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NOTES BRÈVES

84) Observations of the planet Venus in archaic Uruk: the problem and researches — It is well known that the three heavenly bodies – the Moon, the Sun and the Venus – were worshiped as the deities Nanna, Utu and Inanna in Ancient Mesopotamia of the IIIrd millennium BC. Their symbols on seals were, respectively, a crescent, a disc and the eight-pointed star. Encountering an image of crescent on a seal we can therefore assume that the scene depicted on it has to do with the lunar deity Nanna; and the presence of entry ^dNanna in a text suggests that in epoch of this draft the moon was already worshiped as a deity in Ancient Mesopotamia.

Such statements, undoubtedly, are true for the second half of the IIIrd millennium BC and later on as there exist some text confirmations ¹⁾. But what can be said about earlier times? It is not known exactly whether Nanna, Utu and Inanna were originally astral deities. Thus it is natural to ask, whether Nanna, Utu and Inanna were always identified as luminaries in Ancient Mesopotamia, and if not always, then when did they acquire the astral meaning? Answering this question unambiguously now is not possible, yet we can make some assumptions.

First we see, that of the three pictographic signs in proto-Sumerian texts which stand for Nanna, Utu and Inanna two, namely ŠEŠ.KI (= Nanna) and MUŠ₃ (= Inanna), do not suggest astral meaning visually: they do not look as luminaries designated ²⁾. Perhaps, initially these signs were not introduced to refer to the Moon and Venus, and only later did they acquire the astral meaning ³⁾. This evidence, however, can only be seen as an indirect, as pictograms in proto-Sumerian texts do not always resemble the subjects referred to.

It would seem that the sign UD (= u₄, babbar), adopted to a deity Utu, had an astronomical meaning, though it also had other close interpretations: “day” ⁴⁾, “morning” ⁵⁾. In the early pictographic version it had probably represented the solar disk at the moment of its appearance over the east horizon between the two mountains ⁶⁾.

An important problem related to our theme is the use of determinatives in the proto-Sumerian texts. It is assumed that the names of some gods were recorded with determinative ^d already in archaic Uruk ⁷⁾. However, it does not apply to all gods. So the name of Nanna, for example, is seen with a determinative for the first time only in Fara and Abu Salabikh ⁸⁾ but earlier in archaic Uruk, Jemdet Nasr and Ur it is written without a determinative ⁹⁾. The same goes to the name of the sun god Utu ¹⁰⁾.

129:27 in letters from Rib-Hadda of Byblos, add the example Taanach 2:11, from a century earlier: “if the bow is finished being made (*ipēšam*)” (HOROWITZ, OSHIMA and SANDERS 2006:133), as noted by RAINEY 1996 I 37.

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99) SB Gilgamesh XI 149–50 — In *NABU* 2016/23 Jared N. Wolfe and Lance B. Allred propose to derive the difficult *i-pi-ra-am-ma* in SB Gilg. XI 149 (and 152) from *ebēru* “to cross over”, reading *i-bi₃-ra-am-ma*. They find no difficulty in two Kuyunjik mss. (CW) spelling the syllable /bi/ with the sign *pi*, noting that “this exact interchange is seen in line 150 in the spelling of the verb *bašū* as *i-pa-aš₂-[ši]m-ma*.” They do not adduce other spellings of *ibašši-ma* with *pa* and *šim*. While they are preceded in this analysis of *i-pa-aš-šim-ma* by Delitzsch (*Assyrisches Handwörterbuch* 188), knowledge of Akkadian has improved since 1896, and there is nothing in their note to persuade me that the verb so spelled is other than *īpaššimma* from (w)*apū* “to be(come) visible” (*īpi* + ventive + 3 f.sg. dat. pronoun + enclitic). This parsing is commended by all modern authorities (e.g. BAUER, *AL* II 43; BORGER, *BAL*² I 146; CAD A/2 202; *AHw* 1459). Accordingly, Wolfe and Allred’s parsing of *i-pi-ra-am-ma* as *tbiramma* is left without the proposed support. The value *bì* (*bi₃*) of the sign PI does not occur in Kuyunjik copies of Gilgamesh, nor in seventh-century spellings of parts of *ebēru* generally, and the derivation of the verb spelled *i-pi-ra-am-ma* remains elusive.

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100) Enlightenment on Išum — In *NABU* 2016/30 JoAnn Scurlock defends her proposition that the divine night watchman Išum was a god of the hearth and so a household deity, first made in her study of “Ancient Mesopotamian house gods”, *JANER* 3 (2003) 103–6. She reminds us that her assertion is supported by a “text that seeks to protect a household under demonic attack from a *katarru* fungus by making offerings to a number of divinities at specific locations in the household”. On this account they “are household gods ... permanently resident in the house”. These deities are “Gula, Ištar, and the Pleiades as well as Išum”. She goes on to state that “Išum’s name is in the text, and his offering is buried in the midst of the house, obviously, given his association with fire, at the hearth”.

The text in question is a collection of apotropaic rituals for use when mildew or other fungus was observed in a house, K 157⁺ and duplicates. It has been edited by R. Caplice, *Or* N.S. 40 (1971) 140–47, as Text 48 A, and by S. M. Maul, *Zukunftsbewältigung* (1994) 354–66, as “Die *katarru*-Namburbis”, using four manuscripts. The various ritual procedures therein prescribe the sacrifice of ovids to deities, sometimes specifying the places where the offering took place and where the bodyparts were disposed of. The ritual passage relating to Išum (ll. 28–38) is preserved only on K 157⁺ (obv. 23’–33’).

The only public records of the cuneiform text of K 157⁺ are the black-and-white photographs published by Caplice (pls. 3–4) and low-resolution digital images now online (cdli.ucla.edu/P237792). It is a shame that such a fine example of seventh-century Babylonian writing has never been presented in a line drawing, all the more so because a good hand-copy would have assisted a more accurate transliteration. First-hand study of the tablet in the British Museum reveals several mistakes in Caplice’s edition. Most of them were corrected by Maul but, in the vital passage relating to Išum, further improved readings are achieved by collation:

beginning of l. 34 = K 157+ obv. 29’

Caplice [i-n]a UD šu-a-tu₄ UDU.NITÁ SA₅ : SIG₇ “red (variant: yellow)”

Maul [i-n]a U₄ šu-a-tum UDU.NÍTA SA₅ : SIG₇ “rotbraunes : gelbes”

coll. [ina Š]À* UD šu-a-tu₄ UDU.NITÁ SA₅ : GÙN (or SU₄)* “brown (var. piebald or red)”

beginning of l. 35 = K 157+ obv. 30’

Caplice [be]-lu šá² bi-ti “the [lo]rd of the house”

Maul [i]-[na] ŠÀ¹ šá bi-ti “[i]n mitten des Hauses”

coll. [ina Š]À* ri*-bi-ti “[in the] middle of the street”

middle of l. 36 = K 157+ obv. 31’

Caplice ina KAŠ GAR-an ina <KÁ.AŠ>.ÀM “in beer . . . at the outer gate”

Maul ina KAŠ GAR-an ina <KÁ>.AŠ.ÀM “in Bier. Im Außentor”

coll. ina KÁ*.AN.AŠ.ÀM “at the outermost doorway”

* These collations are supported by a close-up photograph of the tablet (Fig. 1a). Slight damage to the left of the sign *ri* in obv. 30’ has hindered its accurate identification heretofore. Other examples of the sign on the same tablet are given for comparison (Fig. 1b–c).

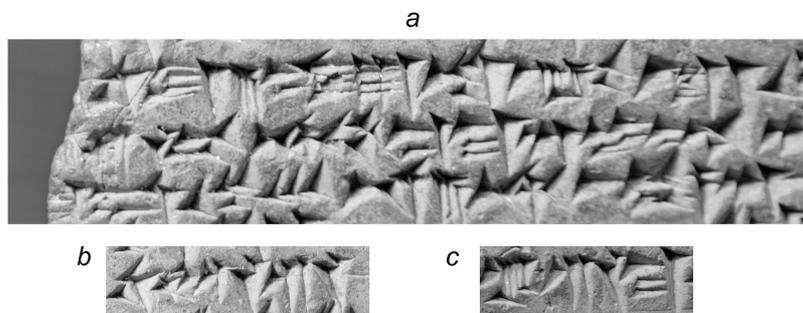


Fig. 1. K 157+, details. (a) obv. 29’–31’ left part; (b–c) other examples of the sign *ri* on K 157+, (left) in rev. 20 *mu-úh-ri*, (right) in rev. 35 *mu-uh-ri-ma*. Author’s images, courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.

These collations give new knowledge about the colour of Išum’s sheep (l. 34) and the places of its slaughter (35) and the disposal of its bodyparts (36). Scurlock (*JANER* 3: 101) followed Maul in the matter of colour and place of slaughter, and in the misreading of KÁ as KAŠ GAR, but proposed that AŠ.ÀM should be translated “individually” (the logogram for *ištēnā* “singly” is elsewhere DIŠ.TA.ÀM). Following autopsy of the tablet the passage of the ritual now reads: [ina libb]i ūmi šu’ātu immera sāma (var. *burruma* or *pelā*) ana pān Išum [ina libb]i ribiti tanakkisma “Išum annā limḥur” *taliqabbīma qaqqada u kursinnāti ina bābi kamî tetemmerma [amēla] šu’ātu ina muḥḥi tušzāz* “on that same day you slaughter a brown (var. piebald or red) ram before Išum in the middle of the street and you say (or he says) ‘May Išum receive!’, then you bury the head and fetlocks at the outermost doorway (of the house) and have the [man] stand on top.”

For present purposes — the issue of whether Išum was ever a house god — the key point is that the ritual locates him not inside the house, but outside. The sacrifice to him took place in the street and the victim’s remains were interred at the place of entry from there to the house. The street outside the house is well known as Išum’s typical place of work, which he patrolled as night watchman (*JNES* 74 (2015) 1–8). Sacrificing there would leave a mark to remind him in passing to show especial attention to the protection of the adjacent household, just as the prayers on amulet-type tablets asked him to do (e.g. *CUSAS* 32 (2016) 155).

The essential data presented by the text of K 157+ and duplicates as a whole can be tabulated as follows:

<i>Lines</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Offering</i>	<i>Deity</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Disposal of bodyparts</i>
22	“on that day”	yellow goat	Gula	not stated	not stated
34–36	“on that day”	brown/piebald ram	Išum	street	buried at outermost door
49–52	not stated	goat, white patch	Ištar	doorjamb of house	buried at threshold
62–70	not stated	brindle goat	Pleiades	not stated	released in river
91	[. . .]	yellow goat	Gula	not stated	not stated

The only uncertainty is the lacuna in l. 91, which seems not to hide the temporal phrase “on that day” (see Maul, p. 361 n. 42; read perhaps [*ba-ra-ri*]-*ta* “at dusk”?). Maul’s emended reading of l. 35 = obv. 30’ as *ina libbi ša bīti* “inmitten des Hauses” was the only piece of evidence that might lead a commentator to write that this text recommends “offerings to a number of divinities at specific locations in the household” (my italics). As we have seen, that reading is now discarded. Apart from undermining Scurlock’s location of Išum “in the midst of the house ... at the hearth”, the table also reveals as false her identification of the locations where animals were sacrificed to Gula and the Pleiades as “specific locations in the household”.

In these rituals to counter the portent of mildew observed on the outside wall of a house, all locations are suitably liminal: the street, the house’s outermost doorway, a doorjamb and threshold. Offerings and interments at the house boundary clearly function to prevent the ingress of evil from the outside. As barriers at the house’s limits, such offerings are not necessarily made to gods resident inside the house and do not unequivocally argue for the identification of their recipients as house gods.

This note does not object to a notion that the night watchman Išum, as a fire god, was present in the fire on a domestic hearth. But the evidence is too slender to characterize him as a house god, especially when the ancient sources are so insistent on situating his place of effective agency outside, in the street.

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101) The BM object 1883-1-18, 752: a scrap of cuneiform about beads for keeping the baby-snatcher at bay, duplicating Farber, *Lamaštu*, ms. “FsL” (BM 42612+) — The British Museum fragment with registration number 1883-1-18, 752 is a mere flake of clay representing the middle part of the upper half of the reverse of a small excerpt tablet.¹⁾ A year ago the present author identified what scanty text has been preserved in it as a duplicate to BM 42612+, ll. 10-16, which itself is an extract tablet, too, inscribed with a ritual involving amuletic beads that derives from canonical *Lamaštu* III, 49-63.²⁾ The two excerpts would appear to have the same format and they also share their graphic typicalities, with the signs leaning to the left.

BM 42612⁺ was first edited by I. Finkel³⁾, dubbed “Stones for right and left,” and has recently been re-edited under the siglum “FsL” by Farber, *Lamaštu*, pp. 52 — there put in the list of “Non-canonical rituals against *Lamaštu* not containing specific *Lamaštu* incantations” —, 276 (transliteration), 306-307 (bound text and translation), and 333-334 (commentary).

It was Farber who established the true nature of BM 42612⁺, renaming it “A school tablet with a ritual related to ‘Lam. III’ 49-63” (*Lamaštu*, p. 276). Unlike this duplicate, 1883-1-18, 752 not only

development of Greek rule, in A. Kuhrt et S. Sherwin-White, éd., *Hellenism in the East*, Berkeley-Los Angeles, 1987, 15 ; M. Geller, *Babylonian Astronomical Diaries and Corrections of Diodorus*, *BSOAS* 53, 1990, 1-7.

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