrived in Nuzi.

⁶ XIV 49: 13 and 3, respectively.

⁷ XIV 49: 13; XIV 56: 7-8; XVI 111: 10; XIV 58: 7; XIV 57: 11.

⁸ Cf. Dosch 2009: 130-131, No. 45.

⁹ Zaccagnini 2020a: 168-170.

‘pairs (of horses) (*šimittu*)’ (XV 35: 19); Tieš-urḫe son of Takku (l. 5), a commander of the left wing of the Arrapḫean army (XV 26: 6; XV 29: 19; XV 40: 15), is equipped with 2 chariots (XV 34: 31); Enna-mati son of Niḫri-tilla (l. 6), Ḫuti-ḫamanna son of Kirziya (l. 7) and Eḫli-tešup son of Waqar-bēli (l. 8) are included in a list of «[n] men whose horses are fully harnessed (*malû*)» (XV 35: 25 and 29); on one occasion, the same Enna-mati son of Niḫri-tilla lacks replacement horses for his chariot (XV 31: 25-26: «other horses have not gone out (from the stables)»; Teḫit-tešup son of Šar-tešup (l. 9) is mentioned in a list of «15 (men) who have not one horse» (XV 31: 1).

The reason of Allašihuri’s presence in this list of military personnel is difficult to understand: however, it is clear that all these people had pairs of horses at their disposal, trained to draw war and/or parade chariots. We ignore in what kind of private or public activities Allašihuri was involved, aside from her participation in royal parades, but it is interesting to point out that – with the isolated exception of the two ladies who will be presented below – no other woman, in the entire corpus of the Nuzi texts, is recorded as having at her disposal a pair of horses (for drawing a chariot).

4. *Allašikunni and Yamaštu*

Two women are mentioned in XV 35, a list of [56²] people equipped with ‘fully harnessed horses’: Allašikunni (l. 31) and Yamaštu (l. 33). All other people are men: some of them are chariot drivers and members of the palace milieu, but the majority are unknown or impossible to identify.

The text is divided in two sections, separated by a dividing line: ll. 1-36 (consisting of three subsections: ll. 1-20, 21-30 and 31-36) and ll. 38¹⁰-44. Lines 1-20 mention 21 men, most of whom are well-known chariot drivers and military commanders, all equipped with one or two or even three ‘pairs (of horses)’ (*šimittu*); ll. 21-30 mention 12 men, of unknown or uncertain identity, equipped with «1 ANŠE.KUR.RA^{meš} (sic!)»; ll. 31-36 mention 9 people, including two women – Allašikunni (l. 31) and Yamaštu

¹⁰ Line 37 is erased.

(l. 33) – equipped with «ANŠE.KUR.RA^{meš}»; ll. 38-44 do not make any mention of horses and list 13 men, six of whom are identifiable as ‘palace residents’. The resumptive total in ll. 45-46 reads: «[n] men, whose horses are fully harnessed. Of the left (wing of the army)» (⁴⁵[...] LÚ^{meš} ša ANŠE.KUR.RA-šu-nu malû (‘SI.A^{1meš}) ⁴⁶[š]a GÜB).

Of specific interest to our present topic are the two women included in the group of 9 people of ll. 31-36: Allašikunni (l. 31), who is equipped with ‘(n) horses’ (³¹ANŠE.KUR.RA^{meš} ša ‘Allašiku(nn)i) and is followed by a man, another woman (l. 33: Yamaštu) and 6 men, all of whom are also presumably provided with ‘(n) horses’. Only two of the seven men are identifiable, although close to nothing is known about them: the scribe Urhite and the ‘palace resident’ Šaškiya (both in l. 36).¹¹

Before analyzing the available information about the two women, we must understand the exact meaning of ‘horses of ‘PN’ in l. 31, which also applies to the other people listed in ll. 32-36. It is clear that the horses associated with each of these people are two animals – no less and no more – trained to be yoked and pull a chariot. However, what is the difference between the ‘pairs (of horses)’ (*šimittu*) listed in ll. 1-20 and the ‘(2) horses’ of ll. 31-36,¹² considering that the resumptive total in l. 45 («[n] men, whose horses are fully harnessed») presumably includes *all* the people listed in this text? In other words, if *all* these [54²] men and 2 women had one pair of ‘fully harnessed’ horses at their disposal (and some of them two and even three pairs), it is reasonable to hypothesize that the professional chariot drivers listed in ll. 1-20 had well-trained horses apt to draw war chariots in battle, whereas other people – including two women – mounted on chariots, pulled by pairs of horses, for auxiliary activities and personal transfers whose details are totally unknown. At any rate, neither Allašikunni nor Yamaštu are ever mentioned in the Nuzi royal parades: their use of horse-drawn chariots remains an exclusively private matter, ignored by scribal recordings.

¹¹ Urhite is the scribe of the legal procedure AASOR XVI 73: 34; Šaškiya is mentioned in XV 37: 13, a list of defective bows.

¹² Not to speak of the «1 ANŠE.KUR.RA^{meš}» of ll. 21-30.

4.1 Allašikunni

Aside from XV 35: 31, Allašikunni is attested in four other documents: XV 42: 37 (a list of workforce assigned to members of the palace milieu), XIV 135: 4 (a ration list of beer), XV 330: 4 (a broken ration list of loaves of bread), XIV 138: 2 (a distribution of garments from the stores of the palace). She is probably also the Allašikunni, mother of an otherwise unknown woman Uriš-elli,¹³ attested in XIV 115: 7-8 (a distribution of wheat to young palace servants and to the woman Uriš-elli, daughter of Allašikunni).¹⁴

An overall scrutiny of these texts shows that Allašikunni was a woman belonging to the inner circle of the palace milieu but nothing is known about her parents and other family members, aside from being the mother of the woman Uriš-elli.

XV 42 is a long list of adult and young male workforce at the disposal of a vast number of palace personnel. Only two women are included in this list: the queen (in l. 25, written ^{sal}ša-ra-ti),¹⁵ and Allašikunni (in l. 32): both women have 3 men at their disposal.

XIV 135 records various quantities of beer, measured according to the *tallu* measure (*i.e.* ca. 6.7 liters), allotted to several people of the palace entourage. Allašikunni is the only woman, mentioned by name, included in a group of female beer recipients who are listed at the beginning of the text (ll. 1-7):

¹[n *tallu*] of beer to the queen, ²[n *ta*llu] of beer to the concubines (*esrētu*),³ ²*tallu* of beer to the daughter-in-law (*kallatu*), ⁴1 *tallu* of beer to Allašikunni, ⁵1 *tallu* of beer to the wet nurses (*mušēniqātu*)⁶ of Šašu-tešup, ⁷1 *tallu* of beer to the young women (*šuḫārātu*) of the country of Mari.

¹³ Some Uriš-elli homonyms are attested in other archives.

¹⁴ This text will be commented on below, in § 5 (sub Malkuti).

¹⁵ I do not think that ^{sal}ša-ra-ti is a female personal name, nowhere else attested in the Nuzi texts. In spite of the unusual writing, I think that the woman mentioned in l. 25 is the queen, especially in consideration of the number of men put at her disposal.

The fragmentary text XV 330 (only ll. 1-7 are preserved) records a distribution of loaves of bread (NINDA^{meš}): Allašikunni is mentioned, among other women, at the beginning of the text:

¹16 loaves of barley to the musicians, ²6 loaves to Šašu-tešup, ³4 loaves to the women *ma-ri-ḫ-x*¹, ⁴2 loaves to Allašikunni, ⁵2 loaves to the daughters of the king, ⁶[n loaves]to Tun-tešup (and) to Tupki-tešup

It will be noted that both XIV 135 and XV 330 include Šašu-tešup among the recipients of beer (for the wet nurses) and bread loaves; he is also attested in two other documents, among recipients of food deliveries: «1 serving (g^{is}BANŠUR) and 6 loaves (NINDA) of *isqūqu*-bread» (XIV 96: 5), and '[n] servings' (XIV 98: 10); both Tun-tešup and Tupki-tešup are mentioned together also in XIV 101: 4-5, a record of allocation of loaves as food (NINDA PAD) to various people, including several women.¹⁶

Allašikunni is the first person mentioned XIV 138: 2, a short list of garments withdrawn from the palace stores:

1 *nuḫu*-garment to ²Allašikunni, [n] *tuttupu*-cloaks ⁴to the king, as second quality / replacement (garments) (⁵[*ana*] *šinaḫilu*);¹⁷ [n] sets of second quality (*šinaḫilu*) *hullannu*-wraps ⁸to the young servants. These 'outer garments' (*naḫlaptu*) of second quality are for *palilu* (use²). These (garments) have been withdrawn from the (palace) stores.

In spite of its lexical uncertainties, the relevant information provided by XIV 138 is the close bureaucratic association of Allašikunni with the king.

Nothing more and nothing less is known about this lady. Her proximity to the queen and to the king, documented by the few administrative records commented on above, attests to her high position within the ranks of the Arrapḫean court and the Nuzi palace milieu but reveals nothing about what her private life and, above all, what her public role might have been – including her movements on a chariot pulled by a pair of horses.

¹⁶ Cf. Zaccagnini 2020a: 189-190.

¹⁷ Zaccagnini 2020b: 44-46.

4.2 *Yamaštu*

Even less is known about *Yamaštu*. Leaving aside her numerous homonyms, she is only mentioned in a few administrative documents from the palace archives: XIII 104: 7 (a ration list of barley), XIII 153: 11 (a ration list of wool), XIV 146: 3 and XIV 114: 8 (deliveries of wool).

XIII 104 is a monthly ration list of 1 seah of barley assigned to 6 women, including a king's daughter (l. 1): *Yamaštu* is mentioned at the end of the list, in l. 7; no other woman is attested elsewhere, with the exception of *Ḫalun-naya* (l. 4), who is only mentioned in another document, together with *Yamaštu* (XIII 153: 12).

XIII 153 is a yearly wool ration for various women, and two men, all belonging to the king's family circle: 8 concubines (*esrētu*) receive 5 minas each (ll. 1-10); *Yamaštu* and 2 other women (*sinnišātu*) receive 4 minas each (ll. 11-15); 4 king's daughters (*mārat šarri*) receive 5 minas each (ll. 16-20); 2 (young) king's sons (*mār šarri*) receive 3 minas each (ll. 21-23). The total in l. 24 is reckoned at «1 talent 30 minas of wool», *i.e.* 90 minas, whereas the arithmetic sum of the four entries adds up to 78 minas, *i.e.* 1 talent 18 minas – I am unable to explain the scribal error.

The obvious question raised by XIII 153 is what was the role of *Yamaštu*, and the other two women, included in the strict circle of the king's family. In this regard, note that the king's wife (*i.e.* the queen) is not mentioned in this list and that the 8 concubines and the 4 daughters of the king receive a wool ration higher than that assigned to *Yamaštu* and to the other two women: *Šilu* (l. 13) and *Ḫalun-naya* (l. 12). *Šilu* is not attested elsewhere; *Ḫalun-naya* is only attested in XIII 104: 4, quoted above, also there together with *Yamaštu*. Any hypothesis about the presence of these 3 women, together with 8 concubines and 4 daughters of the king but without the queen, risks being sheer speculation.

XIV 146 is a delivery note of a small quantity of wool of the queen to *Yamaštu*: «2 minas of wool, from the wools of the queen, have been given to *Yamaštu*. *Erwi-urḫe* is the commissioner».

XIV 114 is a delivery note of 6 *nariu* (*i.e.* 16 minas)¹⁸ of wool to the woman Malkuti, under the accounting supervision of Yamaštu: «6 *nariu* of wool were given at the disposal of Malkuti, (and) she made the accounting (*nissakkamumma itepuš*) in *āl ilāni* (= the capital city of Arraphē) with Yamaštu. Seal of Malkuti». Malkuti is discussed below in § 5.

5. *Malkuti*

The woman Malkuti, mentioned together with Yamaštu in the delivery note of wool XIV 114: 3, 11, has no horses at her disposal but is mentioned in two other documents that deserve a brief comment: XIV 115: 16 and XIV 121: 14, 16. In XIV 115 she is attested in connection with Uriš-elli, daughter of Allašikunni; in XIV 121 she is recipient of various wool garments from the queen of Nuzi.

XIV 115 is a delivery note of wheat and barley managed by Malkuti which includes Uriš-elli, daughter of Allašikunni, among the recipients:

2 homers of wheat for distribution (*ana šukuna*) in *āl ilāni* to the young (palace) servants; 7 seahs of wheat, 5 seahs of barley, 1 seah 4 qa ‘beer bread’⁷ to Uriš-elli, daughter of Allašikunni, were given for the month Ħinzuri and for the month Šeḫali (= June-July). This wheat was withdrawn¹⁶ from Malkuti and given for distribution.

Aside from this document, nothing is known about Uriš-elli, daughter of Allašikunni.¹⁹ All that can be said is that also a daughter of Allašikunni – whatever the role of her mother might have been – was included in the inner circle of the female environment of the palace.

XIV 121 is a delivery note of wool and garments of wool from the queen to Malkuti. This document provides an additional piece of information to the multi-faceted presence and activities of the women included in the family and economic structures of the Nuzi court. I recall that in XIV 146 Yamaštu receives a small

¹⁸ Cf. Zaccagnini 1990.

¹⁹ Few other Uriš-elli, mentioned without their mother, are homonyms of Uriš-elli daughter of Allašikunni.

quantity of wool (2 minas) of the queen: we ignore the purpose of this transfer (a wool ration for half-year?); in XIII 153: 11 she receives 4 minas of wool (a wool ration for one year); in XIV 114 Yamaštu checks the transfer of 16 minas of wool to Malkuti. In XIV 121 Malkuti receives various garments of wool from the queen:

¹³3 garments (*lubultu*): their wool is 1 mina 50 shekels each; ³¹1 *nuḫu*-garment: its wool is 1 mina 50 shekels; ⁴¹1 *tuttupū*-cloak: its wool is 2 minas 40 shekels; ⁶⁸8 minas of wool for 2 garments of second quality / as replacement (⁷²2 TÚG^{mes} *ana šinaḫili*); ⁸¹1 set of *ḫullannu*-wraps as garment (*lubultu*): their wool is 2 minas. ¹¹These are products (*iškaru*) of the queen of Nuzi. ¹⁴Malkuti took their wool. ¹⁶Seal of Malkuti.

6. Conclusions

I summarize the relevant data of this Nuzian female microcosm. The queen and Allašihuri – the official ‘substitute’ of the king’s wife in some Nuzi public parades – were assigned a ceremonial chariot drawn by a pair of horses and led by a chariot driver on which they stood to be officially exhibited at special events. Very little is known about Allašikunni and Yamaštu, the only two other Nuzi women who are each provided with a pair of fully harnessed horses, whose public or private use is however never attested: none of them takes part in the king’s parades. They both belong to the inner circle of Nuzi royal family and are specifically linked with the queen as concerns deliveries of wool and garments of wool. In this scenario it is to be included another woman, Malkuti, although no horses were at her disposal. She is the recipient of a delivery of wool and garments of wool from the queen and, on the other hand, she delivers wheat and barley to Uriš-elli, a daughter of Allašikunni. This is all that can be said about the small circle of these four Nuzi ladies equipped with horses, and another woman, however without a horse, closely connected with them.

Abbreviations

AASOR = Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research, New Heaven (CT) - Cambridge (MA).

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