

**33) Graeco-Babylonian Utukkū Lemnūtu** – One’s best ideas always seems to arrive too late. True to form, the present author has finally been able to identify one of the best preserved Graeco-Babylonia tablets from the British Museum as an exemplar of canonical *Utukkū Lemnūtu*, but only after the recent publication of the preliminary edition of this text (*Evil Demons: Canonical Utukkū Lemnūtu Incantations*, SAACT 5, Helsinki, 2007). The Graeco-Babylonia bilingual incantation (BM 34816, see ZA 87 [1997], 76f., 91) has been re-collated and readings have been improved by comparisons with the parallel text, UH IX 87’-91’.

BM 34816 and duplicates (UH IX 87’-91’)<sup>1</sup>

1	BM 34816	[lú-lí]l-lá ki-sikil ki-sikil-ù-d[a.....] (= UH IX 87’)
		[λιλα χισχιλ] χισχι[λ λιλα] / [ωδ]α [χαρ]
	K 5237	[.....-d]a-kar-ra ᵀè-ba <sup>1</sup> -ra
	BM 35321	lú-lí-lá ki-sikil<-lí>-lá ki-sikil-ud-da-kar-ra [.....]
	BM 34816	[l]i-lu-u li-li-tu KI.SIKIL ár-da-t[u ...]
		λιλι ᵀαρδα <sup>1</sup> [θ] λ[ιλι]
	BM 35321	li-lu-ú li-li-tu <sub>4</sub> ár-dat li-lu-ú [...]
	K 5237	[.....] ᵀli-li-i ṣi <sup>1</sup> -i
2	BM 34816	[ <sup>d</sup> ]nam-tar hul-gál á<-sàg> gig [.....] (= UH IX 88’)
	BM 35321	<sup>d</sup> nam-tar hul-gál á-sàg gig-ga tu-ra nu-du <sub>1</sub> Ú-ga [.....]
	K 5237	[.....-g]a è-ba-ra
	BM 34816	ᵀ <sup>d</sup> nam-tar lem-nu a-sak-ku GIG l[a .....]
		[ναμθ]αρ λεμν ασαχ μουρσ [λα] ταβ σειρ (in wrong sequence)
	BM 35321	<sup>d</sup> nam-ta-ri lem-nu a-sak-ku mar-ša mur-šu [.....]
	K 5237	[.....] l]a ᵀa-a-bi ṣi-i
3	BM 34816	ᵀé-a-šè <sup>1</sup> nam-ba-k[u <sub>4</sub> -.....] (= UH IX 89’)
		[εασε] ναμονχουχωτ
	K 5237	[..... nam-b]a-ku <sub>4</sub> -ku <sub>4</sub> -dè
	BM 34816	ana É-ti ᵀla ter <sup>1</sup> -r[u-...]
		[ανα βιθ λ]α θηροφσ

<sup>1</sup> Duplicates are only provided to establish the UH reading, rather than all Mss. being given. For the text, cf. SAACT 5 149: 87’-91’.

	K 19882	[..... t]er-ru-ub-š[u]
4	BM 34816	šà uru nam-mu-u[n-gi <sub>4</sub> -da] <sup>2</sup> (= UH IX 90')
		[σα ωρ] ναμωγηδα (in wrong sequence)
	BM 48671	[.....] nam-ba-gub-bu-dè
	BM 34816	[ina] ri-bi-ti la <sup>1</sup> ta <sup>1</sup> -[.....]
		[iv ρι]φθ [α]λ <sup>3</sup> λα θ[αζαζ] <sup>4</sup> (in wrong sequence)
	K 5046+	[ina ri]- <sup>1</sup> bit la ta <sup>1</sup> -za-az-zu
5	BM 34816	é hur-sag-ta ki-in-di <sup>5</sup> numun-k[ur-.....] (= UH IX 91')
		[ε ξοροαγθα νομ]ονχοροτ
	K 5046+	[é-šè hur-sag-ta] nam-ba-gur-ru-da
	BM 34816	[u]l- <sup>1</sup> tu šad-di a <sup>1</sup> -[na bi-ti .....]
	K 5046+	[iš-tu KUR-i ana] ... la ta-tar-šú

This tablet is extremely important as the very latest exemplar of a canonical Series, probably dating from the first cent. AD, judging by the paleography of the Greek script. Scribes at Babylon at this late date were still studying standard texts known from earlier scribal curricula and from temple practices of *ašipūtu*.

The text of this tablet is far from perfect (like all school tablets). Spelling is idiosyncratic, especially in Sumerian words (e.g. the numun-sign used for Sumerian prefixes nu-mu-un-), and the sequence of lines in Greek on the reverse often does not match the Akkadian/Sumerian of the obverse. It is difficult to know what to infer from these errors: do they attest to active scribal arts in which a teacher still educates typically inept pupils, or do the errors represent lame attempts at copying an already moribund script?

The recent article by A. Westenholz argues the latter case, suggesting that the latest dated cuneiform tablet (75 AD) more-or-less witnessed the end of cuneiform writing, rejecting all arguments for later uses of cuneiform (ZA 97 [2007], 292ff.). There is a possible reason why, in my view, Westenholz's conservative approach to Graeco-Babyloniaca will eventually be proven wrong.

**2** Restoration of the verb gi<sub>4</sub> is based upon the Greek.

**3** For Akk. *āli*, which is lacking from both the Akkadian version of this line on the obv. and from other duplicates, although the expression *ribīt āli* is well attested in the dictionaries.

**4** Restoration here is based upon duplicates, which deviate from the Greek (gi<sub>4</sub>-da); we may have a textual variant here and should restore u[auars]. See also Westenholz's collations on this line, ZA 97: 269, although I do not agree with his other collations of the Greek.

**5** If the reading is correct, it represents an alternative reading to hur-sag-ta, with ki-in-du being a poetic writing for *eršetu*.

The very late bilingual incantation from Babylon discussed here comes at the end of a long tradition of magical texts, but there is virtually nothing which remains of this tradition among Aramaic incantations bowls, even those found at Babylon itself. By the time the Aramaic magic bowls make their appearance (4th-7th centuries AD), cuneiform script is clearly dead and gone and cuneiform data no longer accessible.

But why do magic bowls suddenly appear in the 4th century AD and then just as suddenly disappear some three centuries later? Since Aramaic incantations were written on clay bowls (ie. non-perishable materials), there is no doubt about their relative chronology, and a few bowls actually contain Seleucid-era dates of the 6th century AD.

I would like to propose a possible reason for the mysterious and sudden appearance and disappearance of magic bowls. The inability to read cuneiform writing (not earlier, in my view, than the 3rd century AD) could easily have precipitated a cultural and epistemological crisis caused by the loss of this script. Today's equivalent is not being able to access one's hard disk. Basic information on magic, medicine, omens, astrology, and even calendar would be lost, if not previously translated into Aramaic. Complex medical recipes were probably not systematically translated from Akkadian, with the result that 'real' medicine was lacking. Healers had to make do with makeshift magic, written on bowls, which relied upon relatively uncomplicated incantations, lacking both rituals and medical recipes. What then causes magic bowls to fall out of fashion? By the Byzantine period, technical medicine translated from Greek into Syriac and later into Arabic was being introduced into Mesopotamia, which made the jejeune magic bowl incantations obsolete or at least no longer in vogue. Aramaic bowls, which had filled the void between technical Akkadian medicine and Greek medicine in Mesopotamia, soon disappeared.

If this theoretical scenario is valid, one corollary of the argument is that cuneiform magic or medicine was still in use prior to the introduction of Aramaic magic bowls. This means that the vague archaeological context of Graeco-Babyloniaca tablets only provides part of the evidence for the survival of cuneiform, and additional clues must be sought elsewhere.

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