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Hurrians at Nippur in the Sargonic Period

One of the most unusual cuneiform tablets in Assyriological literature was published over sixty years ago by Hilprecht in BE I 11. Excavated by an expedition of the University of Pennsylvania at Nippur in southern Mesopotamia, the tablet was said to have come from the same deep-lying stratum as the inscriptions of Narâm-Sin published in the same volume (op. cit. pp. 19 and 48). The tablet was described by Hilprecht, op. cit. p. 48, as being of white marble, with the obverse flat and the reverse rounded, and 11.3 x 7.2 x 2.65 centimeters in size. Bearing museum number CBM 8757, it is now housed in the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. I take this opportunity to offer my sincere thanks to Professor S.N. Kramer for having collated for me the whole inscription. He found Hilprecht's copy to be exact in every detail.

What makes the tablet so unusual is the fact that the inscription, containing nothing more exciting than a simple list of garments given by, or transferred from, one person to another, is engraved on stone rather than clay. However, what enhances its importance are the inferences that can be drawn about the existence of Hurrian elements at Nippur in the Sargonic period, for which we have a very limited attestation in the Mesopotamian sources. What makes the whole case so strange is that, in spite of the uniqueness and importance of the tablet, it has received practically no mention, let alone treatment, in Assyriological literature over the many

years since the date of its publication. In fact, outside of the remarks by Hilprecht noted above, the only references to the inscription known to me are those to be found in my discussion of certain words given in MAD III 21, in Old Akkadian Inscriptions in the Chicago Natural History Museum p. 283, and in Studi Orientalistici in onore di Giorgio Levi Della Vida p. 382.

We may only guess at the reasons why this important inscription has remained so neglected in the years past. They cannot lie in any difficulty connected with the reading of individual signs, since the careful and beautiful Old Akkadian writing normally does not offer any such difficulty, and on the point of care and beauty our stone inscription even surpasses the general standards of the Old Akkadian period. It would seem, therefore, that since it can not have been the writing, then it must be the interpretation of the individual words that has baffled the scholars attempting to unravel the meaning and the purpose of the whole inscription. Although the inscription has been known to me for many years, during which I spent a considerable amount of time struggling with the interpretation of parts of the inscription, it was only very recently that I have been able to recognize the Hurrian character of its personal names and thus find an interpretation of the whole inscription which I hope will stand the test of time.

In the following a sign-by-sign transliteration of the text is offered in accordance with the copy of the inscription reproduced here from BE I 11 as Fig.

- Obv. 1) 12 TÚG 'à-ku-ḫi-na  
 2) 8 TÚG ḫi-šè-lu-ḫi-na  
 3) 6 TÚG 'à-dam-mu  
 4) 5 TÚG zi-im-zé-ḫi-na

- 5) 30 TÚG URI.SAG  
 6) 2 TÚG ra-ba-tum  
 7) 10 TÚG TUM.GUNU 'à-dam-mu  
 8) 10 TÚG TUM.GUNU ḫi-šè-lu-ḫi-na  
 Rev. 9) 3 TÚG TUM.GUNU 'à-dam-mu LIBIR  
 10) 4 TÚG URI.DU  
 11) 2 TÚG NÍG.LAL  
 (space)  
 12) ŠU.NIGÍN 92 TÚG.ḪI.A  
 13) šu-ut É.MUN Tu-pi-in  
 14) a-na Šè-eḫ-ri-in-ip-rí  
 15) da-ti-in

As can be recognized from the copy and the transliteration, the inscription contains fifteen lines, divided into two major sections, the first consisting of lines 1-11 and the second of lines 12-15.

Every line in the first section begins with a number followed by the sign TÚG "garment". To judge from many parallels, what follows the TÚG sign should be either the names of the recipients of the garments or the names of the different garments. In favor of the first interpretation, we can quote such parallels to our 'a-ku-ḫi-na, ḫi-šè-lu-ḫi-na, and zi-im-zé-ḫi-na as the personal names Ewaḫina, Arawa/urḫina, and Malawašḫina, known from Hurrian and Cappadocian sources (Gelb, Purves, MacRae, NPN pp. 216 f.), as well as the fact that our 'a-dam-mu and ra-ba-tum occur as personal names in the Sargonic and Ur III periods (MAD III 19 and 234). In favor of the second interpretation speak the occurrences of URI.SAG, URI.DU, and NÍG.LAL, which are well attested as names of garments, but not as personal names, as well as the fact that 'a-dam-mu is known from outside sources as

the name of a garment and that she sign LIBIR "Old" following ʾa-dam-mu in line 9 clearly defines ʾa-dam-mu as a garment. In re-evaluating the points listed above in favor of taking the words following TUG as personal names, we find that our ʾa-ku-ḫi-na could very well express the name of the agubhum-garment, well-known from the Ur III sources, plus -ḫina, which could be explained as a Hurrian suffix, and that our ʾa-dam-mu and ra-ba-tum could express the corresponding Akkadian words "red" and "soft", which could easily be used as attributes of garments. Consequently, we have no hesitation in proposing that all the words listed after the TUG-sign in lines 1-11 stand for the names of garments, and not for personal names. For a detailed discussion, cf. the commentary on the following pages.

The second section, containing lines 12-15, states the purpose or the reason for making the inscription. Now that the words Tu-pi-in and Šè-eh-ri-in-ip-ri can be safely interpreted as personal names, everything is clear in this section, with the exception of É.MUN, whose reading is perfectly clear, but whose interpretation as "salt desert" lacks sufficient support. The word-by-word translation, "Total: 92 garments of É.MUN Tupin to Šehrin-ipri gave", can be freely rephrased as follows: "Tupin gave (or "transferred") to Šehrin-ipri a total of 92 garments of É.MUN."

The inscription is thus a receipt obtained by Tupin, certifying that she handed over to Šehrin-ipri a total of 92 garments. We know of hundreds and thousands of such receipts from all the periods of Mesopotamian history. What makes our receipt so unique is that it was written on stone, and not on clay, as expected. In line with the purpose of stone (as well as metal) inscriptions, whether royal, official, or private, which was to insure their monumental, display,

or permanent character, we find all kinds of votive, building, mortuary, and historical inscriptions, real estate contracts and grants (boundary stones), international treaties, seals and amulets, inscribed on stone (or metal). Having spent some time in going mentally through the whole field of Mesopotamian literature, I cannot offer one single suggestion, which would be even partly plausible, to account for the use of stone for our inscription.

The occurrence of the suffix -ḫina, attached to three different names of garments, as well as of two personal names, Tupin and Šehrin-ipri, furnishes new and important evidence for the gradual infiltration of Hurrian elements into Babylonia in the Sargonic period, for which see my Hurrians and Subarians pp. 54 ff. We do not know exactly what was the function of these Hurrians at Nippur. On the basis of our text, which is concerned with garments, we may only speculate that the Hurrians of our text may have formed a group of (female) workers, occupied with manufacture of garments and possibly drawn from prisoners of war brought to Nippur from their homes in the Zagros Mountains by one of the Sargonic kings.

In the following pages we offer a detailed commentary of the whole inscription.

Line 1. - The sign É occurring in É-ku-ḫi-na and É-dam-mu (lines 3, 7, and 9) has to be read with the value ʾa up to and including the Sargonic period, in accordance with the proposal of Poebel apud Gelb, AJSL LIII 181, and the evidence gathered in Gelb, MAD II 118 f. For the evidence favoring É = ʾa in Sumerian, see Falkenstein, Grammatik der Sprache Gudeas von Lagaš p. 25 and n. 3, and Sollberger, AOF XVII n. 4. The value é of É begins to be attested only in the Ur III period (cf. MAD II 119).

Reading É with the value ʾa makes it very tempting to interpret

our ʔa-ku-hi-na as equivalent to aguh(hum), the word for a well-known garment in the Ur III texts, regularly spelled a-gu(d)-hu-um (MAD III 20 f.), plus a suffix -hina. The value gu<sub>5</sub> for KU is attested in the Sargonic period (MAD II 149). The exact nature of the aguh(hum)-garment in the Sargonic and Ur III periods cannot be ascertained. In the late synonym lists aguhhu is identified with mesirru "girdle, waist-band, loin-cloth" (cf. von Soden, ZA XLIII 242:230). Meissner, BAW I pp. 6 f., translates aguhhum as "Zottenrock".

The suffix -hi-na, occurring in ʔa-ku-hi-na, is found also in hi-šè-lu-hi-na (lines 2, 8) and zi-im-zé-hi-na (line 4). Consequently, ʔa-ku-hi-na could be interpreted as ak/guh<sub>5</sub>-hina, and if our ak/guh<sub>5</sub> should be identified with the later Akkadian aguhhum, we should consider aguhhum either as derived from an "Urwort" belonging to an unknown language, from which both the Akkadian word and our ak/guh<sub>5</sub> were descended, or as a loan word from a language in which the suffix -hina can be attested. Note that this non-Akkadian suffix occurs with the three foreign words listed above but not with the Akkadian word adamum in lines 3, 7, and 9. Outside of our text, the suffix -hina is found apparently in 2 hi-hi-na in a Sargonic text published recently in Gelb, Old Akkadian Inscriptions in the Chicago Natural History Museum pp. 280-283 line 13. While in this text hi-hi-na is not defined as a garment by the semantic indicator (= determinative) TÚG, it may be assumed that hi-hi-na denotes a garment because of the occurrence of garments defined by TÚG in the three preceding lines, all expressed logographically. The occurrence of TÚG with logograms and its non-occurrence with hi-hi-na can be explained by the well-known principle of Old Akkadian orthography, which requires the mandatory use of semantic indicators in the case of logograms and its op-

tional use in the case of syllabic spellings (cf. MAD II 30). In Studi Orientalistici in onore di Giorgio Levi Della Vida p. 382 I explained -hi-na as containing the adjectival suffix -h(h)e plus the plural suffix -na, both well known in the Hurrian language. Cf. e.g. turu(h)ina aštu(h)ina "male and female", discussed in Speiser, Introduction to Hurrian pp. 46 f., 101 f., and 114 f.

Line 2. - The sign read as šè in hi-šè-lu-hi-na, here and in line 8, looks slightly different from the sign šè in šè-eh-ri-in-ip-ri in line 14, in that the bottom horizontal line of the sign in lines 2 and 8 has a slight protrusion, while the sign in line 14 does not. Notwithstanding this difference, I read the sign in lines 2 and 8 as šè, since I can find no evidence that this form of the sign can be used for š<sub>5</sub> (= SI.GUNU), which regularly has the protrusion in the top horizontal line. That the protrusion at the bottom of the sign in lines 2 and 8 is due to a mishap on the part of the stone-cutter, can be proved by the form of the sign TÚG in line 5, which has the same protrusion in the bottom horizontal line, in contrast to the forms of TÚG in other lines. I know of no parallels to our hišelu-garments.

Line 3. - The ʔa-dam-mu-garments, here and in lines 7 and 9, are the same as TÚG ʔa-dam-mu-um in HSS X 217:5. For É = ʔa see the discussion to line 1 and cf. the personal names written ʔA-da-mu, A-da-mu, and A-dam-u in the Sargonic period (MAD III 19).

The only parallels to our garment are found in the late synonym lists, where ada/umu denotes a kind of red garment. Cf. e.g. a-da-mu = (lubāru) sa-a-mu (CT XVIII 11 ii 42, with the spelling a-du-mu in an unpublished text) and ri-eš mu-ši-e = a-da-mu (CT XVIII 13 iii 37). Thus we can draw the conclusion, first, that the

Sargonic spelling <sup>3</sup>a-dam-mu can very well be explained as adamū (in plural) in line with the principle of Sargonic writing, according to which a combination of two signs the first of which stands for consonant + vowel + consonant does not as a rule indicate consonantal quantity (cf. MAD II 58), and, second, that our word can be the Semitic word adamum "red".

Line 4. - I know of no parallels to the name of a garment called zi-im-zé-. Note the difference between zi and zé here, as well as between ri and rí in Še-eh-ri-in-ip-rí in line 14, discussed fully in my MAD II 35 f.

Line 5. - The sign read here as URI in URI.SAG and in URI.DU in line 10 was quoted without any identification in the list of signs given by Thureau-Dangin, REC No. 76, and Deimel, Fara I No. 125. While the form of the sign URI is unusual, it is not without parallels. The same form, beginning with two horizontal wedges occurs, in TÚG URI. SAG (ITT V 9274:8) and TÚG BAR. TÚG. URI (Thureau-Dangin, RTC 203:2), while slightly differing forms appear in TÚG URI (ITT I 1460:1) and TÚG BAR. TÚG. URI (RTC 102 ii 2).

The URI-garment is qualified by SAG in line 5 and DU in line 10. To judge from such frequent parallels as KAŠ SIG<sub>5</sub> and KAŠ DU (SL 214:71 and 109), SAG, parallel to SIG<sub>5</sub>, means "of superior quality", while DU or GIN means "ordinary".

Line 6. - The word ra-ba-tum can a priori be interpreted either as an adjective construed with 2 TÚG or as a substantive construed with the number 2 and TÚG serving as a semantic indicator. In either case the word ra-ba-tum is in the feminine plural, and not in the feminine dual. Since the word subātum is masculine (cf. šu-ut in line 13), we note immediately that rabbatum, in the feminine, cannot be taken as an adjective, since the form of ad-

jective construed with subātān should be rabbān (and correspondingly rabitān in the feminine, cf. MAD II 185 f.). Consequently, we should take rabbātum as a substantivized adjective. The meaning of the word rabbum is "soft, smooth". Cf. the examples in von Soden, ZA XLI 153, Bauer, Assurbanipal p. 85, the occurrence of rabbūti with subātē in Craig, ABRT I 7:13, and of rab-ba-a-tum with SIG "wool" in V R 14 i 35.

Line 7. - The sign appearing after TÚG in lines 7-9 is identified here as TUM.GUNU in accordance with Thureau-Dangin, REC No. 311. The only parallels known to me are TÚG TUM.GUNU (ITT I 1091:7), TÚG TUM.GUNU Ú (BIN VIII 290:4), and TUM.GUNU GA-DA (ibid. line 7). Their meaning is unknown to me. For adamum see discussion to line 3.

Line 8. - See discussion to line 2.

Line 9. - See discussion to line 3. The last sign in this line is clearly LIBIR "old" (= IGI+ŠE), and not -ū (= IGI.DÍB), as read in MAD III 19.

Line 10. - See discussion to line 5.

Line 11. - There are many parallels to the NÍG.LAL-garment in the Sargonic period. Cf. TÚG NÍG.LAL (Nikolski, Dok. II 49:2; 50:1; BIN VIII 331:2); TÚG NÍG.LAL Ú (BIN VIII 290:5); [TÚG] NÍG.LAL GADA (ibid. line 8); TÚG NÍG.LAL GABA (MAD I 169:8); TÚG NÍG.LAL NÍG. [X] (MDP XIV 86 iii x+5, 16). The exact nature of the NÍG.LAL-garment is unknown to me.

Line 12. - The total of 92 garments corresponds to the sum of all the garments listed in the preceding eleven lines. The semantic indicator HI.A is used in the Sargonic period to denote various kinds of objects or animals (cf. MAD II 31).

Line 13. - The form š<sup>u</sup>-ut represents the accusative masculine plural of the determinative-relative pronoun š<sup>u</sup> (cf. MAD III 254), in grammatical agreement with TÚG.HI.A. It must be a determinative pronoun, since the verb taddin is in the indicative, and not a relative pronoun, which would require a construction with the subjunctive taddinu.

The problem of É.MUN remains the only one in the whole text for which I can offer no plausible interpretation. While the individual signs, É (or ʾÀ in the Sargonic period) and MUN, are perfectly clear in the copy and on the tablet, the combination É.MUN is nowhere attested in the Old Akkadian period. From much later periods two meanings of É.MUN = Akkadian bīt ṭābtī are known. The first meaning is found in a New Babylonian text published in Strassmaier, Nbk. 441:2, which reads 1-en É.MUN u saḫ-li-e, and can be translated as "one container for salt and cress (seed or powder)". The second meaning occurs in the inscriptions of Tiglathpileser III, in [<sup>KUR</sup>R]u-u-a KUR-ú a-di É.MUN (Rost, Die Keilschrifttexte Tiglat-Pileasers III, II p. 18 Pl. XXX:23), and <sup>KUR</sup>Ru-ú-⟨a⟩ a-di <sup>KUR</sup>É.MUN (ibid. p. 22 Pl. XXXVI:32), translated as "das Gebirge Rûa bis zur 'Salzwüste'" by Rost, op. cit. I pp. 51 and 63, and in the inscriptions of Esarhaddon, in <sup>KUR</sup>Pa-tu-uš-ar-ra/ri na-gu-ú ša i-te-e É.MUN (Borger, Die Inschriften Asarhaddons p. 34:31 and p. 55:46), translated as "Patušarri, ein Land, das an die Salzwüste grenzt" by Borger, op. cit. p. 55. This meaning of É.MUN as "salt desert" has been generally accepted in Assyriological literature, although nobody, as far as I know, has succeeded in proving how a word with the meaning "house" could develop secondarily the meaning "desert"; cf. e.g. the arguments offered by Delitzsch,

Assyrisches Handwörterbuch p. 172 a. On the basis of some very ingenious and plausible reconstructions, linking Patušarra of the Esarhaddon inscriptions with a location in northern Iran near Teheran, Sachau, ZA XII 54-57, and, following him, Streck, ZA XV 362-364, identified the É.MUN or <sup>KUR</sup>É.MUN of the Assyrian inscriptions with the great Salt Desert (= Dasht-i-Kavir) situated in the heart of Iran. Of the two meanings just discussed, the meaning "salt shaker", or the like, found in a New Babylonian text, obviously does not fit the context of our Sargonic text. The meaning "salt desert", either as a geographical designation or a geographical name, fits our context much better, since the next could very well deal with 92 garments coming from or named after an area called "salt desert". However, since the Salt Desert of central Iran is located too far away from the areas which are known to have been in political or economic contact with Babylonia in the Sargonic period, we may assume that the É.MUN of our text refers to another salty area and situated in a closer vicinity to Babylonia, for instance in the salty regions of southern Babylonia, near the Persian Gulf.

The three signs read as Tu-pi-in must be interpreted as a personal name in view of the occurrence of the name of Tu-bi-in in an Old Babylonian text from Alalakh, listing names of women (cf. Wiseman, The Alalakh Tablets p. 150 and p. 71 No. 178). That our name is feminine is clear from the feminine form of taddin in line 15. The root tup has been taken as Hurrian on the basis of such Nuzi parallels as Ewara-tupi (NPN p. 269).

The use of the sign PI with the value pi/bi, as in Tu-pi-in, is known in the Sargonic period almost exclusively in the writing system of Nippur (cf. the examples gathered in MAD II 38 and

131 f.), adding valuable information that our text, excavated at Nippur, was actually composed there.

Line 14. - The personal name Še-eh-ri-in-ip-ri has clear parallels in Nuzi onomastics and must be considered Hurrian. For the first element šeprin, cf. Šeḫram-musni (NPN p. 254); for -in, cf. such parallels as akin-, ḫašin-, etc. (pp. 190 and 236); for ip-ri, which could of course be interpreted as ipri, epri, iwri, or ewri in the Sargonic period, cf. erwi, with metathesis, at Nuzi (pp. 210 ff.), but ip-ri in the Ur III period, as in Ip-ri-ba-tal (Gelb, Hurrians and Subarians p. 110) and Na-ḫa-ap-ip-ri (UET III 1391 ii).

Line 15. - The feminine form of the verb taddin is in agreement with the feminine gender of the subject Tupin, following the rules of Sargonic grammar (MAD II 208).

