

nîĝ-ba dub-sar maḥ

Studies on Ebla and the Ancient Near East
presented to Amalia Catagnoti

Edited by
Elisabetta Cianfanelli and Fiammetta Gori

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New Evidence for the Fishermen in Hellenistic Uruk: Collations to *Iraq* 59 No. 37

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Introduction

In legal documents the identification of individuals involved in transactions (principals: seller, buyer, guarantor, neighbours; as well as the witnesses, and the scribe) is crucial to ensuring their validity. In those from Hellenistic Uruk, the practice already established in Babylonia from the late 7th century BCE, was to record the individuals' name in a tripartite form including the personal name, the father's name, and the name of an eponymous ancestor (or "family name"). While family names were prevalent among the urban élite (especially as this group is primarily represented in surviving archives), some individuals, interacting at various levels among them, and with the upper circles traditionally associated with the temple cult and economy, bear professional designations (such as baker, barber, fisherman, shepherd etc.) in their place.¹

This article proposes a reassessment of the professional designation of an individual found in a Hellenistic tablet from Uruk, now held in the collection of the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. This reassessment is achieved through the collation of the tablet, which enables the identification of previously overlooked prosopographical connections with other individuals mentioned in a broader dossier documenting the activities of Uruk fishermen. Additionally, it supports a reconsideration (corroborated by the collation of another part of the tablet) of the property's location within the city. The article concludes by highlighting the potential of studying the network of Uruk professionals to gain a better understanding of their economic and social dimensions, as well as their role in the daily life of the city and its temple.

It is a pleasure to offer this small contribution to Amalia, a friend, a colleague, and an esteemed scholar, with whom I had the honor to share part of my academic journey, cataloguing entries, under her expert guidance, for the "Prosopography of Ebla" project, in the early stages of my career. Crucial for constructing the prosopography, were (among other factors) the professional names, which were also among the firsts of many important contributions she offered in the years to the Ebla studies: her 1989 seminal article on the role of the NE.DI at Ebla remains a milestone in my memory from my brief involvement in 3rd millennium studies.² Despite referencing sources chronologically much later than those that first brought us together many years ago, I hope she will appreciate this return to the topic of professions and prosopography, and I offer her my congratulations on the occasion of her (unbelievable!!) 65th birthday.

¹ See, in particular, the two recent syntheses by JOANNÈS 2024 (on the social aspects of Babylonian names) and by Paola Corò and Laurie Pearce in ALSTOLA *et alii* 2023 (on the use of names in the Hellenistic legal sources), both with further bibliography.

² CATAGNOTI 1989.

New insights into *Iraq 59 No. 37*: collations to obv. 2 and obv. 11

1982.A.1812 is a cuneiform tablet from Hellenistic Uruk housed in the collection of the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. Published by Michael Jursa in 1997, it is commonly identified as *Iraq 59 no. 37*,³ and records the purchase of an empty plot of urban land in the city of Uruk.

Although the date formula of the document is partially broken, the extant parts of the signs recording the year number (year 60⁺) when it was issued, and the identity of the scribe who wrote it, *i.e.*, Anu-ahu-ittannu/Rihāt-Anu//Sîn-leqe-unnini, whose activity runs between 65 and 74 SE, suggest the possibility of assigning it sometime during the reign of Antiochus II or that of Seleucus II.⁴

Based on the badly preserved traces of the last sign identifying the name of the district of the city of Uruk where the property is located, Jursa suggested that this was called Eanki.⁵ However, we have no evidence of a district going by this name elsewhere in the corpus.

The plot (see Fig. 1), measuring 18×16 cubits, adjoins the house of the seller to the south and west, and another plot of his to the north; to the east lies the Ištar canal.

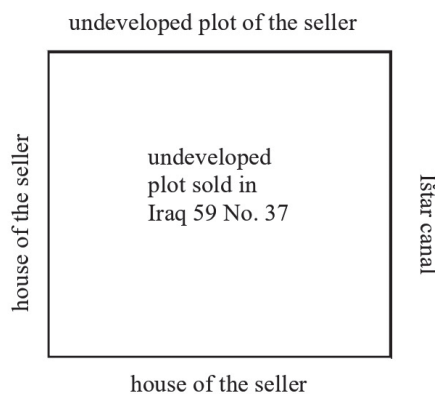


Fig. 1 – Schematization of the undeveloped plot sold in *Iraq 59 No. 37* with the indication of the adjoining properties.

The seller of the property is Illūt-Anu/Kidin-Anu, an alphabetic scribe, who also appears in another contract from Uruk (VS XV 34) as the buyer of a finished house located in a district whose name is also lost.⁶ The purchaser is an individual named Anu-balāssu-iqbi/Hanni'. Anu-balāssu-iqbi, like Illūt-Anu, is not identified through a family name, but his patronym is followed, in this case also, by a professional designation. However, only the classifier for professional names is clearly visible on the tablet (obv. 11), while the sign identifying the profession is only partially preserved; in his edition of the text, Jursa, tentatively, suggested he could also be an alphabetic scribe.⁷

³ JURSA 1997, 118-199 (transliteration and translation); 162-163 (line art).

⁴ Anu-ahu-ittannu is in fact now known as the scribe of a number of documents from Hellenistic Uruk, spanning from year 65 to 74 SE (= 247-238 BCE): in addition to OECT 9 16, already noticed by JURSA 1997, 119, he also wrote STUBM Nos. 37-RE, 44-P, 47-P//48-P, as well as YOS XX 32 and 33. On this scribe and his family see CORÒ 2018, 90, with fn. 15. A new study of the archival scribes of Hellenistic Uruk by the present author is in preparation. MONERIE (2018, 483) records the document among those dated to Seleucus II, on the basis of the currency used for the transaction and restricts its date to ca. years 243-230 BCE.

⁵ JURSA 1997, 118, fn. 2.

⁶ For an online edition of this text see HBTIN (Hellenistic Babylonia: Texts, Images and Names) at <https://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/hbtin/> (last accessed 8/04/2024).

⁷ Note his remark “^{hi}SU allein ist unklar”: JURSA 1997, 118, fn. 11.

Prosopographic connections between *Iraq* 59 No. 37 and the recently published contracts STUBM Nos. 74-RE (and its duplicate STUBM No. 75-RE) suggest the possibility of new readings for both the district's name and the profession of Anu-balāssu-iqbi, prompting the collation of the relevant signs.⁸

STUBM Nos. 74-RE//75-RE, dated to 109 SE, record the sale of a completed house by a certain Hainna'/Anu-balāssu-iqbi, a fisherman (^{lú}šu.ha, *bā'iru*), to an individual named Kidin-Anu/Illūt-Anu, who is an alphabetic scribe of the Property of Anu (^{lú}kuš.sar níg.ga^{d60}, *sēpir makkūr Anu*). The house, located in the district of the Adad temple, adjoins the Ištar canal to the east and south.

It is tempting to identify the parties to STUBM Nos. 74-RE//75-RE respectively as the sons of the Illūt-Anu/Kidin-Anu (alphabetic scribe) and Anu-balāssu-iqbi/Hanni' (profession unknown) encountered above (in *Iraq* 59 No. 37). If this were the case, we would expect that Hainna'/Anu-balāssu-iqbi, similarly to Illūt-Anu/Kidin-Anu, inherited his profession from his father and he is also a fisherman. Collation of obv. 11 of the tablet in the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery's collections (1982.A.1812 = *Iraq* 59 No. 37) confirms that the preserved traces of the signs identifying Hainna's occupational title should be read as "šu" and "ha" respectively so that he can safely be identified as fisherman instead of an alphabetic scribe (the original reading ^{lú}kuš.sar for this part of obv. 11 can thus now be discarded: see Fig. 2).⁹



Fig. 2 – Collation obv. 11.

As noted above, the house that is the object of the transaction recorded in STUBM Nos. 74-RE//75-RE adjoins the Ištar canal, as does the undeveloped plot in *Iraq* 59 No. 37. Additionally, it has now been determined that the parties involved in this contract have family connections with the contractors of *Iraq* 59 No. 37. The only noticeable difference between the two contracts concerns the district where the properties are located: in STUBM Nos. 74-RE//75-RE, it is the Adad temple, while in *Iraq* 59 No. 37, a district of the Eanki is mentioned. As there is no evidence of this district elsewhere in the Hellenistic corpus, and the sign referring to its name is partially broken in Jursa's copy of the tablet, a collation of obv. 2 is also in order. This reveals that the section where the name of the district where the undeveloped plot sold by the alphabetic scribe Illūt-Anu is located has to be read as "é^diškur" rather than "é.an.ki" (Fig. 3; obv. 2).



Fig. 3 – Collation obv. 2.

Moreover, the two additional lost signs in the lacuna following the name of the district can easily be restored based on similar formularies, resulting in line 2 now reading:

obv. 2: *ki-šub-ba-a šá ina ki-tì [šá qé-reb unug^{ki} 18 kùš]*

⁸ Corò 2018, 229-232, with pls LXXIV and LXXV.

⁹ I wish to thank Misaho Washizu for providing me with photographs of the tablet, which were otherwise inaccessible to me. Collations are based on the photographs.

Conclusions

The new interpretation of the professional occupation of Hainna', and the reconsideration of the location within the city of Uruk of the property which is the object of *Iraq* 59 No. 37, based on the collation of the pertinent signs, permit to suggest that members of these two professional families lived in the area of the Ištar Canal in the district of the temple of Adad for a time span of longer than thirty years, and that interaction between them continued at least throughout two successive generations.

Another member of the family of fishermen to which Anu-balāssu-iqbi and Hainna' belonged is likely referred to in *Babyloniaca* 8: 27-35 (and its duplicate VS 15 12). The contract is dated to year 130 SE; this is a sale of a tenured house, property of Anu, located in the district of the Seventh Corner in Uruk. The house borders to the north two other houses: one is the former property of a woman called 'Adēšu-ṭabat, the daughter of a fisherman called Anu-balāssu-iqbi, and is now in the hands of a carpenter; the other is the house of a workman of the temple; to the south it is adjacent to the bank of the Ištar canal; to the west it adjoins the properties of two "slaves", and to the east the narrow street "bank of the Ištar canal".

If the Anu-balāssu-iqbi, father of 'Adēšu-ṭabat, is the same fisherman mentioned in *Iraq* 59 No. 37, we would have evidence here for another member of the same family involved in transactions carried out among professionals of various kinds, not belonging to the urban élite of the city of Uruk. This would suggest the idea that the professionals of Hellenistic Uruk, who were not prebendaries, formed a closed circle, occupied specific areas of the city and despite playing a part in the local business, apparently never became fully integrated with the local élite from a social point of view. Overall, the data collected so far prompt a new, comprehensive investigation of the role and social networks of the fishermen in Hellenistic Uruk, which is outside of the scope of this article.¹⁰

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¹⁰ On the circles of professionals of Uruk in the Hellenistic period see CORÒ 2021 (on the *sēpirus*), CORÒ 2022 (on *sēpirus*, gatekeepers and herdsman). The role and networks of the fishermen in Hellenistic Uruk were the topics of a presentation by the current author at the 68th RAI in Leiden, which is the object of a forthcoming article.