

## 7 Administrative Documents

Only a handful of tablets in the collection are administrative documents; they can be easily distinguished within the collection, on account of their unusual format and layout.

Contrary to the contracts, despite their probably belonging to the same administrative archive of the temple, they do not belong to a single typology based on their content, shape and palaeography.<sup>1</sup>

As we have noted above (see § 2.2), administrative tablets are thinner than the contracts, their edges do not house seal impressions, and they have no date formula. Among the four examples in the BM collections, two are landscape-oriented, written on the obverse only and their writing is slanting and in general very poor; the other two, are portrait tablets, written on both sides (one also on two of the edges).

The characteristics of these tablets are summarised in Table 43, below.

Table 43. Administrative tablets

Text No.	Orientation	Format	Writing	Content
116-ADM	landscape	flat	Obv. only very slanting	list of carpenters
117-ADM	landscape	flat	Obv. only very slanting	list of prebendaries
118-ADM	portrait	Ziegelformat	Obv.; B.e.; Rev.; Ri.e. regular	temple registry for prebends
119-ADM	portrait	pillow?	Obv.+Rev. very slanting	registry of documents

### 7.1 Lists of Personnel

**Nos. 116-ADM** and **117-ADM** are very similar to one another. Both tablets are landscape-oriented, flat, and written on the obverse only. Following Beaulieu’s classification of writing types on administrative tablets, they exhibit a very irregular (“très irrégulière”) writing. Although neither of the two has a date formula, the large number of theophoric names in Anu suggests Uruk as their provenance.

**No. 116-ADM** is a list of carpenters and ‘givers’ (maybe sellers or performers?): it is not clear if this means that all the individuals mentioned in the list are carpenters who gave something to or performed their services for the temple, or if some of them were carpenters and others ‘givers’. In fact, only Nidinti-Anu/Bēlet-šēri mentioned in Obv. 4 seems to have been identified with his professional title in the document.

With the possible exception of Anu-ittannu/Kidin-Anu of Obv. 3, who may have been a member of the Ahhūtu family, no other individual is identified by means of an ancestor.

The fact that the filiation is described with the logogram *a* only (not followed by *ša*), which is unusual in Seleucid Uruk, might point to an early Seleucid (if not earlier) date for the document.

**No. 117-ADM** shares with **No. 116-ADM** some physical characteristics: however, **No. 117-ADM** is slightly bigger than **No. 116-ADM** and features twelve lines of text. As for its content, it is also

<sup>1</sup> As Beaulieu noticed for the fourteen administrative tablets from Uruk he published in 1989 (Beaulieu 1989, esp. pp. 57-61). Beaulieu, indeed, distinguishes as many as four different types of script (“régulière, incliné, legerment incliné; tres inclinés”). The copies and the descriptions of the tablets in the catalogue show that among the group of fourteen texts he studied are included portrait tablets, landscape tablets, tablets with dividing lines; tablets written on the obverse only, tablets written on both sides and even on the edges (upper and lower).

a list of personnel, namely the temple-enterers of the gods who were responsible for the prebends of days 15 and 16 (no month or year is specified): the names of the temple-enterers are followed by the indication of specific amounts of an unknown commodity.

As for the previous tablet, the theophoric element Anu of most of the names clearly points to Uruk as its place of composition. With a few exceptions, filiation is here noted in its typical ‘full’ Seleucid form (a *ša*): as one may easily expect to be the case in administrative documents, no individual is identified with an ancestor name.

## 7.2 Others

**Nos. 118-ADM** and **119-ADM** both came to the Museum through the antiquities market and were registered among BM running numbers identifying tablets from Larsa: however, their content (especially the personal names recorded in the texts, mainly made up with the theonym Anu) makes it clear that these materials pertain to (if not originate from) the administration of the temples of Uruk.

While both are portrait-oriented tablets, **No. 118-ADM** exhibits a very clear and tidy script (“regulière” in Beaulieu’s classification); that of **No. 119-ADM** is, on the contrary, informal and cursive, to the point that it would be difficult to ascribe the tablet to the Urukean milieu on the basis of its content.

The size and layout of the two tablets is also different: **No. 118-ADM** is very small and written on the obverse, reverse, lower and left edge; **No. 119-ADM** is bigger and only written on the obverse and reverse. Both are characterised by the presence of rulings, used by the scribe to organise the text into sections.

Four rulings identify five different sections on **No. 118-ADM**. Two of them (sections 1-2) fit into the obverse; a third section occupies the last line of the reverse and continues over the lower edge, two (sections 4-5) fit into the reverse; while the left edge houses a full section on its own (section 6).

Sections 1-2 contain the description of the shares of an unknown commodity, connected to three days of specific months, that belong to either a particular individual and/or the members of a family/professional group designated as “the estate of PN”. Section 4 refers only to the share in the meat offerings pertaining to the festival of Anu in day 3 of the month, also belonging to a named estate.

Section 3, which functions as a heading, states that the document consists of the “clay tablet of the shares in the festivals(?) of the dressing ceremonies of Anu and Antu”. It is not clear what is the function of the individuals mentioned in the badly preserved section 6, occupying the edge of the tablet.

The format, layout, and also the high level of accuracy in drafting **No. 118-ADM** show that this document was the work of an experienced scribe. It seems thus likely that it belonged to a different administrative level of the temple’s bureaucracy than **Nos. 116-ADM** and **117-ADM**: the rationale for it still remains unclear, though. The tablet is undated and no help comes from the prosopography of the individuals mentioned in order to date it; it is however interesting to observe that the logographic spelling of the name of Sîn-bānūnu (<sup>1d</sup>30-dù-ku<sub>6</sub>; rev. 17) occurs only once in the contracts from Hellenistic Uruk (YOS 20 16, dated SE 29). It would thus be tempting to assign the two tablets to the hand of the same scribe, and to assign **No. 118-ADM** a date in the first half of the first century of Seleucid rule over Babylonia.

Rulings also characterise **No. 119-ADM**, a clay tablet whose first section on the obverse, functioning as a heading, shows that it was drafted to record the contents of a reed basket (*hal-la-lat*), consisting of ‘written documents’. Although the spelling of the term for basket in **No. 119-ADM** is a hapax (*hal-la-lat* vs. the commonly used <sup>(9i)</sup>*hal-lat*), it is plausible that it refers to the same *hallātu* containers whose use is well attested in the earlier periods. Examples from the Rahimesu archive show that *hallātu* were used to deposit money in the temple.<sup>2</sup> Another administrative tablet from Uruk (Beaulieu 1989, Text 2) records their use in the temple of Uruk to store the textiles for the statues of the gods.<sup>3</sup> On the basis of these parallels, and since the documents stored in the *hallātu* basket mentioned in **No. 119-ADM** all refer to prebendary titles, it is reasonable to assume that our baskets were also stored somewhere in the temple.

2 On the use of reed baskets in the administration of the temple of Babylon see van der Spek 1985.

3 Beaulieu 1989, p. 69.

The tablet is divided in four sections. The first section is the heading; sections 2 to 4 detail the number and type of documents, the prebendary title they refer to, followed by a clause stating who placed them in front of (?) the gods, a date, and a number (whose meaning is not clear, but which might refer to the value of the deposited documents<sup>4</sup>). The order of the elements (especially the date and the number) is not always consistent, so that it is difficult to understand how the entries were organised.

Although the general context of the tablet still remains not completely clear, a couple of elements might help to better understand the rationale for its drafting. First is the type of documents listed in the tablet. According to the heading section the content of the *hallātu* consist of *šaṭārus*, a term that can either refer generically to ‘documents’, or more specifically to ‘contracts’: Section 2, however, distinguishes between 2 *šaṭārus* and 1 *giṭṭu*. It is thus likely that *šaṭāru* is used in Section 2 specifically to refer to contracts in contrast to receipts (*giṭṭu*), while the term is used in the heading section in its wider sense of ‘documents’, including all those listed in the tablet, regardless of their type. The need for the distinction made in Section 2, might point to the fact that at least two different types of documents, both part of the same dossier, were assembled together in one place.<sup>5</sup>

Now, among the documents stored in the basket, only those listed in Section 2 include a *giṭṭu*. All the documents listed in the following sections are, in fact, labelled *šaṭārus*, and this obviously raises the question why it happens.

A possibility is that it depended on the content of the dossier to which the documents in this Section referred, i.e. that this was linked to the administrative/legal procedure for which the documents were originally issued. Since the dossier in Section 2 includes documents dealing with service performed for a third party, it would be possible that the issue of a receipt of some kind was connected to the fulfilment of some specific requirements or to a particular payment connected to the lease of the service, in addition to the regular contracts; which would explain why both types of documents are mentioned. However, we have no evidence of any ‘receipts’ being stored with the ‘contracts’ listed in Section 4, that (though its content is not completely clear) also have as object service performed for a third party: thus the explanation may be sought elsewhere.

What might *giṭṭu* represent in contrast to *šaṭāru*? In the late period, *giṭṭu* was used to refer to receipts written both on clay and on parchment, depending on the determinative associated with the term: unfortunately, the absence of a determinative for *giṭṭu* in **No. 119-ADM** makes it impossible to ascertain if the opposition *šaṭāru* vs *giṭṭu* referred also to the material on which the documents were written, in addition to their type.<sup>6</sup> Some details of the documents referred to in Section 2, however, might point to the fact that the distinction had actually to do with the use of different writing media.

The text of the section reads: ‘2 contracts and 1 receipt of 1/6th of a full day of the brewers, to perform in the name of *'is-pu-da-su*, that Anu-māru-ittannu/Nidinti-Anu placed in front of (?) the god. Instead of 58 ½ (shekels?). Nisan, day 21, year 142’ (**No. 119-ADM**, obv. 3-8).

Apparently, a certain Anu-māru-ittannu/Nidinti-Anu placed in front of the god(?) the documents concerning the performance of a share in the brewer’s service, instead of an individual bearing the non-Babylonian name *'is-pu-da-su*. In the commentary to the text, I suggest that *'is-pu-da-su* is the Babylonian spelling for the Greek name Spoudasios/Spoudaios. If Spoudaios was a Greek (besides just bearing a Greek name) it would not be purely coincidental that he appears in the only section of **No. 119-ADM** mentioning different types of written documents. *Giṭṭu* may in fact have been used here to indicate that an extra document, maybe on parchment and in a different language, was issued for Spoudaios, on top of the contracts drafted on clay. At the time of depositing the documents in the *hallātu*, the full dossier had to be handed in, whatever its written medium: from this perspective, **No. 119-ADM** would offer documentary evidence for the habit of storing both clay documents and parchments together, in the same place, in the temple, as we know from the archaeological record.

Unfortunately what still escapes us is the rationale for storing the documents in the temple.

The fact that all the documents recorded in **No. 119-ADM** concern prebends might suggest a connection between the praxis attested by the administrative tablet and that referred to in the so

<sup>4</sup> Suggestion Baker, personal communication, October 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Baker 2003, pp. 250-256 and also Jursa 2005, pp. 5-6.

<sup>6</sup> Jursa 2005, p. 6, with fn. 29.

called 'registration clause', allowing purchasers, on a voluntary basis, to 'enter' their prebend in the registry of the Property of Anu.

Two elements however argue against this reconstruction: first is that according to the prebend contracts featuring the registration clause, the registry of the Property of Anu was kept on wood (*lê'û*), not on clay, so that in order to keep this possibility we should imagine a complex scenario where the prebend owner brought his contracts to the temple in order for them to be registered in the wooden registry and the tablets were deposited in the *hallātu*, waiting to be registered. The date recorded for the entries in **No. 119-ADM** would refer to the day when the original documents were issued (which would explain why the entries are not organised in chronological order).

Interpreting the meaning of the clause, Krückmann suggested that upon registration the allotment owner was allowed to accumulate the income deriving from the prebend in an account set for him in his name, instead of drawing the income directly: this idea would fit in well with the presence of numbers in each sections of the text, that might represent the equivalent in money (?) for the registered titles.

Unfortunately, reconstructing such a scenario one should also consider that the registration formula is only attested in contracts dating in the first century of Seleucid rule over Babylonia, while according to **No. 119-ADM** the contracts deposited in the *hallātu* were all probably drafted between SE 139-142. It would thus be difficult to suggest a direct connection between the two procedures, unless we postulate that the formula disappeared from the contracts because the procedure changed from voluntary to compulsory.