

A LATE MIDDLE ASSYRIAN TABLET FROM NORTH SYRIA

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The tablet presented here was seen by the author on the antiquities market in Syria in 1982. At that time I was allowed to copy and photograph the tablet. The owner had no information about the provenience of the tablet other than "North Syria", but it was accompanied by several fragments of "Emar-type" tablets which leads one to suspect that it came from somewhere on the upper Euphrates in the vicinity of Emar, or at least from somewhere between Emar and Karkemiš.

The tablet is small (5 x 3 cm) and is inscribed on the obverse and lower edge along its long axis. The text ends with a ruled line and the reverse is uninscribed. There is no date on the tablet. The tablet is partially fired and the obverse shows some blackening. Several fingerprints are visible in the clay on the reverse.

In the absence of any archaeological context or, indeed, any provenience at all, the date of the tablet must be determined solely from internal criteria. Conclusions drawn from a single tablet with regards to ductus and orthographic conventions are extremely hazardous, especially without a significant volume of similar material to compare it with. However, a few observations can be made. The script is Assyrian and the ductus and sign forms date the tablet to the Middle Assyrian period, while the regular use of the personal name indicator suggests a relatively late date. On the basis of these observations, we can tentatively date the tablet to about 1100 B.C.

The text is clearly a local administrative document dealing with garments or textiles. None of the names in the text is attested in the Middle Assyrian onomasticon, and it seems equally obvious that they are West Semitic names of individuals from the local population. The fact that all of the names are written completely syllabically in contrast to the prevalent convention of using logograms in names, and the non-standard syllabification of the names also suggests that the cuneiform script was being used to render foreign names. Since this area of North Syria is precisely the area in which the Ahlamû were found in huge numbers at this time (*ARI* 2, T-P I, 4, 97), it is likely that most of the names in this text are Aramaic.

The text reads as follows:

- 1 ¹*Ra-ah-ti-li*
- 2 ¹*A-ni-hi-te ša-pi-ú-tu*
- 3 ¹*A-hi-da-di*
- 4 DUMU *Am-ma-ra-qi*
- 5 ¹*A-bi-la-hi*
- 6 *ša TÚG*^{HI.A-ME}
- 7 *il-qi-ú*

As is usual in administrative texts, the abbreviated syntax does not provide all the grammatical clues necessary for a complete understanding of an isolated text, but lines 6-7 render the purpose of the text as a record of garments or cloth received by certain individuals. The only question is whether all four individuals received the garments or whether the individuals are separated grammatically by the *ša-pi-ú-tu* in line 3. The precise meaning of the word *šapiu* is not entirely clear, but it occurs several times in MA contexts referring to garments or cloth (see *AHW*, p. 1082b s.v. *šapû(m)* I). The most likely explanation here is that *ša-pi-ú-tu* is for *šāpiūtu*, an active participle with adjectival plural of the verb *šapû* (cf. *ibid.*, s.vv. *šapû(m)* II and *šāpû*), and that the first two men listed are dyers. We should then understand the text thus:

(1) Raht(i)-ili (and) (2) Anihite (are the) dyers; (3) Ahi-Dadi (4) son of Amma-raqi (and) (5) Ab(i)-ilahi (6-7) (are the ones) who received (the) garments/cloth.

Notes

7 The expected Middle Assyrian form is *ilqiuni*. It is most likely that the subjunctive marker *-ni* has been dropped under the influence of the western peripheral Akkadian dialect of the area, but the form remains Assyrian in contrast to Babylonian *ilqû*.

While the name *A-ni-hi-te* in line 2 might have a Hurrian etymology (compare *An-hi-ti* at Nuzi [*NPN*, p. 21b], and *An-hi-te/ti* and *An-hi-it-ti* in NA [*APN*, p. 23b]), the rest of the names can plausibly be explained as Aramaic.

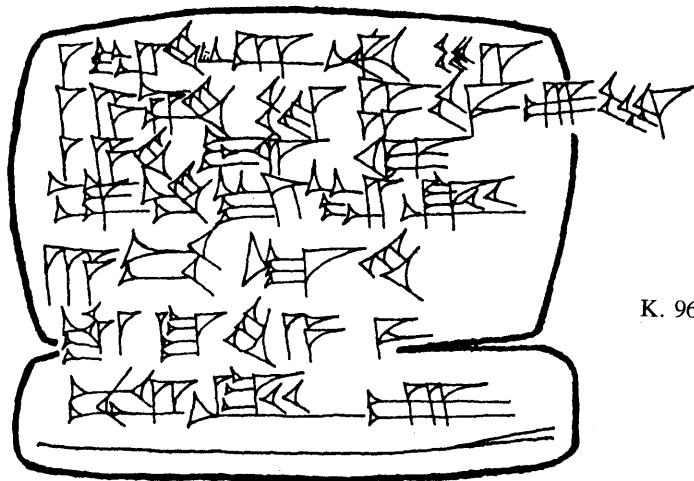
1. Raht(i)-ili has the form of a first person singular perfect form of a middle weak verb plus *ilī*. Compare *Ša-'al-ti-DINGIR* and *Šal-ti-DINGIR* "I-have-asked-(my)-god" (Zadok, *WSB*, p. 84). Unfortunately, the root and its meaning are not apparent.

2. While Ahi-Dadi could be an Akkadian name ("My-brother-is-my-darling"), the name of his father, Amma-raqi, can only be West Semitic. This coupled with the fact that Dadi is a frequently occurring divinity in West Semitic names (note Dadi-ibni [*SAA* 1 189], Giri-Dadi [*SAA* 1 190], and Dadi-suri [*SAA* 1 191]) indicates that the name should be rendered as Ahi-Dadi.

3. Amma-raqi contains the element 'amm "paternal uncle" plus a form that looks like the active participle of a final weak verb. The root here could be *rdy* (see Lipiński, *OLA* I, p. 123, n. 6, and compare *KAI* II, p. 267 (6) and *SSI* II, p. 53, 6). If Gibson is correct in rendering the form *rqh* in the Sefire treaties as "conciliate", then our name could be understood as "The-(divine)-paternal-uncle-is-a-conciliator".

4. Ab(i)-ilahi is rather clearly composed of *abu*, "father", plus *ilahi*, "god", based on the alternative root 'lh. This name is rendered in Neo-Assyrian as AD-DINGIR-a-a (*APN*, p. 5a).

These four names are obviously West Semitic in morphology and lexicon. That they are in fact Aramaic appears from the writing of the root *rdy* as *ra-qi*, since the phoneme *d* is realized as *q* only in Aramaic. This small tablet, then, has a significance far exceeding its original mundane purpose, marking one of the earliest yet attested examples of the rendering of Aramaic personal names in cuneiform script.



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Fig. 8