

HALDI'S GARRISON – HALDI'S PROTECTION.  
THE NEWLY FOUND ROCK INSCRIPTION OF ARGİŠTI II  
IN SHISHEH, NEAR AHAR (EAST AZERBAIJAN, IRAN)

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Between 18th May and 1 June 2000 a team formed by Mirjo Salvini, Raffaele Biscione of the ISMEA, and Béatrice André-Salvini, curator in chief at the Département des Antiquités Orientales of the Louvre Museum, was invited to Iran by the *Sazeman-e Mirath-e Farhangi-e Keshvar* (Organisation for the Cultural Heritage). One of the aims of the mission was to study and collate Urartian inscriptions, both in Museums and *in situ*, and to visit and check pre-Urartian and Urartian archaeological sites. The research was carried out in Eastern and Western Azerbaijan, with the precious advice and help of the *Sazeman-e Mirath-e Farhangi-e Keshvar*, both in Teheran and in Urumiyeh and Tabriz<sup>1</sup>. M. Salvini and B. André-Salvini collated the Urartian-Assyrian bilingual Stela from Movana in the Museum of Urumiyeh which had already been studied in 1997, checking the previous copies<sup>2</sup>.

Between 25th and 29th May M. Salvini and R. Biscione, with A. R. Hejebri-Nobari of Modarres University, and R. Bashash Khanzaq, of the *Sazeman-e Mirath-e Farhangi-e Keshvar*, were in Eastern Azerbaijan.

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. R. Biscione and M. Salvini, *An Archaeological-Philological Research Travel of ISMEA in Eastern and Western Azerbaijan, Iran, 18th May-1st June 2000*, *SMEA* 42, 2000, 312-319. See also B. André-Salvini and M. Salvini, *New Urartian Research in Iranian Azerbaijan*, *SMEA* 39, 1997, 290-292.

The trip and the research were possible only due to the kindness and help of Dr. J. Ghandgar, director of the Tabriz Museum, who joined the team for the whole period in Eastern Azerbaijan. The main aim of the trip was the study of the new inscription of Shisheh, recently discovered by A. Hejebri-Nobari.

In fact, during an archaeological survey in the months of August-September 1998, A. Hejebri-Nobari found an Urartian cuneiform rock inscription, of the niche type, and added another precious document to those already known in Azerbaijan<sup>3</sup>. The inscription, whose local name is Sanduq Dashi (stone of the box), lies on the mountain overlooking Shisheh, one of the villages of the *dehestan* of Vargahan, *bakhs* of Hurand, *shahrestan* of Ahar, located about 40 km from this last city. To reach it one drives 20 km on the Ahar – Kaleybar road to the crossroad for Vargahan; then 16 km through the villages of Kuselar, Babajan and Sherbit; from there one drives 3 km on the track to Doshtor to a small pass, passing close the village of Shisheh but without entering it (fig. 1). Cars must be left at the pass and there is about a 1 km walk up the slope of the mountain to the left (NW) of the track, to the rocks overlooking the village of Shisheh and to the inscription (fig. 2).

The inscription, left by Argišti II, is located at 38° 36' 27" N, 47° 21' 59" E, on the eastern slope of a granite rock, near the top of a hill, in the highest part of a pre-Urartian fortress, with an approximate height<sup>4</sup> of 1970 m a.s.l. About 50-70 m N of the inscription, on the face of the rock, there is a deep crack that, until the previous year, was closed by a small wall. Among the surrounding debris were found fragments of Early Bronze, Early Iron and Urartian pottery, bones and horse teeth. Another crack, similarly closed by a wall, is located higher up.

The pre-Urartian fortress commanded the valley and on the top of the hill visibility is 360° (fig. 3). At 208° can be seen the fort of Shirbit, at 260° the fortresses of Babak and Pegham and the village of Shisheh at 245°. At the foot of the N slope of the hill there are the traces of a caravan road.

The remains of the fortress are formed by a great number of walls, built with large, partially dressed stones, one or two courses high, with corners and changes of directions that at a first sight, however, do not seem to form a coherent plan (fig. 4). Two structures, anyway, can be easily seen and it is possible to determine corners of other rooms, though only a careful map will give more information about the plan. It is evident that the fortress exploits and integrates the natural defences formed by cliffs and very steep slopes,

<sup>3</sup> Katibei digar az dureh-ye Urartu be dast amad, «Iran», 5, n. 1174, Sunday 21st February 1999.

<sup>4</sup> Assessed with GPS.

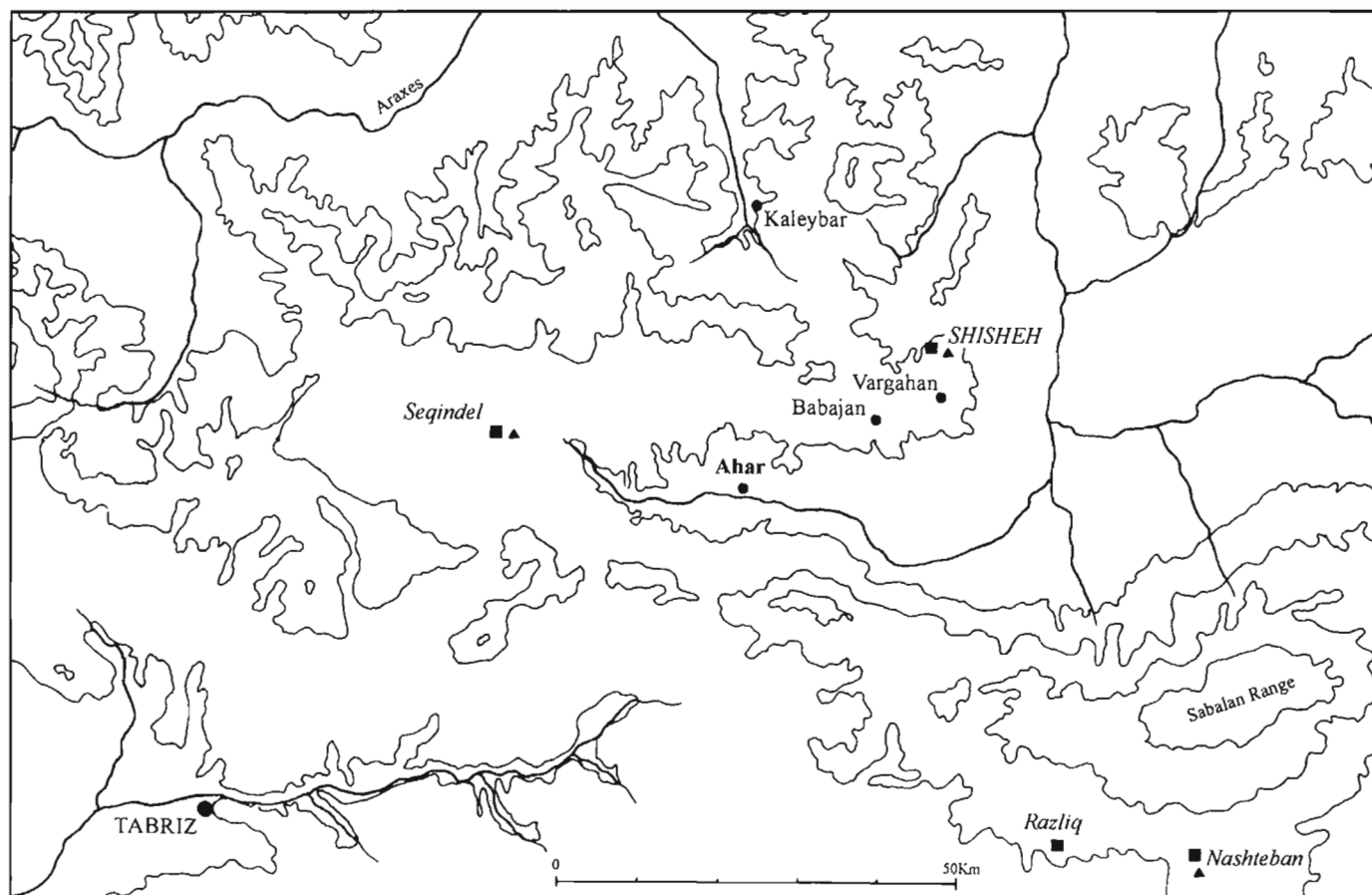


Fig. 1 – Schetch-map of the region of Shisheh. Dots represent contemporary cities/villages, triangles pre-Urartian or Urartian fortresses, squares Urartian rock inscriptions.



Fig. 2 The mountain overlooking the village of Shisheh. The inscription is located at the base of the highest, triangular peak.



Fig. 3 – View from the top of the mountain, looking West. On the background there are the forts of Shirbit, Babak and Pegham.



Fig. 4 – Remains of walls inside the pre-Urartian fortress of Shisheh.

according to the pre-Urartian techniques<sup>5</sup>. The surface pottery confirms this fact, as only Early Iron Age pottery was found, without a single Urartian fragment.

N and SE of the fortress there is a large necropolis formed by *kurgans* of stones and earth, surrounded by stone circles up to 10 m in diameter, with burial chambers built with large stone slabs (fig. 5). One of the chambers measured 4.50 m × 1.60 × 1.10 (depth). Robbers who, according to local informants, used metal detectors sacked all the larger *kurgans*. The coordinates of the necropolis, near the small pass mentioned above, are 38° 35' 43" N and 47° 22' 05" E, approximate height 1948 m a.s.l.

This rock inscription (fig. 6) is the third of the Urartian king Argišti II found in Azerbaijan, after Razliq and Nashteban. This specific text is very damaged by the natural agents, but it was possible to interpret the important

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<sup>5</sup> H. Sanamyan, Architectural Structure, Defensive Systems and Building Techniques of the Fortresses in the Southern Basin of Lake Sevan, in R. Biscione, S. Hmayakyan, N. Parmegiani eds., *The North-eastern Frontier: Urartians and non-Urartians in the Sevan Basin. I. The Southern Shores*, in print, Rome 2001.



Fig. 5 – The necropolis of Shisheh. Remains of stone circles and funerary chambers built with large stone slabs.



Fig. 6 – The inscription of Argišti II, carved in the Eastern face of the rock forming the highest peak of the mountain.

The abundant surface pottery shows that the fort was frequented in the Early Iron Age and in the Urartian, Parthian and Sasanian periods. In the fort there are remains of illegal diggings and on the S slope, at the base of the hill, there are traces of excavated *kurgans*.

1. <sup>ɸ</sup>hal-di-ni-ni al-su-i-ši-ni EN-si-ni-ni
2. <sup>m</sup>ar-gi-iš-ti-še <sup>m</sup>ru-sa-ḫi-ni-še a-li a-[x?]-šá-di
3. [KURar-ḫu]-ú?-e iš-ti-ni-a-ši [ka-r]u-bi
4. [KÚR] KURú šú-[lu-ni] KUR[-ni KURbu-qu-e KUR-ni ku-tè]-a?-di
5. [pa-ri x x x x x x x x ] ka-ru-bi x x x bi-di-e
6. [ḫa?-a?]-ú-bi [x] x [ ]di? x x -ni
7. [ ]x[ ]x[ ] x x
8. [ ]ni-e? x [ ]-x-ri?
9. [<sup>ɸ</sup>hal-di-e? e-ú-[ri?-e? ] <sup>m</sup>ar-gi-iš-ti-še
10. [a?-li]?? [ ] x ni[ ]-bi 'É?.GAL?' URU a? x a? x



Fig. 7 – A close-up of the Shisheh inscription

11. [ši]-[di-iš-tú-bi te<sup>1</sup>-ru-bi ti-ni <sup>0</sup>ḫal-di-e-i i[r]-du-si
12. <sup>KUR</sup>bi-a-i-na-ú-e uš-ma-a-še <sup>KUR</sup>lu-lu-i-na-ú-i na-a-
13. -pa-ḫi-a-i-di <sup>m</sup>ar-gi-iš-ti-še <sup>m</sup>ru-sa-ḫi-ni-še a-li
14. a-lu-še i-ni DUB-te pi-tú-li e-a-i [ti-ni-ni] tú-li-e
15. ma-a-si ti-ni te-li-e tú-ri-ni-ni <sup>0</sup>ḫal-di-še <sup>0</sup>IM-še
16. <sup>0</sup>UTU-še ma-a-[ni DINGIR<sup>MES</sup>-še (?) <sup>0</sup>UTU-ni pi-i-ni]

“(1) Through the Haldian lordly greatness Argišti, (2) the son of Rusa, says: I set up (I settled) in the country of [Arh]u; (3) from this place (from here) I [sub]dued (4) the [enemy] country of Ušulu (and) the country [of Buque.] I [reach]ed (5) [ . . . . . ] I conquered . . . close to . . . (6) I [too]k(?) . . . . . (9) To Haldi, the lo[rd, . . . . .] Argišti (10) [say]s? . . . . . I (made something), a fortress(?) and settlements (11) I built, I gave the name *irdusi* of Haldi, (12) as strenght of Biainili and for the mortification of the enemy countries. (13) Argišti, the son of Rusa, says: (14) He who destroys this inscription and effaces [my name] (15) and puts his own name, may Haldi, the Storm God, (16) the Sun God [all the gods] annihilate him [under the Sun light]”.



## COMMENTARY

This inscription gives us a new text parallel to those of Razliq and Nashteban, also by Argišti II, which were re-published not long ago<sup>6</sup>. Dimensions, number of lines and text disposition make the Shisheh inscription closer to the one of Razliq rather than Nashteban, as is evident from the synopsis of the two parallel texts<sup>7</sup> (see below p. 37).

Line 1. EN-si-ni-ni corresponds to alusinini. This word is not found in the other two parallel texts. We have the following attestations:

<sup>h</sup>hal-di-ni-ni ba-ú-ši-ni EN-si-ni-ni i-e-še ... (Sarduri II's Annals UKN 155 C 30) "For Haldi's sovereign order (durch Haldis herrschaftlichen Befehl), I ...";

<sup>h</sup>hal-di-ni-ni uš-ma-ši-[ni] EN-si-ni-ni (UKN 266, 1: Rusa I's rock inscription at Tsovinar) "For Haldi's lordly might (Rusa, son of Sarduri, says:)";

<sup>h</sup>hal-di-ni-ni al-su-[i-ši-ni] EN-si-ni-ni (UKN 276 Ro 13/14 = HchI 124) "for Haldian lordly greatness"; König translates "Durch die Grösse des Haldi, des Herrn", but more precisely and with a greater grammatical exactness it should be "durch die haldische herrliche Grösse";

<sup>h</sup>hal-di-ni-ni uš-ma-[ši-ni] EN-si-ni-ni [ (UKN 276 Ro 17/18 = HchI 124) "for Haldian lordly might"; König translates "Durch die Macht des Haldi, des Herrn", but, as in the above case, it should be corrected in a more Wagnerian way to "durch die haldische herrliche Macht"; likewise in the duplicate HchI 125 Ro 11 and 14.

Lines 2-4. All the integrations are based on the parallels with the Razliq text.

The last word of line 2 coincides probably with a-šá-di of Razliq line 2; in the place of the sign x maybe there was an empty space, caused by imperfections of the rock. Otherwise one cannot suggest another possible integration. This verbal form is discussed in SMEA 41, 1999, 21. The restitution [<sup>KUR</sup>ar-ḫu]-ú?-e is based on Razliq line 2 <sup>KUR</sup>ar-ḫu<sup>1</sup>-ú-e and confirms the impossibility of restoring the allative suffix [-di] in Razliq. Left of KUR, in line 4, there is more than half a line to be filled, and it is possible to do this on the basis of the Razliq text. If we take out the *scriptiones plenae*

<sup>6</sup> B. André-Salvini and M. Salvini, The Urartian Rock Inscriptions of Razliq and Nashteban (East Azerbaijan, Iran), SMEA 41, 1999, 17-32.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30 ff.

of <sup>KUR</sup>bu-qu-ú-e and ku-ú-tè-a-di (as in Razliq line 4) we have a line with 18 signs, which is in accordance with the number of signs in the preserved lines (18 to 20). The only difficulty is that, before the clear -di at the end of the line, three vertical wedges can be seen, and we cannot determine an A.

Line 5. It is possible to restore pa-ri because of the preceding ku-tè-a-di, but it is not possible to restore automatically here too <sup>UD</sup>mu-na-i-di “to the river”, as at Razliq and Nashteban. The different location of the new inscription, which lies in the mountains north of the Sabalan range and not near the river Agi chay, suggests caution. Notwithstanding the word ka-ru-bi, that corresponds to Razliq line 5, the parallelism between the two texts ends and, because of the poor preservation of Shisheh inscription, it seems useless to attempt restorations beyond this line. At the end of the line we have bi-di-e, that occurs first with this spelling in the Annals of Argišti I (UKN 128 A2 11 = HchI 81 Rs). We repeat the passage: Argištiše alie haubi <sup>URU</sup>Qihuni <sup>KUR</sup>Silunini šuinia bidie “Argišti says: I conquered the city of Qehuni of the country of Siluni, towards/close the lake”. The second is by the same Argišti II in HchI 125 Vs. 36: a-li-li <sup>KUR</sup>ba-ba-ni-li šu-ni-a bi-di-i-e “those mountains on the side of the lake”. Therefore, apparently also in the Shisheh inscription we have a similar spatial-topographical reference, but for a geographical entity hidden by the preceding lacuna.

Lines 6-8. The following lines contained toponyms, probably partly different from those of Razliq and Nashteban. The very poor traces of scattered signs have no counterparts.

Line 9. The dedication “to Haldi the lord” is consistent with the name Argišti gave the new foundation (line 11). But which verb is connected with this dative form? We don’t know how long is the lacuna in line 9. We could reconstitute a sentence of the type “to Haldi the lord Argišti dedicated/fashioned this inscription” or the like. The ergative Argišti=še poses the problem of a shift of subject. To this point all the verbs must be first person, given ali “says” of line 2, both those preserved (ašadi, karubi) and the hypothetical ones in the lacuna. As also the following verbal forms, from line 10 onwards, are first person (]-bi, šidištubi, terubi), we should have again an ali “says”. This form can be perhaps integrated at the beginning of line 10. But there is a contradiction which is difficult to solve due to the bad condition of the text.

Line 10. The only readable part is the possible É.GAL, followed by the sure URU, that could, however, be both a determinative and an ideogram. Also in the text of Razliq line 8 É.GAL appears in a context to be emended<sup>8</sup>, so that it could be governed by šidištubi “I built”: “and I built this fortress”.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20 and 25.

After URU there is a string of three-four signs that cannot be integrated. The only sure fact is that the following sign begins with a vertical wedge: it looks like an A but it could also be M[EŠ].

Line 11. Both É.GAL and URU seem to be objects of šidištubi "I built". However URU is a further element with respect to Razliq. Could it mean that he built a fortress (É.GAL) and some villages (if URU is followed by MEŠ)? In this case the É.GAL could be the fort of Shirbit, located on the mountains opposite the peak with the inscription<sup>9</sup>. The problem is the same as that of the Razliq text, where Argišti in the same way announces the building of a fortress<sup>10</sup>, as noted above. Argišti in the Shisheh inscription says, to this structure teru=bi tini ʰhaldi=ei irdusi "I gave the name irdusi of Haldi" (fig. 8). Here we have a new word, an abstract noun in -usi, like ašihusi",



Fig. 8 – A detail of the lower part of the Shisheh inscription. In line 11 can be read the signs ir-du-si.

<sup>9</sup> See above p. 31. The word É.GAL is generally thought to indicate a fortress with administrative functions, therefore large. The inscription of Tashtepé defines É.GAL (Salvini, in Salvini, Pecorella eds., *Tra lo Zagros e l'Urmia. Ricerche Storiche ed Archeologiche nell'Azerbaigian Iraniano*, Roma 1984, p. 67) the Urartian fortification on the top the Tashtepé hill that, because of the limited space, had to be small. Therefore also the fort of Shirbit could be identified as an É.GAL.

<sup>10</sup> In the recent inspection, carried out on 29th May 2000, no trace of Urartian structures was found near the inscription (Biscione-Salvini, SMEA 42, 2000, 318).

<sup>11</sup> On this word see M. Salvini, SMEA 9, 1969, 14 f.; *id.*, SMEA 40, 1998, 123-129; archaeological and philological analysis in U. Seidl, *Fs. N. Özgüç*, Ankara 1993, 559 f.

urišhusi<sup>12</sup>, LUGAL-nusi<sup>13</sup>, badusi<sup>14</sup>, dašusi<sup>15</sup>. In all the quoted instances the abstract term is formed with the -usi suffix added to a basic noun. Therefore we have the following couples of term: ašihi “?”, ašiḫusi; urišhi “property”, urišḫusi “treasure” (the whole of properties); ereli “king”, \*erelinusi “kingship”; badi “limit, frontier”, badusi “perfection”; daše “light?”, dašusi “candelabrum (illuminations)”. This new noun, irdusi, is a derivative of the noun <sup>L</sup>irdi<sup>(MES)</sup> that was translated as “governor(?)”<sup>16</sup> or “commander”<sup>17</sup>, but instead should most probably mean “garrison”<sup>18</sup>. Therefore here we propose, for the new abstract term irdusi, the meaning of “defence, protection”, like Schutz, Schirm in German. So the new fortification was called “defence, protection of Haldi”. Now it is also possible to find the same term in the parallel inscription of Razliq, where, also because of a collation (fig. 9), we should not read “Ar-giš-te-i-ir-du URU”<sup>19</sup>, but “Ar-giš-te-i (gen. Argište=i) ir-du-si”, meaning “Protection of Argište”.



Fig. 9 – Collation of the right half of line 9 of the rock inscription of Argišti II at Razliq with the signs ir-du-si!

Line 12. The scribe, beginning a new line with the second half of a word (enjambement), took an unprecedented liberty. This is a unicum in Urartian epigraphy, where no word is broken at the end of a line.

Line 16. At the centre of the lacuna there is place for three signs: the hypothesis is that the scribe, mistakenly, postponed DINGIR<sup>MES</sup>-še, which completes correctly the exact expression of the cursing formula. This is akin

<sup>12</sup> It means “treasure”, see M. Salvini, SMEA 22, 1980, 187 f.

<sup>13</sup> It was thought to be an adjective and translated as “royal” (carskij: UKN p. 380). See also König, HchI p. 193, s.v. MAN-nu-si: “nur in URU – Königsstadt”. In fact the expression URU LUGÁL-nusi (or MAN-nusi), found in the annalistic texts, is a calque/loan translation of the Assyrian āl šarrūti “royal residence”, literally “city of kingship”. Therefore also this term, phonetically \*erelinusi, is an abstract noun.

<sup>14</sup> It means “perfection”, see M. Salvini, «Studia Mediterranea» 1 (Fs. P. Meriggi), 1979, 584 ff.

<sup>15</sup> It means “illuminations, lights”/“candelabrum”, see M. Salvini, «Orientalia» 60, 1991, 344-346.

<sup>16</sup> Melikišvili, UKN p. 388, *id.*, USpr. p. 83 “Statthalter”.

<sup>17</sup> König, HchI p. 188: “Vogt, Befehlshaber”.

<sup>18</sup> B. André-Salvini, M. Salvini, SMEA 41, 1999, 26: “garrison troops”.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

to what happens at Razliq line 8, where the expression *gunuša haubi* is out of place<sup>20</sup>. This suggests that the two inscriptions were carved by the same scribe-stonecutter. Also in Razliq line 1 one notes the dyslexic spelling *mar-ti-giš-še* instead of *mar-giš-ti-še*.

As already done in SMEA 41, 1999, 30f., the parts of Shisheh which are duplicate of both Razliq and Nashteban are shown through **bold** script. The correspondences with Razliq alone are in *italic*. The restant words and signs are attested only in Shisheh.

1. **ḫal-di-ni-ni al-su-i-ši-ni** EN-si-ni-ni
2. **mar-gi-iš-ti-še** *mar-sa-ḫi-ni-še a-li* a-[x?]-šá-di
3. [*KUR*ar-ḫu]-ú?-e iš-ti-ni-a-ši [**ka-r**]u-bi
4. [*KÚR*] *KUR*ú-šú-[lu-ni] *KUR*[-ni *KUR*bu-qu-e *KUR*-ni ku-tè]-a?-di
5. [**pa-ri** x x x x x x x ] **ka-ru-bi** x x x bi-di-e
6. [*ḫa?-a?*]-ú-bi [x] x [ ]di? x x -ni
7. [ ]x[ ]x[ ] x x
8. [ ]ni-e? x [ ]-x-ri?
9. [*ḫ*]al-di-e? e-ú-[ri?-e? ] **mar-gi-iš-ti-še**
10. [a?-l]i?? [ ] x ni[ ]-bi 'É?.GAL?' URU a? x a? x
11. [*ši*]-*di-iš-tú-bi te<sup>1</sup>-ru-bi ti-ni* **ḫal-di-e-i i[r]-du-si**
12. *KUR*bi-a-i-na-ú-e uš-ma-a-še *KUR*lu-lu-i-na-ú-i na-a-
13. -*pa-ḫi-a-i-di* **mar-gi-iš-ti-še** *mar-sa-ḫi-ni-še a-li*
14. **a-lu-še i-ni DUB-te pi-tú-li e-a-i** [*ti-ni-ni*] **tú-li-e**
15. ma-a-si ti-ni te-li-e **tú-ri-ni-ni ḫal-di-še** **IM-še**
16. **UTU-še ma-a-[ni DINGIR<sup>MES</sup>-še (?) UTU-ni pi-i-ni]**

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.