54) A new attestation of the term malDitu — In a recently published note brève M. Jursa offers a discussion of the rare Neo-Babylonian term malDitu (or malṭitu) encountered in a number of letters and legal and administrative documents from the long 6th century (JURSA 2012). The suggested meanings – ‘after’ and ‘afterwards’ – are solely inferred from context, as its etymology defies a convincing interpretation. Formally, it has been classified as a noun in the accusative case used as an adverb or preposition.

A hitherto unrecognised attestation of the term is found in the land lease contract JOANNESE/LEMAIRE 1996, no. 65. The passage in question reads (lines 1–9):

PN, mišir-a-a, iš sag lugal-um-ma-as-ta-ar-ba-ra-a’ a-sú, šá PN, ina mi-qir liḇ-bi-šá še-numun, šá ina a-ša egi[ri]-i-tu₄ šá ma-al-DI₄-tu₄ id, šá PN iš-ri-i-tu₄ id šá PN₅ pab 45 gur še-numun pi-i šul-pu u e₂-šašu gab-bi šá [...], (...) a-na PN₆ a-ša P[N₄₆], id-din

Before offering a translation, a few remarks are in order. For the sequence iš-ri-i-tu₄ in line 5, the editors proposed a reading ši-ri-i-tu₄ which they connected with the term *širitu (written ši-RI-ti-šá), a supposed synonym for šilihtu ‘part of a canal; reservoir’ found in line 2 of CT 44 77 (JOANNESE/LEMAIRE 1996, 50). According to CAD, however, ši-RI-ti-šá should be considered a mere misspelling for šilihtu (with suffix). The reading presented here, on the other hand, yields the common word mahritu. This incidentally conforms well with the suggested meaning of malDitu, since the two terms are then used in symmetry with each other to describe the location of the rented field:

‘PN, the Egyptian, the royal courtier, son of PN, acting of his own volition, has turned over the arable land located within the field behind (that of the) Arab, whose rear side (is made up) by the canal of PN₁ (and) whose front side (is made up) by the canal of PN₄ – altogether 45 kurru of arable land under cultivation for grain, his entire bow land of [...] – (…) to PN₅, son of PN₆ (for cultivation).’

Regardless of whether malDitu is to be understood as a nominalized adjective or an attributive adjective without the noun it modifies (e.g., pātu ‘short side’), it is clear from the context that here it stands for arkītu, just as it does for arkā (or uškā) in the examples presented in JURSA 2012.

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1 Babylon, Dar 1 26, Zababa-šarru-úsur archive. The archive, or rather, quasi-archival group is part of a corpus of some 250 texts which Assyriology has come to call documents of Judean exiles and West Semites in Babylonia (see the introduction of CUSAS 28 and WAERZEGGERS 2015).
2 Babylon, Art III 4, Esangila archive. The text, a service contract, is edited in HACKL 2013 as no. 76.

3 See CAD Š 2 443 šiliḫtu A and passim.

4 Admittedly, the spelling is somewhat unorthodox, but not unexpected given the high incidence of scribal errors encountered in the documents of Judean exiles and West Semites in Babylonia (published in CUSAS 28 and BaAr 6); see HACKL in press. A reading ar-i-tu₄ for ārittu ‘canal branching off at a right angle’ is unlikely, both on grounds of orthography and syntax.

5 The two titles – Akkadian ša rēši and the Old Iranian loan ustarbaru (< *vastra-barā-) – are interpreted as synonymous at the time (JURSA 2011, 167–168).

Bibliography


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