NOTAS

An UGALLU, a smiting god and a man with a spear
in Sennacherib’s palace reliefs:
a Precursor of an Assurbanipal’s motif?

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A widely spread idea ascribe the invention of a very meaningful subject to Assurbanipal. It concerns the association of a man with a spear, an ugallu and a smiting god. This subject figures in Ashurbanipal’s reliefs. The ugallu appears sometimes in Neo-Assyrian art as well as the smiting god, who arrived in Mesopotamia in the 1st mill. (Collon). But the association of the ugallu and the smiting god with another man holding a spear is considered originated in Ashurbanipal. Now, a new lecture of Sennacherib’s reliefs antedates this theme. The ugallu is attested in Sennacherib’s palace, sometimes alone (Barnett,BLEIBTREU, Turner, 1998, n.61c, BM 124826: Fig. 1), sometimes with the smiting god (Gadd pl. 17). Barnett and BLEIBTREU show a broken smiting god of Sennacherib (n.683: Fig. 2). And another fragment (British Museum: Fig. 3) illustrates a man holding a spear, similar to the one following a smiting god and an ugallu in Ashurbanipal’s reliefs (cf. WA 118918, WA 118918). The ugallu BM 124826, the fragment of the smiting god presented by Barnett and BLEIBTREU (1998 n.683), the man with a spear conserved in the British Museum fit well together (same direction) and could have formed originally the best known trio. So, one may suggest that this subject existed since Sennacherib. Even if other possibilities cannot be kept out, the presence of the same figures and the originality of Sennacherib’s reliefs propose to attribute the origin of the trio to him. Although the three Sennacherib’s fragments didn’t belong to the same composition as recommended here, Sennacherib knew the subject and used the figures. The examples known in Ashurbanipal’s palace can suggest the original location of the Sennacherib’s trio: at a door or in a doorway. In Ashurbanipal’s palace this is the normal place, but since Ashurnasirpal II (cf. MEUSZYNSKI 1981, Paley & Sobolewsky 1987-88 and 1992)–and perhaps before (Tiglat-pileser I inscriptions)- palace doors and gateways are strongly protected as a possible root of evil. In the palaces of following kings (Sargon, Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal) doors are well protected with lamassu and geniuses. Protecting doors are attested at the main entrances of almost 60 Mesopotamian temples since the IIIrd mill. B.C. This tradition constitutes another evidence for claiming the Mesopotamian origin of the Neo-Assyrian custom of placing sculpture in entrances (Mallowan 1972, Huot 1994, Pittman 1996), even if some contacts with Syro-Anatolia of the Iron Age can’t be neglected (Matthiae 1989, Winter, 1982). The 1st mill. evolution from temples’ entrances to palaces’ ones suggests a shift in meaning between these two powers, well happening in a moment of royal affirmation.
Three Neo-Assyrian Bas-Reliefs from the Palace of Assurbanipal

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Three Neo-Assyrian bas reliefs are in Lyon, two were first published by Barnett, one forgotten. This short article tries to give more data for a better understanding and contextualization of the reliefs.

1. History

Stored in the Musée des Confluences of Lyon (ancient Natural History Museum), the reliefs (figs. 1-3) belong legally to the Congregation of the Propagation of the Catholic Faith. After having failed to constitute a museum in the Sixties, the Congregation entrusted the reliefs to the Musée des Confluences. They arrived there in 1979 with scanty records about the typology (“bas reliefs”) and the provenance.

1. Anonymous, 1888, p. 26 (n.9), p. 71 (nos.532, 533). I’d like to thank Mme Odile Lalom, curator of the Congregation’s archives, who gave me the opportunity of consulting them. For a more detailed article on the three fragments see Battini, forthcoming.
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(from the ruins of Nineveh”: Anonymous 1888). The lack of the reliefs’ original context and all other details requires extensive investigations in the archive both of the Congregation and of the Museum. The result was completely unsuccessful. Other researches attempted in libraries provided ideas for the origin, the discovery, and the travel. A letter of Ley to Maspéro (Ley 1895) quotes one Neo-Assyrian bas relief in Lyon, purchased between 1872 and 1875 by Benham Bennhi, Archbishop of Mossul and associated to the Lyon’s Congregation. His brother Giovanni, member of the same Congregation, was fond of archaeology and worked as an assistant of Botta, Layard and Rassam2. Rassam mentioned the discovery of one of the three Neo-Assyrian reliefs (1897). From the different data available (museum’s catalogue, letters, books), it’s possible to gather that Giovanni Bennhi participated in the discovery of almost a part of the Lyon’s reliefs when he was working with Rassam. He could convince his brother to buy and send some reliefs to the Lyon’s Congregation. The same Giovanni Bennhi sent to the Pope Pius IX the first sixty reliefs that created the so called “Gregorian Egyptian Museum” in Vatican3.

Fig.1: urmahiliu Fig.2: Smiting god Fig.3: Deportee

Two of the Lyon’s reliefs weren’t forgotten (figs. 1 and 2), first by French (Ley and Maspéro), then by British (Reade, Barnett). The first international publication goes back to Barnett in his essential book on Assurbanipal (1976). The third relief, on the contrary, has never been published before, probably because of its dimensions and its storage in a drawer.

2. L. Nigro, 2000, p. 243-244.
2. Description

The biggest relief exhibits a lion centaurus (fig.1), an hybrid being with an human torso and face and a lion body. Originated in the Middle-Assyrian period, it can be identified with the character called UR.MAH.LI₄,LU (Akk. umeratorilu) in the texts. Infrequent, it's seldom carved in the 1st mill. B.C.

Another relief (fig.2) represents a god with a raised arm, better known as “smiting god” (Collon, 1972), survived in the classical world as “striding Zeus”. The motif is widely attested in the Mediterranean world, where the god takes different divine personalities. In Mesopotamia he isn't attested before the 1st mill. B.C.

The smallest relief (fig.3) depicts a defeated carrying bag on the shoulders. The dress and hairstyle identify him as a Babylonian deportee. The figure is frequently represented in the Neo-Assyrian bas-reliefs because it gives the opportunity to celebrate the power and the glory of the Assyrians and of their king.

3. Dating

The three reliefs constitute a good sample of the VIIth century’s reliefs. The subject, the style, the setting of the scene, the iconographic description of hair and dresses point to an Assurbanipal origin. Their shape provides additional data about methods used by pioneering archaeologists.

3.1. Methods of pioneering archaeologists.

The three fragments have got a very irregular shape due to ancient and modern breaks. The modern ones appear as marks of deliberate cuts, probably intended to facilitate the travel in Europe. They affect all the sculptures, most particularly that of the « smiting god », which results very irregular. Probably it was yet badly preserved. The others reliefs are widely broken but in a more regular shape, probably due to a better preservation. The deliberate breaks served to choose the subject. The result is the loss of the native context.

3.2. Space’s organization

The sculptures belong to the VIIth century B.C. first of all for the style and the space’s organization. The smiting god’s dimensions suggest a complete figure of 1,5 m high, almost living size. This means that it was settled in the upper part of a slab, bigger than the bottom part. The umeratorilu’s dimensions (0,69 m) correspond to a complete figure. And the existence of a top line let propose a location in the bottom part of a slab. The top one provides to be higher than the bottom one and no inscription was carved in the middle. The Babylonian deportee’s size (0,33 m) justifies the restitution of a slab crowded with different height of personnages, and with several rows of deportees. All these features, particularly the division of slabs into uneven parts, the several points of view of the scene, the absence of inscription, point to a VIIth century dating.

3.3. Iconography

The three fragments are a good sample of the iconography of the VIIth century’s sculptures. The subjects are compatible only with Assurbanipal. In fact, no umeratorilu has been attested in bas-reliefs

4. But the arrival of near eastern monuments in Europe facilitated the discovery of this forgotten culture (Larsen 2001).
before Assurbanipal, apart from the round-sculpture of Assurnasirpal II\(^5\). No Babylonian deportee like this one is attested before Sennacherib and Assurbanipal. But in Sennacherib’s bas reliefs the direction, the background and the manner and type of carrying bag on the shoulders don’t fit well with the relief of Lyon. The smiting god is attested only twice in Sennacherib with different iconographic details. The hairstyle and the body’s portrait of the relief held in Lyon pertain to Assurbanipal (Battini forthcoming).

3.4. Localization

A better understanding of the reliefs provides to look for the original context\(^6\). On the basis of the analysis of Boutcher’s drawings, Barnett could identify the Lyon’s urmahliu with that standing at the entrance of the room F, a small room, probably having a ceremonial character. On the same basis, the smiting god could be recognized as that pertaining to the throne-room M. The third relief was probably on the first floor, with other Chaldean scenes, perhaps from room S’.

4. Conclusions

The accidentally composition of the collection delineates nevertheless some of the most striking features of Assurbanipal’s sculpture. The protective spirits (smiting god; urmahliu) and the power’s celebration founded in the ordeal meaning of the victory as well as in the gains of the defeated (Babylonian deportee) exemplify the main subjects of the last Neo-Assyrian king.

5. Bibliography


Môtu and Baʾlu at Work. Two Lexicographical Notes on KTU 1.82:5-6

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1. The Forecast of Death (KTU 1.82:5)

The text of KTU 1.82:5b: *hm.tgrm.lmt.brtk* is epigraphically sure and the reading *tqrm* has to be abandoned.1 The character /ɡ/ (fig. 1, see fig. 2a) is quite clear and as against /q/ (cf. fig. 2b) it presents a long central stroke that the last one lacks, although both have similar long protracted angular lines of the “head” stroke of the sign. By the same reason the reading *brf[k]* is also sure as against *brq[k]*2 this time the characteristic angle traits of the sign /q/ (fig. 2b) being missing and only the horizontal stroke of the /t/ is to be seen. The reader is invited to verify by himself the actual outline of the sign /ɡ/ and the difference on one hand of /ɡ/ from /q/ and on the other that of /q/ from /t/.

Fig. 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>t ɡ r m l m t b r t[k']</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(KTU 1.82:5b)</td>
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Fig. 2a | Fig. 2b

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ā ɡ w y n</th>
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<td>(KTU 1.82:42a)</td>
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<table>
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<th>q l š p š</th>
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<td>(KTU 1.82:6a)</td>
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It is precisely this last lexeme *brt*- that can guide us in the interpretation of the quoted text. Leaving aside the correspondence with Hb, *b'rît* and its possible meaning “configuration, general state” or even “fate”, according to the basic seme of *bry* (see Arabic. *barā*, “to form, fashion by cutting”),3 a meaning unknown in the Ugaritic lexicography, the lexeme *brt* can be understood more confidently as “divination, omen”, Akk. *bārūtu*, which supposes the consultation of a diviner (*bārū*) in daily life and of common use.

1. See G. del Olmo Lete, “KTU 1.82: A Miscellaneous Incantation / Anti-Witchcraft Text against Snakebite in Ugaritic”, *AuOr* 29, 2011, 247, 252, n. 22. This is also KTU’s reading.

2. See lastly A.E. Miglio, “A Study of the Serpent Incantation KTU2 1.82: 1-7 and its Contribution to Ugaritic Mythology and Religion”, *JANER* 13, 2013, 33, 39f. On the other hand, the meaning “to cast” of *grm* is substantiated.

in the world of magic activities. Although the word is also an *hapax* in consonant Ugaritic it appear in the Akkadian of Ugarit and it seems to be of common use there according to the witness of an Akkadian letter of Urtēnu’s House in which “le roi d’Ougarit écrit au roi de Sidon à propos d’une bârûtu pour son bateau qui n’est pas bonne”.

In this context *tgrm* could be interpreted according to the Arabic semantics of *garama*: “to pay, to become obligatory upon him”, hence: “if you are bound (to pay) to death / Môtu (according to) your forecast / omen”, or otherwise, assuming a form D (?) “to make one pay, commit him to”: “if your forecast makes pay / commits / ascribes (you) to Môtu/death...”, namely, in either formula: “if you are condemned to death”.

On the other hand the Semitic base may correspond to Akkadian *ḥarāmu / arāmu / erēmu* that has a general sense “to cover” and in this case an expression like Ludlul II 81: [*ri?]-du-ut mûtu i-te-rim paniña, “Death’s persecution has covered my face,” becomes highly close in meaning to our text: “if your forecast to death covers (you)” . “To place a tablet in a clay case”, namely, “to seal it, declare the case settled”: *ina tuppî išṭur e-ri-im ib-ri-im*, “he wrote (the oracle query) on a tablet, put it in a clay case, sealed it” (K. 8323). The CAD comments on this meaning: “the act seems to have had definite legal connotations, its subject is normally the creditor, its object the legal text”. Or it is well known that the diviner (*bârûtu*) acted as a judge and wrote his *bârûtu* in a tablet. Then a possible version would be: “if it is sealed to death your forecast / omen”, namely once more, “if a death sentence has been passed on you”.

So we have two possible alternative versions. One, phonologically more exact, according to the Sem.-Ar. lexicography; the other, more in keeping with the socio-literary genre of the text in the Near Easter Ar. 


5. See F. Malbran-Labat, C. Roche, “Urtēnu Ur-Tešub”, in J.-M. Michaud, *Le Royaume d’Ougarit de la Crète à l’Euphrate. Nouveaux axes de recherche. Actes du Congrès International de Sherbrooke 2005...* (Proche-Orient et Littérature Ougaritique), Sherbrooke, 2007, p. 92. In this context of “ships” the Ugaritic letter 2.42:23 is maybe significant: *mûk yšt b ḫn; see DUL /s?-li/ Gt. On the manifold bearing and frequency of the “request for an oracular reply” (*šl*) to the divination god Šamaš in Mesopotamia see Starr, *Queries to the Sun*, quoted in previous n.; see also KTU 1.124:3 (*yšl*). Actually texts like KTU 1.41-44 (extispicy-hepatoscopy) as well as KTU 1.78 (astrology) may be considered records of so many queried (*yšl*) forecasts (*brtt*).

6. Cf. AEL 2252, quoting *Lisâmu-l-‘Arab*.

7. Cf. CAD A II 228: *arâmu (ḫarâmu, erēmu) v.; 1. to streetch or place (a membrane…) over an object; AHw 323: *ḥarâmu (arâmu)* I “bedecken”.


10. Cf. CAD A II 229f., with many other quotations in this sense.


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magical praxis. The second option should be favoured, since social influence and loan is normal in this kind of technical genre. But since the correspondence between the Sem.-Ar. base (ġaramu) and the Akk. ((ḫ)a:erā:ēmu) is not sure either phonetically or semantically,12 I will adopt the first proposal as the most simple and straightforward, not without some reserves: “if you are bound (to pay) to death / Môtu (according to) your forecast / omen” (“if you must die / are in danger of dying”). The expression may correspond to the apodosis of some omen text: māt ilī-šu mātu, “to die a death (decreed by) his god”.13

2. Ba‘lu goes to the rescue (KTU 1.82:6)

A similar case can be made with the reading hṛmm hgd bšlm (KTU 1.82:6b). The first sign of the second consonantal cluster presents clearly the double lower head stroke of the /b/ while the unmistakable /u/ of KTU 1.82:9b (cf. Fig. 4a) presents the simple horizontal lower wedge of the sing /u/, although in this case an extra vertical head stroke slips into, a rather frequent scribal slip.14 On their turn the two vertical wedges of the /b/ are quite clear. On the other hand the second sign is a clear /g/ with no traces of the two middle head strokes in the vertical wedge so clearly seen (/y/ and /ḫ/) in KTU 1.82:15b (Fig 4b), with an extra horizontal wedge maybe in the /h/. Strokes may be superfluous but they have not to be added normally.

12. Nevertheless in regard to this question of linguistics correspondences it must be taken into account the full and perfect semantic parallel between Akk. (ḫ)a:erā:ēmu, “to stretch, place (a membrane, skin) over an object, body”, and Akk. qarāmu, “to overlay” (CAD Q127), “überziehen mit” (AHw 902), with good Sem. Parallels: Aram. qrm, “to form a film, crust”, q’rāmā’, “membrane, thin skin” (DJBA 1043); Heb. qrm, “to cover” (HALOT 1144). That led me stray in a first moment and prompted me to propose the translation: “if your constitution is covered with the skin of death” (cf. AuOr 29, 2011, 247). Are we in front of two allophones? Let us leave the question open. See in this connection the impressive scene in Ez 37:6-8, with the skin (ʕôr) “covering” the dry bones. In its turn, Ar. qarama also provides the meaning “to gnaw”, said of the skin as well (see Lane AEL 2987).


14. See J. Tropper, Ugaritische Grammar (AOAT 73), Münster 2012, p. 17, for signs with four strokes.

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Epigraphically then the pointed out reading is sure. Of course a scribal error may always be supposed, above all when the context favours a correction. But in this case the parallelism with *bprṭ* favours, rather confirms the proposed reading *bgd*.\(^{15}\) And there are not apparent reasons to apply to the degradation of the tablet.\(^{16}\) A similar argument could be advanced with more cogency in the case of the beginning/edge of lin. 14a (Fig. 5) where Virolleaud and KTU read also *ḥd*.\(^{17}\) The slanting traces of the first sign would rather suggest reading an angled sign (certainly not a `/ǔ/`), while the second would tolerate up to a point a transcription `/ḥ` instead of a simple `/g/` also in this case; the third sign corresponds exactly to that found in the above cluster.

**KTU 1.82:6bb:**

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17. I myself (*art. cit.*, p. 247 proposed the reading/reconstruction/*ḥd* (*grasp*?)). For a clear Ugaritic writing *ḥd*, although from a different kind of texts, see KTU 2.88 ([RS 94.2406]:37 in the excellent photo provided in the accompanying CD attached to RSOu 18 (P. Bordreuil, D. Pardee, *Une bibliothèque au sud de la ville***. *Textes 1994-2002 en cunéiforme alphabétique de la Maison d’Ouirienou* [Publications de la Mission Archéologique française de Ras Shamra-Ougarit/Maison de l’Orient et de la Méditerranée, RSOu 18], Lyon 2012): the sign `/ḥ` leaves no doubt.
An Ur III tablet from Southwestern University

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The cuneiform tablet from the time of the Ur III dynasty presented here belongs to the Special Collections of the Southwestern University (SU), Georgetown, TX. I am very grateful to Kathryn Stallard, the director of the Special Collections and Archives of SU, for permission to publish the tablet here. It is not known how it was acquired, but its provenience can in most cases be established from its content.

Administrative Text from Drehem
(36 x 30 x 15mm); (Šulgi 46/iv/17)
Expenditure (zi-ga) of poultry and porker

obv. 1 uz-tur
1 ir₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇₇}_
“1 duck, 1 pigeon, 1 dove, 1 male piglet, (in) the canebrake, (as) food for my queen; 1 duck, 1 pigeon, dead, (were) brought to the palace; (when) the 17th day of the month (having) passed, (they were) the withdrawals (of) Ur-Lugal-edina. Month 4, Š 46.”

Commentary

This text belongs to the “archive” of Šulgi-šimtum recording the withdrawal of poultry and porker by Ur-Lugal-edina for the queen (Šulgi-šimtum). For the discussion on the “archive” of Šulgi-šimtum, see Sallaberger 1993: 18-25; Hilgert 1998:10-12; Sharlach 2007: 363-368; Weiershäuser 2008: 31-105; and most recently see Wang and Wu 2011: 41-60.

line 1: For uz-tur, most recently see Veldhuis 2004: 223-224, 303, who read it as bibadmušen, (identical with uzmušen).

line 2: For the term irμušen, also read as kaskalmušen or KASKALmušen, most recently see Veldhuis 2004: 257-258.

line 3: For the term tu-gurμušen, also read as tumμušen, most recently see Veldhuis 2004: 292-293.

line 4: For the term ŠÁH.NE.TUR “piglet”, possibly read as zahda(ŠÁH.TUR)zah, see Steinkeller 2007.

line 10: For the phrase iti-ta u₄ N ba-ra-zal, see Sallaberger 1993: 22.

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