Two More Dūr-Abiešuḫ Tablets: A Beer Account and a Letter From the Online Antiquities Market

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Abstract

This article presents two late Old Babylonian tablets from the online antiquities market, one of which is most likely from the fortress Dūr-Abiešuḫ. The other one at least mentions the place. Tablets from Dūr-Abiešuḫ have so far only come from the antiquities market, and this publication tries to contribute to the effort of reassembling the fortresses’ archives with special attention to the difficulties of cuneiform sold online. The first tablet, a nikāṣsu-account, belongs to said archives based on prosopographical grounds. The second tablet, a letter, connects the cities Dūr-Abiešuḫ and Pi-nārāṭi.

§1. Mosaic stones for archival reconstruction and geographical data

§1.1. This article aims to contribute to the archival reconstruction and localization of the late Old Babylonian fortress-town of Dūr-Abiešuḫ. Most tablets from the fortress were housed in the Cornell University collection until 2021 but are now back in Iraq. While the majority have been published in CUSAS 8 and 29, others continue to surface on the antiquities market. Since the rise of the internet in the early ‘90s, this market has changed and multiplied in complexity. One of the changes is the easy accessibility of tablets from any part of the world. Tablets may surface on the market for only minimal amounts of time before disappearing into private collections (text two was available online for less than a month), narrowing the window of opportunity for research on them. It is therefore important to gather all the information made available in this time frame, even on a preliminary basis. Unless, with luck, the texts one day end up in professional hands, they will only ever be available to us electronically. Hence, this article also aims to promote the work with digital resources. Such preliminary treatments of unprovenanced texts in circulation constitute a scientific and ethical conundrum and the potential danger of increasing the market value of the objects in question by publica-

1 Acknowledgments: This article was developed from sections of my master’s thesis at Göttingen University. I thank Gösta Gabriel and Brit Kärger, who supervised my thesis, as well as Marine Béranger, Zsombor Földi, Karel van Lerbergh, and Jake Wilson for their thoughts and helpful comments on paleography, phraseology, and provenance. In addition, credit is due to all the patient and friendly people in Denmark, England, Germany, France, and the Netherlands who gave their time to answer my questions.

2 Abbreviations follow RIA, dates follow the short chronology.

3 There are two main publication volumes (van Lerberghe and Voet 2009 (=CUSAS 8); Abraham et al. 2017 (=CUSAS 29)) and multiple selected editions (Arnaud 2007, 41-44; Földi 2014, esp. 32-35; 2017; Béranger 2019). Some letters from Dūr-Abiešuḫ are in the Schøyen Collection and are being prepared to be published (George 2018, 179), see also Charpin 2020, 151-156.

4 Market-focused studies (e.g. Lindington 2002; Brodie 2011a; 2017a; Hardy 2015) suggest that the available figures concerning trade with Near Eastern antiquities are “underestimates of the numbers of problematic objects on the market” (Marrone 2018, 284). Selling practices shift more and more into client-client transactions, using cryptocurrencies, social media, and the Darknet (Hardy 2015, 83-85; Paul 2018, fig. 8-13). Hence, our understanding of market volume and mechanics is limited.
tion has been raised repeatedly. The two tablets in question have, however, both been bought at least two or three times since the early 2000s without any prior professional assessment (like many, if not most, objects in online galleries).

§1.2. The two tablets presented here thus pose all the additional challenges of tablets with incomplete provenance and growing states of disintegration. But they are two of possibly many more mosaic stones still floating on the market that, in sum, will help to reconstruct the Dūr-Abišuḫu archives. In this specific case, the first tablet offers some prosopographic links to the texts of CUSAS 8 and 29 and, perhaps, other unprovenanced tablets published in YOS 13; the second tablet links the towns Dūr-Abišuḫu and ḫi-nārātī and thus provides geographical information.

Table 1: Basic information on the tablets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text no.</th>
<th>Tablet no.</th>
<th>Text Type</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Language/Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Text 1 (P532986)</td>
<td>Artemission</td>
<td>account (nikkassu)</td>
<td>4.8 × 4.8 × 1 cm</td>
<td>Akkadian / Late Old Babylonian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text 2 (P532987)</td>
<td>Gerhard Hirsch Nachfolger 235 lot 1049</td>
<td>letter</td>
<td>8.5 × 4.8 × 2.7 cm</td>
<td>Akkadian / Late Old Babylonian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

§2. Provenance

§2.1. Some observations on the provenance of the tablets are necessary. As Z. Földi (Földi 2017, 8-9) has aptly demonstrated, it is not impossible to find out more about the modern ownership history of a tablet from the market. Yet, the results are often less satisfactory or promising than those discussed by Földi and always depend on the information obtained from non-scientific sources to be genuine, which sometimes is difficult to ascertain.

§2.2. Text 1 was on offer from the Artemission online gallery based in London as item no. 29.35583 and has been sold (listed price $1600) in January or early February 2020. Before that, it was sold by Timeline Auctions Ltd., on 28 May 2019. According to the vendor, it was part of the collection of the late Prof. Geoffrey Wilson of Warwick Law School, from Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, who died in 2015. The earliest sale of a tablet with this provenance that I could find took place on 26 February 2019, by the same seller. That tablet is now Kress 291. The gallery www.antiquities.co.uk sold another tablet before or in early September 2019.

§2.3. The CDLI project lists at least two additional tablets from the Wilson collection (CDLI no. P513751 and P513754). The first one is an Old Babylonian administrative text concerning two...
silver axes (za-ha-da ku3-babbar). The second one was also on offer on www.artemission.com and came with an analysis of W. G. Lambert that was attached erroneously to this tablet: “This is an exercise from an Old Babylonian scribal school. It has three lines on each side, the same text: ‘Lu-shaga, Lushagamu, Lu-tila’. These are three Sumerian personal names, copied out for writing exercise. The teacher or senior student wrote the exercise on the one side, then the student copied it out on the other side, needing to remember the signs since he could not see them as he wrote. The names mean: ‘Pleasant man’, ‘My pleasant man’ and ‘Living man’. There is a little damage, but generally, the tablet is in good condition.”

Lambert’s description does not fit the tablet and instead belongs to a school exercise sold by the same gallery, which had the same description attached. Either some descriptions got mixed up, or this one was deliberately copied and added to the text. So, a total of five tablets with the alleged provenance of the ‘Wilson collection’ is known to me.

§2.4. When trying to find out more about the alleged Wilson collection and its dispersion, the Artemission could not offer any further information. The other galleries offering tablets from the collection were not forthcoming when asked, pointing to privacy protection regarding buyers and sellers. While inquiries at universities, museums, and auction houses remained either unanswered or produced no results, Prof. Wilson’s 2015 obituary in The Guardian noted: “Geoffrey was an inveterate impulse buyer with a good eye for bargains. The family home in Leamington was an untidy museum of mementoes from Cambridge, paintings, prints, vinyl records, other bric a brac and, of course, piles of books.” The newspaper established contact with Prof. Wilson’s son Jake Wilson, who studied Assyriology at Cambridge from 1997 to 2000 and 2001 to 2003. He confirmed that it was between 2000 and 2003 that his father purchased a small number of cuneiform tablets from various vendors; the paperwork of the purchases is not available any longer, however. Thus, there is no final proof that the tablet here is identical with a tablet from the collection. The provenance of cuneiform objects in online galleries, however, tends to be substantially less specific than in our case and only a few tablets with said provenance are known, which makes it less likely to be feigned. If the tablet was part of the collection, the earliest traceable purchase date is 2000.

§2.5. Tablet no. 2 was on offer for a brief period in March 2019 on www.senatus-consulto.dk, an antiquities dealer based in Copenhagen, via the online antiquities mall Trocadero. The listed price was 595 €. Before that, the Munich antiquities auction house Gerhard Hirsch Nachfolger sold the tablet in 2004, alongside various other tablets. A picture in the auction catalog shows that it is the same tablet as the one sold online in 2019. It was offered as lot 1049 in auction no. 235 on 21–22 September, 2004 alongside several other cuneiform documents under the category stamp-seals (Gerhard Hirsch Nachfolger 2004, 39.Pl. XXXIX):


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11 Lambert’s description can be found in CDLI (P513754).
12 The description was visible at https://www.artemission.com/viewitemdetails.aspx?itemnumber=28.34852&page=1 until September 2021, but it is now offline.
13 Email of 12 September 2019.
15 Emails of 7, 8, and 10 September 2020.
16 Website now offline.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lot Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*1047</td>
<td>Lot von 3 konischen Gründungsnägeln aus Ton. Inschrift in Keilschrift. Mesopotamien, 3./2. Jt. L. ca. 11,1, 10,9 und 10,5 cm. Leicht bestoßen.</td>
<td>1750.-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*1048</td>
<td>Keilschrifttafel aus braunem Ton. Beidseitig Text über Getreide. Mesopotamien, frühes 2. Jt. v. Chr. 8,2 × 4,8 × 2,6 cm. Ein Teil fehlt. Mit Expertise.</td>
<td>300.-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| *1049      | Keilschrifttafel aus grauem Ton. Beidseitige Beschriftung. Mesopotamien, 2. Jt. v. Chr. 8,5 × 4,8 × 2,7 cm. Geklebt, Teile fehlen.  
19 | 225.- |
| *1050      | Keilschrifttafel aus graubraunem Ton. Beidseitige Beschriftung über Privatgeschäfte. Mesopotamien, 1900–1700 v. Chr. 7,4 × 4,9 × 2,1 cm. Bestoßen und geklebt. Mit Expertise und Übersetzung. | 350.- |
| *1051      | Keilschrifttafel aus rötlichem Ton. Verwaltungsdokument. Larsa, um 1767 v. Chr. 4,9 × 3,9 × 2,3 cm. Min. bestoßen. Mit Expertise und Übersetzung. | 300.- |
| *1052      | Keilschrifttafel aus grauem Ton. Beidseitig Text. Ungewöhnliche Schriftform. Vorderasien, 2000–1600. 8,6 × 4,6 × 2,3 cm. Min. bestoßen. Mit Expertise. | 400.- |
| *1053      | Keilschrifttafel aus dunklem Ton. Verwaltungsdocument aus Umma über die Bereitstellung von Gütern. Um 2033 v. Chr. 6,5 × 4,4 × 2,2 mm. (sic!) Zerbrochen. Mit Expertise und Übersetzung. | 150.- |
| *1055      | Lot von 4 Keilschrifttafeln aus Ton. Rechtsdokumente von Dur-Sharrukki (sic!), datiert durch assyrische Offiziere. 750–612. L. 7,0–4,5 cm. Mit Expertise. Leicht bestoßen. | 600.- |

**§2.6.** According to the table above, professionals have identified and analyzed or translated lots 1045–46, 48, 50–53, and 1056. The list says that all lots were sold, and since the previous catalogs do not contain any of those items, one can assume this was their first sale by that auction house. Subsequent inquiries produced no further results. Thus, all that can be said with certainty is that the item was sold in Munich in September 2004 and again by the Danish vendor in spring 2019. To whom it was sold then is unfortunately unknown, too.  

19 Copenhagen-based scholars Nicole Brisch, Mogens Trolle Larsen, and Aage Westenholz kindly informed me that neither the gallery nor the tablet are known to them (Emails of 14 April 2020; 17 April 2020; 21 July 2020, and 7 August 2020).

18 The description of lot 1049 translates: “Cuneiform tablet made of grey clay. Bilateral inscription. Mesopotamia, 2nd millennium BCE. 8,5 × 4,8 × 2,7 cm. Glued, parts missing.”
§3. Text 1 (P532986): A late Old Babylonian canceled nikkassu-account

§3.1. Material issues

§3.1.1. The tablet seller’s description reads: “Pillow shaped clay tablet with incised cuneiform text to both sides, the reverse with a large incised ‘X’.” The gallery gave the dimensions as 4.8 × 4.8 cm. Photos suggest a thickness of just over one cm. It contains ten lines of Old Babylonian cuneiform and two large cross-shaped incisions on the front and back. While the tablet is mostly intact, salt incrustation has already covered some spots on the front and back as well as large parts of the right edge. The “X” is a secondary incision to annul the document, a practice found regularly in Old Babylonian accounting (see, e.g., YOS 13, 354; 530), although not always cross-shaped (see, e.g., CUSAS 8, 55).
§3.2. Transliteration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obverse</th>
<th>Reverse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. &quot;nigg-ka-ap&quot; u4 2(u)1 1(diš)-kam</td>
<td>8. &quot;iz-zi-zu&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. &quot;a-di (hi) du₅, ku₃ u₄ 3(u)&quot;-kam&quot;</td>
<td>9. &quot;hi du₅, ku₃ u₄ 3(u)&quot;-kam&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. ep-su šu-lah-ru-šu₂₂- ma</td>
<td>10. mu ša-am-su₂₂-di² ta-na&quot; [lugal-e] d&quot;nanna en 'gal-la'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. 1(aš) 2(barig) 2(bar₂) gur kaš</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. ša i-na e₂ i-lu-ni</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. ḫu₃-kurun₂-na</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

§3.3. Translation

1–8 During the settling of the accounts of day 21 until day 30 of the month Tešrit, the settlements were deducted, and one kurru, two pānu, and two sùtu are for retail, except for [...] which remain in the house of Iluni, the innkeeper. 9–10 Month Tešrit, day 30, year Samsu-Ditana, the king, for Nanna, his great Lord.

§3.4. Textual notes

§3.4.1. l. 1: The first line is the most difficult because of the physical state and the ambiguity of the last visible signs. The line starts with nigg₂-ka₉, and the best reading seems to be nigg₂-ka₉ ak u₄ 2(u)¹ 1(diš)-kam, with the signs AK and UD written almost into each other. The formulation nigg₂-ka₉ ak here equals most likely the Akkadian temporal/modal infinitive ina epšu nikkassu (Chambon and Langlois 2017, 22-24), with epšu in line 3 being the subject of the main predicate šutah˘rus.¯uma. nigg₂-ka₉ ak can also equal nikkassu epšu (cf. the comment of D. Charpin in ARCHIBAB: T22380), but that would lead to a pleonasm with ep-šu in line 3. Alternatively, one could read not AK and UD but rather one sign, ša, for ša u₄ 2(u)¹ 1(diš)-kam; ipšu/ipšu in line 3 then being the predicate of a relative clause, analogous to a very similar formulation in YOS 13, 305, 1-4.²⁰

²⁰ If the middle of the line should indeed be one rather than two signs AK and UD (e.g. ša), there are also a few, however less viable, options in my opinion (e.g., for a personal name or a commodity). It could read ša iz-kur-[x], but sentence-names of this type usually have a divine subject, and the horizontals at the end do not look like AN; or i-na e₂-kur-[n₃⁻] [bi]. This name is attested several times in the archives from Dûr-Abiešuh, to which this text most likely belongs (see below). That would mean that the first of the three signs is actually a ligature i-na, as can be found in line six. If it is a designation of a commodity, the signs may read kaš ḡeš-hur, but then the shape of BI must be explained. Maybe the heads of the horizontals were imprinted into one another? Alternatively, they may read ša ḡeš-hur. The Akkadian equivalent of ḡeš-hur, usurtu, “drawing, plan, design,” is found as a yet unclear beer designation in other Old Babylonian texts (vanden Berghe 1986, no. 67, 1; Richardson 2010, no. 46a, 22; 46c, 23'). In Dûr-Abiešuh, where the tablet is most likely from (see below), the term is used to designate sums of sheep and is translated as “(according to) plan” (CUSAS 29, 46, 4; 48, 9; 49, 4; 52, 4; 57, 3). Once it apparently designates a commodity measured in sila₃ and gur (CUSAS 29, 158, 2), possibly beer, unless ša u₂-su₂₂-ur-tum is to be understood as “of the plan,” too. Line four shows that it is a beer account, but only kaš is found there. If the first sign is ŠA, one may read ša usurti.
§3.4.2. 1.4: Two hook shaped impressions that are not fully fledged Winkelhaken and which are also oddly placed are visible at the end of the sign ban₂, which usually represent the numbers 4 and 5 respectively, but the sign is missing the third horizontal, so I would rather interpret them as stray impressions.

§3.4.3. 1.5: The secondary incision runs right through the beginning of the line and makes reading difficult. The tablet also shows some stray imprints and the signs may have been written over an erasure. The word *sahirtum* is relatively rare in Old Babylonian, but the reading *sa-hi-* seems warranted by texts such as CUSAS 29, 199, 5.8 (see especially line 5 for a similar form of SA), AbB 9, 111, 3.8' and YBC 11056, 2. For a slightly different meaning cf. the note by D. Charpin in ARCHIBAB: T23042. After a nikkassu is calculated or deducted (*šutah* *rus-* *ūma*) one might expect ribbatu or šittu, the latter often being written si-i₅-tum in Old Babylonian, e.g. in YOS 8, 18, 2 or ARCHIBAB: T19564 (=IB 209 4.20-21), but unless we assume a dittography si-{i}₅-i₅-tum this seems to be a stretch.

Figure 5: Artemission 29.35583 obverse, beginning of line 5

§3.5. Commentary

§3.5.1. Date and provenience

§3.5.1.1. The date formula points to year 10 of Samsu-Ditana (1552 BC). Lines six to seven mention a certain “Iluni the innkeeper” (*lu₂-kurun₂-na*). Whether the individual is female or male is unclear; in Old Babylonian times, female innkeepers are attested (Stol 2016, 344-350, 363-367). Iluni is a common Old Babylonian name (Stamm 1939, 242-244), but the “house of Iluni (the innkeeper)” is found twice in the archives from Dur-Abiešuḫ (CUSAS 8, 56, 4; 57, 3). Both tablets are very similar in size, shape, and layout. The short ḍinanna engal-la for Sd 10 is the date formula in CUSAS 8, 56, 10; 60, 54, and 62, 57, too. Several documents have secondary incisions as well (e.g. CUSAS 8, 13). The tablet also fits the late Old Babylonian paleography of Dur-Abiešuḫ, the similarities in tablet layout, content, and formulation are the best clues for assigning the new tablet to the same or a related archival context. CUSAS 8, 56 is a similar accounting document concerning druff; no. 57 is a receipt for bran received by a certain Ilutu, the Kassite, from Iluni.

CUSAS 8, 56 / CUNES 51, 1, 57
Obverse
1. *iš-tu₂ *u₄ *šu-numun-a u₄ *2(diš)*-kam
2. *u₄ *1(u) *2(diš)-kam
3. 1(diš) (barig) 4(diš) (ban₂₂) duhhi₅-a
4. *i-na e₂ *i-lu-ni
5. *a-na gu₅ hi₅-a
6. *ša-ab-tu

CUSAS 8, 57 / CUNES 51, 1, 58
Obverse
1. *iš-tu₂ *u₄ *šu-numun-a u₄ *2(diš)-kam
2. *u₄ *1(u) *2(diš)-kam
3. *u₄ *u₄ *1(u) *2(diš)-kam
4. *mu am-mi-s.a-du-qa lugal-e

Reverse
1. *e-zu-ub 1(diš) (gur) še gur
2. *ša iz-zi-zu
3. *u₄ *u₄ *1(u) *2(diš)-kam
4. *u₄ *u₄ *2(diš)-kam
2. 3(diš) (ban₂) duh-duru₅
3. i-na₂ i-lu-ni₁₄kurun₂-na
4. m₁-lu-tu ka-aš-ši₅u-₂
e-{ba})-bat
7. mu am-mi-sa-du-q₂₅ lunar-e
    uru₅da-duₙ-mah gal-gal-la

§3.5.1.2. The date of no. 57 is As. 14; the date am-
mi-sa-du-q₂₅ lugal-e in no. 56 likely, but not nec-
essarily, points to the ascension year of Ammi-
ṣadaṣuqa (Pientka 1998, 92). If so, there is a sub-
thstantial gap of 30 years between our text and
CUSAS 8, 56, but there are economic activities of
individuals lasting for more than 40 years, e.g.
in Old Babylonian Dilbat (Klengel 1976, 67-68;
Koshurnikov and Yoffee 1986, 118). This gap is,
course, smaller if the date of CUSAS 8, 56 points
to a later year of Ammi-ṣadaṣuqa. Considering the
tablet was most likely sold and bought around
2000, like most Dūr-Abieṣuḫ tablets (Földi 2017,
10-27), there is good reason to assume it is from
there too.

§3.5.2. Some further thoughts on prosopogra-
phy
§3.5.2.1. There is an innkeeper called Iluni in three
unprovenanced texts from the Yale collection, too:
YOS 13, 187, YOS 13, 534, and YOS 13, 535 (Finkel-
stein 1972). They belong to a distinct group of
tables Finkelstein describes as follows:
“(1) there is little difference in curva-
ture as between obverse and reverse;
(2) the maximum thickness of the
tablet is located at the center and di-
minishes markedly toward the edges
in every direction; (3) the edges are
tapered down and rounded in con-
trast to the standard type where the
edges are sharp and flat and hardly
thinner at all than the center, while
the corners are rounded rather than
sharp; (4) the dimensions of the
tablet are usually square or nearly so,
while the standard shape is either ex-
actly square or distinctly rectangu-
lar.” (Finkelstein 1972, 2-3).

§3.5.2.2. The description neatly fits this new tablet
as well. The tablets of YOS 13 are from the antiq-
uities market; most came allegedly from Northern
Babylonian sites such as Babylon proper, Dilbat,
Kish, or Sippar (Finkelstein 1972, 1-3).

§3.5.2.3. YOS 13, 187; 534; 535, and also 13, 424
are all sealed by a certain Sin-ṣuṭu. The dates are
As. 15 (13, 424), As. 17+b (13, 534), and Sd 2 (13,
187 and 535), which all lie in between CUSAS 8, 57
(As. 14) and the new tablet in question. The seal of
Sin-ṣuṭu is otherwise unknown, but Pientka (1998,
445) sees the rare personal name Yārum (ia-a-
rum) which appears in YOS 13, 534 as a vague clue
to Dilbat, since VS 7 (Altbabylonische Urkunden
aus Dilbat) has a number of texts which contain the
same name (VS 7, 111, 4; 183, i, 7; ii, 12; iii, 11;
v, 3; vi, 16; 186, i, 8; ii, 7; iii, 6; iv, 6; 187, i, 10.26;
ii, 26; iii, 25; iv, 11.29; v, 14; vii, 12.32; viii, 14; ix,
38; x, 11.20; xi, 1.24) that allegedly come from Tell-
Dēlam (Ungnad 1909, III-IV).

§3.5.2.4. The name ia-a-rum does also appear in
line two of the receipt CUSAS 29, 193, but the text
dates to Ad 21, more than 40 years earlier than YOS
13, 534, whereas the text VS 7, 111 dates to As. 16,
which is only one year earlier than YOS 13, 534.
However, an Iluni the innkeeper is not found in the
VS 7 text, but it is found in CUSAS 8, 56 and
57. The other names from YOS 13, 187; 424; 534;
and 535 are Arad-eššēši (ir₃-eš₃-eš₃; YOS 13, 187;
424; 534), Belānu (YOS 13, 424), Lušallim-bēlī
(lu-ša-lim-be-li) (YOS 13, 187), and Šin-mušallim
(sin mu-ša-lim; YOS 13, 534). With the excep-
tion of Lušallim-bēlī the names do in fact all appear in
VS 7 (Arad-eššēši in VS 7, 133, 8 (As. 17+a); 134,
35 (As. 17+a), 135, 28 (As. 17+a), and 183, i, 23;
ii, 7; iii, 28; v, 20; 21 (no date), the same docu-
ment as ia-a-rum; Belānu(m) in VS 7, 32, 17 (Si
8); 48, 11 (Ad 2); 49, 15 (Ad 5); 57, 10 (Ad 30);
60, 13 (Ad 34); 82, 11 (As. 7); 146, 2 (no date);
153, 11 (no date); 155, 37 (no date); 160, 12 (no
date). In Vs 7, 82 and 153 it appears together
with Šin-mušallim, which itself is found in VS 7,
15, 5.6 (Ha 41); 35, 4 (Si 3?); 50, 19 (Ad 7); 51,
14 (Ad 11); 53, 19 (as a di-ku₃), and 23 (Ad 20);
81, 17 (no date); 82, 17 (no date); 93, 5.15 (As
11); 123, 6 (As. 17+a); 124, 5 (As. 17+a); 134, 24
(As. 17+a); 153, 27 (no date); 154, 20 (no date);
192, 3 (no date) and 199, 15 (no date). But the
names are rather common and do also appear in
the Dūr-Abieṣuḫ-archives, Arad-eššēši in CUSAS
8, 4, 20 + seal 3, 1 (As 11), Belānu(m) in CUSAS
29, 174, 7 (Ad 21), Šin-mušallim in CUSAS 8, 4,
6; 8, 20 seal D (Sd 2), and 8, 83 (no date). The
name Lušallim-bēlī is probably attested on a seal
on a barley receipt, which for prosopographic rea-
sons likely stems from Dūr-Abieṣuḫ and dates to
§3.5.2.5. Hence, the prosopography is not unambiguous. A clue may be the fact that YOS 13, 187, 534; 535 are receipts for grain and beer received by Arad-eššêši from Iluni and that in YOS 13, 535 these goods are considered military provisions (ki-ri-it ernen2-meš). In CUSAS 8, 4 (dated to Aš 11), a military official (PA-PA) named Arad-eššêši is witness to the purchase of the slave Illî-danni from a certain Iluni, son of Lîrik-palâšu, the purchaser being a certain Šin-mušallim. So, the names Iluni, Arad-eššêši, and Šin-mušallim appear together in YOS 13, 534 and CUSAS 8, 4, and in both texts Arad-eššêši is associated with the military. But, again, these names are not uncommon. Unless new material from Dûr-Abiešuh provides more such “coincidences”, all that can be said is that from a purely prosopographic perspective it is as likely to connect Iluni the innkeeper from YOS 13 with the text of CUSAS 8 and 29 and with our texts as with the texts of VS 7, and hence with Dûr-Abiešuh rather than Dilbat. But a clear identification cannot be made. However, should future publications hint toward the same direction, one may have to reconsider the provenience of some of the YOS 13 material, and that would, in turn, mean that Dûr-Abiešuh-tablets entered the antiquities market even earlier than the late 1990s.


§4.1. Material issues

§4.1.1. Text 2 is a rectangular tablet with a reddish interior and a dark grey writing surface. The measurements are, according to the German auction house, 8.5 × 4.8 × 2.7 cm. There is some damage on the left obverse, with a vertical crack through the center. The back is badly damaged, with the beginnings of all the lines destroyed and much of the rest partially broken or flaked off. The images provided were not very sharp at the end of the lines, wherefore the signs on the reverse are especially difficult to decipher. In addition, the images on the website of the auction house only showed the front and back of the tablet, and repeated requests for photos of the edges remained unanswered until the object was finally taken down and presumably sold in spring 2019. Consequently, lines eight and eleven were not completely visible, but line eleven can be reconstructed because the flipped sign Š1 is partially visible on the reverse.

§4.2. Transliteration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obverse</th>
<th>Reverse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. [a]-`na be-li2-ia</td>
<td>17. [u2-da-an-]ni-nam-ma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. qi2-bi2-ma</td>
<td>18. [a-na pa-]a-di-im</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. um-ma im-gur2-en-zu ir3-ka-ma</td>
<td>19. [x x x] `a2-di3-in-ma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. iri2 ša-lim</td>
<td>20. [x x x] `be-liq-ia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. `a2-hi-ia-a</td>
<td>21. [x x x] x x A2 AM2-[x]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. ha-en-lil2-ki</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. 2(diš) ab2 mu 3(aš)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. <code>sa</code> ib-mi2-im PA MAR-TU (more written over the edge)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. [iš]-tu ka id2-da-didli2-ki</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. `iš2-ri-q</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. i-na bad3 kun id2-ha-am-mu-ra-pi2-(nu-ḫu-uš-ni)-ṣi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. i-na bi-ti-šu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. `iš2-sa-ab-la-ma</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. `a2-hi-ia-a šu-a-ti</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. `ut3 2(diš) ab2 mu 3(aš)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. <code>sa</code> iš-ṣa-ar-ra2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21 In addition to VS 7 (also Ungnad 1909), there are possible Old Babylonian Dilbat texts in YOS 13 and several other contributions, but none contains any additional prosopographic information that fits the period (Gautier 1908; Unger 1931; Klengel 1976; Kobayashi 1980; Kosshurnikov and Yoffee 1986; Pientka 1998, 409-468).
Figures 6–7: Photograph (Fig. 6) and hand copy (Fig. 7) of Text 2 (P532987).
§4.3. Translation

§4.3.1. 1–5 Speak to my lord: Thus (speaks) Imgur-Sîn your servant: The city is well. 6–10 A certain Ahiya, a Nippurian, stole two three-year-old cows belonging to the general Ibni-Adad ... from Pî-nârâti. 11–13 They were seized in his house in the fortress on the canal “Hammurapi is abundance for the people.” 14–19 That Ahiya and the two three-year-old cows which have been stolen I surely7 handed over to ... to detain7 ... . 20–21 ... my lord ... .

§4.4. Textual notes

§4.4.1. l. 8: The last vertical of TU is not visible, but traces of signs are visible on the back where line eight would have ended.

§4.4.2. l. 11: The canal name is only visible until BI/pû, but the flipped sign SI can still be seen on the reverse.

§4.4.3. l. 17’: I assume l. 17’ follows line sixteen. The sign combination -ni-nam-ma points to a form of the root dnn, which appears regularly in hendiatys for emphasis (CAD 3/D), although I have been unable to find it in combination with the root ndn.

§4.4.4. l. 18’: The root pû is used when referring to criminals, suspects, and confiscated goods awaiting a legal decision (CAD 12/P), hence the reconstruction.

§4.5. Commentary

§4.5.1. Date and provenience

§4.5.1.1. The name “Hammurapi is abundance for the people” in line 11 occurs in Hammurapi’s 33rd year name. Consequently the terminus post quem of the letter is year 33 of Hammurapi (1696 BC). However, the mentioning of “A/Thetransactson the mouth of the canal ‘Hammurapi is abundance for the people’” speaks for a later date. Royal fortification works along the Babylonian waterways are numerous in the late Old Babylonian period (Pienkta 1998, 218-224), and there are two known fortresses on the canal: Dûr-Sîn-muballit and Dûr-Abiešuh. The former was established on the ka/pû, “intake” (RIME 4.3.6.7, 38-53), during the time of Hammurapi, and the latter was located on the kun/zibbatu, “outlet,” of the canal, in the time of Abiešuh. This difference between ka/pû, “intake,” and kun/zibbatu, “outlet,” is systematically upheld in the texts of the archive from Dûr-Abiešuh, which mentions both fortresses.22 The archive texts always have the fortress’ full name, including the localization, while line 11 here only mentions its place on the canal. Provided the letter was from Dûr-Abiešuh, it would be the only example of the fortress lacking its proper name. But unless Imgur-Sîn does not know which fortress is meant and line 11 translates as “a fortress ...,” it is likely that the fortress in the letter is, in fact, Dûr-Abiešuh on the outlet of the canal Hammurapi-nuḫuš-nišī. The precise localization helps to distinguish it from its sister fortress north of Nippur, where Abiešuh had dammed the Tigris (Boivin 2018, 98; Charpin 2020, 153-155). The last attested date on a document from CUSAS 8 and 29 is the 13th year of Samsu-Ditana and Sigrist, Gabbay, and Avila 2017, no. 5, which is probably from the fortress, too, dates to Sd 19. Thus, an approximate date range for the letter, whether it stems from Dûr-Abiešuh or not, is Ae 1–Sd 13/19 (1648–1549/1543 BC) (Boivin 2018, 101).

§4.5.2. Prosopography and content

§4.5.2.1. The address ana bêliya and the statement alû šalîm by the sender Imgur-Sîn may imply that he is part of the local administration. The fact that he reports a theft concerning both Dûr-Abiešuh and Pî-nârâti may even point to regional competence. An official, probably a judge, by that name is known from a seal impression on a contract dating to the reign of Ammi-Ditana, which would fit the time period and the legal context; but Imgur-Sîn is a frustratingly frequent name, and so the evidence is suggestive at best.23 The phrase alû šalîm to connect the heading and the corpus of the letter is found in other letters by officials relating to Dûr-Abiešuh, however (Béranger 2019, no. 1-3; CUSAS 29, 205).

§4.5.2.2. Also, there is a person by the name Ibni-Adad holding the office of PA MAR-TU in the same unprovenanced text in which the name Lušallim-bêlî appears. That Ibni-Adad is associated with the troops of ha-la-ba24, a toponym that appears in other Dûr-Abiešuh texts and which may well have been what was written over the edge in line eight of this letter, but that remains doubtful.

§4.5.2.3. More helpful is Ahiya’s designation as

22 For Dûr-Sîn-muballit see, e. g., CUSAS 29, 36, 9; 41, 33; 44, 16; 176, 10 (also George 2009, 136-142).
23 AO 4657/TLC 1, 157, seal 9 (= RIME 4.3.9.2009).
"lu₂-en-lil₂, “a man of Nippur,” in line five. One wonders how this information is relevant for the theft unless it is a fixed term that helps pinpoint the man to a specific group or status. One of the most interesting features of the Dür-Abiešuh archive is the trace of a community of exiles from the (partially) destroyed city of Nippur (Van Lerberghe and Voet 2009, 3-4; Boivin 2018, 98-101; Béranger 2019; Charpin 2020, 156-168). lu₂-en-lil₂ likely helps identify Ahiya as a member of this group, as it does in other letters from Dür-Abiešuh (Béranger 2019, no. 3). Hence, there is reason to assume that the letter either is from Dür-Abiešuh or a place in the vicinity.

§4.5.2.4. The letter does not betray the crucial information needed to evaluate it from a legal perspective. We do not know how exactly Imgur-Sin settled the matter, which is doubly unfortunate because legal issues are comparatively rare in Old Babylonian letters (Jaffe 1982, 179-182). However, it mentions the place from where Ahiya stole the two cows, the city Pî-nîrîti. Like Dür-Abiešuh, its exact location is still unknown. However, Ahiya the Nippurian must have had the opportunity to transport two stolen cows from Pî-nîrîti to Dür-Abiešuh without getting caught before, and he must have deemed the enterprise worth the risk. Additionally, there must have been reasons and means to investigate in Dür-Abiešuh in a case that firstly concerns a general’s property in Pî-nîrîti. These are good reasons to assume the two places cannot have been too far from each other, maybe connected via canals. While this is hardly conclusive geographical evidence, it is as far as I am aware, the first connection of the two places, which may help localize them if one day more evidence becomes available.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


