

Seleucid Tablets from Uruk in the British Museum

Text Editions and Commentary

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8 Scribes

The scribes of legal documents typically identify themselves in the date formula of the contracts by attaching the title *tupšarru* (scribe) to their names, followed by the patronymic and in most cases the clan affiliation; *tupšarru* is written using the logographic form ^{lu}umbisag. One among the Urukean scribes, Anu-iqīšanni/Nidinti-Anu//SLU, gave his title of chief lamentation priest (*kalamāh Anu*) in addition to that of scribe in the date formulas of the archival tablets he wrote.¹

Indeed, a number of scribes compiled literary texts as well as writing archival documents.² In the colophons of the literary texts they wrote they usually bore their professional titles (e.g. ‘scribe of the Enūma Anu Enlil’, ‘lamentation priest’, etc., that described the stage of mastery of the relevant art they had achieved); however, none of them is known to have used that title in the date formula of the legal tablets he wrote.

The names of the scribes who wrote the tablets belonging to the BM collection are preserved (or may be safely restored) for approximately two-thirds of the documents. Overall, twenty-seven discrete individuals may be recognised.³ As Table 44 shows, unsurprisingly they mainly belonged to the two best known scribal families of Uruk, i.e. the Sîn-lēqe-unnīnīs and the Ekur-zākirs; a few claim ancestry from the Kurīš and the Gimil-Anus, while a small number is identified only by their first name and patronymic.

Table 44. Scribes and clan affiliation in the BM collection

Clan	Scribes
Sîn-lēqe-unnīnī	[Itti-Anu-nuhšu]/Anu-bēlšunu//SLU? Anu-uballiṭ/Itti-Anu-nuhšu//SLU Dumqī-Anu/Anu-uballiṭ//SLU Nidinti-Anu/Anu-uballiṭ//SLU Anu-iqīšanni/Nidinti-Anu//SLU, the chief lamentation priest Anu-ahhē-iddin/Nidinti-Anu//SLU Illūt-Anu/Nidinti-Anu//SLU Anu-ahu-ittannu/Rihat-Anu//SLU
Ekur-zākīr	Ištar-šumu-ēreš/Iqīša/EZ Nidinti-Anu/Anu-bēlšunu//EZ Mukīn-apli/Nidinti-Anu//EZ Anu-bēlšunu/Nidinti-Anu//EZ Anu-uballiṭ/Ina-qībit-Anu//EZ Šamaš-ēṭir/Ina-qībit-Anu//EZ Ina-qībit-Anu/Šamaš-ēṭir//EZ
Kurī	Ištar-šumu-ēreš/Anu-erība//K Nanāya-iddin/Ina-qībit-Anu//K Anu-uballiṭ/Enlil-ahu-iddin//K
Gimil-Anu	Ina-qībit-Anu/Lābāši/Līšir//GA Anu-ahhē-iddin/Anu-abu-usur//GA
No clan affiliation	Bēl-ēreš/Nabû-nāšir Bēl-ahhē-iddin/Anu-uballissu Nazi-muruttaš/Enlil-šumu-imbi Anu-erība/Rabi-Anu

1 See Corò 2015, esp. pp. 89-91, and below.

2 See e.g. Pearce, Doty 2010.

3 Excluded from this figure are those scribes whose names are not preserved enough to attempt any identification.

8.1 The Scribes of the Sîn-lēqe-unnīnī Clan

The Sîn-lēqe-unnīnīs are the most prominent scribal family in Seleucid Uruk, whose eponymous ancestor is believed to have been the author of the Epic of Gilgameš. The family is documented in Uruk since the Neo-Babylonian period; for the Hellenistic period, it has been possible to trace back the activities of individuals belonging to several generations of maybe a single branch of the Sîn-lēqe-unnīnīs, who appear to have been active both as scribes of scholarly tablets and as scribes, witnesses and sometimes also parties of legal documents.⁴

Eight discrete scribes claiming Sîn-lēqe-unnīnī as ancestor wrote about one fourth of the total documents in the BM collection, between the first half of the Seleucid Era and the reign of Demetrius. Unsurprisingly, they belong to subsequent generations of the same branch of the family (see Table 44, above).

Most active among them is Anu-uballiṭ/Itti-Anu-nuhšu//SLU, to whose hand can be attributed a total of thirteen tablets, all dated between SE 44 and SE 59 (see Table 45, below).⁵

Table 45. Tablets written by Anu-uballiṭ and his father

Scribe	Tot. docs	Earliest	Latest	Tablet No.
[Itti-Anu-nuhšu]/Anu-bēlišunu (?)	1	47-49	—	22-P
Anu-uballiṭ/Itti-Anu-nuhšu//SLU	13	44	59	18-P; 21-P; 23-P; 24-P; 25-P; 26-P; 28-P; 29-P//30-P; 31-P; 32-RE; 34-P; 43-P

Most of the tablets written by Anu-uballiṭ/Itti-Anu-nuhšu//SLU have Lâbâši, his son Anu-zēru-iddin and his cousin by the same name (Anu-zēru-iddin/Anu-māru-ittannu) as the parties and prebends as the objects.⁶

The name of the scribe of **No. 22-P** is lost (only the patronym is preserved). It is likely, on the basis of the suggested date of the tablet, that the scribe who wrote it is Anu-uballiṭ's father, the only representative of the generation before Anu-uballiṭ's to appear in our documents.⁷

The two sons of Anu-uballiṭ, Nidinti-Anu and Dumqī-Anu, each wrote five tablets among those that are now in the BM collection (Table 46).

Table 46. Tablets written by the sons of Anu-uballiṭ⁸

Scribe	Tot. docs	Earliest	Latest	Tablet No.
Nidinti-Anu/Anu-uballiṭ//SLU	5	47	78	20-P; 49-P//YOS 20 37; 54-P//55-P; 56-P
Dumqī-Anu/Anu-uballiṭ//SLU	13	44	59	18-P; 21-P; 23-P; 24-P; 25-P; 26-P; 28-P; 29-P//30-P; 31-P; 32-RE; 34-P; 43-P

Those by the hand of Nidinti-Anu are distributed in the thirty years between SE 47 and SE 78. Two

⁴ For the family tree see Hunger 1968, p. 17, with earlier bibliography; Lewenton 1970, p. 104; Del Monte 1996 and Del Monte 2002 (esp. pp. 198-199, with fn. 18); Clancier 2009, pp. 72-80; for the family's history Beaulieu 2000; Pearce, Doty 2000; Robson 2008, pp. 244-260; See also Nielsen 2011, pp. 185-210.

⁵ The date of two of the tablets that form this group is not preserved. On the basis of the extant traces of the signs for the dates in the date formula and the prosopography of the parties, they can be assigned to as early as SE 40 and as late as SE 66, respectively. This would slightly change the scenario, setting the beginning of the scribal activity of Anu-uballiṭ in the BM collection to SE 40 and its end to SE 66. Moreover, Anu-uballiṭ wrote at least ten more contracts belonging to the corpus from Hellenistic Uruk, the earliest dating to SE 46 and the latest to SE 63. For lists of the relevant documents see e.g. Schröder 1916, p. 16, #8 and Doty 2010, pp. 63-64, #54 and the commentary to **No. 32-RE**, below.

⁶ The same is true for the contracts not housed in London, where also L/AZI//EZ and the members of this family largely feature as the parties.

⁷ Only the patronymic of the scribe is preserved on the tablet. On the basis of the extant signs for the date and the kings mentioned in the date formula, the tablet can be dated to SE 47-49. Prosopographical connections to other tablets confirm the chronological frame for this document (see below the commentary to **No. 22-P** for further details). Itti-Anu-nuhšu also wrote OECT 9 6, sometime between SE 18 and SE 31: Del Monte 2002, 200; for the family tree of this branch of the Sîn-lēqe-unnīnīs see Del Monte 1996.

⁸ It is plausible that also **No. 51-P** belongs here. See commentary to the text, below.

are duplicates of each other; a third has a duplicate in Yale; all have prebends as objects. It is worth noting that with the exception of **No. 20-P**, the remaining tablets include the so-called ‘registration clause’ that Nidinti-Anu systematically frames within rulings on the tablets’ reverse (for a layout sample, see Fig. 11, below). Lâbâši or his son Anu-zêru-iddin are parties to all these documents written by Nidinti-Anu.

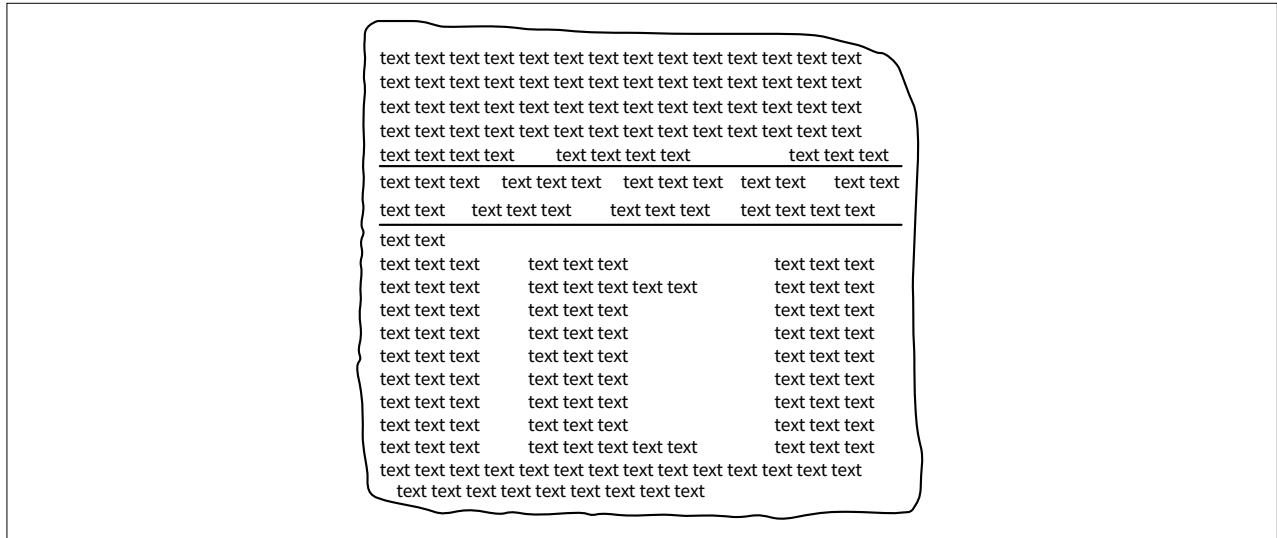


Figure 11. Schematic representation of the layout of **No. 56-P**

Nidinti-Anu’s brother, Dumqi-Anu appears as the scribe of five tablets dated between SE 77 and SE 90: only two involve Lâbâši and his son; a single one features the registration clause, which Dumqi-Anu, unlike his brother, does not separate from the main text by means of dividing lines.

If the identification of our Nidinti-Anu/Anu-uballit with the individual by the same name that owns scholarly tablets holds true,⁹ there is a chance that his choice for formatting the registration clause in a special way reflects the habit of organizing texts in a ‘visual’ way (highlighting significant passages, tabulating prose text, etc.) as he learned it in the context of his scholarly education.¹⁰

None of the sons of Nidinti-Anu appears in our documents; indeed, the dates of the extant documents confirm that the scribes named Anu-iqîšanni, Illût-Anu and Anu-ahhê-iddin, sons of Nidinti-Anu, are the sons of the homonymous grandson of Nidinti-Anu/Anu-uballit (see Table 44).

Table 47. Tablets written by the sons of Nidinti-Anu(2)

Scribe	Tot. docs	Earliest	Latest	Tablet No.
Anu-iqîšanni/Nidinti-Anu(2)//SLU, the lamentation priest	3	109	120	74-RE//75-RE; 86-RE
Illût-Anu/Nidinti-Anu(2)//SLU	1	146	—	98-P
Anu-ahhê-iddin/Nidinti-Anu//SLU	1	157		102-RE

9 Hunger 1968, p. 17 and Clancier 2009, p. 75, see also Del Monte 1996.

10 Although the use of incised lines on these archival tablets cannot be properly considered a conversion of the text to ‘tabular formatting’, it is conceivable that it reflects the same need for providing a new way of viewing a text that, in the context of scribal education and practice, was connected to the increasing use of tables. The adoption of dividing lines, as well as of tabular formatting, rested mainly on personal choice: in this light, its systematic use by Nidinti-Anu to highlight the text’s section containing the registration clause seems to reflect the intentional need for a new way of conceptualising a piece of information. On the use of tables and tabular formatting and their significance see Robson 2003 and 2004. On the organisational structure of knowledge in cuneiform sources see recently Monroe 2015 (esp. pp. 529-531). In general, on the organisational principles of Akkadian texts, Worthington 2012.

Anu-iqīšanni is the famous scribe who took pride in attaching the title of *kalamāh Anu* to his onomastic chain in all the archival documents he wrote. As I have extensively shown elsewhere, he probably was the author of a scholarly fragment for Nidinti-Anu of the Ekur-zākir clan, and as well as writing a large number of legal documents, he most likely drafted administrative tablets for the temple.¹¹

A full set of graphic peculiarities, variants and virtuositities (as, for example, the phonetic vs logographic play in the spelling of his own name and the anomalous use of the determinative lú) represent a typical mark of his hand in the tablets he wrote: their use, as already in the case of his father, may be connected to his scholarly background.¹²

Unlike those of their forefather, none of Anu-iqīšanni's tablets (both those in London or part of the corpus) involve members of Lâbâši's family;¹³ conversely, many of the texts he wrote have as the parties individuals who were not members of the traditional families of Uruk, as suggested by the fact that they are identified in the documents by means of a professional title instead of the family name.

As I argued elsewhere, the fact that Anu-iqīšanni identifies himself by using his priestly title and that the tablets he wrote involve people who are not part of the traditional Urukean elite (though they are on the payroll of the temple) might indicate that when he drafted those documents he was acting in some formal capacity for the temple. There is a chance that it was in connection with this official role that he was entrusted the recording of administrative tablets as well.¹⁴

Anu-iqīšanni's brothers, Illût-Anu and Anu-ahhē-iddin, each wrote one of the tablets in the BM collection. Interestingly, Illût-Anu's tablet records a member of the Lâbâši family as a party, namely Anu-zêru-iddin/Anu-ahu-ittannu/Anu-zêru-iddin//EZ, who appears leasing out a portfolio of prebends including shares in that of temple-enter of Anu, that of temple-enterer of Enlil and in the butcher's prebend (**No. 98-P**).

Anu-ahhē-iddin, conversely, writes the contract (**No. 102-RE**) where another Lâbâši, belonging to the Ahhûtu family (a descendant of Anu-uballiṭ=Nikarchos) sells his share in the paternal house to his two brothers. No evidence of either of the two scribes as author of scholarly tablets has come down to us.

Finally, it is not clear what (if any) is the family relationship between the scribes of the Sîn-lêqe-unnîni family whose careers we have discussed so far and Anu-ahu-ittannu/Rihat-Anu//SLU, who wrote three documents, among which are two involving L/AZI//EZ as buyer, between SE 65 and 74.

Table 48. Tablets written by Anu-ahu-ittannu

Scribe	Tot. docs	Earliest	Latest	Tablet No.
Anu-ahu-ittannu/Rihat-Anu//SLU	3	65	74	37-RE; 44-P; 47-P//48-P

Wallenfels identified him with the *kalamāh Anu* who owned the tablet containing the ritual for covering the kettledrum (TU 44), besides writing several archival documents (other than those in the BM) between SE 68 and SE 73. Be that as it may, whatever branch of the family Anu-ahu-ittannu he belonged to, he must be placed chronologically somewhere at the same level as Anu-uballiṭ.¹⁵

11 See Corò 2015, with bibliography and all relevant references to the pertinent texts.

12 See Corò 2015.

13 This is not unexpected, because the family is no longer well represented in the sources after Bēlessunu's generation.

14 Corò 2015, pp. 90-91, with fn. 30 for a list of the tablets written by Anu-iqīšanni.

15 For Anu-ahu-ittannu and his family members, see Wallenfels 1994, p. 20. Clancier 2009, p. 75 (quoting Wallenfels) considers Anu-ahu-ittannu to be the grandson of Anu-iqīšanni/Nidinti-Anu, and places him accordingly in the family stem. This is, however, unlikely since all the tablets witnessing Anu-ahu-ittannu's activity date some 30 years earlier than those of his presumed grandson. Moreover, according to Wallenfels' identification, the Anu-iqīšanni father of Rihat-Anu would be the son of Širki-Anu, not of Nidinti-Anu (see Wallenfels 1994, p. 20, with reference to the owners of seals #51, #52 and #53).

8.2 The Scribes of the Ekur-zākir Family

Twenty-seven documents in the BM collection can be assigned to the hands of as many as nine scribes claiming Ekur-zākir as ancestor. In contrast to the scribes of the Sîn-lēqe-unnīnī family, they appear to have belonged to three different branches of the Ekur-zākir family.

8.2.1 The Iqīšaya Branch

The first branch is named after its most famous representative Iqīšaya (who however did not write any of the tablets in the BM collection). His son Ištar-šumu-ēreš is the scribe of a single document in the collection (**No. 2-P**) dated to SE 13; we know that the year before, he wrote another contract belonging to the corpus from Hellenistic Uruk (VDI 1955/4 6). Interestingly, VDI 1955/4 6 and **No. 2-P** have five witnesses in common (see below, commentary to **No. 2-P**). One of them is Iqīšaya, Ištar-šumu-ēreš’s father, the owner of the well known library that owes him its name.

Table 49. Tablets written by Ištar-šumu-ēreš

Scribe	Tot. docs	Earliest	Latest	Tablet No.
Ištar-šumu-ēreš/Iqīša/EZ	1	13	—	2-P

Iqīšaya and his son Ištar-šumu-ēreš appear in a number of colophons of scholarly texts, either as scribes or as owners; in particular, Ištar-šumu-ēreš wrote ten tablets for his father and he was the owner of at least one, dated to the reign of Philip Arrhideus.¹⁶ He thus clearly associated his activity as scribe of archival documents with that of scholar.

Although only two of the tablets he has written have come down to us, and the obverse of one of them is badly preserved, a quick look at their *mise-en-page* clearly shows that they are the work of a single scribe.

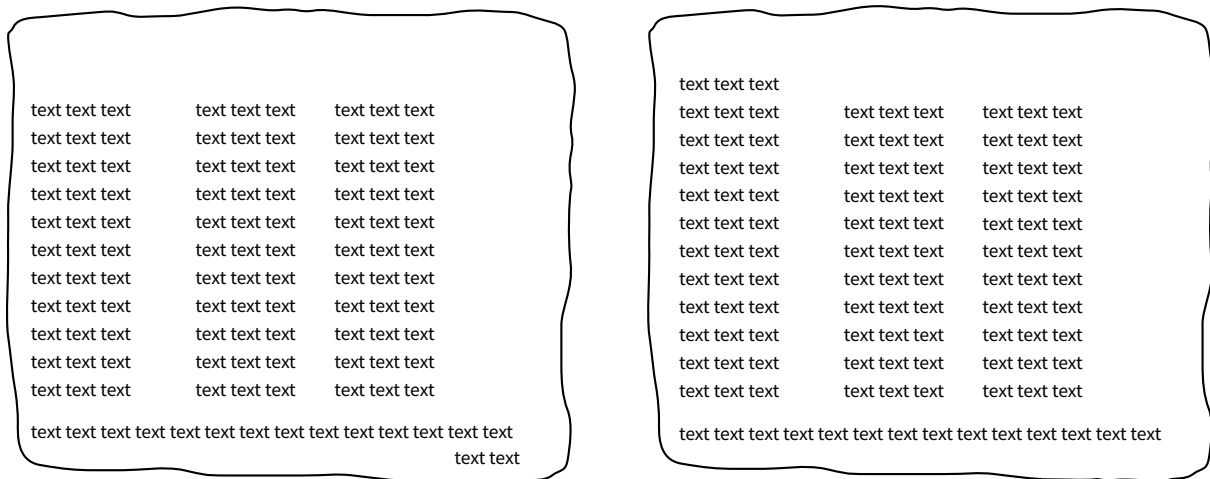


Figure 12. Schematic representation of the *mise-en-page* of **No. 2-P** (left) and VDI 1955/4 6 (right)

As Fig. 12 reveals, in both of them the text of the contract ends with the obverse, the reverse opening with a blank of about three lines. The witness list is tabulated in three columns, left-aligned on the

¹⁶ Hunger 1968, p. 18 and Clancier 2009, p. 52.

surface in order to leave a blank space the size of a fourth column, to the right.¹⁷ This arrangement is in general unusual in Hellenistic Uruk and can be considered a distinctive mark of Ištar-šumu-ēreš's hand. It is not clear if the fact that in both tablets the seal impressions are captioned *na₄.kišib* instead of *unqu* is due to the early date of the documents, or is a matter of Ištar-šumu-ēreš's preference.

We have no more evidence of this branch of the Ekur-zākirs among the scribes who wrote tablets in the BM collection.

8.2.2 The Nidinti-Anu Branch

Better represented than the Iqīšaya branch is the Nidinti-Anu branch, which numbers three scribes whose work is now part of the BM collection: Nidinti-Anu and his sons Mukīn-apli and Anu-bēlšunu.

Altogether they appear to have written eleven contracts between SE 84 and SE 162.

Table 50. Tablets written by scribes of the Nidinti-Anu branch

Scribe	Tot. docs	Earliest	Latest	Tablet No.
Nidinti-Anu/Anu-bēlšunu//EZ	4	96	106	71-P; 72-P//73-P; 76-P
Mukīn-apli/Nidinti-Anu//EZ	4	119	132	79-RE; 92-RE; 93-RE; 94-P//TCL 13 244
Anu-bēlšunu/Nidinti-Anu//EZ (2)	2	137	162	95-RE; 109-P//Iraq 59 38;

Nidinti-Anu is the best known representative of this branch of the family: he was the owner and scribe of several scholarly tablets all dated to the reign of Antiochus III.¹⁸ His activity as secular scribe covers approximately the same time range (SE 96-106). Six documents in the BM collection can be attributed to his hand, in two of which feature as parties members of the Lâbâši family (i.e. Anu-uballit and his brother Nanāya-iddin in **No. 76-P**; and Anu-uballit's wife ^fBēlessunu in **No. 71-P**). To the texts in the BM several more archival tablets written by the same scribe can be added from the corpus of Hellenistic Uruk.¹⁹

Nidinti-Anu's hand is characterised by his using a rare variant spelling for the word *babbanûtu* that involves replacing the common five-sign form (*bab-ba-nu-ú-tú*) with a shorter four-sign spelling (*bab-ba-nu-tu*), for which TU is used instead of UD. The same spelling is used by only one other scribe who unsurprisingly is Nidinti-Anu's son, Mukīn-apli: probably a reflection of the importance played by father-to-son transmission of writing skills in the scribal education process.

In addition, the contracts drafted by Nidinti-Anu feature a notably tidy handwriting (the wedges are neatly impressed on the tablet's surface with a thin stylus, the heads of the oblique strokes featuring long tails) and the tablets all have sharp square corners.

It seems thus unlikely that the two tablets written by a scribe whose name is lost, identified as the son of Anu-bēlšunu//EZ,²⁰ can be attributed to him: in fact, they share none of the formal and physical characteristics of Nidinti-Anu's tablets.

One of the sons of Nidinti-Anu, Mukīn-apli is the author of four tablets in the BM collection: in two of them parties to the contracts are Anu-uballit and his son Anu-zēru-iddin, from the Lâbâši family.

¹⁷ The following slight differences may be noticed between the two specimens: ¹⁴*mu-kin*, is part of the first line of the witness list in **No. 2-P** while it is written separately as the first line in VDI 1955/4 6; the date formula runs as one line only in the Hermitage tablet, while it develops along two lines on the tablet in London: it must be noted that the text is not homogeneously split into two equal parts in order to occupy both lines, as usual, but only a few words are accommodated on the second row, with an atypical right-alignment (as if the scribe exceeded the available space on the first line and just added the few extant words below, as close to the previous word as possible).

¹⁸ Clancier 2009, p. 61 dates his activity to 221-213 BC.

¹⁹ BRM 2 30 (109 SE); CM 12 4 (109 SE); YOS 20 49 (106 SE); YOS 20 58 and 59 and **No. 82-P** (BM 109949 =HANEM 8, pp. 188-190) all three have the date lost, but the co-regency of the two Anthiocuses and the preserved part of the scribe's name suggest SE 102-119 as a possible date range. See also commentary to **No. 73-P**, below.

²⁰ [PN] ¹⁴umbisag dumu šá ¹⁴60-en-šú-nu a ¹⁴é-kur-za-kir: **No. 69-P**, rev. 27; [...¹⁴]umbisag dumu šá ¹⁴60-en-šú-nu a ¹⁴é-kur-za-kir: **No. 70-P**, rev. 34. As can be seen from the pictures (see Tables LXIX and LXX, below), both tablets have round corners and the handwriting is less accurate than on the tablets by the hand of Nidinti-Anu.

We have no evidence of his having been active also as a scholarly scribe but we know that he wrote a number of archival documents.²¹ As stated before, he shares with his father the use of the variant spelling for *babbanûtu* and some of his tablets show inconsistencies in the use of the determinative for professional names, and in the use of the sign for the conjunction *u* (for which he seems to alternate between *u* and *ú* with no specific reason other than, probably, the need to accommodate a certain number of signs within the line).

A few documents can, finally, be attributed to the other son of Nidinti-Anu, Anu-bēšunu, who was named after his grandfather. He was active around the end of the Seleucid domination over Babylonia as is suggested by the two contracts he drafted in SE 137 and 162 respectively.

8.2.3 The Šamaš-ētir Branch

A third group of scribes claiming Ekur-zākir as an ancestor may be identified as the Šamaš-ētir branch of the family: they are Anu-uballit/Ina-qibit-Anu, his brother Šamaš-ētir and the latter's son Ina-qibit-Anu.²² The Ina-qibit-Anu/Anu-uballit, scribe of **No. 104-RE**, whose clan name is lost in lacuna, may also be attached to this group. Altogether they wrote twelve tablets in a time span of around forty years, between SE 120 and SE 159 (Table 48).

Table 51. Tablets written by scribes of the Šamaš-ētir branch

Scribe	Tot. docs	Earliest	Latest	Tablet No.
Šamaš-ētir/Ina-qibit-Anu//EZ	5	120	149	87-P//88-P; 90-P; 91-P; 99-RE
Anu-uballit/Ina-qibit-Anu//EZ	1	159	—	103-RE
Ina-qibit-Anu/Šamaš-ētir//EZ	6	151	163	100-RE//101-RE; 107-?; 110-P; 111-M//112-M

Šamaš-ētir is well known for the scholarly tablets he wrote and owned;²³ in addition, he was known for having been the scribe of two of the published archival documents (CM 12 6 and VS 15 32). The BM collection houses five more tablets (including a pair of duplicates) that can be assigned to his hand, confirming that he was active as a scribe of secular documents during the first half of the second century of the Seleucid era.

Among the few variant spellings that characterise his hand, most notably stands a certain preference for the logographic form of the name Ina-qibit-Anu (which in some instances he spells ^l*ina-e-^d60* besides the more common ^l*ina-qí-bit-^d60*). Although this usage is not consistent in the tablets he wrote, it is interesting to note that one of the two contemporary scribes with whom he shared this feature is his brother Anu-uballit.²⁴

Šamaš-ētir's son, Ina-qibit-Anu, is the author of several contracts, four of which (plus two duplicates) are part of the BM collection.²⁵ As far as we know, he was neither the author nor the owner of scholarly tablets.

21 Among them e.g. BRM 2 33; BRM 2 36; BiMes 24 22 and TCL 13, 244//**No. 94-P**.

22 Hunger 1968, p. 17.

23 See Hunger 1968, under the name; for a synthesis of his career see Wallenfels 1998, p. 38. On his activity as a scholar see also Robson 2007.

24 The other scribe who used it is Papsukkal-bānūšu, son of Nidinti-Anu, also claiming descent from the Ekur-zākir; according to Hunger's reconstruction of the family stem he is one of the sons of Nidinti-Anu/Anu-bēšunu, thus a member of Nidinti-Anu's branch of the EZ family (see Hunger 1968, p. 18 and Lewenton p. 105, where the name is read Papsukkal-bāni). To the tablet (BRM 2 43//YOS 20 74) known to Hunger, where the logographic spelling of the name Ina-qibit-Anu occurs, we can now add BiMes 24 27//29 and YOS 20 72, both featuring Papsukkal-bānūšu as scribe: while in BiMes 24 27//29 the syllabic form for the personal name is used, in YOS 20 72 both spellings alternate in the same tablet. As for Anu-uballit he uses the logographic spelling in CM 12 9, where also he alternates between the syllabic and logographic form. The syllabic spelling only occurs in **Nos. 102-RE//103-RE**.

25 Other texts from Hellenistic Uruk that may be assigned to this scribe are CM 12 10//YOS 20 82; RIAA² 295//BRM 2 50; TCL 13 246; BRM 2 49//AoF 5 10+; VDI 1955/4, 3. See the commentary on this scribe by Wallenfels 1998, p. 63.

Peculiar to him is the preference for a particular short spelling of the name of king Demetrius (*'de-meṭ-ri-su*), which in the corpus from Hellenistic Uruk occurs exclusively in the tablets he drafted; ²⁶ only on one occasion does he use a different, longer, form.²⁷ It is worth noting that only a few scribes operated during the reign of Demetrius but, in stark contrast to Ina-qibīt-Anu, they appear to have freely chosen between several different spellings of the king's name; the most prolific among them, Ina-qibīt-Anu's uncle, Anu-uballit, seems to have tried all the different possibilities in the texts he wrote.²⁸ Only one tablet in the BM collection, that can be attached to the clay workers' dossier, belongs to him (**No. 103-RE**).

Ina-qibīt-Anu is additionally worthy of notice for a peculiar use of the determinatives in one of the tablets he wrote. In **No. 100-RE** in fact, he uses *munus* instead of *lú* to designate the role of a woman as guarantor for the transaction; the classifier is followed by the (exceptional) feminine form of the participle *mu-mar-raq-at*. The spelling, which can be interpreted as a form of hyper-correctness and at the same time suggests some confusion on the part of the scribe between the determinative for professional names and that used to mark gender, is a hapax in the archival documents from Uruk. It is not clear, due to the tablet edge's poor state of preservation, if the form, which appears neatly written on the right edge of **No. 100-RE**, was also used on the duplicate (**No. 101-RE**). This is however conceivable since, as emerges from a careful comparison of the two documents, Ina-qibīt-Anu took much care in formatting them similarly.

As Fig. 13 shows, both on the obverse and the reverse of the two tablets, only slight differences; the content of each line tends to be identical (slight one- or two-word differences between the lines are marked § in the figure). The witness list, whose layout is organised into columns, occupies exactly the same position on the surface of the two tablets. Also the date formula of the two tablets, whose layout is atypical, is identical in the two specimens: Ina-qibīt-Anu writes its content over two lines; the second line is organised into three small text-blocks (consisting of the year number, the name of the reigning king and his title) and it is distributed on the surface with blanks in between so that the line is not completely filled in and results left-aligned.

Since the two tablets are quasi-xerox copies of one another, the lower portion of the obverse of **No. 100-RE** stands out as a bit of an oddity. Two vertical strokes, one clearly visible, the other partially erased, are impressed on a half-line size blank following Obv. 17. No trace of either a corresponding blank nor the vertical strokes is visible on the parallel section of the duplicate tablet (**No. 101-RE**), on whose obverse writing ends with line 17 and continues on the reverse without interruption.

The possibility that Ina-qibīt-Anu used the strokes as fillers for the extra room available on the bottom of the tablet's obverse seems unlikely.

An alternative scenario is that he started writing the content of the next line of text (i.e. the one now corresponding to the first line of the reverse) below line 17, shortly after realising that on the duplicate tablet that same line opened the reverse. He thus quickly erased the signs and re-wrote the text on the reverse.

It is not clear if Ina-qibīt-Anu had already written the entire line before erasing it or if, as the extant traces suggest, he had only impressed a few strokes. Close comparison of the position of what remains of the two strokes on the obverse of **No. 101-RE** and the first line of the reverse of **No. 100-RE**, reveals that they correspond, respectively, to the first vertical of the feminine classifier and to the masculine classifier (the 'Mr.' sign) preceding the name of Rihat-Anu on **No. 100-RE**. It is tempting to imagine that the scribe used those two strokes as guides for properly setting the layout of the line; erasing them only partially he offered us an insight into the procedure adopted by the scribes in drafting their tablets. Moreover, if this hypothesis proved true, it would also give us a clue that among the two copies of the same text, **No. 101-RE** represented the master, **No. 100-RE** being its duplicate.

²⁶ The spelling occurs in TCL 13 246; VDI 1955/4, 3, **No. 106-P**. It is also attested in the fragment **No. 107-?** that might thus be ascribed to his own hand (as already tentatively suggested by Monerie 2014, p. 204; the text is referred to as K. 4790 in Monerie's table).

²⁷ The text is **Nos. 100-RE//101-RE**, where the king's name is spelled *'de-e-mé-de-ri-su*.

²⁸ For the spellings of this name and the related scribes see Monerie 2014, pp. 203-204, Annexe 5.

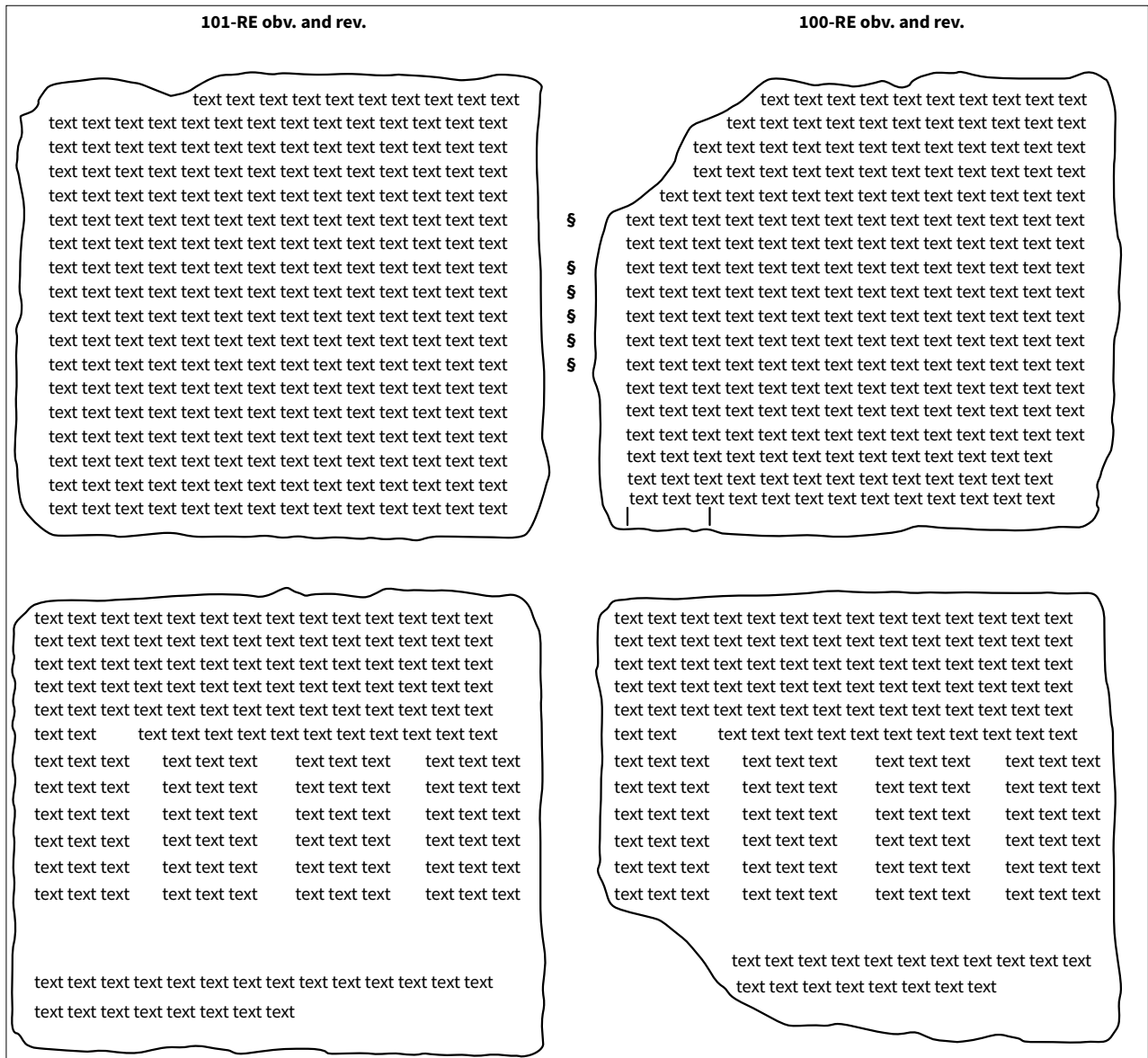


Figure 13. Schematic representation of the layout of Nos. 100-RE and 101-RE

8.3 Scribes Belonging to the Kurî and the Gimil-Anu Clans

Three scribes belonging to the Kurî clan are recorded in the tablets housed in the British Museum; the name of a fourth individual, while not preserved, may be safely restored. All together they wrote five contracts all dating to the first century of the Seleucid Era (Table 52).

Table 52. Tablets written by scribes of the Kurî and Gimil-Anu clan

Scribe	Earliest doc.	Latest doc.	Tablet No.
Kurî			
Ištar-šum-ēreš/Anu-eriba//K (2)	70	99	68-P; 46-RE;
Anu-uballit/Enlil-ahu-iddin//K	15	—	3-RE
Nanāya-iddin/Ina-qibit-Anu//K	22	44	5-P; 19-P
Gimil-Anu			
Ina-qibit-Anu/Lâbâši/Lišir//GA	139	144	96-RE; 97-RE
Anu-ahhē-iddin/Anu-ab-ušur//GA?	18-31	—	6-RE

With the exception of Ištar-šumu-ēreš/Anu-eriba//K, author of two of our tablets and several more archival documents from Uruk,²⁹ not much is known about them.

Anu-uballit/Enlil-ahu-iddin is recorded only as the scribe of **No. 3-RE**. The inaccurate script (featuring a number of allographs for common signs and markedly leaning up towards the right), the irregular layout of the tablet (including the relative order and alignment of captions, names and seal impressions on the edges; the indentation of the witness list from the second line on; the many lines of the obverse whose text spills onto the right edge) all together concur in giving the idea that Anu-uballit was an inexperienced scribe.

Nanāya-iddin's tablets (**No. 5-P** and **No. 19-P**) also feature several inaccuracies: he omits determinatives, seal captions and might have mistaken the name of a witness when writing the caption of the seal impression corresponding to one of the witnesses. As in the case of Anu-uballit, the layout of the tablets he wrote is inaccurate.

Only a few scribes stemming from the Gimil-Anu clan are known in Hellenistic Uruk. Two of them occur as scribes for documents in the BM collection.

Ina-qibit-Anu was active in the later periods and appears to have been mainly involved in the registration of contracts dealing with tenured properties of the temple. He is the scribe who drafted the two contracts mentioning the assignation of tenured land by order of the *rab ša rēš āli* that I have extensively discussed above (**Nos. 96-RE** and **97-RE**; see above § 5.4).

Anu-ahhē-iddin/Anu-ab-ušur//GA, conversely, acts as scribe at the beginning of the Seleucid Era. He drafted one tablet in the BM collection (**No. 6-RE**) in addition to the one known from the corpus (YOS 20 10). No specific trend may be detected in the texts ascribed to his hand.

It may not be a coincidence that the evidence on scribes claiming descent from the two clans of Gimil-Anu and Kurî is scanty, both in the archival documents and in the colophons of scholarly tablets.

²⁹ See Wallenfels 1998, pp. 18-19.

8.4 ‘Foreign’ Scribes in Uruk?

A few scribes who wrote tablets now housed in the BM collection are identified in the date formula only by their name, title and patronymic: no ancestor’s names complete their onomastic chains (Table 53).

Table 53. Tablets written by scribes with no clan affiliation

Scribe	Earliest doc.	Latest doc.	Tablet No.
Anu-erība/Rabi-Anu	53	—	27-RE
Bēl-ēreš/Nabû-nāšir	37	—	10-P//11-P
Bēl-ahhē-iddin/Anu-uballissu	18	—	4-P
Nazi-muruttaš/Enlil-šumu-imbi	32	38	7-P; 9-P//YOS 20 17; 13-P

In the case of Anu-erība/Rabi-Anu it is likely that the absence of clan affiliation is entirely accidental. Only another scribe by the same name, in fact, is known in Hellenistic Uruk: i.e., the author of OECT 9 15; there he claims descent from the Kurîs, so that it is plausible that Anu-erība/Rabi-Anu is the father of the Ištar-šumu-ēreš, whose career as a scribe I discussed above.

Of great significance are the dossiers of the three scribes that in addition to not bearing an ancestor name as part of their onomastic chain, also feature a non-Urukean name. The names of two of them are made up with the theonym Bēl (Bēl-ēreš and Bēl-ahhē-iddin); the third is named after the Kassite king Nazi-muruttaš.

Bēl-ēreš is the son of Nabû-nāšir: as shown by Boiy, both his onomastics and the explicit reference to him as ‘son of Babylon’ in a contract from Yale confirm that he originated from Babylon.³⁰ His presence in Uruk is likely a relic of the influence of North Babylonian families in the Eanna cult in Uruk that characterised the Neo-Babylonian period.³¹

Only two archival documents record Bēl-ēreš as scribe: **No. 10-P** (with its duplicate **No. 11-P**) and the fragmentary tablet SpTU 5 311.³² Careful examination of the duplicate tablets housed in London reveals some interesting details relevant to the present analysis.

Most remarkable is the layout of the right edges of the two tablets, which differs substantially from the one in use in Uruk in the Seleucid period. As is clear from Fig. 14, writing on the right edge of **Nos. 10-P//11-P** develops across the edge, parallel to its short axis. This, as Altavilla and Walker have shown, is the typical arrangement of seal captions on the edge of tablets from Babylon dating to the Seleucid period, in contrast to the Urukean habit of writing the captions along the edge, parallel to the tablet’s long axis.³³

Given the Babylonian origin of the scribe who drafted the two tablets, it is tempting to see in the adoption of such a rare layout for a tablet written in Uruk the reflection of the Babylonian habit of formatting the layout of the tablets’ edges, possibly due to the fact that he was educated in Babylon.

30 Bēl-ēreš is mentioned as a witness in YOS 20 20: rev. 8, which runs as follows: ^ld^aen-kám dumu šá ^ld^aag-na-šir a tin.tir^{ki}

31 Boiy 2011.

32 New reading of the tablet by Boiy 2011.

33 Altavilla, Walker 2016, p. 23.

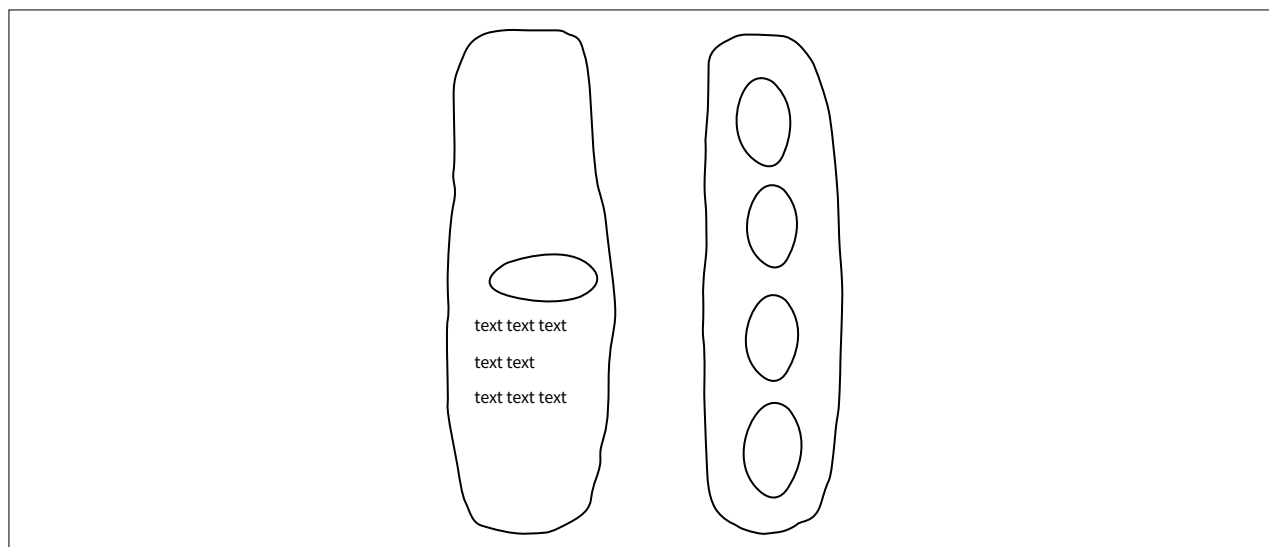


Figure 14. Schematic representation of the layout of the right edge of **No. 10-P** (left) in contrast to usual Urukian tablets (right)

Moreover, as we have noted above, **No. 10-P** and its duplicate record the sale of a *mubannûtu* prebend; this title is a hapax in Uruk, where the prebend of the arranger of the sacrificial table is not attested in the Hellenistic period. Conversely, it occurs in Babylon. Similarities between the characteristics of this prebend and that of the *gerseqqû*, that is on the contrary well known in Uruk but whose content is not very clear, make it likely that writing **Nos. 10-P//11-P** Bêl-êreš opted for describing the prebend that is the object of the contract using the ‘Babylonian’ word more familiar to him for the title (*mubannûtu*), instead of adopting the odd ‘Urukian’ term *gerseqqûtu*.

On the Babylonian origins of Bêl-ahhê-iddin/Anu-bullissu, the scribe of **No. 4-P**, the evidence is less straightforward, yet a few factors support it. Although no more occurrences of his name are, in fact, recorded in the corpus from Hellenistic Uruk, a certain Bêl-ahhê-iddin (whose patronym is not registered) is mentioned at the same time of two individuals, named Nidinti-Bêl and Ubar, in an administrative tablet from Babylon (BRM 1 99), where they all appear as recipients of silver in return for their service as gatekeepers for the *akîtu* temple.

It is worth noting that a witness named Ubar is mentioned in the Urukian tablet (**No. 4-P**) written by Bêl-ahhê-iddin: Ubar is described there as the son of Anu-ahu-ittannu, of the clan Kidin-Marduk. Given the Babylonian origins of this clan, it is tempting to suggest that he is the same Ubar who figures next to Bêl-ahhê-iddin in BRM 1 99, and to identify the two individuals occurring in BRM 1 99 with those of **No. 4-P**.

A second individual claiming Kidin-Marduk as ancestor appears in the witness list of **No. 4-P**, namely Nanâya-iddin/Nidinti-Anu//KM. No further evidence of Nanâya-iddin is available in the corpus; however there is a chance that he is the brother of a certain Anu-uballit/Nidinti-Anu//KM who acts as witness in BRM 2 3 and OECT 9 5 and also appears in the onomastic chain of the two women that act as parties to the transaction recorded in YOS 20 15, who are identified as the wife and daughter of Anu-uballit/Nidinti-Nanâya//KM, respectively. He is moreover likely to be recognised as the ‘son of Nidinti-Anu//KM’, whose name is lost, to whom the witness list of the same contract refers.

The fact that Anu-uballit acted as witness in BRM 2 3 is especially relevant, since this is the only tablet from Hellenistic Uruk recording the sale of a prebend of gatekeeper’s superintendant that has come down to us. There is a chance that his involvement in this particular transaction is somehow connected to the North-Babylonian origins of his family (i.e. the Kidin-Marduks), as might be implied by the fact that, as we have seen before, his brother acted as witness in a transaction along two gatekeepers of the *akîtu* temple of Babylonian origin (namely, the witness Ubar and the scribe Bêl-ahhê-iddin).

More ‘Babylonian connections’ can be detected in the documents involving members of the Kidin-Marduk family. As a matter of fact, the contract involving Anu-uballit’s wife and his daughter (YOS

20 15), which he himself may have witnessed, was written by the Babylonian scribe Bêl-êreš; interestingly, witness to this same transaction was also Nazi-muruttaš, the third scribe of foreign origins who is known to have drafted tablets belonging to the BM collection.

Nazi-muruttaš was neither a member of the traditional families of Hellenistic Uruk, nor an Urukean; he most probably originated from Nippur.³⁴ He features as witness or scribe in a bunch of archival documents from Uruk, plus a tablet that he wrote in the so far unidentified city of Antiochia on the Ištar Canal (YOS 20 20) that however involves Urukean individuals (in particular, one of the parties is Lâbâši's father).³⁵

In several of the documents featuring Nazi-muruttaš also Bêl-êreš/Nabû-nâšir is mentioned. Besides YOS 20 15, for example, Bêl-êreš is among the witnesses of YOS 20 20 written by Nazi-muruttaš, while Nazi-muruttaš appears in the witness list of **Nos. 10-P//11-P**, written by Bêl-êreš/Nabû-nâšir.

As recorded in **No. 7-RE**, Nazi-muruttaš is the scribe of one of the two contracts in Uruk where the name of the exorcist's prebend is rendered by its logographic spelling instead of the more common syllabic one, a peculiarity that is tempting to assign to the hand of a scribe of foreign origin.

Some elements concur in suggesting that Nazi-muruttaš had a stake in agricultural land. We know that he wrote at least two of the few documents dealing with arable land (YOS 20 18 and 19) from Uruk and there is a chance that he is referred to in a fragmentary tablet (probably recording a lease contract) concerning agricultural land.³⁶ Curiously, the reverse of a recently published scribal exercise from Nippur associated the name Nazi-muruttaš and the formula (ús.sa.du še.numun) used in the contracts to describe fields. Should we expect, in the light of the evidence analysed so far, the association to be not entirely accidental?³⁷

Nazi-muruttaš was not the only individual from Nippur in Uruk: another individual whose onomastics points to a Nippurean, i.e. Nidinti-Ištar/Arad-Ninurta (with no clan name), is in fact listed among the witnesses to one of the tablets he wrote (**No. 7-RE**).³⁸

All in all, the several interconnections between the documents where Bêl-êreš, Bêl-ahhê-iddin, Nazi-muruttaš and members of the Kidin-Marduk family are involved point to the existence, at the beginning of the Seleucid era, of a pool of individuals of Northern/Central-Babylonian origin playing a part in the affairs of the temple of Uruk.

Although the resulting picture is perhaps influenced by the archives evenness, one wonders whether the relationship between them and the early generations of the Lâbâši family (as witnessed, for example, by the involvement of Lâbâši's father in the contract recorded by Nazi-muruttaš), stood perhaps at the basis of the family's rise at the beginning of the Seleucid period.

The points of contact between the contracts are summarised in Table 54, below.

³⁴ As already shown by Doty 1977, p. 195 and Wallenfels 1994, p. 68, #448; see recently also Frazer 2013, pp. 204-205 and 2016, p. 176.

³⁵ The contracts where Nazi-muruttaš appears are listed by Frazer 2013, p. 204, fn. 103, to which **No. 13-P** must be added (Frazer 2016, p. 176, fn. 8); note that, contrary to Frazer's statement, he is the scribe of YOS 20 20 but not one of the witnesses there. In addition, YOS 20 17 has a duplicate in the BM collection, namely **No. 9-P** (BM 109956). BM 104805 quoted by Frazer *via* Brinkman is published below as **No. 7-P**.

³⁶ The fragment BaMB 2 131 is referred to by Frazer (2013, p. 204, fn. 103) as an "administrative document" where Nazi-muruttaš (the name is only partially preserved) might be mentioned (corrections and an improved reading of the fragment are offered by Hunger 1984, p. 424, ad #131). Although the typology of the document is unclear due its poor state of preservation, what remains of its content ([... *zaq-pi*] *u ka šul-pi* and a reference to 10 years) suggests that its object was agricultural land and it was a lease contract for ten years.

³⁷ See Frazer 2016. Frazer (p. 177), on the basis of the scanty evidence on the provenance of the tablet at her disposal, suggests the early Persian period as a possible date for the scribal exercise; it must be noted that the tentative alternative setting of the document to the early Seleucid period proposed here would not change her conclusions, which remain valid.

³⁸ It is maybe worth noting that the Arad-Ninurta family is known for having provided many of the interpreter-scribes of Uruk. The implications of this are the object of discussion of a work by the present author currently in preparation.

Table 54. Points of contact between the documents

	Bēl-ēreš/Nabû-nāšir	Nazi-muruttaš/ Enlil-šumu-imbi	Bēl-ahhē-iddin/ Anu-bullissu = Bēl-ahhē-iddin gatekeeper?	Ubar gatekeeper= Ubar/Anu-ahu- ittannu//KM(?)	Sons of Nidinti-Anu//KM
YOS 20 15 (Uruk)	scribe	witness			witness KM (Anu-uballit?)
YOS 20 20 (Antiochia on the Ištar Canal)	witness	scribe			
No. 10-P//11-P (Uruk)	scribe	witness			
No. 04-P (Uruk)			scribe	witness KM clan (Bab. origin?)	witness KM (Nanāya-iddin brother of Anu-uballit?)
BRM 1 99 (Babylon)			gatekeeper Babylonian	gatekeeper Babylonian	
BRM 2 3 (Uruk)					witness KM (Anu-uballit) object: gatekeeper prebend