A MIDDLE ASSYRIAN TEXT CONCERNING VINEYARDS AND FRUIT GROVES

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The text presented here is part of a private collection in Venice. It measures 40 x 34 mm; the color of the clay is blackish. The tablet, which bears 6+3+5+3 lines, is substantially complete.

Transliteration
Obverse
1 2 IKU 7 GIR GISKIRI
2 ša ŠU 1BIL-ia
3 u 10UTU-SEŠ-SUM-na

4 1 IKU 2 ku-ma-ni
5 ša ŠU 1DUMU-4UTU
6 110-tu-[ ]

Upper Edge
1 3 ku-ma-ni
2 ti-lu-tu
3 ša GEŠTIN

1) The tablet is part of the collection of cuneiform tablets of the Centro Studi e Ricerche Ligabue of Venice. A presentation of the document, in the fuller setting of the collection, was also given in F.M. Fales, Prima dell'alfabeto, Venezia 1989, pp. 191-192, no. 60. I take the present occasion to provide full photographic documentation of the text, as well as to present a modified reading of Rev. 5, which I reached by way of a helpful observation by H. Kühne, to whom I am most grateful.

2) I am grateful to J. N. Postgate for discussing the text with me, and for helpful hints.
Reverse
1 GIS-TIR^MEŠ
2 ša GIS-ša-šu-gi
3 ū a-za-am-ri
4 sa-mu-he
5 ša URU BĀD-kat-li-mu

Lower Edge
1 ITI ša sa-ra-te
2 UD 28 KAM li-mu
3 1Qi-bi-dA-šur

Translation
2 ikûtâ 7 feet of orchard, belonging to Bilia, and Šamaš-ahu-iddina; (4) 1 ikû and 2 kumûnî belonging to Mar-Šamaš, (and to) Adad-tu ...; (U.E. 1) 3 kumûnî of vine shoots; (R. 1) groves of šašsu-gu-trees, (and) of mixed fruit-plants — (all') of the city Dur-Katlimmu. (L.E. 1) Month VI, day 28, eponymy of Qibi-Abûsar.

The main feature of interest of this 13th century document lies in a series of rare occurrences, both contextual and lexical, which it shows within the relatively small MA text-corpus. First of all, the parallels to lists of this form and typology (land, connected to personal names and toponyms) are few and far between in the MA archives, and they essentially concern cornland, not orchards or vineyards. Second, our tablet clearly shows the units of measure ikû, kumûnî and šêpu applied to land types other than cornland in MA texts — similarly to the system used at Nuzi, where, however, the emûrû substitutes the ikûtî. Thirdly, the sole toponym of the text may be made out as Dur-Katlimmu, nowadays well identified as the extensive and archaeologically rich site of Tell Shekh Hamad on the left bank of the lower Khabur, known from MA annals as well as from contemporary tablets discovered on the site itself, as yet only known from preliminary reports. Thus our tablet might originate from the vicinity of Dur-Katlimmu.

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3) The eponym Qibi-Abûsar should be referred to the age of Tukulti-Ninurta I (1244-1208 B.C.): cf. C. Saporetti, OMA p. 375; Gli eponimi medio-assiri, pp. 55, 124. The toponym in Rev. 5 has an unclear first sign, after URU: for place names built with Kakkab-, cf. e.g. Parpola, NAT, p. 188, 2 (now collated for the SAA edition as URUKak-kab-na-te').
4) Cf. e.g. KAV 125-129.
6) Cf. W. Röllig, Dur-Katlimmu, OrNS 47 (1978), pp. 419-430; H. Kühne, Tell Sheh Hamad / Dür-Katlim-
— a fact which might *per se* explain the rarity of the previously noted aspects.

Finally, a significant feature of curiosity in the text concerns the attestation of some MA forerunners to administrative terms used in the NA period. Thus, two items which were hitherto exclusively, or almost exclusively, known in NA textual material occur in this document. The first is *tillulù ša karani*, which essentially means "grapevine", but here — in view of the measurements in *kumāni* — must be taken to indicate more specifically the "shoot of vine", the "vine-stalk". Now, *tillulù* is attested in lexical material of various periods with a small series of nuanced meanings, including the above; however, no occurrences of the term in legal and administrative contexts prior to the NA age were hitherto recognized.

In the NA period, as is known, *tillulù* is not infrequently to be found in the description of the types of landed property for purposes of sale, or for census records (presumably linked to taxation matters). The legal texts provide mentions of *tillulù* alone, or together with other forms of property, as the case may be: cf. e.g., *ADD 360*, where a GIS KIRI₃ *zaq-pu ša GIS til-liti*, "a fully planted vineyard" adjoining a threshing-floor, a grove, and two roads, is sold in the town of Uruulli for 31 shekels of silver; or *ADD 448*, where 4 vineyards, bearing altogether 7000(+$n) vine-shoots, bordered by stone walls, are sold with 7 people and 2 houses in the town of Ispullûrê of the land Izalla; etc.

Similar information may be gleaned from administrative material of various types. The "Harran census" gives evidence for the normal contiguity of corneland with *tillulù* in the hill country of the northwestern corner of Mesopotamia, with single vineyards reaching an average of 9500 shoots in the region of Kipani. The same may be said for other material of cadastral type, either from specific and homogeneous text groups — such as the land schedules within the royal grants — or from random lists of general

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7) Cf. AHw., pp. 25a, 1385b (s.v. *tillatu*) and 1306a.

8) For the meaning "shoot of vine", "vine-stalk", notice the contiguity of *tillulù* to *papalli*, "shoot, branch" in MSL 5, p. 94, and the parallelism GES *gestin-GAM-*ma = *tillat/kippat karani* (Hh III, 18a, 19). On the other hand, *tillulù/tillulù* may also act as general synonym for *karanu* (e.g. in the parallel attestations [U a-a]-ar ka-ra-ni : U a-a-ar til-la-te, quoted in CAD K, p. 206a).

9) Despite no full treatment of the issue up to the present (cf. Postgate, JESHO 17 [1975], p. 226).

10) *ARU 373; FNALD 4; NALK 152.*

11) *ARU 443; NALK 265.*

12) Not just 4000, as reconstructed in *NALK*, pp. 315-316.

13) 4 *NA*-ga-*ra*-te in Obv. 12.

14) The same town and region are mentioned in connection with a vineyard in *ADD 742 (= CCENA 24), 32.*


16) Cf. Postgate, *NARGD*, *passim; CCENA*, nos. 23ff.; and see also e.g. *ADD 774.*
bureaucratic nature\textsuperscript{17}. The evaluation of the vineyards in terms of acreage/yield was not always provided, but when present was consistently by the number of shoots or stalks, as may be deduced from \textit{ADD 1052}, an inventory of a (royal?) park, where 3000 \textit{Gls}il-lu-tu flank other fruit-bearing arboreal species, numbered by individual plants (e.g. 135 apple-trees, 50 fig-trees)\textsuperscript{18}. Preferably done roughly by thousands, this count could also reach greater detail, as proved by the 49300 shoots attested in a text of the Harran census\textsuperscript{19}.

The second item of interest in our document is (a)\textit{zamru}. Often taken until the recent past as a term for a particular fruit\textsuperscript{20}, (a)\textit{zamru} (attested in NA as \textit{zamru}) is now commonly believed to be the Assyrian word for “fruit” in general\textsuperscript{21}. As stated recently by Postgate, “The meaning ‘fruit’ is admittedly a guess, but strongly supported by contexts and the phrase \textit{zamru sammuhu}, ‘mixed fruit’”\textsuperscript{22}. Taking up on this brief remark, a look at such contexts may be useful here: although the material is, again, well-known, the point is to show that “fruit” (or alternatively “fruit tree”), is the most plausible interpretation for the variety of occurrences of the word, which range from legal and administrative documents to lists of offerings for the temples and the gods to a single case in the royal inscriptions.

In the legal material, a \textit{Gls}KIR6 šā za-mar is attested as the object of a mixed sale (land and people) in the town of Abnulu of 683 B.C.; in a further mention in the same text, it is abbreviated to a simple \textit{Gls}KIR6, attended by a “gardener” (\textit{LONU} \textit{Gls}KIR6)\textsuperscript{23}. Basically the same terminology occurs in a tablet of the Harran census, where a garden is said to comprise both \textit{zamru} and \textit{urqu}, “vegetables” (1 \textit{Gls}KIR6 za-am-ri \textit{Gls}SAR) and to bear 300 “stalks of \textit{zamru}” (300 kan-ni zam-ri ina ŠA) as well as 150 \textit{Gls}sar-bu-tu \textit{Gls}hi-lat-pu, “150 (stalks of) poplar and willow trees”\textsuperscript{24}. And a similar

\textsuperscript{17} See e.g. \textit{CTN} 2, no. 155, VIII, 7', an inventory of mixed goods, with land mentioned only in the very last column, in census-type style.
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{ADD} 1052, II. 9, 5, 7, resp.
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{CCENA} 9, VIII. 2.
\textsuperscript{20} Cf. e.g. \textit{CAD} Z, pp. 40-41; Postgate, \textit{TCAE}, p. 207.
\textsuperscript{21} Cf. in any case already \textit{CCENA} (1973), p. 28.
\textsuperscript{22} \textit{BSA} 3 (1987), p. 136 fn. 10.
\textsuperscript{24} \textit{CCENA} 3, 1, 6-10: the final total (I. 10) is PAP 450. Two further mentions of \textit{Gls}KIR6 za-am-ri occur in the same text (II. 5; III. 3). And a similar connection between \textit{zamru} and other arboreal species may be desumed from the following passage of \textit{CCENA} 5, VIII, 4-7: (4) 1 \textit{Gls}[ab-lu x x] (5) \textit{ina} \textit{bir-tu} \textit{Gls}[KIR6 x x] (6) 1 \textit{Gls} za\textit{ma}r GAB. \textit{DI} \textit{Gls}K[Ri x x], "one gr[ove of ...], among the gardens of ...", one fruit garden, adjoining the ... garden" (\textit{CCENA} 5, VIII, 4-7). On \textit{qablu}, cf. fn. 37, below.
picture is again offered by a group of cadastral texts of large estates, where we find, e.g., 3 Gis KIRI₆ Gisza·am-ri ina URU ŠE ⁴AG ina KUR Ha-lah-ha ²⁵.

Turning to the offering schedules and similar documents, we may notice that zamru is a regular presence in food lists for the gods and temples. Our substance is usually mentioned in these offering schedules in “baskets” (sallu) ²⁶ alongside other foodstuffs and/or containers: e.g. DUGša·za-mu·u, “Zamuan-type wine jars” (with numerous varieties of wine) ²⁷ “pots of olives” (DUG qa-butu sir-di ²⁸), “dishes (asudu) of haršu-fruit”, “vessels (massitu) of alappānu-beer”. The concurrent attestations and the lack of Gis are obvious markers of the fact that here we are dealing with an edible fruit, not with the plant on which it grows.

The single case from the Assyrian royal inscriptions pertaining to (a)zamru is, as so often in these cases, illuminating when cast against the background of the “pure” NA documentation. Indeed, the famous banquet stela of Ashurnasirpal ²⁹ lists among many other foodstuffs “100 (containers) of grapes (Gis KIN GESTIN), 100 (containers) of za-am-ru sa-mu-hu, 100 (containers) of pistachios, etc.”. Now, it may be noted that the association/opposition between zamru and nuts occurs also in administrative texts, e.g. ADD 1036, I, 28 ³⁰, where Gisza·ma·ri is present alongside Gis duk-di, “almonds” ³¹, and bu-su-na-te, “pistachios” ³²; and it further recalls other contexts, in which grapes and pistachios are listed together with various, specifically named, types of fruit as, e.g., in an inventory of ikkakate-payments from Nimrud ³³. In conclusion, the mention of zamru sammuhu alongside nuts in the Banquet stela has a decisive function: it eliminates any possible doubt that zamru might have, in fact, referred to nuts and nut-bearing trees—a tenuous possibility, to be sure, but not one to be totally discounted in the texts discussed above.

²⁵) CCENA 24, Rev. 14. Notice also CCENA 23, 35.
²⁶) CAD S, pp. 217ff.
²⁷) Cf. Dalley-Postgate, TFS, p. 150, who translate DUGšazamû “skins/jars of Zamuan wine”, although noting recent reservations on this interpretation. It may be further added that such a rendering is quite clearly ruled out by a passage in various offering-schedules (e.g. ADD 1024, Rev. 10-14; RA 69 [1975], Rev. 12-13, etc.) which reads Gis sa-lu za-am-ri DUGša·za-mu·u / GESTIN me·zi DUGša·za-mu·u GESTIN la·u·<u>, with reference to two well-known types of wine of the NA empire (cf. CAD M/2, pp.148b-149a). Thus it is not the wine that is indicated as (possibly) Zamuan, but the type of jar (with AHW., p. 1206a).
³⁰) Transliterated in Postgate, TCAE, p. 328. A group of GisNA za-mar is attested here; cf. also ADD 1060, I, 5, for this term.
³²) Or “terebinth”: cf. ibid., p. 133.
³³) TFS 87, passim.
“Mixed fruits”, then, is the most plausible translation for zamru sammuhu in the 9th century royal inscription; and “mixed fruit trees” is the translation to be given to the azamri sammuhe of our 13th century text. In this connection, it may be noticed that ours is not the only mention of azamru in MA material: the term further occurs in the administrative document VAT 1789234, showing a vague but interesting connection with the type of fruit called haršu, already quoted above.

A final notation. In our text, the mixed fruit trees are planted in groves or small woods (GIsTIRMES) in close connection with GIsša-šu-gi, a type of tree commonly believed to be of the fruit-bearing variety35, but perhaps in fact of a different kind altogether, e.g. a willow or a mountain ash36. Particularly if this were so, the general “landscape” of our MA tablet would come to bear strong resemblances with that of the 8th century census of the region around Harran: in this corpus, not only do we find a landed property comprising zamru-trees together with typical riverbank flora, such as poplars and willows, as seen above, but also a further plot entirely formed of 1 qab-šu GIsša-šu-gi, “a grove of šaššugu-trees” looked after by a ḫa-ša-šu gabi, “guardian of the grove”37. Thus, conclusively, our text is not only a forerunner of some terms for components of the Neo-Assyrian rural landscape, but — in a broader outlook — presents a description of the Assyrian countryside which antecesses the riverine scenery of the Harran census by half a millennium.

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35) Cf. e.g. Ahw., p. 1198b.
36) Notice the mention of GIsšaššugu in the fable of the willow (BWL 165, 18): userdata.GISMES.GAM sa-pi-ŠU KUR a-a-bi x [], which does not seem to apply to fruit trees at first sight. Another literary passage, SAA 3, 39, 14, gives no contextual clues as to the plant’s appearance and function. In ABL 566, 20, specimens of the tree are utilized to make beams a-na-tal-li (line 16); in general on tree-cutting procedures in NA times, cf. F. M. Fales, Studi..., Pintore, Pavia 1983, pp. 49-92.
37) Pace von Soden (“hill” — cf. Arabic jebel — Ahw., pp. 888a, 1198b), qablu is a grove (cf. already RA 75 [1981], pp. 67-69), and generally recognized as such (CAD Q, p. 16a; SAA 1, 223a). Particularly interesting in this connection are some recent comments by Deller, which have some bearing on the text under examination: “In Anbetracht der Tatsache, dass das Wz. GIS.TIR in nA Texten fehlt, andererseits aber häufig von Holzfällarbeiten in GISMURU, die Rede ist, wird man wohl annehmen müssen, dass qablu (C) das eigentliche nA wort für Wald ist” (OrNS 58 [1989], p. 256).