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A NEW MANUSCRIPT OF *LUGAL-E*, TABLET IV

By SAM MIRELMAN

This study edits BM 48053, a newly identified Late Babylonian manuscript of the epic poem *Lugal-e* in the British Museum collection. This tablet, which is likely to come from Borsippa, contributes towards the reconstruction of Tablet IV of the epic in its late bilingual form. It is also of interest for its colophon, which specifies the swift return of the tablet following a same day loan, using the phrase *ina mišil ūmīšu* "in half a day" or perhaps "at midday".

The tablet edited here preserves the opening and closing lines of Tablet IV of *Lugal-e* on the obverse and reverse respectively.[1] The obverse features the address of Šarur, Ninurta's divine weapon, to Ninurta. The reverse recounts the Asag's attack. This manuscript contributes towards the reconstruction of the text, particularly lines 144–147 and 175–179. In the case of at least three lines (147, 176 and 179), an improved reconstruction leads to important changes in sense. The manuscript is also of interest for subtle variations it introduces between the late manuscripts; examples include the variation in Sumerian grammatical forms in line 138, or the use of an alternative Akkadian verbal form in line 177. The tablet is also of interest for its fully preserved colophon, which includes the direction for the tablet to be returned to its owner within half a day, or possibly "at midday". BM 48053 belongs to the 1881-11-03 collection of the British Museum. This consignment includes tablets excavated by Rassam at Babylon, Borsippa and Dilbat.[2] The script is Late Babylonian. The colophon indicates that it was copied from a Borsippa master copy. Based on similar occurrences of this formula, our tablet is likely to come from Borsippa. This is suggested by the reference to Nabû in the colophon, together with the precise form and writing of the colophon on the reverse (Fig. 2), which is comparable to similar examples from Borsippa (see below). The tablet has been glued together from numerous fragments. In addition, it is accompanied by a group of small fragments, which are at present not physically attached. I have situated five of these small fragments in my copy of the obverse, where they are marked by dotted lines (Fig. 1). The remaining small fragments are copied for completeness (Fig. 3), but I have been unable to confirm these fragments as belonging to BM 48053.[3] Most likely, the present state of the tablet and associated fragments is due to damage resulting from baking. The process of baking may have resulted in the fracturing of the tablet, followed by a museum conservator's partial reconstruction.[4] The primary edition of *Lugal-e* remains van Dijk (1983). Manuscripts published after van Dijk are listed in Seminara (2001: 24). Late Babylonian manuscripts published after Seminara (2001) are Maul (2005; Tablet VII) and Geller (2010; Tablet II).[5] I know of no new

[1] I would like to thank M. J. Geller, E. Jiménez, S. M. Maul and an anonymous reviewer, for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper. I would also like to thank E. Jiménez and G. Nicolet for sharing their unpublished work with me. Of course, I remain responsible for all errors. BM 48053 is published here by permission of the trustees of the British Museum.

[2] See the introduction by J. E. Reade in Leichty (1986: xxxii).

[3] The possibility cannot be ruled out that some of these unplaced small fragments, which are all of similar colour and script, may have been mistakenly attributed to BM 48053. For example, the larger fragment on the right side (see below) reads ˹*mu*˺-*šal*-˹*lim*˺, followed by *mu-šal-lim*(-) ˹*x*˺, on the next line. A succession of lines involving such repetition does not fit with what is currently known of *Lugal-e* Tablet IV.

[4] This explanation was proposed to me by I. L. Finkel. The tablet was baked on 12 May, 1971. In its current state the tablet measures 9.7 cm × 7.5 cm. See the entry for this tablet in the British Museum online catalogue at http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/.

[5] Other new sources include five Old Babylonian Nippur mss. in Peterson (2011: 64–68). An Old Babylonian ms. from Mari (TH00-T062a + 00-T2081 + 00T211a = lines 118–124, 285–296) is unpublished, but a photograph and description appears in Nicolet (2015: II 224). Collations of Old Babylonian Ur mss. appear in Ludwig (2009: 17–21). New copies of Middle Assyrian mss. h (VAT 9306), d_1 (VAT 9710) and n_1 (BM 122625) can be found in Wagensonner (2011; 2014). Note also the post-Old Babylonian extract fragment from Nippur (lines 683'–87'; Peterson 2013).

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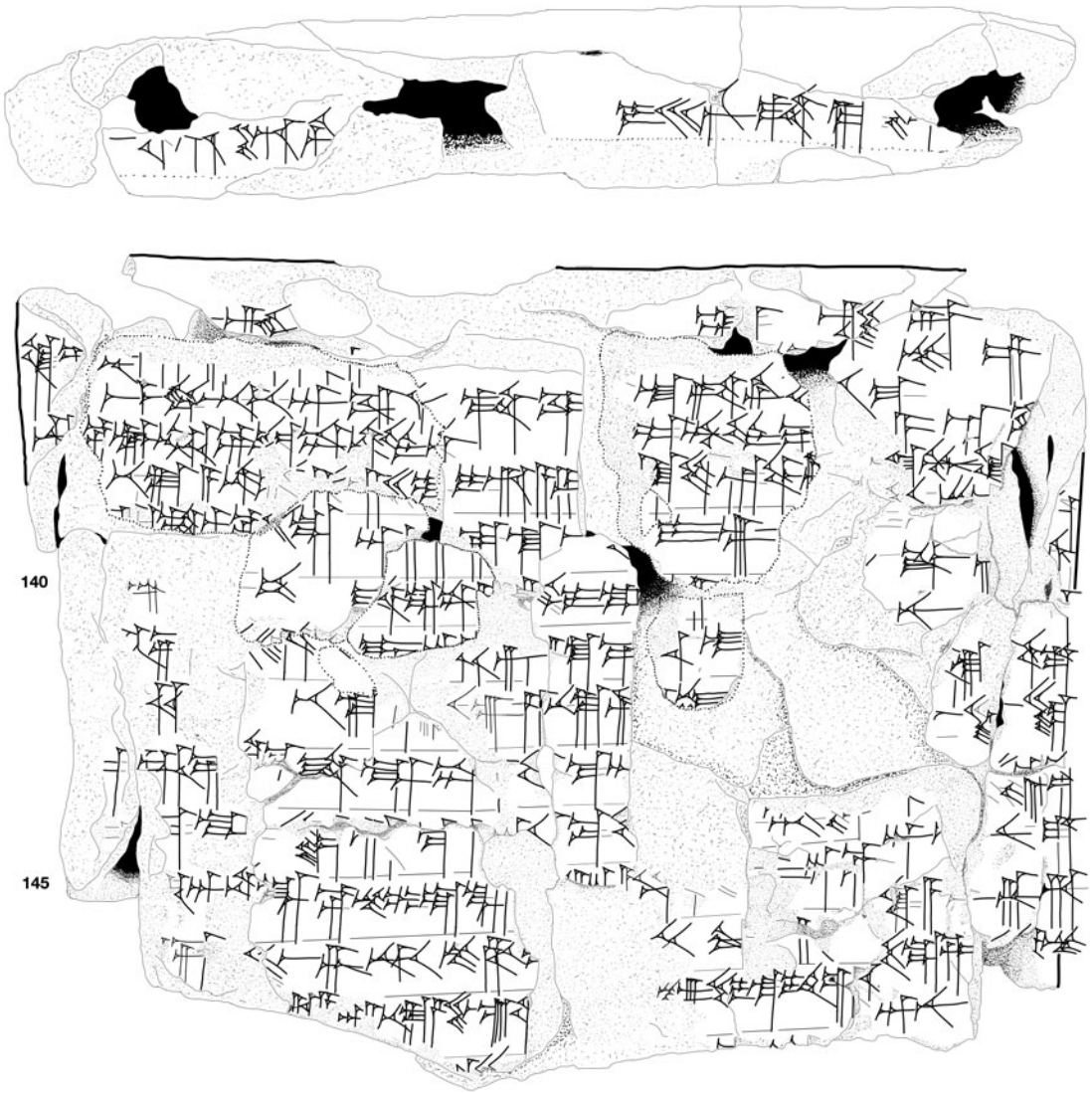


Fig. 1 BM 48053: obverse (including 5 loose fragments) and upper edge

sources for lines parallel to those preserved in BM 48053. In the following edition, line numberings follow the edition of van Dijk (1983), as do text sigla. Newly attested lines or partial lines are underlined. Exclamation marks refer to readings known from this manuscript which result in revised readings, in partially damaged parallel manuscripts. The translation is based solely on the late bilingual version.

BM 48053
Upper Edge
136. ⌜*ina tam-ḫu-uṣ*⌝ *kak-*[*kī*] *i-sin-*⌜*ni*⌝ *eṭ-lu-*⌜*tu*⌝
Obverse
136. [^{ĝeš}tukul sàg-sà]g-ge ⌜ezen⌝ nam-guruš-[a]

From the clash of weapons, the festival of young men,

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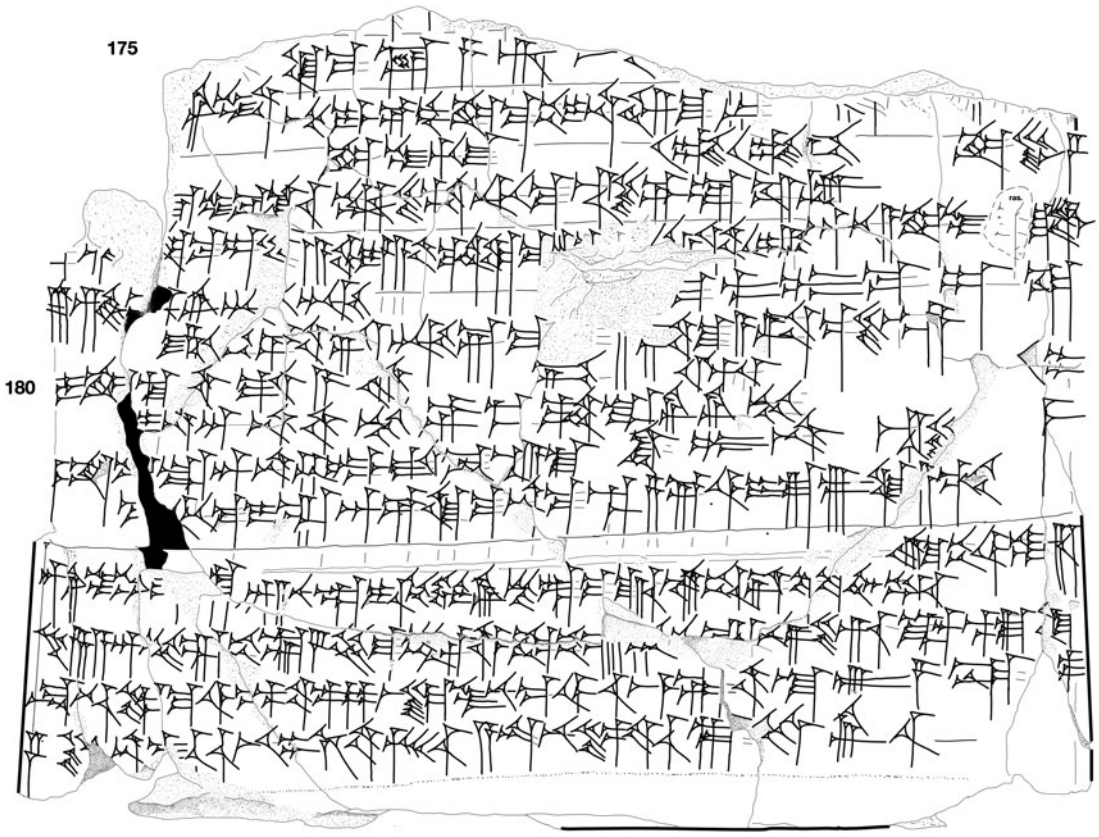


Fig. 2 BM 48053: reverse

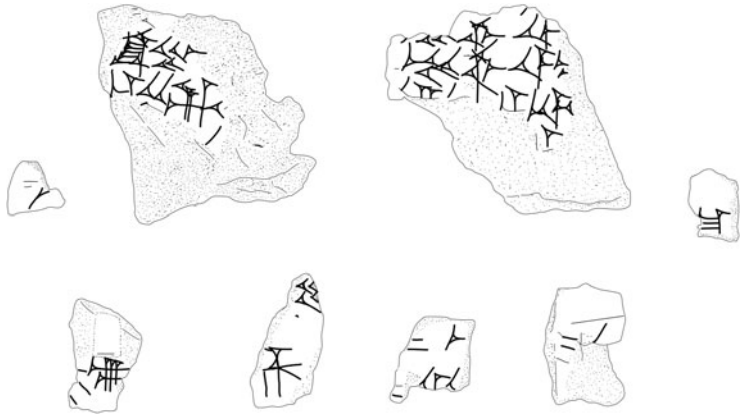


Fig. 3 BM 48053: unplaced fragments

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137. ešemen(KI.˹E.NE.DI˺) ˹d˺inana-ta á-zu˺ [ba]-˹ra˺-mu-un-[gi]
ina me-lul-ti ^{d}*iš-tar id-k*[*a*] *la ta-né-˹e'-am˺-ma*

from the play of Ištar, do not turn back (lit: turn back your arm)!

138. ˹en˺-e mè mah-e-ne ĝen-na ĝìri na-ab-ul$_4$ ĝìri-z[u ki]-a si-b[í-íb]
be-lu a-na ˹ta-ḫa-zi˺ ṣ[*i*]-*i-ri a-li*[*k l*]*a tuš-te-˹ep˺-pi-i*[*r šēpka*] ˹*ina*˺
erṣeti([K]I-*tim*) *ki*-[*in*]

O lord, go to the supreme battle (Sum: battles), (but) do not hurry!
Place your foot firmly on the ground!

---

139. [d]˹r˺nin-urta á-sàg˺-e ˹kur˺-ra ˹ĝìri mu-e˺-[ši-íb-g]ub
^{d}˹r˺MIN *a˺-sak-ku ina šadî*(K[UR]-*i*) *ú*-[*qa-a-k*]*a*

Ninurta, the Asakku awaits you in the mountain!

---

140. [ur-saĝ] ˹men˺-[na] [ga]l-bi sig$_7$-˹ga˺-[n]a
qar-ra-du ˹*šá*˺ [*ina a*]-˹*gi*˺-*i ra*-[*bi*]-˹*iš*˺ [*ba-nu*]-˹*u*˺

Hero, who with a tiara is very handsome,

---

141. [dumu ^{d}e]n-lí[l-lá h]i-˹li-bi˺ nu-[til-l]a
mār(˹DUMU˺) ˹d˺*en-líl šá*˺ *ku-z*[*u-ub*]-*šú la* [*qatû*]

son of Enlil, whose sexual allure is without end,

---

142. [en zi] ˹en˺-[ra nun-a] ˹ù˺-t[u]-ud-da
be-lu ˹*kun-nu˺-ú šá* ˹*ana˺ be-lu r*[*u-b*]*a-˹tum˺* [*uldūšu*]

steadfast ruler, whom the queen (Ninlil) has borne for the lord (Enlil),

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143. [ur-sa]ĝ ^{d}suen(˹d˺+EN.Z[U])-˹na-gim˺ [s]i m[ú]-mú
qar-ra-d[*u*] ˹*šá ki˺-ma* ˹d˺[*sîn qarnī banû*]

hero, who grows horns like Sîn,

---

144. [lugal] ˹kalam˺-[m]a-r[a] ˹ti˺-[la u$_4$] ˹sù-da˺
˹*šar-ri ma*-*a-ti˺ ba-la*[*ṭ ūmī ru*]-˹*qu-tu˺*

who is life of long days for the king of the land,

---

145. [usu ma]h an-na-ra an b[ad-b]ad-da
e-mu-qan ṣi-˹ra-a-ti šá ^{d}˺*a-˹nim*˺! *pe-tu-ú˺ šamê*(AN-*e*)

who, (being) the supreme strength of Anu, opens the sky,

---

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146. [a-ur$_4$-r]a-⌜ke$_4$⌝ peš$_{10}$ ⌜ì⌝-ur$_4$-ur$_4$
⌜*bu*⌝-*tuq-ti mu-ḫa-a*[*m-mi-m*]*at ki*[*b*]-⌜*ri*⌝

the flood which makes the banks gather together,

---

147. [^{d}nin-urta en ní-huš] ri-a kur-ra sa[ĝ] ⌜nu-sum⌝-mu
^{d}MIN *be-lu šá pu-luḫ-tú* [*ezzetu ra*]-*mu-ú šadî*(KUR-*î*) *la i-ḫi-iš-*⌜*šú*⌝-*šú*

Ninurta, lord who is imbued with [angry] fearsomeness,
towards whom the mountains do not rush,

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148. [ ] an-nu-[ ]
[ ] ⌜…⌝ [ ] ⌜…⌝

Reverse
174. [ ]
[ ] ⌜…⌝ [ ]

---

175. [muš-saĝ-kal-gim kalam-ma šeg$_{10}$ bí-in-gi$_4$]
ki-ma ṣar-ṣa-ri ⌜*ina*⌝ *mātu*(K[UR]) [*išgum*]

He (Asakku) roared like a great snake in the land;

---

176. [kur-ra mi]-ni-íb-lah [ĝeš]⌜šinig⌝ [mi-ni-íb]-⌜ùr⌝
ina šadî(KUR-*î*) *me-e ub-bil-ma bi-i-na im-šu*$^{!}$-⌜*ur*⌝

he dried out the mountains, and dragged away the tamarisks;

---

177. [ki-a su-bi] bí-íb-dar GIG gig-[g]a bí-in-ĝar
[*er-ṣ*]*e-tum zu-*⌜*mur*⌝-*šú il-le-ti-ma sim-* < *mi* > *mar-ṣi iš-kun*

the body of the earth became split, and he created severe wounds
(to appear on the earth's surface);

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178. ⌜ĝeš-gi⌝ [i]zi ba-ab-⌜sum⌝ an úš-a bí-íb-$^{(ras.)}$-tu$_5$
ana a-pi i-šá-a-tú id-di-ma šamê(⌜AN-*e*⌝) ⌜*da-mu ur*⌝-*tam-mi-ik*

he set fire to the reed-beds, and bathed the sky in blood;

---

179. [š]à-ge-⌜túm⌝ ì-⌜bal⌝-bal [kalam-m]a ság ba-ab-du$_{11}$
qer$^{!}$-⌜*bé*⌝$^{!}$-*e-tú uš-bal-kit-ma* ⌜*ma-a-ta*⌝ *šu-a-ta is-pu-un*

he fomented rebellion in the environs, and flattened that land.

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180. i-ne-éš u_4-da a-˹šà˺-ga ùh ĝi$_6$
i-na-an-na u$_4$-mu e-qel id-ra-ni ṣal-mu

Now, on this day, (that land was) a field of black potash (Sum: scum).

181. me-˹dè úr˺-ra an-na síg-hé-me-da-gim sa$_5$-šè ur$_5$ hé-na-nam-me
m[a-t]i-ma i-šid šamê(AN-*e*) *ki-ma na-ba-si ṣa-rip ši-i lu-ú ki-a-am*

Forever, the horizon was as red as dyed wool. It was truly so!

Catchline:
182. an-né íb dú[b-ba]-šè šà šu-bi ši-íb-[r]i
^{d}*a-nu-um i-gu-ug ir-mu-um-ma qātī*(ŠU.2)*-šú ina lìb-bi-šú uš-˹te-te˺-'i-il*

As Anu became furious and trembled, he wrung his hands over his heart,

Colophon:
46.ÀM ˹MU˺.ŠID.BI DUB.4.KAM.MA ˹lugal-e˺ u_4 me-lám-bi ˹nir-ĝál˺ ˹*úl*˺ *qati*(˹AL˺.TIL) GABA.RI BÁR.SIPA˹ki˺ | *kīma*(GIM) *labirī*(SUMUN)*-šú šaṭir*(SAR)*-ma bari*(IGI.TAB) *pa-liḫ* nabû(^{d}+AK) *ina* SAR-*tum là inaššī*(ĜEŠ-*ši*)*-šú ina me-˹reš˺-tú la ú-šá-ka-áš* | *šá i*[*n*]*-na-˹áš˺-šú-šú ina mi-šil ūmī*(u_4.MEŠ)*-šú a-na be-li-šú ˹lu-te˺-er-šú*

46 is its line-count, Tablet IV of *Lugale-u-melambi-nirĝal*. (The series) is not finished. Master copy from Borsippa, written and checked according to its original. He who fears Nabû must not dishonestly take it, or deliberately allow it to go missing. He who takes it away must return it to its owner in half a day/at midday.

Notes

[136] The Akkadian version of the incipit is written on the upper edge of the obverse, ahead of its usual place following the Sumerian version. There are several other examples of this practice in first millennium bilingual Sumerian-Akkadian tablets (see Gabbay 2014: 235, with n. 54). As has been suggested by Cavigneaux and Ismail (1998: 6), this practice is likely to have functioned as a means of quick reference within tablet collections or "libraries".

[137] Lines 137–38 are good examples of highly divergent understandings between the Old Babylonian and late bilingual versions. In the Old Babylonian version the speech of Ninurta's divine weapon, the Šarur, clearly directs Ninurta not to go to battle; line 137 reads: ešemen ^{d}inana-ke$_4$ á-zu ba-ra-ni-zi "To the play of Inana, do not raise your arm!". The late bilingual version of these lines directs Ninurta to do the opposite, i.e. to go to battle. Note Seminara's (2001: 444) understanding of these lines as an "ideological" translation, reflecting a greater emphasis on Ninurta's martial aspect in the first millennium.

[138] I interpret the Sumerian postposition -e as a vocative. Cf. the opening line of Tablet I in the late version: Lugal-e u_4 me-lám-bi nir-ĝál "O king, a storm the glory of which is noble". On the use of vocative -e see Woods (2000: 322–23), with earlier literature. Although it appears to be attested infrequently in early Sumerian literature, vocative -e may be considered characteristic of late Sumerian; it is, for example, a feature of the post-Old Babylonian (Emesal) Sumerian Eršahuĝa prayers (Maul 1988: 6). The Sumerian of this line shows substantial differences with manuscript i$_2$ (BM 38838), such as the introduction of the -/ene/ plural suffix. Use of this suffix is irregular here, according to Old Babylonian conventions, as it is normally attached exclusively to personal nouns. In addition, the Akkadian version of this line does not reflect an understanding of "battle" as a plural. The -/ene/ plural suffix is used with non-personal nouns in the bilingual Šamaš-šuma-ukīn inscription VR 62, 2 (Jacobsen 1991: 284).

[145] There are clear traces of NIM for ^{d}*a-nim* in our tablet. The traces of this sign in manuscript t (4R^2 23, 2) fit NIM better than van Dijk's proposed reading of -*t*]*i*$^{?}$.

[146] The traces before ur$_4$-ur$_4$ could potentially be SA, known from the Old Babylonian version; note the proposed reading pes$_{10}$-sa in Geller (1985: 217). However, the traces fit NI better than SA. In addition, a conjugation prefix is expected at this point before the reduplicated verbal base. The sign UR$_4$ is very close to RI in Late Babylonian script; however, in this context, and with the parallel Late Babylonian manuscript u (BM 47892) the reading of these signs is clear. The usual form of UR$_4$ features a descending diagonal which ends the sign in a triangular point. The scribe of this tablet has a tendency to draw the diagonals very close or touching the horizontals, making the distinction between RI and UR$_4$ less distinct. See for example, the form of the similar sign TUK in *bu-tuq-ti*, in the Akkadian of this line.

[147] For the image of mountains rushing (*ḫiāšu*) towards Ninurta, see the bilingual version of line 125 in *Angim* (Cooper 1978: 76–77). By the introduction of negation, the meaning of this line is transformed. In the Old Babylonian version Ninurta's

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fearsomeness is the reason why he rushes to the mountain. In the first millennium version, Ninurta's fearsomeness is the reason why the mountains do not rush towards him.

[175] The newly attested bilingual equation between the *ṣarṣaru* snake and its Sumerian equivalent conforms to the lexical evidence (CAD Ṣ: 115).

[176] The clear ŠU sign in *im-šu-ur* confirms as correct the emendation in manuscript u: *im-šu*!(text: KU)-*ur* proposed in Geller (1985: 217–18). In manuscript i_2 I see *ub-*ˈ*bil*ˈ (collated), confirming our tablet.

[177] The first GIG sign may possibly be read as sim_x. Cavigneaux (1987: 45) discusses this reading, the primary evidence for which is the Old Babylonian writing sim_x-ma. However, I know of no first millennium examples of such a writing. The Akkadian of this line probably omitted the sign *-mi* in *sim-* < *mi* > . The parallel Late Babylonian duplicate manuscript u is written syllabically (*sim-ma*). But the possibility of a construct state (*sim marṣi*) cannot be excluded. The use of the N stem of *letû* "to split", which differs from the G stem of the only other manuscript (i_2) for this line, clarifies that the body of the earth became split as a direct result of being dried out, not as a separate action of the Asakku.

[179] In manuscript i_2 my collation confirms our tablet. In manuscript i_2 I see: ˈšà-ge-túmˈ i-ˈbal-balˈ ka[lam-ma ság ba-ab-du_{11}] // ˈ*qer*ˈ-[*b*]*é-e-tum uš-b*[*al-kit-ma māta šuāta ispun*]. The equation between *qerbētu* "environs, district" and šà-túm is well attested. The transformation from the Old Babylonian to late Sumerian, appears to be based on homophony, resulting in the shift ti > túm. This technique is well attested elsewhere in *Lugal-e* (Seminara 2001: 421–29).

[180] This line is central to the argument of K. P. Foster (1999), who understands the Asakku as a personified volcano. For the various interpretations of Asakku, see Foster (1999: 28), with earlier literature.

[181] The equation between *matīma* "ever, always" and me-da (or me-dam in manuscript i_2 for this line) is well known. I know no parallel for the variant me-dè in our tablet. sa_5 = *ṣarāpu* is not attested lexically, but the use of SA_5 as a logogram for the verb *ṣarāpu* "to dye red" is attested (Farber 1977: 91).

[182] My understanding of the Sumerian of this line partly follows Gragg (1973: 25). Seminara (2001: 272) interprets the Akkadian verb here, I think correctly, as *ra'ābum* "to shake, tremble". The Akkadian translation understands íb as equivalent to *agāgum* "to be(come) furious", contrary to its original function as a vocalic prefix (/i/) plus pronominal element (/b/) before the verbal base (íb-dúb). DÚB = *ra'ābum* "to shake, tremble" is not attested, but note the well attested equation between dúb and *râbu* "to tremble, quake" in bilinguals (CAD R: 55–57). A confusion between the two verbs may explain the equation in our passage. The form *ir-mu-um-ma* could potentially be a pret. of *ramāmum* "to roar" plus *-ma*. The spelling differs in the parallel mss. x (BM 38433) and n_2 (BM 46971 + 43974), where it appears as *ir-'u-um-ma*. *ra'ābum* (CAD R: 2–3) is used together with *agāgum* in other contexts, and it is also used in passages where gods are the subject. Thus, it fits the context of our passage better than *ramāmum.* The shift from /m/ > ' is known from certain contexts in late periods (see GAG^3 §31d; Mayer 1992: 45–51). Evidence of the reverse shift ' > /m/ is admittedly rare, but attestations in Late Babylonian literary texts have been compiled in Jiménez 2017: 279.

Colophon. The formula *ina me-*ˈ*reš*ˈ*-tú la ú-šá-ka-áš* "he must not knowingly/deliberately allow it (the tablet) to go missing" occurs, in variant forms, in Late Babylonian colophons from Uruk, Borsippa and Babylon. The particular spelling of the formula in our tablet is known from tablets which most probably come from Achaemenid Borsippa (see for this, and for discussion of the formula in general, Jiménez 2016). The formula occurs together with the direction for the tablet to be returned to its master within a specific time scale, in Late Babylonian colophons from Uruk (Hunger 1968: nos. 91, 96, 97; CAD M/I: 140). I am not aware of any parallel for such a direction allowing only half a day; other examples in Late Babylonian colophons stipulate longer periods for the return of tablets, such as two days, the "same day" (*ina ūmīšu*) or "the same evening"(?) (*ina kakkabī*(TE)*-šú*; see Farber 1987: 31, n.22). The phrase *ina mišil ūmīšu* could alternatively be interpreted as "midday" (cf. CAD M/2: 129). It is unclear which of these alternatives is intended in this context. The reading of SAR-*tum* as *ḫubtu* "robbery" (Borger 1970: 166) cannot be excluded, but I prefer the reading *sartu* "falsehood, dishonesty" based on the context of our tablet. The phonetic complement to ĜEŠ in *inaššī*(ĜEŠ-*ší*)*-šú* supports the proposed reading of ĜEŠ as *našû* "to lift, carry", doubted in Hunger (1968: 13). See the discussion of this reading in Jiménez 2016: 230, n.6.

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مخطوطة جديدة من لوغال-ي،للوح IV
بقلم: سام ميريلمان

يراجع هذا البحث المستند BM 48053 وهو مخطوطة من العهد البابلي الحديث Late Babylonian لملحمة لوغال-ي – تم تمييزها مؤخرا من بين مجموعة في حوزة المتحف البريطاني. هذا اللوح الذي من المحتمل ان يكون قد جاء من مدينة بورسيبا يساعد في إعادة تركيب اللوح IV الذي يتضمن الملحمة بشكلها المتأخر المزدوج اللغات. للوح اهمية اخرى وهي خاتمة الملحمة التي تتضمن تحذير موجه لمن يحاول سرقة اللوح مثلها بذلك مثل الخاتمات البابلية المتأخرة الأخرى. بالاضافة الى ذلك تحدد هذه الخاتمة ان يعاد اللوح بسرعة في نفس اليوم التي يستعار فيه، مستعملين لذلك التعبير (ina mišil ūmīšu) "خلال نصف يوم" أو يحتمل ان يقصدون "في منتصف النهار".

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