

## THE DONATION OF ABĪ-SIMTĪ

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The Ur Dynasty Tablet published herewith is anomalous in various ways. I offer this preliminary treatment of it in the hope that someone else may be able to extract more information from it than I have<sup>1</sup>.

The text reads as follows:

- |   |   |   |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| a | { | 1) 2 t ú g - t [a]                            | d | {   | 16) [l t ú g - t a]                                |
|   |   | 2) 2 s ì l a ì - t a                          |   |   | 1') [ ] x [ ] DINGIR [ ]                           |
|   |   | 3) Ḫ a l - ḫ a l - l a                        |   |   | 2') [I] <sup>d</sup> Šu- <sup>d</sup> Sin-x-[ ]    |
|   |   | 4) <sup>I</sup> Ra-ba-tum                     |   |   | 3') Id <sup>d</sup> Šu- <sup>d</sup> Sin-x-[ ]- ma |
|   |   | 5) <sup>I</sup> Ku-ba-tum                     |   |   | (space)  |
|   |   | 6) (erased)                                   |   |   | 4') Š u - n í g i n 23 t ú g                       |
|   |   | 7) <sup>I</sup> Ša-ru-uš-DÙG                  |   |   | 5') Š u - n í g i n 14 s ì l a ì                   |
| b | { | 8) 2 t ú g - t a                              |   | 6') d a ḫ - ḫ u - m e - é š                               |  |
|   |   | 9) 1 s ì l a ì - t a                          |   | 7') k i A - b i - s i - i m - t i                         |  |
|   |   | 10) <sup>d</sup> Šu- <sup>d</sup> Sin-t μ-[ ] |   | (erased)  |  |
|   |   | 11) <sup>I</sup> I - r a - [ ]                |   | 8') m u <sup>d</sup> Šu- <sup>d</sup> Sin l u g a l b à c |  |
|   |   | 12) <sup>I</sup> G a - x - [ ]                |   | M a r - t u m u - [ r i - i ] q x x                       |  |
| c | { | 13) 2 t ú g - [t a]                           |   | m u - d ù   |  |
|   |   | 14) Ra-at-[ ]                                 |   |   |  |
|   |   | 15) [ <sup>I</sup> PN]                        |   |   |  |

Translation:

Entry a: 2 textiles each, 2 silas of oil each, (to) Ḫalḫalla, (as well as) Rabātum, Kubātum, ... (and) Šāruš-ṭāb.

Entry b: 2 textiles each, 1 sila of oil each (to) Šu-Sin-t. (as well as) I. (and) G.

Entry c: 2 textiles [each] (to) R. [(as well as) NN].

Entry d: [1 textile each (to) NN], (as well as) Šu-Sin-x (and) Šu-Sin-y.

Total: 23 textiles, 14 silas of oil, they are to be added.

Account of Abī-simtī.

Notes:

1.7. Šāruš-ṭāb is presumably to be etymologized as "His-Breeze-is-Sweet"; for discussion, see Stamm, *Namengebung*, 234f.

11.6'-7'. For k i and d a ḫ, see Foster, *Mesopotamia* 9, 81f.

The first striking feature of this document is its appearance. The tablet is exceptionally large (6.7 x 11.5 cm) and beautifully made. The script is twice the size of normal Ur III ductus, and is rectilinear and calligraphic in execution. Its archaizing, monumental quality immediately calls to mind classical Sargonic script, and there can be little doubt that Ur III court calligraphy was Sargonic in inspiration. For another example of this style, see Foster: JCS, 31 (1979), 241, no. 15. In this tablet, note, for example, the multiplicity of wedges in é š and z i, the generous spacing, and the over-all Sargonic appearance of the text.

To this stands in sharp contrast the date formula. Under the erased lines are traces of another date formula that was written in the calligraphic style. This was erased, leaving only what appears to be the number 30, and Šu-Sin 5 is written in by wetting the surface and scratching in the signs very crudely. Do we have here a document with an altered date, or did the scribe simply make a mistake and discard his painfully labored masterpiece? The former explanation seems more probable, as in the latter case it is hard to see why he would scratch in a new date if he intended only to discard the document. The presumed lapse in time between the first scribbling of our text and its final subscription does not, however, account for the erasure in line 6,

as the person whose name was there is not reckoned in the totals for the commodities listed.

My interpretation of the format of the text is expressed by the letters denoting "entries". According to this, four groups of people receive textiles, and two oil: Group a 2 textiles and 2 silas of oil each; Group b 2 textiles and 1 sila of oil each; Group c 2 textiles each, and Group d 1 textile each. Within each group one person is listed without a *Personenkeil*, then one or more with *Personenkeil*. At least three people in the groups of recipients have names built on that of Šu-Sin, the reigning king. Furthermore, the emoluments bestowed are at the expense of Abī-simtī, the queen mother of Šu-Sin (cf. Steinkeller: ASJ, 3 [1981], 79f.).

Beyond this one stumbles in the realm of guesswork, but may offer a suggestion or two as follows. The simplest explanation of the groups of names is to suggest that the name without *Personenkeil* is a parent, the names with *Personenkeil* the children. This yields four families headed by one person each, singled out by Abī-simtī, in rank order, for gifts. One may hazard further that the unifying factor among these "families", beyond Abī-simtī's good will, is Šu-Sin himself; further, that the principles are all women, the first-named in each group being the mother.

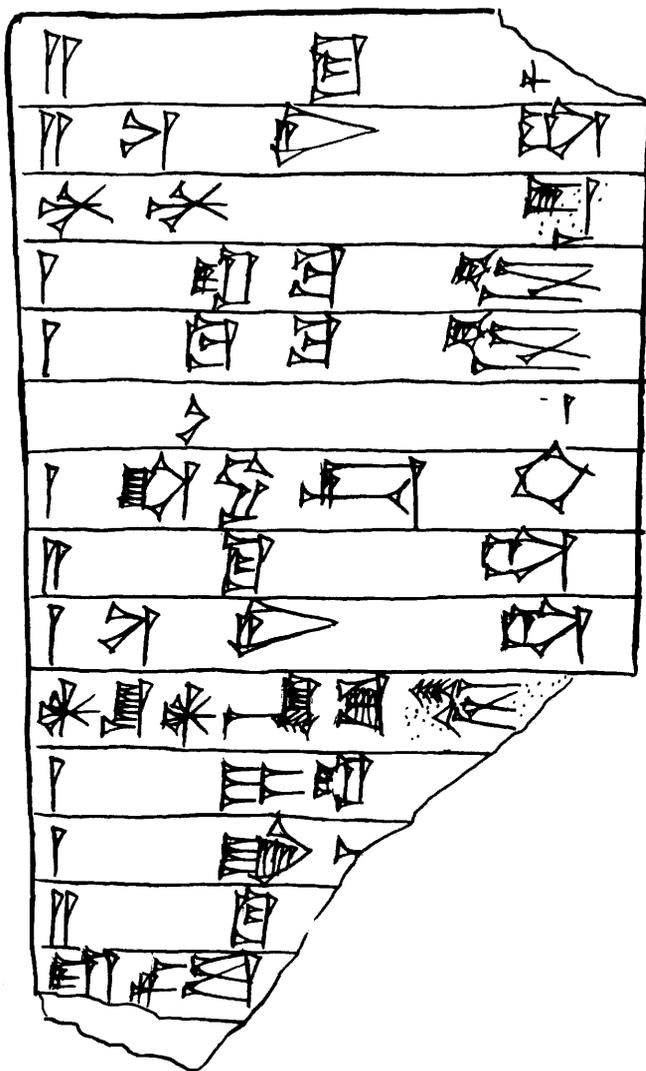
In any case, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Kubātum of line 5 is the well-known Kubātum, the queen of Šu-Sin (cf. Steinkeller: ASJ, 3 [1981], 80). By the interpretation proposed here, Halhalla would be the mother of the queen, Rabātum her older sister, and Šāruš-tāb a younger sibling (sister?). The erased name was of someone who died or was married off about the time the document was drawn up? Our proposal for this "family" is reinforced by its being the most important "family" honored in the text, at least in terms of quantities of gifts. The presence of a maternal Šu-Sin name in family b suggests that b was a lesser wife of Šu-Sin, who took his name upon marriage, whereas the two Šu-Sin names in family d were, perhaps, children of the king.

If our interpretation of this record turns out to be correct, one has here four branches of the royal household of Šu-Sin being given a present by

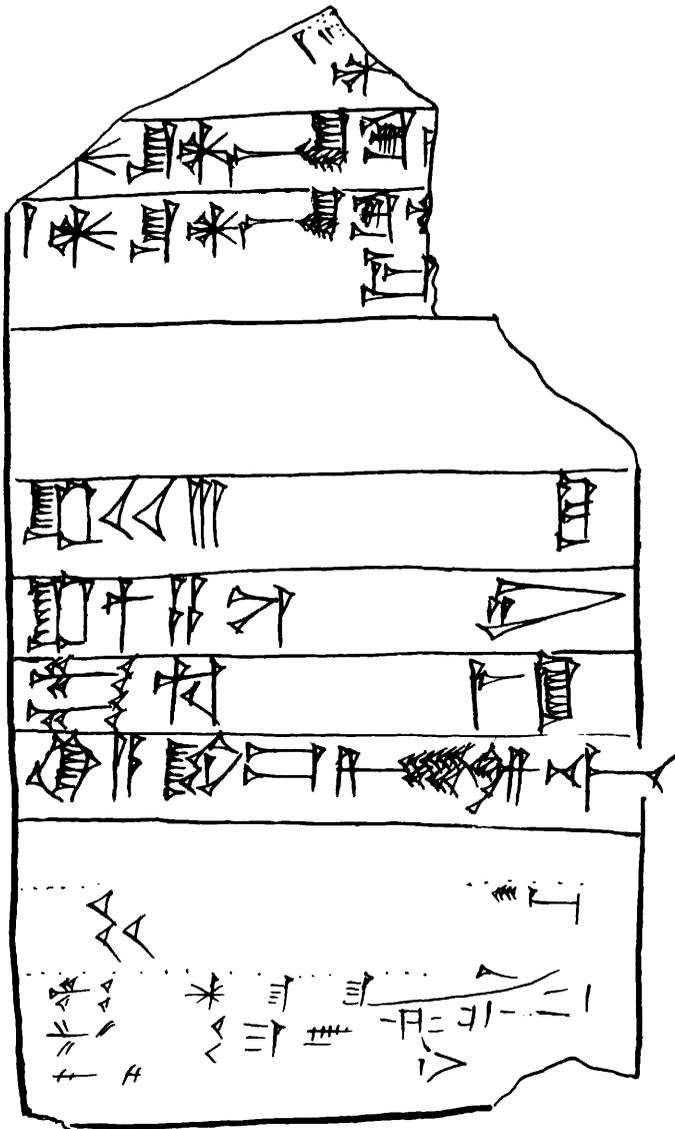
Abi-simtī, the queen mother, a few years before her death. The alteration of the date is puzzling, but the explanation may lie in the figure 30 preserved from the previous date. If this tablet was drawn up on the last day of a month and that month fell just before promulgation of a new year formula, a short delay might have occasioned re-dating of the text.

As it stands, with all its problems, this document is a unique survival of the Ur III royal court and its finest chancellery calligraphy.

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- 1) This tablet was for many years housed in the Mattatuck Historical Society, Waterbury, Connecticut, USA. It was acquired by a traveler in Mesopotamia at the end of the nineteenth or beginning of the twentieth century, and did not pass through the hands of any American or European dealer. It now is the property of Jonathan Rosen Esq. I am grateful to him for permission to publish it, and to Ulla Kasten, who first brought the Mattatuck collection to my attention.



obverse



reverse