Nos. 1-19

Hymns and Prayers

No. 1

Old Babylonian Balag, to the Mother Goddess Aruru

Konrad Volk

Introduction

MMA 86.11.62 can be dated by the script to the Old Babylonian period. The text most probably belongs to the genre of the balag composition, liturgical compositions accompanied by a musical instrument called balag, which denotes either a drum or a harp (see A. D. Kilmer, "Musik," RLA 8 [1995], p. 463 s.v. "Musical Instruments"). The genre of this text would have been indicated at the end of the tablet, but unfortunately, the end is broken away. Nevertheless, the text can be identified as a balag because it contains the typical features of the Old Babylonian balag.

The text is divided by horizontal rulings into sections, some of which are explicitly labeled kirugu or, rarely, gisgigal. Characteristic features include a mournful tone, repetitions of words and phrases, and especially the use of the Emesal dialect. This purely literary dialect is the typical language of the Sumerian gala = Akkadian kalû liturgist, a temple functionary who usually sang or recited (and perhaps also composed) liturgical literature for a ritual context, such as festivals, particular days of the month, and ceremonies for the leveling and restoration of temples (see below p. 11). The ritual of temple restoration is closely connected with the contents of these compositions. They generally describe the destruction of sacred buildings (along with the removal and expulsion of the gods) and of cities and their inhabitants, resulting in the disruption of cultural and economic life. But in evident contrast to historical lamentations, balag compositions make no mention of any specific historical event. They are limited to a very general terminology.

Balag compositions are attested in the Old Babylonian period and were copied in canonical form from the Middle Babylonian period until the Seleucid period (see text Nos. 2–17). The Old Babylonian balag compositions have forerunners that date to at least the Isin-Larsa period. Unfortunately, it is still quite unclear how far back we can trace the origins of this genre.

Selected Bibliography

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- A. D. Kilmer, "Musik," RLA 8 (1995), p. 463
- J. Krecher, "Klagelied," RLA 6 (1980-83), pp. 1-6

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- R. Kutscher, Oh Angry Sea (a-ab-ba hu-luh-ha): The History of a Sumerian Congregational Lament, Yale Near Eastern Researches 6 (New Haven, 1975)
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1.

MMA 86.11.62

Plates 1, 2

Old Babylonian balag, to the mother goddess Aruru

Old Babylonian period

H. 100 mm W. 49 mm Th. 27 mm

Publication: J. Maynard, "A Lamentation to Aruru (Metropolitan Museum No. 112)," JSOR 3 (1919), pp. 14-20

Obverse

L.	ul ₄ -ul ₄ -la mu-un-DU [
2.	dA-ru-ru ul ₄ -ul ₄ -la mu-u[n-DU		
3.	nin-sa ₆ -ga	λ[]
4.	áb ér-ra	$^{f}SAL + x^{T}x \; [\dots]$.]
5.	mu-lu zı-ga-ni	mar-uru ₅ z[i-ga]	
6.	mu-lu nú-a-ni	eme-sig n[ú-a]	
7.	gu ₄ -dam ki-bal-a	muš-šà-t[ùr	J
8.	i ₇ -gal-gal-c	má-da- ^r lá¹ [. , .	j
9.	i ₇ -bur-dagal-e	$sig_{14}-g[i_4$	l
10.	i ₇ -da na-ág ba-e-tar	i ₇ -bi [ļ
11.	a-šà-ga na-ág ba-e-tar	še-bli	1
12.	i ₇ -nam-ku ₅ -da-zu	1i ₇ 1 [
13.	a-šà-nam-ku ₅ -da-zu	[a-šà]
14,	dam-na-ág-ku ₅ -da-zu	[dam]
15.	dumu-na-ág-ku ₅ -da-zu	[dumu . , .	l
16.	ć-kar-ra-zu	[1
17.	A-tu-'zu¹	l	}
18.	á-dàra-2u	Į	J
19.	é-zu é-zu-gim	[J
20.	úru-zu úru-zu-gim	[)
21.	dam-zu dam-zu-¹gim¹	[]
22.	dumu-z[u dumu]-'zu'-[gim]
23.	x [Ì
	(rest of obverse broken)		

Reverse

1′.	'égi ga-ša-an-ḫur¹-[sag-gá	1
2′.	sipa-tur ki-amaš- ^r a ¹	1
	,	ļ,
3′.	eden-na DU NE.DU [1
4′.	ta a-ab-ba	[ba-da-ab-ús]
5'.	égi ga-ša-an-hur-sag-gá	é[gi
6'.	i-bí íl-lá-zu	a-ba-[a ba-ra-è]
7′.	du ₁₀ -bad-rá-zu	a-ba-a [ba-ra-šub-bu]
8′.	égi ga-ša-an-hur-sag-gá	égi x []
9'.	é-tùr mu-e-gul	áb sá[g ba-e-du]]]
10'.	ki-amaš mu-e-hul e-zé	am[aš-a ság ba-e-du ₁₁]
11'.	dumu ama-gan-zi-da ur-re-cš	[ba-tu-bé-eš]
12'.	mu-lu-maḥ mu-bur-ra nu-mu-e-DU x [1
13′.	tu-mu-mer zà-ga nu-mu- ¹ e ¹ -[]
14'.	é-gal-kèš ^{ki} -ke ₄	na-ma-ni-[,]
1.5.	<u> </u>	-
15'.	u ₅ ér-mah	u ₅ [ér-mah]
16′.	nin-gal- ^d Mu-ul-líl-lá	u ₅ [ér-mah]
17'.	égi ga-ša-an-hur-sag-ke ₄	u ₅ [ér-mah]
18′.	UL ₄ ,UL ₄ -tur-ra	$UL_4.UL_4$ -[mah-a]
19'.	UL ₄ ,UL ₄ ^d téme ^{sar} -gim	šú-šú-[a]
20'.	gišmar-mah-tur-re	^{giš} mar-m[aḫ]
21′.	^{giš} eren-kud-rá-e	^{giš} eren-ku[d-rá-e]
22'.	saḥar(?)-sù-ga	u ₅ é[r-maḫ(?)]
23'.	a-R1.RI túm-ma	ki-¹amaš³-a [sá[g ba-ab-du ₁₁](?)

Translation

Obverse

- 1. The one who hastens came along [...
- 2. Aruru, the one who hastens [came along . . .
- 3. The beautiful lady [...
- 4. The cow in wailing [...
- 5. (When) she rises up, a storm r[ises].
- 6. (When) she rests, slander r[ests].
- 7. (Like) a wild bull in the rebel lands, a poisonous s[nake . . .
- 8. To the great rivers [....] the punting pole.
- 9. To the river, a broad vessel, [.....] shout[ing ...
- 10. For the river you decreed a destiny, that river [...

- 11. For the field you decreed a destiny, that grain [...
- 12. You cursed a river, [(that)] river [...
- 13. You cursed a field, [(that) field . . .
- 14. You cursed a spouse, [(that) spouse . . .
- 15. You cursed a child, [(that) child . . .
- 16. Your "Quay-House" [...
- 17. Your Atu [...
- 18. Your ibex horn [...
- 19. Your house like your house—[(Alas!)]
- 20. Your city like your city—[(Alas!)]
- 21. Your spouse like your spouse—[(Alas!)]
- 22. [You]r child [like] your [child—(Alas!)]
- 23. ...[...

Reverse

- 1'. Princess Ninhur[sag . . .
- 2'. [You have killed](?) the young shepherd in the sheepfold.
- 3'. Walking in the steppe [...
- 4'. What can [stride with you] in the sea?
- 5'. Princess Ninhursag, p[rincess . . .
- 6'. When you lift your eyes—who [can escape(?)]
- 7'. When you stride—who [can get off(?)]
- 8'. Princess Ninhursag, princess [...
- 9'. You devastated the cattle pen: the cows [were scattered by you].
- 10'. You destroyed the sheepfold: the sheep were [scattered in the sheepfold].
- 11'. (Even) children (and) child-bearing mothers [were heaped up together].
- 12'. You did not let the high priest carry the magic wand. [...
- 13'. You did not [hold back] the north wind [...
- 14'. At the palace of Keš you did not [.....] for me(?)
- 15'. Woe! Profound weeping! Woe! [Profound weeping!]
- 16'. Elder sister of Enlil! Woe! [Profound weeping!]
- 17'. Princess Ninhursag! Woe! [Profound weeping!]
- 18'. The little kiši-plants, the [finest] kiši-plants,
- 19'. the kiši-plants altogether are overturned like a qaqqullu-plant.
- 20'. By the small shrubs, the [.....] shrubs,
- 21'. by the cut cedars, the c[ut] cedars,
- 22'. the soil is ravaged. Woe! P[rofound weeping!]
- 23'. Spilling the seed that has been [......] she scatters [.....] in the sheepfold.

Notes

This author wishes to thank J. J. A. van Dijk, W. G. Lambert, and especially S. Votto for various suggestions and for corrections to his English style.

Obverse

- 1: ul₄-ul₄-la must be a divine epithet in this position, although this epithet seems hitherto unattested. The context suggests that the term means "the one who hastens," but the meaning "the hastened one" is also grammatically possible. Cf. ul₄-ul₄-la in Inanna and Bilulu I. 94 (see Th. Jacobsen and S. N. Kramer, "The Myth of Inanna and Bilulu," *JNES* 12 [1953], p. 174) and ul₄-ul₄-le im-DU "(The messenger) runs quickly" in Enmerkar and Ensuhkešdanna I. 49 (see A. Berlin, *Enmerkar and Ensuhkešdanna*, Occasional Publications of the Babylonian Fund 2 [Philadelphia, 1979], p. 42). ul₄-ul₄-la as an epithet should also be compared to the one of the many abilities of Inanna in the programmatic Innin-Šagura. In I. 116 (conflated text; see Å. Sjöberg, "A Hymn to the Goddess Inanna," ZA 65 [1975], p. 231) it says: [x] x ul₄-ul₄ (var.: ul-lu-ul) zi-zi x an-ta sá-sá-dè dinanna za-a-kam/i-ta-ap-ru-ur-rum ha-ma-iú-um ma-qa-tum te-bu-ú ù ta-ap-pa-am < . . . > 'kul-ma lš₈-tár, "to run around, to hasten, to fall down, to raise and to . . . a companion are yours, Inanna." For a discussion of the semantic range of ul₄ see Black. "A-še-er Gi₆-ta." p. 48, and MSL 14, pp. 503-4, 248-59.
- 2: The mother goddess Aruru of Keš is identified with Ninhursag (Emesal: Gašanhursag) several times on the reverse of the composition.
- 3: L1. 5–7 form a three-line unit, which also occurs (lines in reverse order) in the syllabic Šulpa'e-Aruru text OECT 5, 10:rev. col. v 5–7: ^dA-ru-ru mu-lu ¹nu-a¹-ni mc-si ¹nu¹-a/^dA-ru-ru mu-lu zi-ga-ni marur[u₅] ¹zi¹-ga/gù-da ki-b[al]-¹a(?)¹ ušumgal ¹šu¹ x x nu-a. Note the syllabic nu for nú, mc-si for emesig of our text and also gù-da for gu₄-da(m). Does gu₄-dam here allude to the myth of gu₄-dam (see W. Heimpel, "Gudam," *RLA* 3 [1971], pp. 675–76)? Since ušumgal of OECT 5, 10:rev. col. v 7 (cf. G. B. Gragg, "The Keš Temple-Hymn," in Å. Sjöberg and E. Bergmann, *The Collection of the Sumerian Temple Hymns*. TCS 3 [Locust Valley, N.Y., 1969], p. 187) is here replaced by muš-šà-tùr: bašmu, "poisonous serpent." the end of the line is not restored. Note that it is not only Aruru-Ninhursag, the goddess of Keš, who has this epithet muš-šà-tùr but also her temple in Keš.
- 8: Although this line cannot be restored completely, má-da-lá may be interpreted as *tillatu*, "punting pole." But compare gi/gismá-da-lá "Ziehleine," for which see Th. Balke. "Eine neusumerische Urkunde über Materialien für den Schiffsbau," UF 25 (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1993), p. 5.
- 10–11: na-ág—tar of these lines must be separated from nam—tar of Il. 12–15, because of the different construction (with locative /-a/ as opposed to absolutive /-Ø/). For nam-/na-ág—tar, "to decree fate," with the locative see D. O. Edzard, "Zum sumerischen Eid," AS 20, p. 70. Interestingly, the Aruru-text CT 36, 48:rev. col. ii 15 states i₇ a-bi mu-ra-an-ba a-šà še-bi mu-ra-an-ba, "He (An) gave to you as a gift the water of the river; he (An) gave to you as a gift the barley of the field." So apparently Aruru decrees fate for the river and the field that she was once given by the great An.
 - 12: A parallel to this line is found in BM 38593 (see K. Volk, "Die Balag-Komposition úru àm-ma-ir-ra-bi," FAOS 18 [1989] pl. lb); this text will be published by the present writer; col. ii 25: i₇-da a-bi umun-^[d][Am-a]n-ki-ke₄ na-ág im-ma-ku₅-dè/na-a-ri ša-a-ši be-lum ^[d]tÉ'-a li-ru-ur-ši, "May Lord Enki curse that river" (Sum.: "the water of the river").

- 16: The mention of the temple é-kar-ra in this context is noteworthy. Ekarra points to Dilmun, where this temple ("House of the Quay," see George, House Most High, pp. 107-8) is the temple of Ninsikila. who, in a certain tradition, is the wife of Lisin, the son of Ninhursag (see A. Falkenstein, "Sumerische religiöse Texte. 4. Ein Lied auf Šulpa'e," ZA 55 [1963], p. 30). The possibility of a (syncretistic) conflation between Ninhursag's son Lisin and the mother goddess Lisin cannot be discussed here. For the present note S. N. Kramer, "Lisin, the Weeping Mother Goddess: A New Sumerian Lament," in G. van Driel et al., eds., Zikir Šumim: Assyriological Studies Presented to F. R. Kraus on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday, Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten Studia Francisci Scholten Memoriae Dicata 5 (Leiden, 1982), p. 137 n. 12. In Langdon, BL 175:rev. 9-10, the Ekarra is connected with Ninbanda.
- 17: Atu most likely refers to a-tu-bānda (cf. An = Anum II 100 dA-tu-bān-da = ama-siki-lá-ke4 [the reading of this entry is courtesy of W. G. Lambert]), who is closely connected with Ninhursag, Ašgi, and Lisin in the Lamentation to Lil, the son of Ninhursag: A-tu-bānda na-ág-er-ra bí-ri-íb-lá, "Atubanda, wailing, turns toward you" (see F. Thureau-Dangin, "La passion du dieu Lillu," RA 19 [1922], p. 184:obv. 11, 25). Since Atu is presumably an abbreviated form, it could also be understood as dA-tu-gu-la mentioned in KAV 64:obv. col. ii 21–22: dA-tu-gu-la ní-te dingir-maḥ-ke4/dA-tu-gu-la pa-lih dBēlet-ili. "Atugula who revers Dingirmaḥ/dBēlet-ilī." The whole matter needs further research. At any rate it is striking that a-tu in our text and a-tu-bānda (see above F. Thureau-Dangin, "La passion du dieu Lillu," RA 19 [1922], p. 184) are written without the divine determinative, as opposed to dA-tu (gašan-gal-e) in TCL 6, 54:obv. 21 (and duplicates). Finally a-tu could also denote the Atu-priest, for which see MSL 12, p. 41 226–27, and especially the Keš temple-hymn 109 (a-tu-e šibir šu bí-in-du8, "The Atu-priest held the staff"; see Sjöberg, Temple Hymns, TCS 3, 174 and 186). For a discussion of a-tu see also W. L. Moran. "The Keš Temple Hymn and the Canonical Temple List," in Kramer Anniversary Volume: Cuneiform Studies in Honor of Samuel Noah Kramer, AOAT 25 (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1976), pp. 340–42.
- 18: The meaning of á-dàra in this passage is not entirely clear. It literally means "horn of the ibex" and is to be compared with CT 42, 19:14, paralleled by VS 10, 198:15 (eršemma of Dingirmaḥ): á(!)-dàra TUR sug-ge gu₇-a-gu₁₀. Significant for the problem of how to interpret á-dàra is the late and quite distorted translation of á-dàra gašan-ḥur-sag-gá with *i-dan šá-qa-a-tú be-let*-DINGIR^{meš}, "She of the ibex horns, Ninhursag: She of valorous strength, Bēlet-ili" (see Cohen. CLAM 2, pp. 50; 518). One could also argue that in our text á represents a syllabic spelling of é and that the term then represents the late é-dàra-(an-na) of Enki. Note however Langdon, BL 56:obv. 20: gašan-é-dàra-an-na.
- 19-22: This section is perhaps to be restored according to CT 44, 17:obv. 10-13: é-zu é-zu-šè ù-⟨li-li⟩/ úτu-zu úτu-zu-šè ù-/dam-zu dam-zu-šè ù-/dumu-zu dumu-zu-šè ù-, "Your house! To your house! Alas! etc."

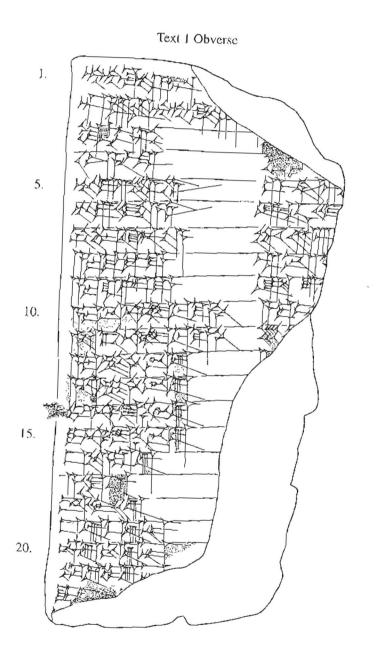
Reverse

- 3': There is no convincing evidence for the reading of DU NE.DU. gen-ne-mèn. "You were the one who walked in the steppe" seems possible but not compelling. Although this line is incomplete, it surely alludes to parallels like SBH 12:obv. 20-21: cden-na DU-ba edon šà-su-ga-{gu₁₀}/se-ra-am ina a-la-ki-šú ḫu(!)-ur(!)-bu-um-ma, "When he walks around (Sum.: stands) in the steppe, the steppe becomes wasteland."
- 4': SBH 23:obv. 26 and Langdon, BL 96:obv. 2: ta a-ab-ba ba-da-ab-ús permit us to restore this line. This phrase, as in the text just cited, usually forms a couplet with ta idim-ma ta nu-mu-da-sá, "What in the

- depths, what (is it), that you do not reach?" Interestingly, the couplet of II. 6'-7' of our text also follows immediately in SBH 23:obv. 23–29 and Langdon, BL 96:obv. 3–4.
- 6'-7': Both lines form a well-known doublet occurring in many balag compositions, for which see K. Volk, "Die Balag-Komposition úru àm-ma-ir-ra-bi." FAOS 18 (1989), p. 168.
- 9'-11': These lines represent a three-line unit also found in other balag compositions. Cf. especially CT 36, 35:obv. col i 22-24 (+ dupl.); cf. S. N. Kramer, "By the Rivers of Babylon: A Balag Liturgy of Inanna," AuOr 5 (1987), p. 72: é-tùr mu-e-gul áb ság ba-e-du₁₁/ki-amaš mu-e-hul e-zé ság ba-e-du₁₁/šà-zu dumu ama-gan-zi-dè ur-re-eš ba-tu₁₀-bé-eš.
 - 12': mu-bur-ra is to be understood as Emesal writing for giš-búr-ra = iṣ piṣri, "magic wand" (see CAD I-J, p. 218 s.v. isu).
 - 13': For tu-mu as a syllabic spelling of tu₁₅ (-m) = šāru, "wind" see G. Cros, Nouvelles fouilles de Tello (Paris, 1910), p. 207: obv. col. iii 6, where we read tu-mu-me-er, "northwind." zà-ga is possibly the nominal part of a compound verb. Compare for example zà-(ga)—dab/tag/gub/lá/ús. Based on the context one could guess a meaning like "you did not detain(?) the northwind," perhaps construed with the semantically related zà-(ga)-dab/tag (see W. H. Ph. Römer, "Das sumerische Kurzepos 'Bilgames und Akka." AOAT 209/1 [Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1980], p. 67: Å. Sjöberg, "Beiträge zum sumerischen Wörterbuch." OrNS 39 [1970], pp. 88–89). Yet it should be noted that the faint traces of a vertical wedge after /-ga/ could indicate a reading zà-ta.
 - 16': As often, the intended nin₉, "sister," is written nin. For Aruru as a sister of Enlil see, for example, A. Sjöberg, *The Collection of Sumerian Temple Hymns*, TCS 3, p. 74.
 - 18': These lines can be interpreted only by comparison with de Genouillac, Kich 2, B 471:rev. 16'–18'//OECT 5. 10:col. iv 15–17, because the unit quoted there corresponds roughly to II. 18'–19' (split) of our text. Since de Genouillac, Kich 2, B 471, has UL₄-UL₄-tur-ra-zu šu mu-ra-[ab]-du₇/UL₄-UL₄-maḥ-a-zu šu mu-ra-[ab-du₇]. "Your small... has been made perfect for you, your outstanding... has been made [perfect] for you," UL₄-UL₄ must denote some realia. If the following context is correctly interpreted, UL₄-UL₄ might then denote some tree or shrub, probably to be read kiši₁₇-kiši₁₇ = ašāgu, "prosopis farcta," a thorny, straggling shrub (Arab.: šōk/ḥarnūb) bearing ḥarub-fruits (see M. Civil, "The Lexicon as a Source of the Literary Inspiration," in F. Rochberg-Halton, ed., Language, Literature, and History: Philological and Historical Studies Presented to Erica Reiner, AOS 67 [New Haven, 1987], pp. 47–48, and C. C. Townsend, "Leguminales," in C. C. Townsend and E. Guest, eds., Flora of Iraq 3 [Baghdad, 1974], pp. 38–42 and pl. 7). Less likely is the interpretation of ul₄ as "myrtle" (see K. Volk, "Zur Lesung von teme (NAGA-inversum) und teme (NAGA)," NABU [1990], p. 37 n. 54). Whether this expression is to be paralleled with ul-gal-gal, of the Aruru text published by L. Speleers, Recueil des Inscriptions de l'Asie Antérieure des Musées Royaux du Cinquantenaire à Bruxelles (Brussels, 1925, 189:obv. 13–14) remains uncertain.
 - 19': The reading of "témesar is evident from the syllabic parallel OECT 5, 10:rev. col. iv 17' UL₄-UL₄ deme-gim šú-šú-a. For téme = qaqqullu see K. Volk, NABU (1990), p. 37 n. 54. Cf. for our context HS 1885:14 (atabbak) kī qāqulli, "(I throw down [the enemy]) like a qaqqullu/qāqullu-plant" (unpublished MB text, quoted by CAD Q, p. 124 s.v. qaqqullu 1).
 - 20': gi^xmar-maḥ-tur-re creates a number of difficulties. At first glance one could be tempted to interpret gi^xmar-maḥ as "great shovel," in view of the fact that Ninkasi, who is the dNin-hur-sag-gá-ke₄ mí-zi-dè-eš du₁₁-ga.

"tenderly cared for by Ninhursag," handles the gismar-mah to mix the dough for the bappir-bread (see M. Civil, "A Hymn to the Beer Goddess and a Drinking Song," in Studies Presented to A. Leo Oppenheim, June 7, 1964 [Chicago, 1964], p. 69 ll. 4, 14). But this makes no sense in our context. gismar-mah may also be interpreted as (m)armaḥhu, "shrub." Admittedly this seems to be lexically a hapax legomenon, but it fits our context well. So armaḥhu (see CAD A/2, p. 290 s.v. armaḥhu), until now attested only in lexical texts and a single Neo-Assyrian royal inscription, may be derived from gismar-mah (see K. Volk, "(m)armaḥhum-mar-mah 'ein Obstbaum,' "NABU [1992], pp. 14–15).

- 21': The first sign of the line is not entirely clear but is most likely sahar; compare lexically and semantically kuš₇ (SAHAR)—su-su/sù-sù, "to level the land" and šà-sù-ga, "waste, empty land."
- 22': The translation offered here remains highly tentative. Since this line is the beginning of a new literary unit, one cannot be sure whether the preceding subject (destruction) is continued or not. Possibly the contents of the line are to be connected with Cohen, CLAM 2, p. 732 (= BM 96568) II. 9-10: u₄-te-eš tùr-ra a ri . . ./u₄-te-eš amaš a ri . . ., "a violent storm that spills the seed in the sheepfold. . . ." Also note OECT 5, 10:col. iii 11-12: u₄ a ri-a A ri-hu-tum-ma/i-a-gim u₄ A ri-a a ri-hu-tum-ma.



Text 1 Reverse

