BALANCING THE ACCOUNTS OF THE ROYAL NEW YEAR'S RECEPTION

Seven Administrative Documents from Nineveh

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This study was inspired by a growing need to understand and be able to assess the information provided by Neo-Assyrian administrative documents. Preparing a dissertation on the highest officials of the Neo-Assyrian Empire has clearly demonstrated how difficult these documents are to use as source material.

To approach the administrative texts productively one must look at them in groups. A curious group of seven texts sharing common features and clearly representing a distinctive text category is analysed here to illustrate the point. As always with the ADD texts, it was clear from the outset that the texts needed careful collation. Prof. Simo Parpola kindly undertook this task on my behalf. Collation showed that all the fragments indeed belonged to roughly similar but separate 4-column tablets.

The present study does not offer an edition of the texts themselves, since this is to appear soon in the State Archives of Assyria series. Instead, I have ventured to combine the information of the individual texts into a composite text to make their structure and format apparent. The composite text takes as its point of departure a reconstruction of tablet A (ADD 1083), a 4-column tablet with the following dimensions:

width: c.25+3+23+2.5+25+2.5+c.25=106 mm (see Fig. 1)
length: with a 2:3 ratio 159 mm.

I wish to thank Prof. Simo Parpola for discussing these texts with me and for undertaking the task of collation. I am also indebted to Mr. Nicholas Postgate for allowing me to use his collations of some of the texts. All collations by Parpola are marked SP, while those by Postgate are marked JNP. Dr. Robert Whiting kindly revised my English and helped with the production of the manuscript. The renderings of personal names, names of professions and administrative terms generally follow the conventions of the SAA series.

1) The term "composite text" is perhaps not the best one since the texts are not, strictly speaking, duplicates, but rather a group of texts composed using the same model. The "composite text" is thus an...
The script density in A being about 3 lines per cm (21 per 7 cm), each 16 cm long column had space for about 48 lines.

The reconstruction of the obverse of the composite text can be fairly reliably based on A, as its text covers parts of all the four columns. On the reverse the situation is more problematic. Reconstruction is based here on the sequence attested in A, B and F, because in these fragments the column numbering is certain. These columns are marked in the following with uppercase Roman numerals (I) as opposed to assumed ones, indicated by lower case Roman numerals (i).

TEXT

Text sigla (alphabetical order reflects fragment size in terms of extant lines [as counted before collation, December 1988]):

A = K 2023 (ADD 1083)
B = 82-5-22, 548 (ADD 1125)
C = K 13198 (ADD 834) + K 7702 (ADD 837) + K 13029 (ADD 849) + K 13752 (ADD 903)
D = 83-1-18, 454 (ADD 981)
E = Sm 287 (ADD 971)
F = K 11955 (ADD 1046)
G = K 9119 (ADD 970) + K 11420 (ADD 1138)

Texts included:
ADD 834 → C
ADD 837 → C
ADD 849 → C
ADD 903 → C
ADD 970 → G
ADD 971 → E
ADD 981 → D
ADD 1046 → F
ADD 1083 → A
ADD 1125 → B
ADD 1138 → G

attempt to reconstruct this underlying model in order to assess its implications for the nature and function of these texts.
The Composite Text

(breaking line, c. 17 lines, broken away)
RAIA MATTILA

102 10: [x x x x]
103 10/5: si-sal-hi
104 10/5: gab-bu-bu
105 10/5: hal-lam
106 10/5: KAM.TUK.MES
107 [x] x [x x x]
108 PAR 65 UDUMES BUR
109 10/5 UDUMES ki-ra-ti (10/5 ditto, small kettles)
110 [x] x [x x x]
111 [PAB xl (10/5 ditto, roasted)
112 [x x x x]
113 [x x x x]

(break)

115 bir-[N u x] x x x x]
116 10 KUR.GIL.MUŠEN
117 10: TULUR,MUŠEN
118 10 MUŠEN-GAL-la [x x x x]
119 10/4: ina E-a-ni
120 10: ba-[a-a-du]
121 10/2 lam-lil [ba-a-du]
122 1-me/50 TULUR, gar-ha-te-lil
123 1-me/50 hal-lam
124 1-me/50: [ba-a-dalina a-a-ni]
125 1-me/50: S [x x x x]

(break)

126 [x] x x x x]
127 50/25: TA BUR ZA GUR, GA
128 50 [[] x x x x]
129 10/5 ak-bur
130 2-me/10 KUL.ME BUR
131 10 UDUMES [x x x x]
132 1-me [x x x x x]
133 1-me [x x x x]
134 2-lim [x x x x x]
135 2-me [x x x x]
136 1 [x x x x]
137 x [x x x x]

(break of c. 28 lines)

166 1 [x x x x x]
167 1 si-[x x x x x]
168 [PAB x [x x x x]
169 [x] x-x-gi
170 1 [x x x x x]
171 [x x x x x]

(c. 4 lines completely destroyed)

176 1 [x x x x x]

(break of a few lines only)

180 [x x x x]
181 1 nu-[x x x x]
182 2 mu-[a-a-x]
183 1 Na[ba-ba]
184 2 Na[ba-ba]
185 1 Sin-mar-ali
186 1 ma-[a-a-a]
187 2 [x x x x]
188 2 [x x x x x]
189 1 [x x x x]

(break of c. 28 lines)

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219 10 ur'-šu1 [x x x x]
220 23 u-ša-ni [e]
221 PAB 1-me-60 BANŠUR.MEŠ
222 a-ši-šu
223 (blank space of one line)
224 3 PASS.JAB.MEŠ ?KAB?[ ]
(break of c. 14 lines)
229 [x x x x] [x x x x]
230 [x x x x] [x x x x]
231 10, [......] 23, teams
232 in all 160 tables
233 consumption
234 3 sappu-vessels of beer
(break)
239 (lines G rii 3'-4' seem blank)
240 (lines G rii 5'-12' obliterated & difficult)
241 1 GURIR
242 21 BB-PASA.MEŠ 3-MEŠ.B, P.PO.MEŠ
243 3-GU-ŠAG.MEŠ
244 3 GURIR 11.
245 3, bodyguards of the 5a-Sepe-guard,
4, of the open chariots, ditto
(break)
246 1 cohort commander of the left house,
his colleague
247 1, groom(s)
248 1, chariot-drivers, "third men" of ditto, [...]
their colleagues
249 1, second table of the crown prince,
250 1, (third men) of the open chariotry, ditto
251 1, (third men) of the open chariotry, ditto
252 1, chariot-driver of the crown prince, his colleague
253 1, (second table of) the crown prince,
254 2, (third men) of ditto
his colleague
255 1, (third men) of ditto
256 1, (third men) of ditto
257 1, cohort commander of the left house,
258 1, second table of the crown prince,
259 1, chariot-driver of the crown prince, his colleague
260 1, (third men) of ditto
261 1, (third men) of ditto
262 1, (third men) of ditto
263 1, (third men) of ditto
264 1, (third men) of ditto
265 1, (third men) of ditto
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279 1, (third men) of ditto
280 1, (third men) of ditto
281 1, (third men) of ditto
282 1, (third men) of ditto
283 1, (third men) of ditto
284 1, (third men) of ditto
(break)
285 2 mi-ni [x x x]
286 1 be-šu-xu [x x x]
287 1 [x x x x] [x x x x]
(break)
288 2 mi-ni [x x x]
289 2 mi-ni [x x x]
290 1 be-šu-xu [x x x]
291 1 [x x x x] [x x x x]
(break)
292 2 mi-ni [x x x]
293 1 [x x x x] [x x x x]
(break)
294 2 mi-ni [x x x]
295 2 mi-ni [x x x]
296 1 be-šu-xu [x x x]
297 1 [x x x x] [x x x x]
(break)
298 2 mi-ni [x x x]
299 2 mi-ni [x x x]
300 1 be-šu-xu [x x x]
301 1 [x x x x] [x x x x]
(break)
302 2 mi-ni [x x x]
303 2 mi-ni [x x x]
304 1 be-šu-xu [x x x]
305 1 [x x x x] [x x x x]
(break)
306 2 mi-ni [x x x]
307 2 mi-ni [x x x]
308 1 be-šu-xu [x x x]
309 1 [x x x x] [x x x x]
(break)
310 2 mi-ni [x x x]
311 2 mi-ni [x x x]
312 1 be-šu-xu [x x x]
313 1 [x x x x] [x x x x]
(break)
314 2 mi-ni [x x x]
315 2 mi-ni [x x x]
316 1 be-šu-xu [x x x]
Notes on the Composite Text

18: See fig. 1. Judging by the curvatures A is a fragment roughly from the middle of the tablet.

48: The breaks between fragments from different tablets as reconstructed here are of course purely hypothetical, but serve to demonstrate the approximate and relative size of gaps in the composite text. G i is placed as it is to allow c. 50 lines between G i and G ii 6', which are written on the same level on the fragment.

66: The reading of the extant traces is very uncertain. SP reads 3-me-20\(^{1}\), but a number at the end of line would be somewhat unexpected. JNP reads \(x\) GAL\(^{-1}\)-E A\(^{A}\)-MAN\(^{7}\).

68: Lines A I 1', II 1', III 4' and IV 4' are written on the same level. Allowing c. 50 lines in between each of them gives us a fairly reliable reconstruction of the obverse.

69: Coll. JNP. The interpretation of the last three signs remains obscure despite the collation; the last sign can not be read UDU, since the section deals with oxen.

73: This whole line is omitted by Johns in A. Neither betu šaniu or betāni is possible according to collation. JNP: F I 3' shows only: 2 uzu \([x \ x \ x]\).
Discussion

The composite text presented above shows that these seven texts, which taken separately make little sense, do in fact form a distinct new text type. The fragments in question are in many places badly worn and difficult to read without the support of parallel passages provided by the composite text. On the other hand, it is only with the composite text that the real problems concerning the nature of this text group start to emerge.

The text is divided into two distinct parts. The obverse (lines 18-176) lists amounts of edible commodities defined either by person/place or a qualifying adjective. The
reverse presents sequences of official titles, military, administrative, priestly and scholarly, each preceded by a figure.

The commodities listed follow roughly the order known from the so-called "Offerjournals" (ADD 998ff., cf. van Driel, The Cult of Assur, App. III): cuts of meat are followed by sheep and different kinds of birds. So many of the terms used refer to offerings that one is entitled to see the commodities as foodstuff retrieved from offerings. Some of them are identified as coming from the offerings provided by the royal family or important palaces.

In the second section (from about line 177 onwards) we have a list of persons with the exception of 1. 265 1 BANŠUR 2-u A-MAN, “second table of the crown prince”, which can be compared with BANŠUR MAN / .: MF.KUR / .: GAL-SAG, “table of the king, ditto queen, ditto chief eunuch”, receiving wine in NWL 35, r I 12-14. No information is available on what the figures preceding the titles stand for. On lines 221-222 they add up to “160 tables, consumption; 3 šappu-vessels of beer”\(^3\). The only other totals on the reverse (lines 263 and 361f) add little to the understanding of the text because the precise implications of TUR and PA as administrative technical terms remain obscure.

The seven tablets clearly refer to seven different occasions, with individual variation as to amounts and persons mentioned. The amounts in A are on the whole considerably higher than the figures in the other texts, but the fact that B has at least one quantity larger than A argues against A being a summary tablet giving the totals of the other six texts.

\(^3\) A possible solution may be suggested by ADD 946+ (K 9751 + ADD 838 [K 4672] joined by Tuviah Kwasman, collations by Postgate). The text is distinctly of a different text type but it features many elements known from the present text group. Very distinctive is the sequence on lines r. 1-6:

\[
\begin{align*}
2 & | 2 | LUGAL.LU-IŠIR x [x x] \\
2 & | 1 | GUGIR [x x] \\
2 & | 2 | LUGAR-NU.MES.BAD.[HAL] \\
2 & | 1 | 'GUR1-15 'PAB-[x x] \\
x & | 1 | LUDI-IGI-SILA] \\
x & | 1 | GAL-50\{\text{?}\} 0 [x x]
\end{align*}
\]

The title LUDI-IGI-SILA is known from only these texts. Lines 221-224 in the composite text parallel closely the concluding sum on lines 13-15:

\[
\begin{align*}
[\text{P}]AB 74 \text{BANŠURMES } & \text{ $[1 \text{ DUGS}]AB\text{MES } 2 BE} \\
[0] & \text{ za-}[\text{u-zu} \\
x & \text{ ina } e x [x x] x \\
& \text{ e-to-ak-lu}
\end{align*}
\]

Surprisingly enough the obverse is counting shekels to persons mentioned by name. Could this be the case also with the figures preceding persons in the composite text?
These texts can be dated to the time of Esarhaddon on the basis of G ii mentioning royal children. Unfortunately it is not possible to say anything more precise on the basis of the other names mentioned. Two of them, Šarru-Iu-dari and Sin-sarru-ušur feature in two texts — A & F and C & D respectively — but even this does not help us to determine how long the time span covered by the texts is.

The seven texts represent seven different tablets: no joins between them seem possible. On the other hand it has not been possible to find any more material belonging to this text group amongst the published ADD-texts.\footnote{With the possible exception of ADD 898 which according to Postgate’s collation begins: line I 1: 2\textasciitilde te\textasciitilde BUR Ša Ša.}
There is no direct evidence in the texts themselves, which could help to establish whether the texts record a daily routine or account for a series of special occasions. However, the presence of scholars and priests from other major cities in the capital may be taken to point to a special occasion, important enough to require their participation. No high-ranking administrative officials, such as governors, are mentioned, but it is quite possible that we have simply lost the relevant section.

While the nature of these texts remains uncertain owing to their fragmentariness, it does seem extremely likely, following a suggestion by Prof. Parpola, that they are accounts of food and possibly gifts distributed at the royal New Year's reception arranged twice a year (in Nisan and Tishri) in the Assyrian capital.²

APPENDIX

Score of lines 255-283

If this fragment belongs to the group, as suggested by Postgate, it would give us the opening lines of the composite text.

²) The exceptionally high figures in A may reflect special occasions involving an exceptionally high number of guests, as was the case e.g. in early 672, when Esarhaddon assembled “all Assyria” to take the oath of loyalty at the treaty ceremonies by which he regulated his succession.
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C rii 6'  [ x BA] NŠUR 2-u A-MAN
E rii 8'  1 BANŠUR 2-u A-MAN
G rii 22'  [ x x x x x x ] x [ x x ]

C rii 7'  a minute additional line? (JNP)
E rii 9'  3' SAG US MES :.

C rii 8'  [ x GAL-ki]-ṣir MES r :.
E rii 10'  [ x ] GAL-ki-ṣir MES .:

E rii 11'  [ x ] GIGIR A-MAN

C rii 9'  [ x ] A-ṣ SIG A-MAN 1 DU 8 MES :.
E rii 12'  [ x A ] SIG MES A-MAN

E rii 13'  [ x DI B-PA MES : ]

C rii 10'  1 DI GUR-SU 2 MU

C rii 11'  [ x ] GAL-50 MES

C rii 12'  [ x ] DINGIR x [ x x ] x

C rii 13'  6 NAR MES

C rii 14'  [ x ] GAL-[SA]G

A rII 1'  [ x x x x x ] x-me 2 EN 2
C rii 15'  [ x ] NAM MES  x SAG MES

A rII 2'  x [ x x x x x ] EN 2
B rII 4'  2 KUR 1 AŠ GAR-nu MES BAD-HAL
C rii 16'  [ x ] GAR-nu MES ša BAD-HAL

A rII 3'  [ x ] SAG MES PAB PAB MES
B rII 5'  0  SAG MES tar- bi-a-ni
C rii 17'  [ x S ] SAG MES PAB PAB MES
A rII 4' [ x ] GAR-nu₄ MES šā A-MAN
B rII 6' 0' GAR-nu ša A-MAN
C riii 18' [ x ] GAR-nu₄ MES A-MAN
E riv 1' [ x ] GAR₂ MU³

A rII 5' [ x ] šā¹-IGI-SILA
B rII 7' 1 KUR¹.AŠ šā-IGI-SILA
C riii 19' [ x ] šā-IGI-SILA
E riv 2' [ x ] šā² IGII-SILA

A rII 6' [ x ] x x ]-me² ša 3-šū GIRII
B rII 8-9' 1 KUR¹.AŠ GAL-50MES / ša 3-[šū x']
C riii 20' [ x ] GAL¹-50¹ 3-šūMES
E riv 3' [ x x ] ša ki¹-šū'

B rII 10' 1 KUR¹.AŠ GA[L¹-x x x]

A rII 7' [ x x šā-EN].NUN-šū-nu

A rII 8' [ x x x x x x x ] x
C riii 21' [ x x ] ˘x x' [ x x ]
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