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Tablettes cunéiformes de Tello au Musée d'Istanbul datant de l'époque de la IIIe dynastie d'Ur by Bertrand Lafont ; Fatma Yildiz
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latter translation. First of all, debtors are identified as slave, donkey-driver, or “bought man,” and the merchant acts in precisely the role we expect of him, namely that of creditor. The insolvent debtors impress their nails into the tablets, making them subordinates of the governor of Kalkhu who has paid off their debts. Creditors who receive their money back have absolutely no reason to do this. Finally, the semantic ambivalence of many other bêl constructions can be adduced as support for the translation “debtor.”


P. 293: Pigs, piglets, and lard all occur in the Practical Vocabulary of Assur, which might be taken as an indication that in Neo-Assyrian times pigs were taboo only in certain circles.

Pp. 384ff.: A comparison between table XI.2.C.b.2.1, Verpfändung von Feldern, and XI.2.C.b.2.2, Verpachtung von Feldern, is complicated by the absence of the size of the plots in the second table. A more detailed study of these texts to appear in Rainfall and Agriculture in Northern Mesopotamia (ed. R. M. Jas) will stress the resemblances between the two groups.

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The book under review (TCTI 2) is the second part of TCTI 1 published in 1989, and completes the edition of the Ur III texts catalogued by H. de Genouillac in ITT 2/1. B. Lafont and F. Yildiz have published here, as usual in exemplary fashion, a large number of Ur III administrative texts.

The volume includes an “Introduction” (pp. 7–9 in French, pp. 11–12 in Turkish) where the authors explain their criteria for the transliteration of numbers, many other aspects regarding the structure of the book, and the conventions used. They also reiterate here that Ur III documents are “veritable matériaux pour l’histoire.” Next follows a careful and precise chronological and thematic classification of the texts (pp. 13–28).

One misses here a list of those texts previously published. This information can only be found with the transliteration of each text. There the following references should be added:


L. 3418: P. Michalowski, Letters, 110, no. 220.


L. 3600: P. Michalowski, Letters, 60, no. 89.

L. 3608: P. Michalowski, Letters, 98, no. 185.


The “Transcriptions” constitute the main part of the book (pp. 31–266). Indeed, there one can find (from L. 2544 to L. 4713) the transliteration of almost 1350 texts. The authors have also included bibliographical references and—when possible and necessary—collations to the more than one hundred tablets already published in copy by H. de Genouillac in ITT 2/1. The layout for each text is consistent: museum number; numerical reference to seal impressions if necessary, the latter described in the “Liste des empreintes de sceaux” on pp. 269–77 (it would also have been convenient if the seal legend had been included after the transliteration of each text); date; transliteration. The absence of autographed texts is compensated for by the addition of accurate copies for badly preserved or less intelligible parts of the tablets.

After the aforementioned list of seals there are a very useful and valuable section devoted to “Notes et commentaires aux textes” (pp. 279–94), and excellent indexes of personal names (pp. 295–347), divine names (pp. 349–51), geographical and topographical names (pp. 353–60), as well as a glossary (pp. 361–95). The volume concludes with “Addenda et corrigenda” (p. 397) to TCTI 1 and 2.

It has to be emphasized that the quality of this work is more than excellent. The following notes, therefore, are but minor comments and should not detract from the high value of the volume.


L. 2677: 2: In the commentary to this line (p. 281), the authors suggest that the expression ḫuŋ-ga mu-kûr-ra “dépend
du sens qu'il faut donner à MU; on peut ainsi comprendre: 'travaillers embauhés aux noms étrangers', ou bien: 'travaillers embauhés qui ont été changés' (ce qui pourrait peut-être correspondre grossamo moduo aux nasībū des textes de Mari). I believe that the latter suggestion is most probable, since in a few Ur III texts workers or recipients of rations are qualified as kīr "replaced" (MVN 15, 66: 14–15; BCT 1, 131:18, 21; Gomi, Orient 21 [1985]: 6; BM 106075); r. iii 3; BM 13667: passim = Molina, MVN 22, forthcoming).

L. 2707: 3 and passim (see pp. 372–73): lū-ḪU.KUBU: W. Heimpel (JAOS 118 [1998]: 396–97) has recently proposed interpreting this term as a designation for "invalids." He understands it as an example of an Akkadian parrusu-form (ḫu-KuBu). Even if Heimpel's translation is correct, I can hardly agree with his morphological interpretation of the word, since it does not take into account the graphic variants. These have been briefly discussed by M. Civil (review of B. Lafont, Documents administratifs sumériens, AuOr 7 [1989]: 147), who lists the following writings: lū-ḪU.KUBU, ḤU.BUKU, lū ḫu-bu, and even ḫu-KU' (TCS 1, 42: 4); accordingly he proposed reading lū ḫu-bu. It must be noticed, however, that lū ḫu-KU' in TCS 1, 42: 4 is written lū ḫu-LU, a variant which is also attested beside lū ḫU.LU.BU (for example, MVN 2, 232: r. 15) in other texts belonging to the "Archive of the Kennelmen" (an exhaustive study of these variants by P. Mander is forthcoming).

L. 2810 iii 4, L. 3354: 3 and passim (see pp. 305, 371): the PN or PrN transliterated by Lafont and Yuldiz as GĂL.DI (PN) or GIŠGAL.DI (PrN) is perhaps to be read as U18:di; see P. Attinger, Eléments de linguistique sumérienne: la construction de du1/e/di "dire" (Fribourg: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 737; for the second element cf. l-bi-la GIŠGAL-di-da-ke₄-ne, BM 22871: 5', 13' (M. Molina, "Some Neo-Sumerian Legal Texts in the British Museum," Zwischen Sumer und Ebla, Festschrift G. Pettinato, no. 3, forthcoming).

L. 2816 iv 8 provides a new example of the otherwise rarely termed for the "branding" tool, si-im-da (for which see D. A. Foxvog, "Sumerian Brands and Branding-Irons," ZA 85 [1995]: 5–6): 1 eme₂ si-im-da ūn-gir-su lū-nu-tuk "nobody has one female ass branded with the mark of Ningirsu." This term is also found in an interesting Ur III legal text in the British Museum (BM 27844), which may be worth quoting. It reads as follows: (obv.) 1 i īn-dur-si-im-da / ūn-gúš-zí-da, 2 Ur–〈Ur–Nun–gal sipa nin, 3 anš–es–um–mu bi–in–du₁₁, 4 i–nim–ni / [bi]–in–gi, 5 en–na / 〈i–ni₃₃–bi–i–il₃₃, 6 lū–iš–iš–ma–bi 〈i–im– / DU₃₃–e (rev.) 1 〈l₄₃₃–N₄₃₃–ra₄–a, 2 ša–ša–mu–du–Ur–〈Ba–ba₄– / i–da–b₅₄, 3 ša₄–〈E–gib–i₄₃₃–le₄₃₃, Seal, 4 〈ši₃₃–ezem–〈Dumu–zi, 5 mu–du–mu–lú–lú–l-gi₄₃₃, 6 Za–ab–ša–li₄₃₃–ke₄₃₃ / ba–an–tuk; (Seal: L)-〈N₄₃₃–ra₄–a, dub–sar, du–mu–Ur–〈Ba–ba₄–)، "One male ass branded with the mark of Ningišzida: Ur–Nungal, the shepherd of the queen, has declared: 'the donkey is mine!' He has confirmed his statement. The litigation has been closed until he brings the witnesses. Lu–Narua, the prefect, son of Ur–Baba, took (the donkey) in charge. In Egibe, Month VI, IS5. (Seal of) Lu–Narua, scribe, son of Ur–Baba." (I am grateful to the Trustees of the British Museum for their kind permission to quote the contents of this tablet.)


We must be grateful to B. Lafont and F. Yuldiz for having put at our disposal this superb edition of Ur III texts, which will no doubt contribute greatly to our understanding of the economy and society of southern Mesopotamia in this period.

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Drinking in Ancient Societies ist unter den immer häufiger erscheinenden Symposiumsbanden einer der gelungensten.¹ Der Gegenstand ist kulturgeschichtlich hochinteressant; es wurde—bei einem Schwerpunkt in Mesopotami en und Nordsyrien (Ebla)—ein zeitlich und geographisch weiter Raum berücksichtigt (Ägypten, Welt des Alten Testaments, Iran, Ägypten), und der Band hat in dem Organisator L. Milano auch einen höchst kompetenten Herausgeber gefunden.²

Mein noch als gemeinsames Essen fördert Trinken die Geselligkeit, führt Fremde zueinander, lässt Freundschaften entstehen.


² Zu bedauern ist nur das Fehlen von Indizes, die den reichen Inhalt noch besser erschlossen hätten.