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*Adbi'ilu : an arab at Babylon (BM 78912)*

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An unpublished tablet from the archive of Šumā descendant of Nappāḫu contains a possible Arabic personal name. The treatment of non-Babylonian personal names in this tablet and CTMMA 3 6 from the same archive differs from the treatment of Babylonian names suggesting that the scribe distinguished between the kin-group-affiliated Babylonians and the non-Babylonians who lacked such affiliations.

Keywords: Neo-Babylonian – cuneiform – Arabic – onomastics

Resumen: Abdi’ilu: un árabe en Babilonia (BM 78912)
Una tablilla inédita del archivo de Šumā descendiente de Nappāḫu contiene un nombre personal posiblemente árabe. El tratamiento de los nombres propios no-babilonios en esta tablilla y CTMMA 3 6 del mismo archivo difiere del tratamiento de los nombres babilonios, sugiriendo que el escriba distinguía entre los grupos babilonios afiliados por parentesco y los no-babilonios, que carecían de tales afiliaciones.

Palabras clave: Neo-babilonio – cuneiforme – árabe – onomástica

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The archive of Šumā of the Nappāḫu kin group consists of twelve tablets, most of which are debt notes recording aspects of Šumā’s business dealings between 667 and 652. Most of Šumā’s documented activities took place at or near Babylon, though one tablet was dated at nagītu near Borsippa. Šumā was involved in harrānu ventures and some of his associates apparently were foreigners if the use of non-Babylonian names is accepted as an indicator of ethnicity. On one tablet, CTMMA 3 6, three of the witnesses are identified with Northwest Semitic patronyms. The scribe emphasized their non-Babylonian identity by expressing their filiations with the writings DUMU-šú šá or A-šú šá in clear contrast with the witnesses from the well-known Babylonian kin groups Bā’iru, Šangû-Bābili, and Gaḥal, whose genealogies were written simply with the signs DUMU or A.

Another non-Babylonian personal name present in the archive poses some difficulty. San Nicolò and Ungnad read the partially damaged name as ₃AD-GI(?)-DINGIR. This could be the Northwest Semitic name Adgi-ilu, Adgi being a Šušian name for Adad. However, it is likely that the same man appears in line 8 of the unpublished tablet BM 78912, also from the Šumā archive. On this tablet, however, the name is written ₃ad-bī-i-lu. The best way to interpret this name is to normalize it as Adbi’ilu and understand it as being derived from Arabic ²adaba and ²il. An Arab chief named Idibi’ilu in the inscriptions of Tiglith-pileser III possessed the same name as the man in VAS 4 6 and BM 78912, raising the possibility that Šumā’s witness was also an Arab. In neither BM 78912 nor VAS 4 6 is Adbi’ilu provided with a patronymic or family name in spite of the fact that the other witnesses in the list had family names, an omission which reinforces Adbi’ilu’s non-Babylonian identity in the eyes of the scribe.

1 A total of eleven tablets have been assigned to the archive of Šumā (Jursa 2005: 72 and Van Driel 1989: 113). To these eleven tablets should be added BM 49171 = 1882–3–23, 162 which is published in Strassmaier 1893: No. 7 and San Nicolò 1951: No. 57. The scribe who wrote BM 49171, Bēl-useppi, also wrote BM 78912 and VAS 4 6 for Šumā. Furthermore, the first witness in BM 49171, Bēl-aḫḫē-erība descendant of the Potter, was also the first witness in BM 78912.


3 San Nicolò and Ungnad 1935: No. 163 n. 1.


5 Zadok 1977: 208.

CITED REFERENCES


Figure 1.
BM 78912 3.5 x 5.0 cm, obv.

Figure 2.
Bottom edge
obv. 1. 1/3 2 gin kù.babbar šá
ina ugu
šá iti.kin iti a-na ugu
ma-ni-e 10 gin kù.babbar ina muḥ-ḥi-šú
5. i-rab-bi
lú mu-kin-nu
dumu
edge
rev. 10. dumu
ù lú. šid
tin.tir
mu.14.kam
lugal

(1-5) 22 shekels of silver belonging to Šumā are loaned to Kāṣiru on the 20th day of Ulūlu (VI). Monthly, 10 shekels will accrue per mina upon it.