

REVIEWS

THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

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Middle Babylonian Literary Texts from the Frau Professor Hilprecht Collection, Jena.

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The findings of the Philadelphia excavations in Nippur (1889–1900) were, to use one of Hilprecht’s favourite expressions, truly “epoch-making”. After the various controversies involving their excavators, their true significance became evident when, well into the twentieth century, Poebel, Kramer, and others reconstructed Sumerian literature almost exclusively on the basis of these materials. Today, over a century after their excavation, we are only beginning to understand their importance for various other aspects of Mesopotamian scribal culture. The Middle Babylonian period, traditionally regarded as the time at which the elusive “stream of tradition” was fixed, and therefore as a singularly formative period in Mesopotamian literature, is better represented in the findings from these early excavations than it is in findings from other cities. Many Middle Babylonian literary texts from Nippur remain unpublished in Jena, Philadelphia, and Istanbul, and only their publication will allow us to understand the transmission of Mesopotamian literature and to evaluate properly the creativity often ascribed to this period. One may mention HS 1887, an unpublished Kassite forerunner to the prayer to Marduk contained in BMS 12, which displays close similarities with its first millennium version, but also certain striking differences.

Because of the significance of Middle Babylonian texts from Nippur, the publication in this slim book of four Middle Babylonian texts from the Hilprecht Collection, Jena, three of which were previously unpublished, is particularly welcomed.

No. 1 (HS 1885+ HS 2819+ N 4026(+) N 1338).

The lion’s share of the book is devoted to a text christened by the author “Epic of Gulkišar”, which appears to describe a battle between the last king of the First Dynasty of Babylon, Samsi-ditāna, and a little-known king of the First Sealand Dynasty, Gulkišar. The text is of such historical and literary interest that a number of scholars have cited the author’s transliteration before its publication (e.g. Boivin, *The First Dynasty of the Sealand in Mesopotamia* (Berlin, 2018), 11, 22). A long historical study based on the author’s 2012 Master’s thesis, but which does not always have direct bearing on the interpretation of the text itself, precedes the edition and introduces the dramatis personae of the text. The events of the reigns of the latter kings of the First Babylon, Kassite, and Sealand Dynasties are outlined using contemporary and later evidence, including the text edited in the book.

The tablet consists of three fragments. The main piece, HS 1885–, has frequently been cited in secondary literature (e.g. AHw. 213a and 290b) but was hitherto unedited. The author has sagaciously recognized that it represents a direct join to N 4026, previously published in copy in *JCS* 31, 1979, 227f., and an indirect join to the previously

unpublished fragment N 1338. An additional Nippur fragment that mentions king Gulkišar, Ni 13090, is cited in the draft edition of F.R. Kraus on pp. 24–5 n. 182.

The text is highly poetic, and even contains hapax legomena (o 13': *šagantu*). Given the difficulties it presents, some of the solutions adopted seem in need of better justification. Ll. o 11'–12' are better interpreted as predicative complements (see Jiménez, *Kaskal* 16, 2019, 79–81), since “their hatchlings and the piglets” makes little sense in the context:

atmīšum-ma alaqqata burmāmī I shall assemble their hatchlings (like)
piglets
ultemmed mārāšunu abūba I shall gather (*emēdu* Š₂) their child, (like)
a flood.

In o 22', instead of [*ú²-n*]*a²-ap-pa-áš*, read [*ug-t*]*a-ap-pa-áš* (*gapāšu* Dt), “I will become swollen”, since the action is compared with that of a wave. In o 30', read *at-mu-ú-š*[*u* (o o o)] *tāhāzu*(MÈ), “(he who is a murdering lion, . . .), his speech (is) [(.)] (like) a battle”. Ll. o. 29'–30' would then contain a description of the speech of Gulkišar (o 1'–27'), and would therefore not be direct speech (cf. p. 35).

No. 2 (HS 1886).

The text contains an interesting hymn to Pa(p)nigara, a *recherché* divine name that may stand simply for “Ninurta”. Note that AO 6161, an unpublished duplicate of the Papulegara hymns (BM 139964), writes the name of the god simply as Ninurta.

The interpretation of this difficult text hinges upon the key word *pa-ru-ú*, which appears several times in the hymn and which, the author states laconically, is “to be derived from *pir'u*, ‘sprout’” (p. 43). It is, however, omitted that such a spelling of *per'u* is restricted to Old Assyrian texts. The mysterious *parū* in this text are probably simply the “mules”, which Pa(p)nigara, like other gods, can have, and which, as in *Enūma eliš* IV 51–2, are four in number (not “to pollinate”, but “for the chariot”: r 2 *a-ru-ku-bi* < *ana rukūbi*) and are given apotropaic names. They are “fast” (*arhu*, compare SB *Gilgameš* III 96: *parūka haṃtūtu*), and break the enemy lines (*šupturu*, *suppuhu*, *huššusu*). The author's interpretation of the whole text is affected by this change: the hymn probably has no connection with fertility.

o 12', because of the parallelism with *kiššu*, *kūbu* is best interpreted as *kūbu* II/B “chapel”, with hymno-epic ending *-u* for the st. const., “the shrine(s) of the Igigi, the chapel(s) of the goddesses”. In r 1 read *lā* 𐎠𐎢𐎣 *maḥ⁷*-ri* (coll.). In r 7 there is no *ki* after *ki-i*, in r 8 probably *hu-uš-ši-iš*, i.e. *hašāšu* D.

No. 3 (HS 1902).

This fragmentary text describes a ceremony of some sort involving offerings at the Ekur. Diacritics have vanished from many logograms in this edition: o 16' and r 3 read ŠU.KU₆ (3×), r 4 É.KUR, r 5 TU.KÚR^{mušēn}, r 7 ZÚ.LUM.MA, NINDA.Ī.DÉ.A, ^{giš}MA.SÁ.AB.

No. 4 (HS 1893).

This important tablet was first published by Scheil when it was part of the Nippur collection of the Constantinople Museum under the number “Ni.341” (recte Ni.351, a tablet catalogued by Hilprecht as “Cassite ou Néo-Bab. Sehr interessant”, in HSN 44, p. 12), a number it then lost when it became part of Hilprecht's collection. It has been re-published by Kilmer (AoF 18, 1991, 9–22), who declared that Landsberger identified it as a list of children's games. The new edition, prepared in collaboration with I.L. Finkel, attempts to tackle the many lexicographical problems the text presents, but much remains unclear. The effort to identify the underlying themes of the

games ostensibly grouped together (e.g. “physical games”) is commendable, but not always convincing.

That this tablet, whose first words are “my city is Babylon”, should have been found in Nippur is interesting: one may compare the case of the so-called “Aluzinnu Text”, entirely unknown in first-millennium Nippur while among the most popular texts in elementary school tablets in Babylon and its vicinity, for which a MB forerunner from Nippur has now been found. The written traditions of southern and northern Babylonia, starkly divided in the first millennium, seem to have been closer in Middle Babylonian times.

Typos abound (e.g. p. 3 dating *to* this period, p. 19 *eighth* [2×], p. 25 *does not imply*, p. 26 *fn. 188 stable*, p. 28 *fn. 197 remove the*), and a more careful proofreading would have been desirable. The author should be thanked for making these tablets accessible, and for her efforts to read these difficult texts.

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AGNÈS GARCIA-VENTURA and LORENZO VERDERAME (eds):

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In their introduction to this volume of 18 essays, the editors distinguish between different stages in the historiography of an academic discipline (in this case, ancient Near Eastern studies). A first more “descriptive” stage collects basic data about individual researchers and the institutions in which they worked, while a second “analytic” stage makes use of this data to address broader questions of intellectual history, such as the way “political context affects and shapes research”. Given the uneven development of the historiography of ancient Near Eastern studies, it makes sense that the editors chose to include both kinds of studies.

Most historiographical research to date has been on the inter-war period and the effect on Assyriology of the rise of Nazism. Accordingly, the essays in the volume that deal with this period are more sophisticated and will likely be of wider interest. They include not only all six essays in Part 1 (“The edge of the abyss: the study of Antiquity under totalitarian threat”) but also (to my mind) Eva von Dassow’s excellent article “Nation building in the Plain of Antioch from Hatti to Hatay” and the short survey of Assyriology in Turkey by Selim Ferruh Adalı and Hakan Erol. Taken together, these eight essays form a kind of book-within-a-book that tells a complex story interweaving racial and nationalist ideologies, colonial politics, institutional rivalries, and heartfelt concern for scholarship. Many chapters provide rich bibliographies that will surely assist future research, as well as generous excerpts from unpublished correspondence and other archival documents.

Some highlights: in Silvia Alaura’s essay on the correspondence between Albrecht Goetze and Hans Gustav Güterbock from the 1930s and 40s, we find two pioneers of Hittitology worrying about how to rebuild their field from the rubble of the Second World War: Sebastian Fink’s reassessment of language and race in the work of Benno Landsberger and Wolfram von Soden results in a far more complex