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A Bowl of *alallu*-stone

by George F. Dole – Newton (Mass.)

and

William L. Moran – Brunswick (Maine)*

HSM 899.2.282 (formerly 1660) is an inscribed fragment of a stone bowl. The records of the Harvard Semitic Museum show that it was acquired by purchase from D. D. Noorian in 1889, along with some tablets “said to be” from Nippur and Lagash, and other objects alleged to be from Nippur, Babylon, and Phoenicia.

The bowl is 5.1 cm. high, and, on the assumption that it was circular, it was just under 26 cm. in diameter. The wall is about .7 cm. thick – slightly more towards the top and the base – and the bottom varies from 1 to 1.2 cm. in thickness.

The stone is predominantly buff, with several wavy striations of a light reddish brown and one of a whitish gray.

Wherever the bowl may have surfaced on the antiquities market, it is clear that it was originally destined for use in the cult of the moon-god at Harran. Its inscription, despite the breaks at the end of each line, hardly allows any other interpretation, and a Harran provenience is confirmed by other features of the text: (1) in line 1 Sin is called “the king of the gods,” a title he bears only in inscriptions from Harran or closely related ones;¹ (2) according to line 1

* “It is almost twenty-five years since I prepared the first draft of this study, and I was aware even then that it needed the editorial hand of a more accomplished scholar. Having left the field of Assyriology on receiving my degree, and being aware that the field has not stood still in the meantime, I am particularly grateful to Dr. Moran for his thorough and substantive revision. I am also grateful to Dr. Thorkild Jacobsen for remembering the article kindly, and to a beneficent providence that enabled me to find the original typescript at Dr. Moran’s request” (George F. Dole).

¹ See H. Tadmor, AS 16, 360. The inscriptions related to those from Harran are Nab. 1a (VAB 4, 250 ff.), Nab. 4* (S. Langdon, AJSL 32 [1915/16] 103 ff.), Nab. 5 (VAB 4, 250 ff.), Nab. 16 (BBSt. No. XXXVII). For the numbering of the inscriptions we follow Tadmor, AS 16, 351, n. 2, and for the Harran relationship see 360 f. For P.-A. Beaulieu, The Reign of Nabonidus, King of Babylon 556–539 B.C. (= YNER 10, 1989) 45 (nos. 14–17), these belong among the “inscriptions

the god is also "dwelling in the sky" (*āšib šamē*), an epithet he enjoys only in a Harran inscription² and perhaps in the closely related ones just mentioned,³ (3) to our knowledge, the only parallel for the use of the preposition in *ana genē* (line 5) is found in another Harran inscription of Nabonidus.⁴ In brief, there can be no doubt where the bowl was meant to be used.

On the bowl, to the left of the inscription, appears the mooncrescent of Sin. To judge from other Harran (related) inscriptions, it is quite likely that, moving from right to left, we should imagine, as in H 2A and B,⁵ the sun-disk and the star of Ištar, or, as in BBSt. No. XXXVII, Pl. XCIII,⁶ the winged sun-disk and the star of Ištar.

The inscription reads as follows:

1. *a-na* ^dXXX LUGAL *šá* DINGIR.MEŠ *a-šib* A[N-e (GAL.MEŠ) LUGAL LUGAL.LUGAL EN EN.EN]
2. ^dMUATI-NÍ-TUK LUGAL TIN.TIR^{ki} *za-nin* é-s [ag-íl ù é-zi-da kal-lu (u)]
3. *šul-pi šá* ^{na4}A.LÁL.LUM *a-na na-še-e me-^le^l* [ŠU.II ina é. . .]

of the last years" of Nabonidus. On the exaltation of Sin, see Beaulieu, 45–65, 203–219.

² H 2 iii 37–38 (C. J. Gadd, AnSt. 8 [1958] 64), ^dXXX *a-šib šá-ma-me*. On H 2 iii 29–30, see next note.

³ ^dXXX EN DINGIR.MEŠ *šá* AN-e u KI-tim (29) LUGAL DINGIR.MEŠ DINGIR.MEŠ *šá* DINGIR.MEŠ (30) *a-ši-ib* AN-e GAL.MEŠ . . . (Nab. 5 i 28 ff.); . . . ^dXXX *be-lí* DINGIR.MEŠ (4) LUGAL DINGIR.MEŠ *šá* AN-e ù KI-tim (5) DINGIR.MEŠ *šá* DINGIR.MEŠ (6) *a-ši-ib* AN-e GAL.MEŠ . . . (ibid. ii 3 ff.). The problem concerns the referent of *āšib*: the gods just mentioned (Tadmor) or Sin (for example, Langdon)? Two considerations seem to favor the latter: (1) one expects "god of gods" to be used absolutely, without qualification, as is ^elāh ^elāhīn in Dan. 2:47, a parallel noted by Tadmor, AS 16, 361, n. 53, and ^elōhē hā^elōhīm wa^adōnē hā^adōnīm in Deut. 10:7, a parallel noted by K. Tallqvist, Götterepitheta (StOr. 7, 1938) 12; (2); in Harran related inscriptions and in Harran inscriptions themselves, when the antecedent is certainly plural, then we find *āšibūtu/āšibūt*: Nab. 1 ii 30 DINGIR.MEŠ *āšibūtu ša šamē u eršeti*; Nab. 4* i 38–39 ^dSin bēl ilāni u ^dIštar *āšibūtu ša šamē u eršeti* = iii 79–80 (with variant); cf. i 28–29 ^dSin bēl ilāni u ^dIštar *ina šamāmū* = iii 73 (omits ^dIštar); H 2 i 5 ^dSin bēl ilāni u ^dIštar *āšibūt šamē*; see also i 27 ff. and ii 32 f. In H 2 ii 29 f., therefore, especially in view of ^dSin *āšib šamāmē* just a few lines below, (see note 2), with A. L. Oppenheim, ANET³, 563 b, we would refer *āšib šamāmū* to the moon-god (. . . ^dSin šar ilāni bēl bēlē *āšib šamāmū*), and similarly the *āšib šamē rabūti* in Nab. 5 cited at the beginning of this note.

⁴ VAB 4, 292:18 = H 1 B iii 3 (AnSt. 8, 50).

⁵ AnSt. 8, Plate II.

⁶ See also AnSt. 8. Plate III.

4. *ziq-qur-rat é-hú¹l-hú¹l šá qí-rib KASKAL^{ki} e-pu-u[š^dXXX e-piš^{e-piš-ti}]*
 5. GAL-ti šá u₄-mi-šam-ma ana ge-né-e ina šá-ma-mu a-m[a-su^{i-qab-bu-u}]
 6. u a- na qí- bití- šú l[a i- tur- ru]

For Sin, the king of the gods, dwelling in the (vast) sk[y, king of kings, lord of lords], Nabonidus, the king of Babylon, supporter of Es[agila and Ezida, (this) kallu-bowl (with)] šulpu-pitcher, (both) of alallu-stone, for presenting wate[r for the hands in (the temple) E-. . .]. the ziqqurra of the E^hul^hul in Harran, mad[e. May Sin, author of the achievement] supreme, who daily (and) forevermore, [speaks his] w[ord] in the heavens, and his command does no[t revoke],

Comments

The obvious restoration in line 6 is *l[ā iturru]*, which on the evidence of other Harran (related) inscriptions was probably written *i-tur-ru*.⁷ Assuming that the signs in the break were spaced more or less as in the beginning of the line, we may estimate the break between 4 and 5 cm., then gradually increasing to ca. 6–7 cm. at the top. Since in lines 1–5 the spacing is consistently 8–9 signs per 6 cm., ca. 8–10 signs are missing in line 1, with the number gradually decreasing in the following lines. Needless to say, given the variation in the size of signs, these calculations are only approximate.

The complete inscription must have extended into at least a second column. Line 5 makes it clear that line 4 ended with some sort of reference to the moon-god, which is followed in lines 5–6 by two relative clauses. On the assumption of a one-column text, in order to have a complete sentence, we would very probably have to begin the break with a verbal phrase – something like *šIG₅-šú/ia liq-bi* – followed by the reference to Sin. This, however, would yield a form for which we know no parallel, a votive inscription ending in two subordinate clauses. We assume, therefore, that line 4 must be

completed by the reference to Sin alone, and that at least one more column followed.

Line 1: For *šamê rabûti*, see above n. 3; for LUGAL etc. (hardly more than a guess), see H 2 ii 20 (AnSt. 8 [1958] 60). It is not likely that Nabonidus's personal relationship of servant to master (EN-ŠU/ia) was expressed, for elsewhere it never appears joined with the honorifics of Sin.

Line 2: Nabonidus is frequently called *zānin* Esagila u Ezida, and it is only of these temples that he is said to be *zānin*; see M.-J. Seux, *Épithètes royales akkadiennes et sumériennes* (1967) 372f. The epithet, if surprising in an inscription from Harran, becomes less so when we note its appearance in the Harran-related inscriptions (Nab. 1 i 3; Nab. 4* i 10, ii 51, iii 31; Nab. 5 i 2) and the observation that in these same inscriptions Sin usurps these temples for himself; see H. Tadmor, AS 16, 361a, and P.-A. Beaulieu, *The Reign of Nabonidus* (1989) 61f.

The names of the temples do not seem to account adequately for the space of the break, which almost certainly includes two or three more signs. Now, if the latter refer to another epithet of Nabonidus, or to anything other than the bowl itself, then our bowl is a *šulpu*. Nor would this be altogether surprising, for there are other occurrences of *šulpu* where none of the assigned meanings, "Halm, Röhrchen . . . , Trinkhalm, Metallröhrchen" (AHw. 1269), seems to fit. We may note *ina*^{du}*gkallu u*^{du}*gšulpu* (LKU 51 r. 3), but especially the association with the *kallu*-bowl in the rite of hand-washing: *ina* 2 *kallu šulpu ħurāsi mē qātē* . . . *inašši* (Rit. acc. 91 r. 4–5); *kallu ša mē qātē* (Dar. 373:7), then *šulpu ša mē ša ziqqur-ratu* two lines below; ⁸*kalli šulpi* . . . *ana mesē qātēšu*, "(wooden) *kallu šulpu* . . . for washing his hands" (AfO 16, 306:7) and *ina muḫḫi kalli šulpi* (line 10). For washing hands it is difficult to see the use of a tube of any sort.

CAD K 83 suggested that *šulpu* refers to the handles. However, if *šulpu* had this meaning one would not expect it to be associated only with the *kallu*-vessel. Moreover, in the Dar. text just cited *šulpu* and *kallu* are separate entries. Note, too, the conjunction in *ina*^{du}*gkallu u*^{du}*gšulpu* (LKU 51 r. 3) and *kal-la u šul-pu* (CT 51, 95 ii 14).⁸

⁸ In this text *kallu* and *šulpu* do not seem to be used for the washing of hands, which is accounted for three lines above (A.MEŠ TA *šap-pi ana UGU ŠU.II-ŠU ŠUB-di*). We find the text obscure: "He brings (fl-am-ma) the *kallu* and *šulpu*, and

CAD M/2, 155 proposes that *šulpu* is a pitcher for pouring the water. This makes excellent sense. The *kallu* and *šulpu* (always in this order) seem to have formed a set, virtually a single instrument, a lavabo with the water poured from one, over the hands, into the other. Given the other meanings of *šulpu*, it should be the pouring-instrument, some kind of pitcher.

Our bowl, however, is hardly a pitcher. Even if we provide it with a spout, it is too shallow and wide to be used for pouring. On the other hand, it would serve perfectly as a receptacle into which water might be poured, and it would be large enough for both hands to rest in it. Hence our restoration at the end of line 2, which makes our bowl a *kallu*.

Line 3: For AHw. 34 *alalku* (*elalku*) is "ein Stein." CAD E 75, in its discussion of the word, is more specific and on target: "It was a brownish limestone native to the mountains north of Assyria." The color was deduced from two passages comparing the stone to the bark of the date-palm, and its provenience from one of these passages.⁹ For the record, it should be noted that Campbell Thompson also argued for a limestone composition.¹⁰

A chip from HSM 899.2.292 was tested by X-ray diffractometer.¹¹ It proved to be about 65% dolomite ($\text{CaMg}(\text{CO}_3)_2$) and 30% calcite (CaCO_3), the latter being the principal constituent of limestone, and both being carbonaceous.

In view of "*mê qāti* basin (of metal) for washing the hands (after a meal)" (CAD M/2, 155), the restoration ŠU.II must be defended.¹² As far as we can see, only A.MEŠ *išru* A.MEŠ ŠU.II *itabbak* (MVAG 41/3 ii 21), which K. Müller, *ibid.* 78, considered corrupt, supports this interpretation. Otherwise, the evidence is

then he mixes the juniper-aromatic into the water with the spout(?) of the *šulpu* (ŠIM.LI *ina* SUHUŠ *šul-pu ana* A.MEŠ *i-sa-am-maḥ*, line 15)." Here, it must be admitted, *šulpu* as tube seems quite plausible.

⁹ STT 52/3:21 and *Archaeologia* 79 (1929) pl. 52 No. 122 N (+ M): 5. For additional occurrences of *alalku*, note its use for slabs "of the temple of Aššur on which the king stands and kisses the ground", W. G. Lambert *apud* S. Parpola, *LAS* II 279, n. 504, and A. George, *Iraq* 48 (1986) 144f. See also H. Limet, *ARM* 25 No. 651:3, ^{na}*a-la-al-lu* (cf. M.A.R.I. 4 [1985] 511), and D. Arnaud, *Emar* VI/4 No. 553:87' *min-á-lál-lum = a-la-al-lu* (Hh. XVI forerunner); and possibly (in the Emar dialect) *ibid.* 201' *ia-ni-bu = i-ia-ni-bu : e-la-lu*.

¹⁰ A Dictionary of Assyrian Chemistry and Geology (1936) 159f.

¹¹ The test was kindly run by Dr. J. A. Apps.

¹² CAD Q 238a perhaps suggests second thoughts: *mê qātē ša uqarrabuni* "the water for washing the hands which he presents."

against it: (1) *mê qātē ana Anu u Antu inašši-ma šarra u nišē ulappat*, which CAD L 92 a, in essential agreement with F. Thureau-Dangin (Rit. acc. 95:22–23, “il en touchera”), correctly understands to provide for a sprinkling with the water presented to the gods, for the “touching” can only be with water, not with a basin; (2) *ina 2 kallu šulpu hurāši mê qātē . . . inašši-ma* (Rit. acc. 91 r. 4–5), where it is obvious that what is carried in the two *kallu šulpu* is water, not a basin;¹³ (3) *mê qātē lā misāti* (CT 17, 41 K.4949:10), which can only be “water for unwashed hands”; (4) the consistent absence of a determinative (^{du}*mê qātī*).

After ŠU.11, the name of the ziqqurrat in the Eḫulhul-complex must have followed. In inscriptions of Nabonidus, cf. é-lugal-galga-si-sá *ziqurrat é-giš-nu₁₁-gal* (Nab. 13), and é-babbar-ra *adi é-kun₄-an-kù-ga ziqurratišū* (Nab. 1 iii 4). To our knowledge, the name of the ziqqurrat is unknown.

Line 4: We take *ēpuš* as 3rd p. and assume a sporadic Assyrianism; for other examples in the Harran inscriptions, see W. Röllig, ZA 56 (1964) 227. However, 1st p. may not be excluded; cf. *Nabūna'id . . . ana Sīn bēlīya ēpuš* (Nab. 15).

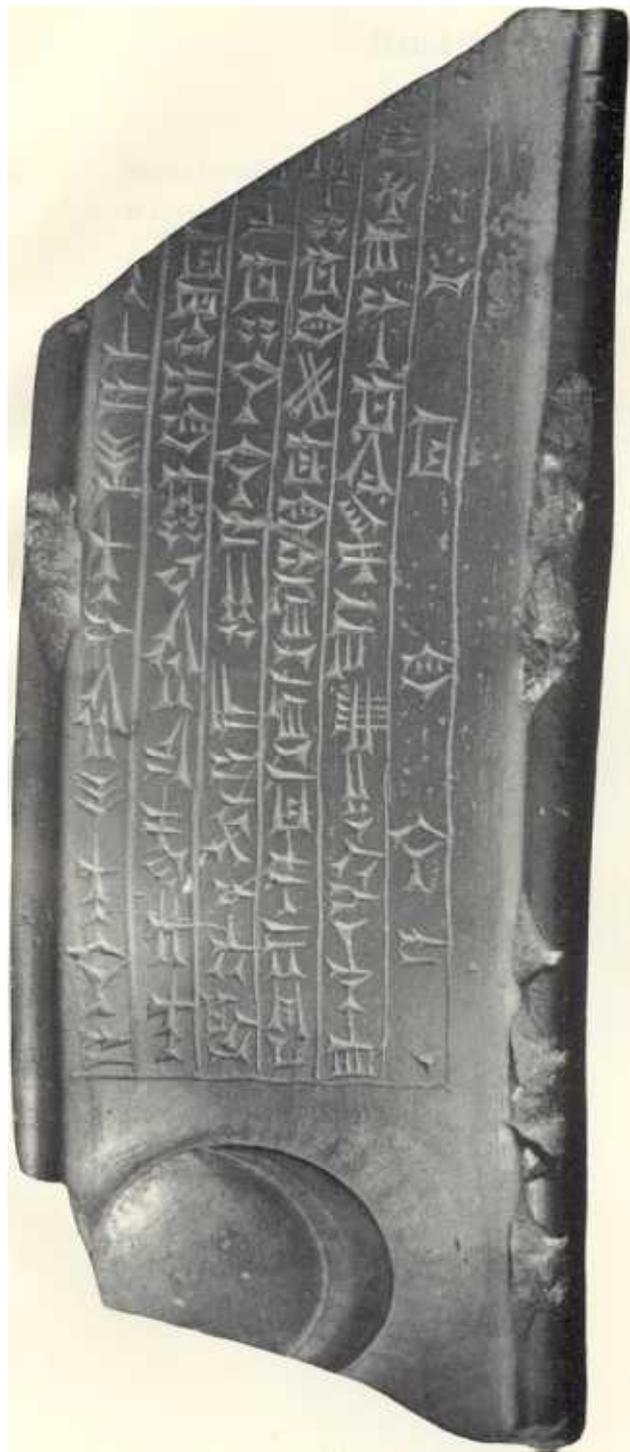
A very common expression in the inscriptions of Nabonidus is *ilūtu rabītu*, but a plausible restoration including this phrase eludes us. For our own proposal, cf. *i-piš-ti^dxxx GAL-ti* (H 2 i 1; AnSt 8, 56).¹⁴

Line 5: On *ana genē*, see above, and on *genē* rather than *ginē*, see R. Biggs, JCS 19 (1965) 101, on line 24. For the restoration, cf. H 2 ii 36–38 (AnSt 8, 62): . . . *qí-bi-ti-šú* (37) *šir-tú šá u₄-mi-šamma ina šá-ma-mi i-qab-bu-u*, “his exalted command that he daily pronounces in heaven” (the subject is Sin).

Line 6: Cf. “Enlil of the gods, king of kings, lord of lords, *šá a-na qí-bi-ti-šú la i-tur-ru u a-mat-su la ta-qab-bu-ú* II-šú, who does not revoke his command and whose word is not spoken twice” (H 2 ii 20–22; AnSt 8, 60).

¹³ CAD M/2, 155 cites this passage, but omits the prepositional phrase.

¹⁴ The “deed of Sin” is also referred to in the Harran related inscriptions 4* and 16; see Beaulieu, The Reign of Nabonidus, 212f.



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