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ADBPILU: AN ARAB AT BABYLON (BM 78912)*

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Abstract: Adbi'ilu: An Arab at Babylon (BM 78912).

An unpublished tablet from the archive of Šumā descendant of Nappāḥu contains a possible Arabic personal name.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 Nappāḥu 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 652.¹ 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.² 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 Gaḫal, 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 ^mAD-GI(?) -DINGIR.³ This could be the Northwest Semitic name Adgi-ilu, Adgi being a Suḫian name for Adad.⁴ However, it is likely that the same man appears in line 8 of the unpublished tablet BM 78912, also from the Šumā archive.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 ^mad-bi-i-lu. The best way to interpret this name is to normalize it as Adbi'ilu and understand it as being derived from Arabic ^ʿadaba and ^ʿil.⁵ 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.⁶ 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.

² Von Dassow and Spar 1987: 18-19.

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

⁴ Zadok 1977: 48.

⁵ Zadok 1977: 208.

⁶ Eph'al 1982: 93, 215-216 and Fuchs 1999: 505.

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



Figure 2.
Bottom edge

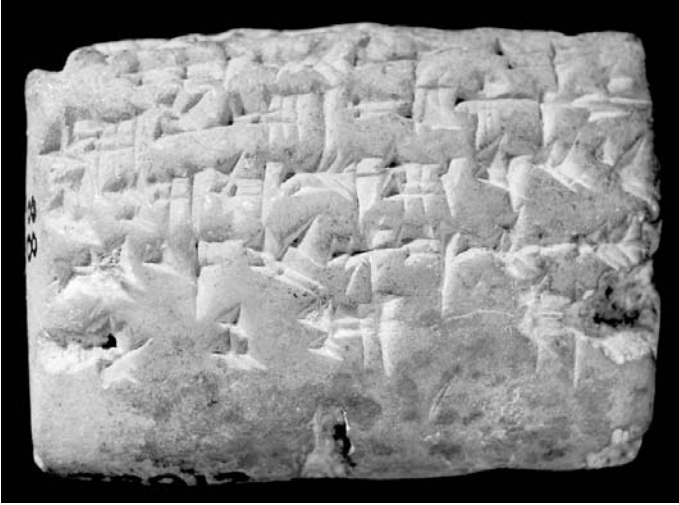


Figure 3.
BM 78912, rev.

obv.	1.	1/3 2 gín kù.babbar šá ^m šu-ma-a ina ugu ^m ka-ši-ru ud.20.kam šá iti.kin iti a-na ugu ma-ni-e 10 gín kù.babbar ina muḫ-ḫi-šú
	5.	i-rab-bi lú mu-kin-nu ^{md} ag-numun-ib-ni dumu ^m su-ḫa-a-a
edge		⌈ ^m ⌋ ad-bi-i-lu ^{md} en-šeš.meš-su-ba
rev.	10.	dumu ^m báḫar ù lú. šid ^{md} en-ú-sep-pi tin.tir ^{ki} iti.kin ud.20.kam mu.14.kam ^d giš. šir-mu-⌈gi.na⌋ ⌈lugal⌋ tin.tir ^{ki}

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

(6-14) Witnesses: Nabû-zēra-ibni descendant of Suḫāya, Adbi'īlu, Bēl-aḫḫē-erība descendant of the Potter, and the scribe Bēl-useppi. Babylon. The month of Ulūlu (VI), day 20, year 14 of Šamaš-šuma-ukīn, king of Babylon.