

THE “ŠUILISU ARCHIVE”
AND OTHER SARGONIC TEXTS IN AKKADIAN

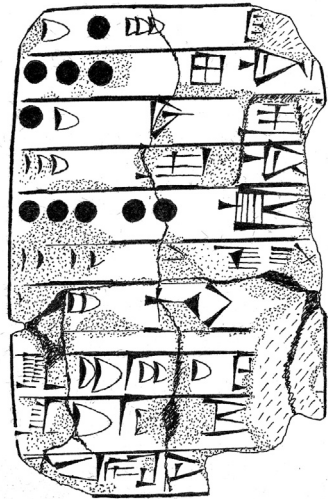
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The “Šuilisu Archive” and Other Sargonic Texts in Akkadian

by
Lucio Milano and Aage Westenholz



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Series Editor's Preface

The collection of texts from the Sargonic period appearing in the CUSAS series already has enriched greatly our understanding of this important period in the history of mid-third millennium BCE Mesopotamia. The current volume is particularly significant in that it makes available a group of tablets associated with a specific official, in this case the scribe *Šuilisu* son of *Idabana*. The recently published Madrid Collection (M. Molina, with the collaboration of M.E. Milone and E. Markina, *Cuneiform Tablets in the Real Academia de la Historia: The Carl L. Lippmann Collection*. Catálogo del Gabinete de Antigüedades I.I.6. Madrid, 2014), the earlier published Banca d'Italia collection (F. Pomponio et al., *Le tavolette cuneiformi di Adab*, Roma: Banca d'Italia, 2006 and *idem.* et al., *Tavolette cuneiformi di varia provenienza*, Roma: Banca d'Italia, 2006), and the various previous CUSAS volumes (11, 13, 19, 20, 23, 26), all more or less interrelated albeit devoid of any excavated context, nevertheless constitute the largest corpus of texts so far known from the period. Although the majority of these previously published tablets appears to have been found at Adab and perhaps also at Umma, the authors of the current volume were able to identify a segment of the Rosen Collection as coming from Umm al-Hafriyat, thereby adding to the geographical range of the documentation. Regardless of assertions to the contrary that artifacts devoid of context are “meaningless,” these texts clearly represent a major contribution to our understanding of the history, culture, and religion of the Sargonic period, helping to enhance and to clarify issues of chronology, economics, and society during its late stage. It is not without some irony that these

previous publications of “unprovenanced” texts, appearing but a few years after their “discovery,” can be contrasted with the over three quarters of a century that it took the Oriental Institute to publish the Sargonic texts from the University of Chicago excavations at Bismaya (Yang Zhi, *Sargonic Inscriptions from Adab*, Changchun, 1989) or the many tablets that still remain unpublished and inaccessible in the collections of the Istanbul Archaeological Museums from the excavations between 1880 and 1918. Thus we are fortunate indeed that the Rosen Collection managed to obtain this corpus, more or less intact, and—thanks to Jonathan and Jeannette Rosen, the series Editor-in-Chief, Lucio Milano and Aage Westenholz—the scholarly community now has these significant new sources available in a thorough and reliable edition.

Perhaps now, after an inexcusable delay of over thirty-five years and the refusal to allow the authors access to the small group of eight tablets excavated at Umm al-Hafriyat for this publication, McGuire Gibson, who directed the still unpublished, single season of excavation, will finally make available these texts together with their archaeological context, texts presumably prepared for publication long ago by Bob Biggs to whom they were assigned.

The current volume provides critical editions of texts involving or otherwise associated with *Šuilisu*, an official residing in the site of Umm al-Hafriyat, now identified by Westenholz as the city Maškan-ili-Akkade. Furthermore, each author provides an independent perspective on the interpretation of these new data found in the texts to form a solid foundation for additional elaboration by themselves or

by other scholars. Thus, these new sources will surely be utilized to further develop our understanding of Sargonic history and society in its declining years, a period that, hitherto, has been reconstructed on the basis of a much more limited corpus.

It also should be noted that the work on all the Sargonic CUSAS volumes was facilitated greatly by the preliminary identifications and catalogue prepared by Dr. Rudolf “Rudi” Mayr, assistant curator at the Rosen Collection in New York City, and by the staff at the Jonathan and Jeannette Rosen Ancient Near Eastern Studies Seminar and Tablet Conserva-

tion Laboratory at Cornell University; particularly by Laura Johnson-Kelly and Dr. Jeff Zorn, who conserved and photographed the tablets. They deserve our gratitude and thanks for their close collaboration and support of the authors and for their commitment to make these sources available as quickly and reliably as possible to Assyriologists.

Once again we acknowledge with gratitude the generous ongoing support of Jonathan and Jeannette Rosen that has made this publication possible, along with so many other CUSAS volumes.

David I. Owen
Curator of Tablet Collections
The Jonathan and Jeannette Rosen
Ancient Near Eastern Studies Seminar
Cornell University, Ithaca New York
June 2015

Foreword

This volume contains 253 tablets and fragments, of which 207 are presently in the Jonathan and Jeannette Rose Ancient Near Eastern Studies Seminar and Tablet Conservation Laboratory at Cornell University, a small part of the magnificent donation and loan of tablets by Jonathan and Jeannette Rosen in 2000. Twenty-five tablets are from the Schøyen Collection in Spikkestad, Norway; twelve from the collection in Banca d'Italia, Rome; and the remainder are from various private collections or were copied many years ago and whose present whereabouts are unknown. We are very thankful to Jonathan and Jeannette Rosen, Martin Schøyen, and to David I. Owen for placing these texts so freely at our disposal and for their generosity in various other ways toward us.

The twelve texts in the Banca d'Italia collection and thirteen from the Rosen Collection at Cornell have been published previously (see the list “Previously published texts” p. 12). They are republished here, partly in order to provide as complete a picture of the relevant evidence as possible and partly because cleaning the tablets in the Tablet Conservation Laboratory at Cornell occasionally has allowed improved readings.

The texts fall into two groups: one that we have assigned, more or less confidently, to the so-called “Šuilisu Archive,” and one containing other Old Akkadian texts of diverse origins.

In the presentation of the texts, the remarks on color, baking, etc., always refer to the condition of each text before baking and conservation. For explanations of the sigla, see the list of Abbreviations, p. xii.

The tablets published here all come from illicit excavations. The local diggers, convinced

that a whole tablet would fetch a higher price than would a pile of fragments, often succeeded in joining fragments. These they assembled with mud (or occasionally with glue), often covering minor breaks with generous doses of the same material. In so doing, they also covered some of the cuneiform signs. When baked, this modern mud is usually of a lighter orange color than the clay of the ancient tablet and is fairly easy to remove. Larger breaks and missing parts of tablets were sometimes filled with mud, sometimes embellished with bogus signs; but more often the locals made good use of the many fragments at their disposal, grafting them onto tablets where they would fit in. In some cases, they trimmed the joining surfaces to make them fit. One-column “whole” tablets were frequently assembled from fragments of two or three different tablets, sometimes upside down relative to each other. In other cases, the broken edge of a fragment was trimmed by filing so that it would appear complete to the untrained eye. These proceedings are traditional in the country and were described many years ago by Kraus (1947, 116–117). The only new observation that we can add is that when fragments of different tablets are pasted together, these fragments usually come from the same site (see CUSAS 26, p. xvii–xviii). It is thus most likely that the restorations are made by the local diggers themselves, not by the middlemen in the antiquities trade network. At Cornell’s Rosen Seminar new inventory numbers to extraneous fragments detached in the conservation process from tablets where they do not belong have been assigned, noting from which tablet they were detached, as for example **12** = CUNES 52-00-029 < 52-20-067 (the latter =

208). In the Schøyen Collection, the tablet and its detached fragments are numbered with a, b, and c numbers, as for example **212** = MS 4267b, which originally came pasted to **78** = MS 4267a. Unfortunately, we have not been able to search for joins among these numerous fragments, of which there must be many, and we anticipate that future researchers will fill this gap.

In the present publication, the documents have been arranged according to their contents (for an overview, see “Catalogue” pp. 1–8). Any arrangement based on external criteria is, of course, unsatisfactory. Categorization of texts (and especially administrative texts) in Assyriological publications is usually based upon keywords used in the texts: this is often the result of a misunderstanding about what categorization meant to ancient scribes. Moreover, it creates the illusion of giving a sound reconstruction, if not of the original arrangement of the tablets in a given archive, then at least of the spectrum of the different formats—in terms of layout, wording, and technical vocabulary—used by the scribes in drawing up their documents. This typological attitude of modern scholars is based on the assumption that scribes actually followed coherent guidelines to differentiate among types of texts intended to match specific accountancy needs and to cover specific sectors of a household administration. Obviously, there is some truth in this assumption, although this presumed consistency is hardly present in the documentation. In some cases it is just we who do not understand what is behind an apparent confusion manifested in a text (why, for example, are beer and pigs accounted for together in a list of deliveries?), but very often it is the general economic and social framework of the accounting procedures that escapes us. In the case of animal husbandry, for instance, we would expect the subsequent steps followed in the managing of a flock of sheep and goats (and of its wool production) to be covered by different types of documents, whereas the texts give us a puzzling picture in this regard. Examples could be extended easily to the overall documentation of the Šuilisu archive, where we often find por-

tions of the accounting that are not apparently coherent with the basic purpose of the text.

For this reason, we have refrained from any attempt to reconstruct the ancient archival context of the texts and, instead, we have chosen to arrange them in a manner to illustrate life at Umm el-Hafriyat, beginning with subsistence economy and ending with juridical proceedings. A deeper analysis might well reveal the bureaucracy, if such it was, that produced the texts we have. Our primary aim with this publication is to make the texts available for study by our colleagues, present and future, in as reliable and careful an edition as our limited time would allow. Our analyses in Chapter I of the Šuilisu tablets are in no way intended to be an exhaustive treatment of these most interesting texts. That would require yet another book.

Since the two authors of this book hold very different views in general and on the Šuilisu tablets in particular, we have decided to write separate introductions to that text corpus in Chapter I. Obviously, this has resulted in a measure of overlap and even contradiction, but we trust that our different perspectives will prove useful for further study.

The texts are presented in photographs, sometimes in copy, and, for particularly difficult tablets, in both. The photographs cannot achieve complete coverage; but we trust that the wealth of photographs in the Jonathan and Jeanette Rosen Ancient Near Eastern Studies Seminar and Tablet Conservation Laboratory at Cornell University and in the Schøyen Collection will be made available on their respective websites (<http://cuneiform.library.cornell.edu/> and <http://www.schoyencollection.com/>) or on the CDLI website (<http://cdli.ucla.edu>).

In the transliterations, a struck-through text reproduces an incomplete erasure by the ancient scribe.

We have transliterated Sumerian using the values given in Borger, *Mesopotamisches Zeichenlexikon*, generally preferring the short values (e.g., du₁₀ rather than dūg). We are under no illusion that this represents Sumerian speech any more faithfully than any other transliteration

system. Akkadian is transliterated according to “the Gelb system.”

In the translations, commentaries, and other connected English text, we have modified the Akkadian proper names into some sort of inexact, pseudo-Old Babylonian, simply to avoid too many unfamiliar forms, inconsistencies, and uncertainties in reconstructing the Old Akkadian forms behind some of the spellings. We have also dispensed with macrons and diacritic points under *š* and *ṭ*. Therefore, no Ba^li-tukulti, no Yiśārum, no Ḫubārum, no Tuṭṭanābšum, but Beli-tukulti, Iśarum, Ubarum, Tuttanabšum. The only exception we have made is Šuilisu, because this form has now become so entrenched as to be the path of least resistance. Furthermore, we have taken the liberty to italicize Sumerian and Akkadian words alike in English context, as was done in CUSAS 26, trusting that our colleagues, for whom this book is written, will know which is meant.

One recurrent problem we faced is the translation of the phrase PN₁ *š*u PN₂, or PN *š*u *nin*, for instance. Usually, it is translated as “PN₁ dependent on PN₂” which is cumbersome relative to the original, and perhaps too explicit in indicating a superior–inferior relationship. That may, in fact, often have been implied, but was not necessarily so. We have here chosen the rendering “PN₁, of PN₂” or “PN, of the Queen.” This may not be good English, but we have no better ideas.

The translations and the commentaries have been kept to a disappointing minimum. It almost goes without saying that there are many

passages or whole texts that we do not really understand. We have usually passed over such problems in silence, as commenting on them all, only in the end to declare defeat and admit our ignorance, would probably have doubled the length of the book. As so often in our discipline, we leave it to those not yet born to solve the riddles that baffled us—and they will, if past experience is any guide.

Many have helped us in various ways during our work with this book. As always, David I. Owen, Curator of Tablet Collections at the Jonathan and Jeannette Rosen Ancient Near Eastern Studies Seminar and Tablet Conservation Laboratory at Cornell University, has been a generous and open-handed host during our repeated visits to Cornell along with Laura Kelly-Johnson, Collection Manager and Head Photographer/Conservator, who unstintingly provided us with photographs of outstanding quality whenever we asked for them. The various owners of private collections, who wish to remain anonymous, have freely provided texts of crucial importance, such as nos. **1** or **34**. The Italian Ministero dell’Istruzione, dell’Università e della Ricerca (MIUR) provided funding that allowed Lucio Milano to spend a few months in Vienna and Munich to work on the texts, while Ca’ Foscari University of Venice defrayed the travel expenses of Aage Westenholz going to Cornell in December 2014 for the final collations. And as always, Inger Jentoft, Westenholz’s wife, has devoted much time to proofreading. To all of them go our most heartfelt thanks.

L. Milano
A. Westenholz
June 2015

Abbreviations

A	siglum of tablets and inscriptions in the Asiatic collections of the Oriental Institute Museum, Chicago
AW	siglum of tablets in the possession of Aage Westenholz, Denmark
BI	siglum of the first tablet collection of Banca d'Italia, Rome
BI-II	siglum of the second tablet collection of Banca d'Italia, Rome
CUNES	siglum of tablets in the Cornell University, Near Eastern Section
CUSAS	<i>Cornell University Studies in Assyriology and Sumerology</i>
gsg / <i>gsg</i>	gur-sag-gál / <i>gur-sag-gál</i>
kb / <i>kb</i>	kù-babbar / <i>kù-babbar</i>
L	spurious siglum of tablets formerly in the possession of a London dealer
MS	siglum of tablets and inscriptions in the Martin Schøyen Collection
SIA	Yang Zhi, <i>Sargonic Inscriptions from Adab</i> . Changchun 1989
TCABI	F. Pomponio et al., <i>Le tavolette cuneiformi di Adab</i> . Banca d'Italia, Roma 2006
TCVP	F. Pomponio et al., <i>Tavolette cuneiformi di varia provenienza</i> . Banca d'Italia, Roma 2006.
TMLAT	P. Steinkeller – J. N. Postgate, <i>Third-Millennium Legal and Administrative Texts in the Iraq Museum, Baghdad (Mesopotamian Civilizations 4)</i> . Winona Lake, 1992.