

83) Is the temple not a holy place? - YOS 6, 225, a legal report from the time of Nabunaid, recently studied by M. Dandamayev and C. Wunsch in Fs. Hruska,¹ tells about Adad-nūru who asked a certain Marduk-šum-ibni to deliver for him his *erbu* contribution to the temple of Eanna. The text reveals that the sesame was not received by the temple administrators, and that a suspicion was raised that Marduk-šum-ibni took the sesame for himself. When Marduk-šum-ibni was investigated by the chief administrator of the temple about the matter, he furnished a surprising explanation (11. 12-18): “[something happened and] my clothes were soiled; in distress I aban[doned (?) my plan (?)] (saying): ... “I shall clean (my) clothes and (then) bring (the sesame) in and give (it) to the [Eanna].” After some delay, and the opening a legal procedure, Marduk-šum-ibni had finally delivered the sesame to the temple.

Reading his excuse, one wonders why Marduk-šum-ibni did not avoid the unpleasantness of the investigation and the risk of legal sanction by simply changing his garment to a clean one (his own, or a garment borrowed from another) and delivering the sesame to the temple on time. A clue may be found in his words: *kib/psū lumâku*, lit. “I was soiled as to my clothes”. The not too common *tamyîz* construction² creates a semantic emphasis on the man’s uncleanness rather than on his clothes being dirty. Dandamayev and Wunsch were not insensitive to the subtleties of this phrase. In their note on 1. 13 we read: “... ‘I became soiled with respect to (my) garment’ ... focus on the acting person ...”. Commenting further on 11. 14 and 16 they wrote: “The verb *elēlu* is used here to describe the reversal of the state of defilement or dirtiness (*lu’u*). Does the choice of this verb indicate an additional aspect of (cultic) purity over and above mere cleanliness? It should be noted that Neo-Babylonian laundry contracts regarding everyday clothes use *zukkû* (*ana*

¹ M. A. Dandamayev and C. Wunsch, YOS 6 225: A Dispute about a Sesame Delivery, in L. Vacín (ed.), U₄ DU₁₁-GA-NI ŠÁ MU-NI-IB-DU₁₁. Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Memory of Blahoslav Hruška, Dresden, 2011, 61-72.

² See N. Wasserman, Style and Form in Old-Babylonian Literary Texts (CM 27), Leiden/Boston, 2003, 29-43.

zikāti) or *hâru* (*ana hâšti*) to describe the cleaning process [...]. The cleaning referenced here may, therefore, have a cultic connotation”. I believe that this, indeed, is the right direction.

A thematic parallel to the events described in the Neo-Babylonian text can be found in a literary-historical composition which describes a drama that occurred almost 2000 years before the times of Marduk-šum-ibni. In the Sumerian Sargon Legend³ it is told that the king Ur-Zababa had a dream about his own fall. It was then brought to his attention that Sargon, his cupbearer, also had a similar frightening nocturnal vision. In his dream Ur-Zababa was drowned by Inanna in a river of blood. Assuming that Sargon is the main protagonist of his possible (in fact, inevitable) demise, Ur-Zababa decided to lead his cupbearer to a trap. He told Sargon to bring some bronze objects (cups, or ingots) to the hands of the master-smith in the temple of Esikil. Though not said explicitly, it is clear that Sargon was not meant to come out of this meeting alive. Inanna, however, did not forsake her favorite future king, and stopped Sargon on his way to the Esikil, saying (1. 42 in the Sumerian Sargon Legend): “Is not the Esikil a holy temple? No one (polluted) with blood should enter it!”. Dreaming of blood made Sargon impure and prevented his entrance to the temple. He handed the metal objects at the gate of the temple, saving his life. The parallel to the Neo-Babylonian document are easily grasped: in both texts a person is asked to deliver goods to the administration of a temple, but is forced to refrain from completing his mission due to ritual uncleanness. I suggest that it is not merely that Marduk-šum-ibni had dirty clothes; somehow he became impure, perhaps contaminated with blood, and was prevented from delivering the sesame to the Eanna. This would not only explain the use of the inalienable construction *kib/psū lumâku* (which now can be translated, “I became defiled/contaminated through to my clothes”), but also make clear the reluctance of Marduk-šum-ibni to describe how exactly his clothes became dirty – for it is understandable that one is unwilling to provide exact details regarding the circumstances of one’s becoming impure.

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³ J. S. Cooper and W. Heimpel, The Sumerian Sargon Legend, JAOS 103 (1983) 67-82. Cf. ETCSL t.2.1.4.