

A MIDDLE ASSYRIAN BAKERY MEMORANDUM

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The following tablet is currently on display in the newly-opened Raymond and Beverley Sackler gallery of later Mesopotamia in the British Museum. It measures 6.1 by 4.9 cm, with a maximum thickness of 2.0 cm, and is of the neutral clay colour commonly described as “buff”. I am most grateful to the Trustees of the Museum, and to Dr. Irving Finkel, for permission to publish the text and encouragement to do so, respectively. The tablet bears no seal impressions.

Transliteration

Obverse

1. 1-BÁN NINDA *ki-i* ^d*iš*₈-*tár*
 2. ¹SU—^d*sîn i-si-ú-ni*
 3. ¹*mu-šal-lim*—^dAMAR.UTU
 4. LÚ.*ka-kar-di-nu*
 5. *ma-ḫi-ir*
-

6. [x]x NINDA *a-na* [
 7. [xxx] x [
- (1-3 lines broken)

Reverse

- 1'. [xx]xx *a x*[(x)]
 - 2'. *ma-ḫi-ir*
-
- 3'. 2-BAN NINDA 1 *pa-áš-ru*
 - 4'. *ša si-im-di*
 - 5'. 1 *pa-áš-ru ša ta-ḫal¹-te*
 - 6'. 1 *qa pa-pal-tu*
 - 7'. *mi-im-ma an-n*[*i-ú*]

Upper Edge

8'. *ša a-na* LU[GAL]9'. *qar-ru-bu-ni*

Left Edge

10'. [UD-x(-KÁM) IT]I. *al-la-na-te*11'. [*lim-m*]u^{ld} *be-er—iš-ma-ni*

Translation

“1 *sūtu* of bread, when Ištar called Erīb-Sîn, Mušallim-Marduk the victualler has received. [...] bread for [...]. (Rev.1) [...] has received. 2 *sūtu* of bread; 1 tray⁷ of fine flour; 1 tray⁷ of *taḥaltu*; 1 *qû* of porridge — all this, which was presented to the king.

[*n*th day], month of Allanate, [epony]mate of Bēr-išmanni.”

Notes

1 (and 6, Rev. 3'): NINDA is consistently written with a fourth vertical to the left of the head of the lower vertical.

1-2: what being “called” by a goddess implies is unknown to me. I transliterate the divine name in line 2 as *sîn* to emphasise the fact that as usual in Middle Assyrian texts it is not the 30 sign.

Rev. 3'-4': the wedges on the right edge belong to an earlier, erased version of these lines.

3'-5': the term *pa-áš-ru* is known from another Middle Assyrian text concerned with bread, where it has the determinative GIŠ: [*x* GIŠ.*pa*]-*áš-ru*.MEŠ *ša* NINDA.MEŠ-*ni* ... 1 GIŠ *pa-áš-ru ša pu-nu-gi* ... (see V. Donbaz, SAAB 2 [1988], p. 5 fn. 11, A 3211). Other probable occurrences of the term may be found in AHW. *s.v. pasru(m)*. It seems likely to me that we have here a syllabic writing of *paššūru*, or rather of a by-form *pašru*, a suggestion already hinted at by Ebeling in *Tod und Leben*, p. 88 fn. e. In its logographic writing this word is associated with bread in VS 19, 29, 5, and in the NA ritual texts mentioned by AHW., *loc. cit.*, and *s.v. paššūru(m)*.

5': *taḥaltu* as a food is attested once in Late Babylonian (AHW. p. 1301a), and now also for Middle Assyrian in the two texts mentioned by Donbaz, *loc. cit.* (A 3211, written *ta-ḥal-te*, and A 786: 3 *qa zíd.DA ša LÚ a-na ta-ḥa-al-te*).

6': a feminine formation from *pappasu*, but clearly here a foodstuff and not the “geronnene Samenflüssigkeit” of the jB passages cited in AHW. p. 824a *s.v. pappaltu*.

7': Bēr-išmanni is probably 13th century (C. Saporetti, *Gli eponimi medio-assiri*, p. 87).

We have no information as to the provenance of this tablet, but it no doubt comes from Assur. In addition to the two tablets from Assur referred to by Donbaz in his article cited above, special kinds of bread are also listed in VS 19, nos. 7 and 29,

which both belong to the archive of Ubru (Pedersén, ALA I, archive M8). More than this we can hardly say at present, although the term *qarrubu* in Rev. 9' suggests a formal ceremony in the presence of the king, whether secular or religious.

