



Fig. 5 Drawing of YBC 6830 (YPM BC 020896)
(For a photograph see <https://collections.peabody.yale.edu/search/Record/YPM-BC-020896>)

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89) The adventures of a fugitive slave in the Old Babylonian period* — CUSAS 43, 59 (= Spada 2019: 121–123) is a tablet of which about one-half of the original length is preserved. It contains three documents, each ending with a date but without any lists of witnesses.¹⁾

The second document recorded on the tablet is about a female slave named Ali-aḫī and her third escape attempt towards the land of Amurru. The first two lines of this document are also recorded in a fragmentary text from Nippur, published by D. Owen in NATN 354, which he has dated to the Ur III period (cf. Owen 1982: 26, and Pl. 87).

Now, a new version of this same event has been identified in EES 180 (= Wilson 2008: 272–273), a Type I tablet collecting five model contracts—the first of which was published in Spada 2021—that ends with a colophon: ^{1d}EN.ZU-na-wi-ir / [du]b-sar / *sign traces*, “Sîn-nawir, the scribe²⁾ ...” (rev. ii 18–20). While dealing with the same episode and the same characters, the version recorded in EES 180 presents some significant differences compared to the version appearing in CUSAS 43, 59, and probably in NATN 354. Since the text in NATN 354 has only been partially preserved, it is not possible to state with certainty that it definitely corresponds to that recorded in CUSAS 43, 59.

The transliterations and translations of these three texts, which are to be considered tentative, are provided below. It should be noted that the transliteration and interpretation of CUSAS 43, 59 §2, as given in Spada 2019: 122, has been partially modified on the basis of EES 180.

Text 1 Publication: EES 180 Museum n°: PARS 12/01, 152 CDLI: P273879

r. i.	16	1	1 ba-bala	“One traded [?] (slave), named Ali-aḫī, the female slave of Lugal-inim-gina, because she had (illegally) picked up things in the house of Iddin-Išum, the singer, and then had fled away, [Lugal-inim-gina, her owner [?]] has sworn on the king’s name that he will pay to Iddin-Išum one-third mina of silver as its compensation.”
	17	2	¹ a-li ₂ -a-ḫi mu-ni	
	18	3	geme ₂ lugal-inim-gi-na	
	19	4	mu e ₂ i-din- ^d i-šum ₂ [?] / nar	
	20	5	im-deg _x -deg _x -ga-a	
	21	6	u ₃ ba-zaḫ _x -a-še ₃	
	22	7	ziz ₂ -da-bi-še ₃	
	23	8	½ ma-na kug-babbar	
	24	9	i-din- ^d i-šum ₂ [?] -ra ¹ some lines missing	
r. ii.	1	x+10	in-na-la ₂ -e	
	2	x+11	mu lugal-bi in-pad ₃	

Textual notes

1. I consider that 1 ba-bala is in place of the expected 1 saḡ-munus, “one woman”, which usually precedes female slave names in Old Babylonian model contracts, therefore indicating the status of Ali-aḫī. I have tentatively interpreted ba-bala here as a noun from a passive verbal form of the Sumerian bala, equated to the Akkadian *šupēlu* (cf. CAD Š₃ s.v. *šupēlu*, p. 321, mng. 1, “to exchange (property)”, including slaves). However, as far as I know, this use of the expression ba-bala is not attested elsewhere. If this interpretation makes sense, Lugal-inim-gina would temporarily transfer his slave Ali-aḫī to the house of Iddin-Išum, the musician.

5. Molina (2021: 157–158) argues that the Sumerian verb deg_x(RI) used with e₂, “house”, clearly means “to plunder, strip (a house)”, being equated to the Akkadian *luqqutu*, which has this same meaning (cf. CAD L, s.v. *laqātu*, mng. 4, p. 101). However, as Marten Stol suggested to me, the verb *laqātu* primarily refers to chickens picking up grain from the ground.³⁾ By transposing this meaning of “gathering little by little” to the actions of a dishonest slave, we can interpret this verb as “illegally picking up this or that in a house”, which a slave can easily do. Accordingly, deg_x(RI) is here equated to the Akkadian *luqqutu*, with the meaning “to pick up, gather, to collect” (CAD L, s.v. *laqātu*, mng. 3, p. 101). Therefore, Ali-aḫī, after being transferred to Iddin-Išum’s house, would have committed pilferage and then run away.

7-x+11. Since the responsibility for the misdeeds of the slave lies with her owner, Lugal-inim-gina must swear in the king’s name that he will pay Iddin-Išum twenty shekels of silver as compensation. For the latest discussion on the Sumerian term ziz₂-da, see Marchesi 2021: 151–152, with previous bibliography.

Text 2 Publication: CUSAS 43, 59 Museum n°: MS 2295 CDLI: P251535

obv.	9'	1	1 ba-bala a-li ₂ -a-ḫi mu-ni geme ₂ [lu]gal-inim-gi-na
	10'	2	mu kur mar-du ₂ -še ₃ a-ra ₂ 3-kam ba- ^r zaḫ _x -a ^r
	11'	3	[u ₃ e ₂ i-d]in- ^d i-šum nar in-deg _x -deg _x -ga-še ₃
	12'	4	[...]ni-še ₃ in- ^r dab ₅ [?] ½ ma-na kug-babbar lugal-inim-gi-na
	13'	5	[i-din- ^d i-šum-ra in-na-la ₂ it]i ne-ne-ḡar ud 5-kam ba-zal
	14'	6	[mu nu-ur ₂ - ^d]iškur lugal

“One traded[?] (slave), named Ali-aḫī, the female slave of [Lu]gal-inim-gina, because she had fled to the land of Amurru for the third time, [and] had (illegally) picked up things [in the house of Id]din-Išum, the musician, he captured[?] her as his[?] [...]. Lugal-inim-gina [paid Iddin-Išum] one-third mina of silver. [Month] V, day 5; [year: ‘Nūr]-Adad (became) king.”

Textual notes

1. In Spada 2019: 122, the term preceding the slave’s name was read as ba-buluḡ, and tentatively interpreted and translated as “a foster child”, from the Sumerian verb buluḡ₃, equated to the Akkadian *tarbītu*, “child placed for rearing”. However, based on the new reading of the first line in Text 1, I checked the photographs of this tablet again and realized that the sign is bala and not buluḡ.

2–3. This is different from Text 1, as here the verbal actions are reversed. First the verb ba-zaḫ_x-a appears, with additional information, i.e. the direction of escape towards the land of Amurru; then the verb in-deg_x-deg_x-ga. In this version, it seems that Ali-aḫī accidentally reached the musician’s house during her third escape attempt. Hence, she would not have been voluntarily transferred from her owner, as interpreted in text 1, on the basis of ba-bala in the first line. That being so, it is not possible to offer a valid interpretation of ba-bala here.

4. As I noted in Spada 2019: 122, the reading in-dab₅ is tentative since the sign looks more like LU than KU. At this time, I have no valid hypothesis to offer for the expression preceding this verb form.

Text 3 Publication: NATN 354 Museum n°: CBS 10171 CDLI: P121052

obv.	1	1	ba-bur ₂ ¹ a-li ₂ -a-ḫi	“(One) . . . , Ali-aḫī, the female slave of Lugal-
	2	2	geme ₂ lugal-inim-gi-na	inim-gina, because she had fled to the land of
	3	3	mu kur mar-du ₂ -še ₃	Amurru for the third time, (<i>rest missing</i>).”
	4	4	a-ra ₂ 3-kam ba-zaḫ ₃ -a-š[e ₃]	
			<i>rest missing</i>	

Textual notes: D. Owen considered this text as dated to the Ur III period, and described it as follows: “fragmentary text recording an incident of a servant girl who fled to the land of Martu for a third time. From Luinimgina archive(?)” (Owen 1982: 26). However, the fact that it is apparently not dated—the lower part of the reverse, where the date is normally expected, is blank—might suggest that it is a school text from the Old Babylonian period instead.

1. Here the sign is clearly BUR₂, and the expression ba-bur₂ is not preceded by DIŠ. Furthermore, the slave’s name is not followed by the expression mu-ni (Akkadian *šumšu*), which is a reference to the social status of the person, identifying him/her as a slave. I have no valid proposals for this verb form, assuming that the scribe really wanted to write BUR₂ and not BALA. Sumerian bur₂ could be equated here to the Akkadian *pašāru*, with the meaning of “to pay as compensation” (cf. Prang 1977: 229–230). Therefore it would not indicate the status of Ali-aḫī, but would refer to the payment of compensation, as explained in Text 1 l. 7. However, its initial position preceding the slave’s name does not seem to justify this interpretative hypothesis. For the same reasons, it seems to me that we can exclude its meaning of “to settle, resolve (a legal case)” (cf. CAD P s.v. *pašāru*, mng, 4 p. 239)—a sort of synonym of di til-la—since ba-bur₂ is not separate from the rest of the text, as is normally the case for the heading di til-la.

Discussion

It is evident that we are faced with three texts which seem to deal with the same event, even if the individual actions have a different order in at least two of the three texts. In fact, since only the first four lines of Text 3 have been preserved, we cannot be sure that it continues in the same way as Text 2: the alleged presence of the terminative -še₃ at the end of line 3, seems to indicate that the causal subordination, started on the previous line, contains only the verb zaḫ₃.

An open issue concerns the interpretation of the verb form occurring at the beginning of the texts—which is ba-bala in Texts 1 and 2, and ba-bur₂ in Text 3. This variation is clearly explained by the extreme similarity of the signs BALA and BUR₂, which are easily confused, especially in the Old Babylonian period.

However, since the interpretation of the ba-bala form offered in Text 1 does not seem to fit the unfolding of the story as told in Text 2—and perhaps also in Text 3—it is not currently possible to hypothesize that the scribe of Text 3 has mistakenly written BUR₂ instead of BALA, also omitting the initial DIŠ.

Equally, it is not possible to hypothesize that the opposite occurred—ba-bur₂ mistakenly written as ba-bala, to which DIŠ has been added, in Texts 1 and 2—since at this time I have no valid proposal for the interpretation of ba-bur₂ in Text 3.

Notes

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Abbreviations follow CDLI’s list, available at https://cdli.ox.ac.uk/wiki/abbreviations_for_assyriology (accessed July 25, 2022).

1. As written in Spada 2019: 121, it is not clear what the function of this tablet was. Since it seems to be written by an inexperienced hand, this would suggest a school context for this collection.

2. As de Boer (2017: 27, fn. 14) pointed out, a scribe named Šin-nawir closes the list of witnesses in four tablets, all dated to Sumu-la-El 30–32. They are: YOS 14, 140 rev. 5 (Sumu-la-El 30/vii); BBVOT 1, 62 rev. 6 (Sumu-la-El 31/xi/-); BBVOT 1, 63 rev. 5 (Sumu-la-El 31/xi/-); YOS 14, 119 rev. 8 (Sumu-la-El 32/v/-).

3. Marten Stol (personal communication, July 2022) informed me that F. R. Kraus had learned this in class from B. Landsberger.

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90) La Houe et l’Araire (Al-Apin). Un fragment perdu et retrouvé — Aux nombreuses tablettes et fragments de Nippur conservés au musée de Philadelphia qui permettent de reconstituer cette diatribe, il faut ajouter au moins la tablette N 1550 (P276678). Ce fragment est un join au texte Bn N 3991 + N 1560 (P276688) qui comme lui saute la ligne 54 (homioarcton). La face est le haut de la colonne ii et le revers le bas de la colonne iii. C’est certainement celui qui était en possession de Civil et dont parle Mittermayer (2019) à la p. 285 de son édition.

Col. ii (face ii)

- ii 2=51 gud udu ^dša[gan₂-na lu-a-bi] ^ra₂¹ mu-da-an-e₃-^re²
« Je permets d’élever le bétail de Šakkan qu’on y fait paître »
- ii 3=52 ^gišal ħulu-[bi buru₃-da z]_{u₂} ħulu-bi sir₂-ra
« Houe mal percée, à la dent mal serrée »
- ii 4=53 ^gišal im-m[a Ø ki]_{ġ₂}-ġa₂ la₂-a
« Houe qui reste bloquée à travailler dans la glaise »
- ii 5=54 Ø
- ii 6=55 ^gišal ^giš[u₃-šub-ba] im-ma u₄ zal-la lu₂-lu₇ nu-luĥ-ĥa
« Houe toujours dans l’argile du moule à briques, que nul ne rince »
- ii 7=56 pu₂ ba-^ral sur₃¹ [ba-al l]_{u₂} en₃-dur-ru ba-al
« (tu veux) creuser des puits, mais (tu) ne creuses que des trous, (on dirait) quelqu’un qui se gratte le nombril, »
- ii 8=57 ġiš.[LAGAB(gur₄²) uku₂-ra-bi š]u nam-para₁₀-ga-ka nu-tum₂-ma
« toi dont le misérable bout de bois ne sied pas à une main royale, »
- ii 9=58 [šu urdu lu₂-ka s]aġ me-te-aš bi₂-ib-ġal₂
« mais convient tout au plus à la main d’un esclave, »
- ii 10=59 [ze₄-e ġa₂-ra in g]_{e₁₇} mu-e-tub₂
« C’est toi qui me lances une amère insulte! »
- ii 11=60 ...

Col. iii (revers i)

- 148 ni]_{ġ₂}² ^rsa²- ĥa¹ a[m₃-...]
« Je fais pousser les pommiers, qui donnent des fruits. »
- 149]-gal-e-ne(-)[...]
« Ces fruits sont le digne ornement de la maison des dieux »
- 150 [nu-^giškir₆-ke₄ dam du]mu-ni a₂ mu-d[a-an-e₃ (?)]-^ren¹
« et je permets au jardinier d’élever sa famille. »
- 151 i[d₂-da ^g]_{is}keš_{e₂}-da um-mi-ak ġiri₃ s[i um-m]i-sa₂
« Je fais un barrage sur la rivière et trace le chemin, »
- 152 ki-^rba¹ [an]-za-gara₃ gu₂-ba um-mi-du₃
« Je construis à côté une ferme fortifiée, »