

A Previously Unpublished Lawsuit from Ur III Adab

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§1. The cuneiform clay tablet presented for the first time in this article is kept in the California Museum of Ancient Art, Los Angeles. The text was given to the museum in 1985 by Russ and Ivonne Kino.¹

§2. I would like to thank the museum for making the text available to the *Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative*, and R. K. Englund for sending me all necessary details about the text. This article was written as part of a research project generously funded by the History Department at Northeast Normal University in Changchun, China.

General description

§3. While the city of Adab no doubt was very important during the Ur III period,² less than fifty texts have so far been published from the site.³ The present text is an important and welcome addition to this limited

number of available Ur III tablets from Adab. Moreover, a number of unusual and highly interesting features (see below) certainly justify a more thorough analysis of the text. As so often is the case with Ur III administrative and economic texts, the text under review here may be understood in rather divergent ways. It should be emphasized that the present interpretation should by no means be considered definitive.

§4. Since the text does not have a month name, the attribution to Adab has been based on the overall appearance and structure of the text (see e.g. *SDU* 67-72)⁴ and on the fact that the lawsuit took place in front of the Adab governor Ḫabalukke (ḫa-ba-lu₅-ke₄, line 6). A further indication for an Adab provenience is the theophoric element Ašgi in lu₂-daš₇-gi₄ (line 9). This element was popular in the personal names in Adab (hence the city's earlier governor, and the father

1 For the collection of Ur III texts kept in the California Museum of Ancient Art, see R. K. Englund, "The Ur III Collection of the CMAA," *CDLJ* 2002:1.

2 Hence the impact of its calendar in the north of Babylonia (M. Cohen, *Calendars*, p. 203).

3 See W. Sallaberger and A. Westenholz, *Mesopotamien. Akkade-Zeit und Ur III-Zeit* (=OBO 160/3; Freiburg, Switzerland, 1999) 208 with further references (add *MVN* 3, nos. 174, 212, and 369 to Yang Zhi's list in *Adab*, 24-35). In addition to these texts, it seems likely that *NATN* 116 also comes from Adab, and there are at least three further texts from the city published in *MVN* 13 (see T. Gomi's review in *JAOS* 107, 146-151). M. Sigrist, *Neo-Sumerian Archival Texts in the Nies Babylonian Collection* (=CBCY 3; Bethesda 2001) lists 15 (add NBC 6672?) additional Adab texts kept in Yale. The Istanbul Archaeological Museum is said to have 11 Ur III texts from the site (*Adab*, p. 3, note 2). D. I. Owen (personal communication)

reports that several Adab tablets from ancient Garshana are in the New York Rosen collection. Finally, N. Vanderroost will publish in the near future a further text from Adab now in a private collection in Europe. Apart from the tablets in Istanbul and this private European text, the Ur III texts from Adab seem to be found mainly in various American collections; the first extensive excavation of Adab began about a century ago under the direction of Edgar Banks and was sponsored by the Oriental Exploration Fund of the University of Chicago (see Yang Zhi, "The Excavation of Adab." *JAC* 3 [1988] 1-21). Banks later sold a number of smaller groups of tablets to private collectors, colleges, museums, etc. in the United States (T. M. Sharlach, *Bala: Economic Exchange Between Center and Provinces in the Ur III State* [Harvard University Dissertation, Ann Arbor 1999] 7).

4 It should, however, be noted that although the present document in many respects resembles these texts, it does not represent a similar sale contract of the servant Ana-ḫili.

of Ḫabalukke⁵, ur-^daš₇-gi₄ or puzur₄-^daš₇-gi₄ in *UET* 3, 14/*SDU* 68; *MVN* 3, 268/*SDU* 73) and was always written ^daš₇-gi₄.⁶ Note also the Ašgi temple e₂-u₄-gim-x-x that was situated in either Adab or Keš (A. George, *House Most High*, 153). The e₂-mah “Exalted house”, which is an element in the personal name ur-e₂-mah in line 7, was (together with the e₂-sar “House of vegetation?”) the main temple in Adab (*Adab*, 99). Emah as an element in personal names is also attested in e₂-mah-ki-du₁₀ who worked as a scribe in Adab (*UET* 3, 14/*SDU* 68). It should, however, be noted that this temple name is rather common and can be found in several other Ur III cities (see *House Most High*, 119-120) and the personal name Ur-Emah is common in the Ur III state.

§5. Due to the lack of textual material from Adab, we know very little about the governor Ḫabalukke. Nevertheless, we have every reason to assume that he was one of the most influential individuals in central

(and possibly also northern) Babylonia during the Ur III period. We know that he acted as governor for at least 30 years,⁷ from Shulgi 33/iv (seal inscription of *SAT* 2, 79) until Shu-Suen 5/iii (*SAT* 3, 1592; *MVN* 3, 268). Not only was Ḫabalukke in control of Adab for a very long period of time,⁸ but he must also have been of considerable age when he finally retired. In our first attestation of Ḫabalukke from Shulgi 33 we learn that he had a son called lu₂-me-lam who was old (and important) enough to receive very large amounts of barley as the regular delivery of the goddess Ninsun (see also *OrSP* 47-49, 186, from Shulgi 35). While it is reasonable to assume that Lu-melam, due to his father’s influence, indeed would enjoy rapid success within the state administration, we can hardly reckon that Ḫabalukke was much younger than 40 at this point.

§6. The tablet CMAA 015-C0019 measures 79 x 48 mm and is 21 mm thick. For the date of the text, see the comment below.

§7. CMAA 015-C0019

Transliteration

obv.

- 1) 1(diš) an-na-ḫi-li mu-ni-im
- 2) IR₁₁ puzur₄-ma-ma-kam
- 3) ur-^dnin-mug šeš ama an-na-ḫi-li
- 4) ugu₂ an-na-ḫi-li

Translation

obv.

- 1) *One (man), his name is Ana-ḫili,*
- 2) *he is the servant of Puzur-Mama.*
- 3) *Ur-Ninmug, the maternal uncle of Ana-ḫili,*
- 4) *on account of Ana-ḫili,*

5 For new and important information concerning the familial relations of the Adab governors Lu-Ašgi and Ḫabalukke, see N. Vanderroost (forthcoming).

6 Note that this theophoric element can be found in a number of cities/archives in the central or northern parts of Babylonia, including the SIA-a and *Tūram-ilī* archives, Tell al-Wilayah and Išān Mīzyad. In the SIA-a archive, the name is written in the same form in Adab, while it always is written ^daš₃-gi₅ in the *Tūram-ilī* archive and in Tell al-Wilayah. In Išān Mīzyad we find the writing ^daš₇-gi₄ as well as the “compromise” ^daš₃-gi₄ (see S. J. Garfinkle, *Private Enterprise in Babylonia at the End of the Third Millennium BC* [Columbia University Dissertation, Ann Arbor 2000] 123-124, with references; A. Cavigneaux, “Une nouvelle graphie du dieu Aški,” *NABU* 1992/113).

7 The latest decisive evidence of Ur-Ašgi actually being the governor of Adab stems, as far as I know, from Shulgi 29 (*UET* 3, 19/*SDU* 67). As already suggested by D. I. Owen (*MVN* 3, 32, note 32), the well-known scribe ur-^dpa₄-mu-ra continued to use his seal, dedicated to Ur-Ašgi, for several years after Ḫabalukke’s succession to the office. As a matter of fact, Ur-Pamura even continued to use this “outdated” seal after he had acquired a new, correct one dedicated to Ḫabalukke (hence *MVN* 3, 188 [Shulgi 41] with old seal impression and *NBC* 6726 [Shulgi 40] with new impression). Another possibility would, of course, be that the text *NBC* 6726 simply was backdated one year.

8 The considerable length of the reign of Ḫabalukke should be considered in view of the fact that very few officials in the Ur III period occupied their posts for more than 20 years and the average was much lower than that. Hence P. Michalowski has stated about the Ur III governors: “Most of them had reigns which covered approximately ten years of so. The longest tenure on record is that of Ur-Lisi of Umma who governed that city for at least twenty-three years” (P. Michalowski, “Third Millennium Contacts: Observations on the Relationship Between Mari and Ebla,” *JAOS* 105, 296).

- 5) di-bi i₃-[gar]^{ar}
- 6) igi ha-ba-lu₅-ke₄ ensi₂ adab^{ki}-ba
- 7) igi ur-e₂-mah₄ dumu x-x-x
- 8) igi ba-du-du dam-gar₃
- 9) 1(diš) [l]u₂-^daš₇-gi₄ dumu bi₂-bi₂
- 10) 1(diš) *i-ti-dam* DIM₄
- 11) 1(diš) *ma-ga-ru-um*
- 12) 1(diš) GAL₃-di dub-sar
- 13) 1(diš) KA-NI-NI [dumu] ma₂-lah₄-ku₃-zu
rev.
- 14) [1(diš)] ʾnam-ha ʾ-ni dumu sanga-bi-ta
- 15) [1(diš) e₂[?]]-ʾlu₂ ʾ-ti dumu sanga-bi-ta
- 16) [1(diš) x]-x-GAR maškim ensi₂
- 17) [lu₂]-inim-ma-bi-me
- 18) igi-bi-ʾše₃ nam-IR₁₁ ʾ
- 19) i₃-in-[gi]-ʾin ʾ
- 20) (blank space)
- 21) mu ur-bi₂-lum^{ki} ki-maš^{ki} ba-hul-a

- 5) *he (i.e. Ur-Ninmug) brought a legal complaint.*
- 6) *Before: Habalukke, the governor of the city of Adab.*
- 7) *Before: Ur-Emah, the son of... .*
- 8) *Before: Badudu, the merchant.*
- 9) *One (man): Lu-Ašgi, the son of Bibi.*
- 10) *One (man): Itidam, the DIM₄.*
- 11) *One (man): Magarum.*
- 12) *One (man): GAL-di, the scribe.*
- 13) *One (man): KA-NI-NI, [the son] of Malah-kuzu.*
rev.
- 14) *[One (man):] Namhani, the son/apprentice of (lit. from) its chief temple administrator.*
- 15) *[One (man): E[?]]-lu-ti, the son/apprentice of (lit. from) its chief temple administrator.*
- 16) *[One (man): x]-x-GAR, the enforcer (of) the governor.*
- 17) *They are its (i.e. the lawsuit's) witnesses.*
- 18) *Before them (i.e. the witnesses), the servant status (of Ana-hili)*
- 19) *he (i.e. Ur-Ninmug) has made (legally) firm.*
- 20) (blank space)
- 21) *In the year: "The city of Urbilum (and) the city of Kimaš were destroyed".*

Commentary

§8. To line 4. The literal meaning of ugu₂ (Akk. *eli*) is “above, over” but also, by extension, “on account of” (see *CAD* E, 89). From the context of the text, it seems clear that Ur-Ninmug is acting on behalf of his nephew (his sister’s son) Ana-hili. This suggests that the servants (IR₁₁) in the Ur III period were not completely incorporated into the legal system and therefore were represented by juridical custodians. The important fact that the custodian in our text is a relative of Ana-hili (rather than his owner Puzur-Mama) shows that the choice of legal representation most likely was made by the servants themselves.

§9. To line 5. Seemingly a local Adab variant of the otherwise common expression inim--gar^(ar), “to bring a legal complaint” (*CAD* R, 62-67). For di-bi denoting “word”, “matter”, “agreement” as well as “legal case” and “lawsuit” see *AHw* p. 168 and *CAD* D pp. 132-33.

§10. To line 10. The DIM₄ is not written in ligature. For the profession DIM₄ (written in ligature) mentioned together with šabra administrators, see

OrSP 47-49, 134. DIM₄ corresponds to the Akkadian verb *sanāqum*, which *CAD* (S, 133ff.) translates: “to arrive at a locality”, “to check, supervise”, “to transfer”, “to proceed against” or “to approach an authority with a claim, a complaint”. It is therefore possible that the profession should be associated with some sort of transport or messenger services, some controlling/supervising duties or – seemingly suitable for our lawsuit – some kind of prosecuting function.

§11. To line 11. A witness called *Magarum* (son of Ur-LI) can be found in the approximately (see below and *SDU* 257) contemporary sale document *UET* 3, 46/*SDU* 70 from Adab. While the name *Magarum* indeed seems to have been extremely rare in the Ur III period, it may well have been more common in Adab and we cannot be certain that the two witnesses refer to the same individual.

§12. To lines 14-15. In *MVN* 17, 3 (col. ii) and *ITT* 2, 3536, we find, among various temple personnel, dumu sanga listed immediately after sanga. This shows that the expression was used to denote a title or profession,

i.e. “apprentice of the sanga” (*AAS* 217: «novice» sanga). However, other texts (hence the scribe Ur-Baba on the tablet/case and on seal inscription of *MVN* 6, 162) show that the expression could simply refer to the profession of an individual’s father (in which case we, of course, have to consider Namḥani and E²-lu-ti brothers). Since the other witnesses in the texts are identified both with their patronyms (lines 7, 9, 13) and by means of their professions (lines 6, 8, 10, 12, 16), it is difficult to say how we should understand the lines. The expression is usually followed by a divine name or, in some cases, a location (e.g. ^dNin-šubur or URUxKAR₂^{ki}). The absence of either in our text may perhaps imply that the text was written and archived within the jurisdiction of a specific temple and that the particular deity of the sanga and temple therefore was considered obvious and unnecessary to write down.

§13. To line 21. The year name on this tablet is unique and may be the result of a novice scribe in Adab. However, a few year names in the Ur III state (i.e. Shulgi 9 and 36) were only used in particular cities in the state (see M. Sigrist and P. Damerow, *Mesopotamian Year Names*, in the web pages of the CDLI <<http://cdli.ucla.edu/>>), and it is possible that the year name in our text represents such a local and until now unknown year formula used only in Adab. Both Shulgi (year 45) and Amar-Suen (year 2) claim to have destroyed the

city of Urbilum, and Ḫabalukke, our only other certain point of reference, was the governor of Adab from at least Shulgi 33 to Shu-Suen 5 (see above under *General description*). However, only Shulgi claims to have destroyed the city of Kimaš (Shulgi 46 and 48) and since the use of regionally specific year names otherwise seems to be confined to his reign,⁹ it seems likely that the year name in our text refers to any one of the years Shulgi 45, 46 or 48. The year formula for Shulgi 45 is securely attested in Adab (*MVN* 3, nos. 209, 211, 212) and does not appear different from that known in other cities in the state. Two texts (*UET* 3, 15/*SDU* 69 and *UET* 3, 18/*SDU* 72), which are recorded as found in Ur but probably were written in Adab (see *SDU* 5), show that the year formulae for Shulgi 46¹⁰ and Amar-Suen 2 followed the standard Ur III convention. With this in mind, it appears plausible that the year formula in our text was used for Shulgi’s 48th year.

9 For minor local variations of year formulae related to the local pronunciation of place names that were by no means restricted to Shulgi’s reign, see S. J. Garfinkle, *Private Enterprise in Babylonia at the End of the Third Millennium BC*, p. 298.

10 *UET* 3, 15/*SDU* 69 is dated to Shulgi 47 with the formula: mu us₂-sa Ki-maš^{ki} ba-ḫul “The year after (the year): “Kimaš was destroyed,” thus suggesting that the formula for Shulgi 46 was the regular formulae commemorating the destruction of Kimaš.