

Babylonian Literary Texts in the Schøyen Collection, Nos. 18 and 19 – No. 18, A Tablet of Legal Prescriptions: Klaas Veenhof has generously alerted me to two much better readings, *ú-pi-ḫu-ú* and *ú-pi-iḫ-ḫ[u]* in ll. 13 and 23, both from *puḫḫum* “to exchange” rather than *uwwûm*; and *i-te!-pu-uš* in l. 17, “he makes (the vacant plot into a building)”.

No. 19, formerly catalogued as a mathematical tablet, was only discovered not to be so as *BLT* was in press, and published in haste as a Tablet of Riddles. A more leisurely treatment would have led to a different generic ascription, for the text shares vocabulary and phrasing with a spell about a scorpion that survives on an Old Babylonian tablet from Mari published by A. Cavigneaux, “Magica mariana”, *RA* 88 (1994) 155–61. That text reports the scorpion’s proclivity for lurking in lavatories (obv. 6): *ul-da-aš-šu a-su-ru-um na-aš-pa-ar mu-ti?!-im* “a drain produced it, the envoy of death”. Correspondingly, ll. 2–4 of No. 19 can be read: *ú-ul-da-šu-ma! a-sú-ru-um ge₆-eš-pa!-ar pu-ti-im* “a drain produced it, the snare-headed one”. The phrase *gešpar pūtim*, literally “forehead-snare”, is phonetically similar to the Mari tablet’s less fanciful *našpar mūtum* and probably derived from it by inadvertent corruption or deliberate adaptation. Both phrases are rhetorical expressions for the scorpion, one alluding to the lethal effect of its sting, the other to the two pincers that pin down its prey. The snare is qualified by *pūtum* “forehead” because a scorpion’s pincers (Akk. *qarnān* “horns”) seem to sprout from its body where a head should be, as both spells aver (No. 19: 1 // 5–6 // Mari obv. 8): *qarnī išu qaqqadam ul išu* “it has ‘horns’ but no head”.

For *ge₆* as a phonetic value of the sign MI in the OB period, see No. 5: 28, *ḫur-sa-gi₆*. Both instances of the usage are faithful to the presence of /g/ in the Sumerian loanword, resp. *gīš.pàr* “snare” > *gešparrum* and *ḫur.saḡ* “mountain range” > *ḫursāḡum*. Comparable spellings of the nominative pl. of the latter word occur in OB Anzû II 55 and 79: *ḫur-sa-gu₁₀(MU)* = *ḫursāḡū*. Alternatively read *mé-eš-pa-ar* and posit *mešparrum* as a phonetic variant of *gīšparrum* < *gīš.pàr*; compare the SB doublets *gīš(n)immaru* : *miš(n)immaru* < *gīš.nimbar* “date-palm”, *giparru* : *miparru* < *gī₆.pàr* “private chamber”.

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