

# Ṭuppi ilāni takāltu pirišti šamê u eršetim

In his “Enmeduranki and Related Matters”<sup>1</sup> W.G. Lambert with his customary punctilio and insight gave a near complete edition of the first twenty-nine lines of the highly interesting text K 2486+ with the duplicates K3357+ and K 13307, which he characterized as “[a combination] of three categories: legend, ritual, and explanations of ritual”. In a first part (lines 1–9) Enmeduranki of Sippar is received with honour by Šamaš and Adad, who teach him oil and liver divination and give him the implements needed therefore. In a second part (lines 10–15) Enmeduranki summons the “men of Nippur, Sippar and Babylon”<sup>2</sup>, honours them, and teaches them what he has been taught himself. In a third part (lines 19–29)<sup>3</sup> the (future) experts are enjoined to pass on likewise what they have been taught to their “sons”<sup>4</sup>, and, in addition, the ritual requirements<sup>5</sup> for the exercise of the profession are briefly indicated. The text seems to have suffered somewhat: between parts 2 and 3 (lines 6–18) there is what appears to be an alternative version of what Enmeduranki was taught and passed on, including astrology and mathematics. We would like to propose a few interpretative notes.

---

<sup>1</sup> JCS 21 (1967) 126–39. Only a few signs are missing in the first dozen lines. They have been supplied *plausibiliter* by Lambert. One fragment had been known since 1866.

<sup>2</sup> Surely only the *ummāni*, specified as *bārî* and related experts, as mentioned in l. 19 and from l. 23 onwards. See Lambert’s observations on p. 127.

<sup>3</sup> Note that we interpret this passage in a way which differs (very slightly) from Lambert’s reading. We think that the intention is: the future experts should hand down their expertise only within the profession (see fn. 4), and they should insist on the following points of correct procedure and qualifications.

<sup>4</sup> These “sons” are presented as being physically descended from Enmeduranki: *apkal šamni zēru darû pir’i Enmeduranki sippari*<sup>u</sup> (l. 23), and consequently from the subsequent experts themselves. Although there is evidence for the latter from Old Babylonian times onwards (See e.g. U. Jeyes, *Old Babylonian Extispicy*, Leiden 1989, p. 15), we think that notwithstanding a high incidence of actual physical descent, the descent is intended to be not so much of the flesh as of the spirit of instruction. The “sons” are the pupils, and with Jeyes we think that *mār bārî* is the term for a qualified member of the profession (*Extispicy*, p. 15).

<sup>5</sup> Both instrumentally and physically.

[1] It is worthy of note that, although according to Lambert there is an anakolouthon or in his words, “a jolt in syntax”<sup>6</sup> in lines 22ff, there is another possibility, viz. that of taking the first part (*enūma ... ša zārūšu ellu*) as a nominal phrase, and thus reading: “(Even) when there is a diviner [l. 22] ... of pure descent [l. 27], he must be without blemish in body and limbs [l. 28: *u šū ina gatti u ina minātišu šuklulu*]; only then may he approach [*i(t)teḥ(h)i*]...” or, alternatively: “When(ever) there is a diviner ... without blemish, he may then approach ...”, taking the *šuklulu* of l. 28 to carry the subjunctive, and the final verbal form (wr. *TE<sup>b</sup>*) as either a present–future or a perfect indicative.

[2] Anyway, the instruction is mentioned three times, and it contains three times the expression: *ṭuppi ilāni takāltu pirišti šamê u eršetim ...*<sup>7</sup>. “The tablet of the gods, the *takāltu*, the secret of heaven and earth (they gave to him / he gave to them)”. The first point to be made here is about the term *takāltu* itself<sup>8</sup>. The lexical evidence suggests primarily a kind of bag or pouch or holder<sup>9</sup>. For our text the equivalence *giš-tūn-gi-dub-ba-a = takāltu qān ṭuppi* might seem attractive, since *takāltu* follows *ṭuppi ilāni*. Yet there are two objections: (a) why should they be given the tablet and the stylus holder, and not the stylus itself, which is frequently mentioned in comparable contexts<sup>10</sup>; and (b) since the following term (*pirišti šamê u eršetim*) can hardly be taken as indicating an instrument or an operational device, there seems no good reason for taking *takāltu* in this sense<sup>11</sup>.

So what is this *takāltu*? Although the term occurs a few times in the queries as being a specific part of the liver<sup>12</sup>, it is known that it may refer to the liver as a whole. There is not only evidence from lexical lists<sup>13</sup>, but also from the omen texts

<sup>6</sup> From l. 22 on; the *enūma* of l. 22 has seemingly mislaid its main verb; and the verb in l. 29 is undoubtedly in the indicative present–future or perfect: *iṭṭehi* or *iṭṭehi*.

<sup>7</sup> L. 8 and 14: *ṭup-pi DINGIR<sup>med</sup> ta-kal-ta pi-riš-ti AN<sup>c</sup> à KI<sup>im</sup> id<sup>c</sup>-di-nu-šu*; l. 16: *ṭup-pi DINGIR<sup>med</sup> ur<sup>c</sup>-TUN<sup>c</sup> (= takāltu) URU<sup>c</sup> (= niširtu) AN<sup>c</sup> KI<sup>im</sup>*. The slight differences in spelling (syllabic vs. logographic) and terminology (*pirištu* vs. *niširtu*) also argue for the incorporation of these lines as a variant or an alternative from a slightly different *Vorlage*.

<sup>8</sup> Lambert, *op. cit. passim* spells *takāltu*; Jeyes, *Extispicy* p. 218 s.v. spells *tākaltu*; *id.* in “The Act of Extispicy in Ancient Mesopotamia: An Outline” (*Assyriological Miscellanies* 1, 1980, 13–32) pp. 17 & 30 spells *takaltu*; *id.* in “The ‘Palace Gate’ of the Liver” (*JCS* 30 1978, 209–33) p. 211 with fn. 20, has *takaltu*, and identifies it, following Goetze (*YOS* 10 7), as the pancreas; and I. Starr, *Queries to the Sungod* (SAA 4), Helsinki 1990 uses *takāltu* throughout (it occurs only 3 times and has the restricted meaning of “pouch” as a part of the exta); *AHW* p. 1304 gives *tākaltu* (deriving it from *akā-lu*?) with only a possible reading as *takāltu*. *CAD* Š p. 343 s.v. *šamû* gives *takāltu* (and translates as “bowl”). A decision would be appreciated.

<sup>9</sup> See e.g. *giš-tūn = ta-[kal-tum]*; *giš-tūn-šu = ta-[kal<sup>c</sup>-[ti qa-ti]*; *giš-tūn-šu-i = MIN gal<sup>c</sup>-[la-bi]*; *giš-tūn-āpin = MIN e-[pi-in-ni]*; *giš-tūn-a-zu = MIN a-[si]-i*; *giš-tūn-gīr = MIN paṭ-ri*; *giš-tūn-gi-dub-ba-a = MIN qa-an ṭup-pi*. [*MSL* V 152–3 = *Hh* iv 29–35].

<sup>10</sup> See e.g. Lipit-eštar B ll. 21–2 [*JCS* 30 (1978) 36–7].

<sup>11</sup> We have been unable to find lexical evidence for the “bowl” of *CAD* Š p. 343 s.v. *šamû*.

<sup>12</sup> Starr, *Queries*, nos. 5: rev. 9; 281: 4; 285:7.

<sup>13</sup> See Lambert, *op. cit.* p. 133 quoting *ḤARGUD* (see *MSL* 9, 35: 66–67; 38: 71–72): *ur<sup>c</sup>kin-gi<sup>c</sup>-a = ta-kal-tu = ḥa-šu-u*; *ur<sup>c</sup>kin-gi<sup>c</sup>-a = a-mu-tu = a-bi-du*. The identification *amūtu*

themselves<sup>14</sup>. Lambert had no doubt that in this text as well the term at least refers to the liver<sup>15</sup>. The fact that both *pirištu* and *niširtu* also occur as synonyms for the liver<sup>16</sup> seems to bear two implications: (a) the terms *takāltu* = *pirištu/niširtu* do not refer to different objects here; they are simply being used as synonyms<sup>17</sup>; (b) it follows that there seems to be no reason for not extending the series of synonyms forward.

[3] This implies that *tuppi ilāni* also means the liver, or more generally the exta, which constitutes our second point in this context. Such an interpretation seems to be alluded to by Jeyes who writes that there are “examples [of expressions] which show the significance of the liver”<sup>18</sup>. One of these quotations is our text. Another reads: “Šamaš ... who let trustworthy omens about going by my side be written on the liver”<sup>19</sup>. The examples could easily be multiplied. Now it has long been recognized<sup>20</sup> that the operational rationale of extispicy is precisely this: the divinity is requested to ‘provide’ its answer *hic et nunc* on the liver or exta, while the extispicy proceeding is in course. The ideological implication, also present in some other cultures in an early phase of literacy, viz. that writing is somehow closely related to the secrets of the gods<sup>21</sup> might fruitfully be pursued. But even more important seems to be that our text now confirms what many other indications allude to: that the liver is the tablet of the gods, upon which they give their answer *in writing*. This is not to be taken in any metaphorical sense<sup>22</sup>, but quite factually, on grounds of approximately comparable features such as colouring, surface texture and perhaps even general shape and dimensions<sup>23</sup>. In a way the liver might even be thought to have been regarded as the ‘real’ tablet, while actual clay tables are mere human approximations. Finally, this obviously implies that the extispicy technicians were literate in the general sense<sup>24</sup>, but that theirs was a highly specialized and restricted kind of literacy – as indicated by lines 19ff. of our text.

---

“word” = *kabittu* “liver” was made, as far as we know, by Nougayrol in his “Note sur la place des ‘présages historiques’ dans l’extispicine babylonienne” in *Annuaire EPHE* (1944–1945), 5–41, p. 14 n. 54 (see also Malku V, quoted in MSL 9, 38).

<sup>14</sup> See Lambert, *op. cit.* p. 133; Jeyes, *Act*, p. 30 fn. 26; *id. Extispicy*, pp. 11, 18–19 & 76.

<sup>15</sup> Lambert, *op. cit.* p. 133.

<sup>16</sup> Jeyes, *Extispicy* pp. 17–9.

<sup>17</sup> Albeit that the “second” term, i.e. *pirištu/niširtu*, is used here with a slight explanatory force: “the liver, which is ...”.

<sup>18</sup> Jeyes, *Act*, p. 17.

<sup>19</sup> Jeyes, *Act*, p. 30 n. 25: (TCL 3:319) ... “UTU ša UZU<sup>meš</sup> tikilti ša alāk idija ušaššima amūti.

<sup>20</sup> See already E.G. Klauber, *Politisch-religiose Texte aus der Sargonidenzeit...*, Leipzig 1913 (PRT).

<sup>21</sup> See e.g. R. Harris, *The Origin of Writing*, Duckworth, London, 1986 p. 15 on the etymology of runes.

<sup>22</sup> As is done by Klauber, PRT, p. xxxii–xxxiii: the liver as “Sitz des Lebens”.

<sup>23</sup> See already H. Vanstiphout, “*Mihiltum*, or the Image of Cuneiform Writing” in *Visible Religion* 6 (1988), 160 with fn. 48.

<sup>24</sup> Otherwise the image and the ideology behind the image would hardly make any sense.