

**33) Babylonian Miscellanea 3. Blacksmithing as a family profession** — The document presented below deserves attention for several reasons. Among the apprenticeship contracts published a few years ago by Johannes Hackl,<sup>1)</sup> no-one deals with blacksmiths. Admittedly, BM 60944 is not a contract, but a text made for internal use by the temple administration, i.e. a type of memorandum. The text reveals how the relationship between the temple's dependent and the temple functioned.

**BM 60944 (82-9-18, 920)**

5.5 x 4.1 cm

2.7.9Nbn

- Obv. 1. <sup>m</sup>ki-i-dutu du[mu?-šú šá PN šá ]  
 2. <sup>r</sup>bu-ne-ne-lugal-ù[ru dumu-šú <sup>lú</sup>...]  
 3. <sup>m</sup>utu-šeš-mu dumu-šú <sup>x</sup>1 [(...)]  
 4. <sup>m</sup>bu-ne-ne-dù dumu-šú <sup>lú</sup>kud  
 5. pap 3 lú dumu.meš šá <sup>m</sup>ki-i-dutu  
 6. <sup>lú</sup>simug-[ú-t]u ú-lam-mad  
 7. <sup>r</sup>man-da-at<sup>1</sup>-[tu<sup>4</sup>] <sup>r</sup>a-na<sup>1</sup>  
 9. <sup>d</sup>utu i-nam-din  
 Rev. 10. iti.du<sup>6</sup> u<sup>4</sup>.2.kam mu.9.kam  
 11. <sup>m</sup>ag-i lugal tin.ti<sup>ki</sup>  
 12. 5 gin kù.babbar ta iti.bár mu.9.kam  
 13. <sup>m</sup>an-da-at-tu<sup>4</sup> <sup>m</sup>ki-i-dutu  
 14. <sup>i</sup>t-ta-din 1 gin kù.babbar  
 15. [ina] igi-šú ri-e-ḫi

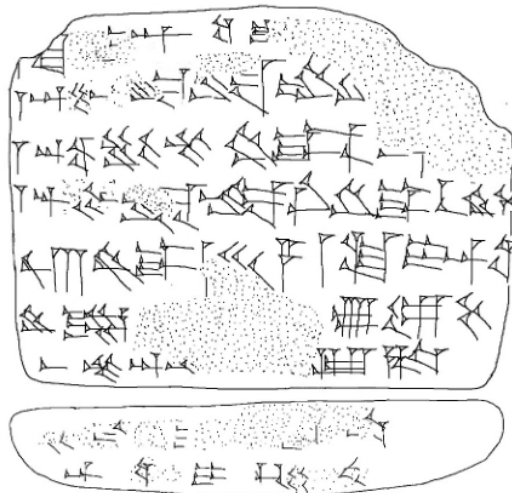
**Notes**

For l. 3, see below.

**Translation**

1-11. Kī-Šamaš, s[on of PN, who] teach the smith profession Bunene-šar-us[ur,...], Šamaš-aḫ-iddin, the... (and) Bunene-ibni, the crippled, total three sons of Kī-Šamaš - he will pay per year [six] shekels of silver as the *mandattu* obligation to (the temple) of Šamaš. Month Ulūlu, second day, ninth year of Nabonidus, king of Babylon.

12-14. Kī-Šamaš has paid five shekels of silver as the *mandattu*-obligation for the period from month Nisannu, ninth year; one shekel is outstanding [on] him.



The blacksmith Kī-Šamaš appears two times in CT 56, 87 IV, 17, 30 dated to 29.11.15Nbn in the ration list, first with another blacksmith and later together with twelve workers in Tekrit (Tagritain).<sup>2)</sup> However, it is doubtful if Kī-Šamaš from CT 56, 87 is identical with Kī-Šamaš from BM 60944 because a long period of 43 years passed from the fifteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar (590 BC) to the ninth year of Nabonidus (547 BC). Assuming that if Kī-Šamaš was at least fifteen years old in 590 BC, by 547 he would have been 68 years old. Although older people are known,<sup>3)</sup> it seems too late to begin teaching his sons in his profession.

Additionally, apprenticeship began rather at the young age of only 10 or so. If that were the case, Kī-Šamaš would have become a father in old age, which is rather unlikely. Although the idea that sons inherited their profession from their fathers is commonly accepted, BM 60944 is – according to my knowledge – the first such clear statement.

Out of three sons of Kī-Šamaš, two: Šamaš-aḥ-iddin and Bunene-šar-ušur, appear here for the first time. Two smiths with the name of Bunene-ibni, are known (Bongenaar 1997, 373), however, without a father's name, and as their activity ended in the time of Nebuchadnezzar, presumably neither is the same Bunene-ibni, son of Kī-Šamaš from the discussed text.

### Age or health?

The sequence in which the sons are named: Bunene-šar-ušur, Šamaš-aḥ-iddin and Bunene-ibni suggests that they are listed according to their age, from the oldest to the youngest, but it cannot be excluded that Bunene-ibni is mentioned last because of his health problems, as he is described with the term <sup>l</sup>kud. Such writing seems to be an abbreviation of <sup>l</sup>kud.kud.(du), the Akkadian *ḥummuru* translated as “shrunken, shriveled, crippled” (CAD H 235). According to *Šumma Izbu* (CT 27, 14: 32), cited in CAD, this defect was formed already in the mother's womb. Lexical texts suggest that the malfunction concerned a man's leg, but the text from Nuzi shows that the disease also affected the legs of horses, which were therefore unsuitable for harness.

Because of damage on the right side of the obverse of the tablet, it is impossible to say whether the defect concerned only the youngest brother, or all three; in modern times there are known cases of leg defects of a single family member, but also of multiple family members. In l. 2 the term describing Bunene-šar-ušur is totally damaged, while in l. 3 the reading of last partly preserved sign, presumably the term describing Šamaš-aḥ-iddin is highly uncertain.

### Terms for age or health

Few terms describing physical condition or age are known.<sup>4)</sup> Thus, an adult person was referred to as *itbaru*, a term never preceded by the determinative; sometimes the different term *lú = amēlu* was used. Both terms describe an able-bodied adult person. Other terms describe the age of the person: *ša šizbi*, “sucking, or breast-feeding child;” *dumu.1/2/3/4.kam*, “child of one/two/three/four years old,” not obliged to work; *rabû*, ‘adolescent,’ i.e. an infant outgrown child” (Kessler 2002), however, some texts suggest a different meaning of the term. In these texts concerning workers, in the heading in first column is the term *gal*, while in the second column is used, i.e. the first denoted a fully able-bodied person,<sup>5)</sup> while the second, Akkadian *šeḥru*, “young,” i.e. a person too young to fulfil the work norm.<sup>6)</sup> The term <sup>l</sup>šibu, abbreviated to <sup>l</sup>šī (MacGinnis 2003), “old man,” expressed advanced age and probably also the inability to perform the standard of work of his profession.

Apart from *ḥummuru*, in economic and administrative texts, other terms denoting physical disability are known. BM 78886,<sup>7)</sup> the long list of Hindaneans mentions one *ḥummuru* and one *sā'u*, translated as “wheeze, or wince,” the last term denoted probably a person with pulmonary problems. The third term is <sup>l</sup>mulāla, which “described some physical impairment associated with advanced age, e.g. lamed or sick, or that it designated a status that came from age”, translated as “feeble” (MacGinnis 2003, 99). In BM 60944: 3 the term referring to child or elderly person is naturally excluded, and the most probable reading is *g[al]* or *t[ur]*, i.e. fully able-bodied or young person, not able to perform the working norm of an adult man.

## 2. Typology of document

Undoubtedly, the person who decided that the document should be composed, or who wrote it (not mentioned by name, situation typical for administrative document) was an official of the Ebabbar temple administration, because Kī-Šamaš is mentioned in 3Ps Sing as the one who asked the temple for permission to teach his sons his blacksmith's profession.<sup>8)</sup> This means that Kī-Šamaš could not decide himself about his sons' future and needed the consent of the temple administration. This allows us to state that Kī-Šamaš and his sons (by inheritance of the legal status of their parents) belonged to the temple's dependent people, i.e. *širku*. However, because Kī-Šamaš was able to pay *mandattu* (*man-da-at-tu*) for his sons, presumably he also worked independently and paid *mandattu* for himself, too, but this was regulated in a different, unknown to us, document.

Kī-Šamaš received a positive answer to his request on condition that he paid *mandattu*, a payment that was supposed to compensate any expected profits from the work of his sons lost to the temple in the period of teaching. Such a charge was paid by a craftsman or his sub-tenant, an example of which is BM 67433 (Zawadzki 1997)<sup>9)</sup>. In this case Šamaš-ittiya, the prebendary baker of the Ebabbar temple was hired by Nabû-eṭit-napšāti, son of Ea-kāšir, descendant of the Ša-nāšišu family, presumably living in Babylon, where the document was written, who paid the Ebabbar temple ten shekels of silver as a *mandattu*. In the second document (Cyr 119) the slave baker is given as a pledge, and the creditor and debtor agreed that the debtor will not pay interest while the creditor will not pay a *mandattu* for the work of the pledged baker, i.e. the *mandattu* was equivalent to interest. As the most typical interest rate in a loan contract was one shekel per month, the *mandattu* was presumably the same, i.e. ca. 12 shekels per year.<sup>10)</sup>

BM 60944 reveals yet another situation: *mandattu* is paid in advance for income potentially lost by the temple for the period of apprenticeship. In the discussed text, the charge was six shekels of silver for a period of six months, from Nisannu to the month preceding the date of composition of the document at the very beginning of seventh month. Kī-Šamaš had already paid five shekels, while he still owed one shekel of silver. This means that the annual charge was twelve shekels, i.e., 4 shekels per year for each son. The charge was undoubtedly related to the sons, because the document did not change their father's duties in any way. The sum paid by the father in BM 60944 is significantly lower in comparison to ten shekels paid to the temple for a skilled baker (BM 67433 in Zawadzki 1997), but the sons did not yet have the professional qualifications that were to be acquired in their father's workshop; moreover, at least one of them was a disabled person. It should be stressed that the agreement was very favorable for the temple in comparison to the apprenticeship contracts. In many such contracts the temple participated in the costs of living (food and clothes) of the apprentice, at least during the first years of learning.<sup>11)</sup> In this case, the temple neither participated in the costs of learning, nor did it have to pay to the master for teaching. It is very difficult to answer the question about the circumstances of such a settlement, but it cannot be ruled out that the temple took advantage of two circumstances: (1) first and foremost, it was the father who wished to teach his sons, securing in this way better material and social prospects for his sons, (2) the temple's income would be much higher than if they remained unskilled. Undoubtedly, the material and social positions of a person disabled from birth who had acquired professional skills was much better, despite his legal status remaining unchanged. BM 60944 is the second case demonstrating that the *hummuru* disease did not interfere in the performance of a hard job if it did not require changing the place of residence.

#### Notes

1. Hackl 2007-2010. For studies, see Hackl 2010, and Kedar 2014 (both with earlier literature).
2. Mentioned by Bongenaar 1997, 375, although he did not exclude that two smiths of the same name might be mentioned there.
3. For lifespan and active period of occupation, see Gehlken 2005, 98-108.
4. For the terms, see MacGinnis 2003, 97-99.
5. BM 61263 and in CT 56, 586, and gal.meš to be translated rabūte in BM 73261 (MacGinnis 2004), in which it denotes adult persons.
6. See Zawadzki 2018, 427 and n. 69, contrary to MacGinnis 2004, who thinks that tur = šeḫru denoted "children."
7. See Zawadzki 2021.
8. San Nicolò 1950, 6 emphasized that the father usually taught his son(s) his profession.
9. As far as I know, such a meaning of the term *mandattu* has not been considered in the research conducted so far.
10. For a different meaning of *mandattu*, i.e. compensation paid by the master if he has not taught the apprenticeship within the agreed period and scope, see Petschow 1980-83, Hackl 2010 and in texts edited by Hackl 2007-2010.
11. See previous note, Petschow and Hackl.

#### Bibliography

- BONGENAAR, A. C.V.M (1997), *The Neo-Babylonian Ebabbar Temple at Sippar: Its Administration and Its Prosopography*, Istanbul.
- HACKL, J. (2007-2010), Neue spätbabylonische Lehrverträge aus dem British Museum und der Yale Babylonian Collection, *AfO* 52, 77-97.
- HACKL, J. (2010), Apprenticeship contracts, in M. JURSA *et al.*, *Aspects of the Economic History of Babylonia in the First Millennium BC. Economic Geography, Economic Mentalities, Agriculture, the Use of Money and the Problem of Economic Growth*, Münster, 700-725.
- KEDAR, S. (2014), Apprenticeship in the Neo-Babylonia Period: A Study of Bargaining Power, in: L. MARTI (ed.), *La famille dans le Proche-Orient ancien: réalités, symbolismes, et images. Proceedings of the 55th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale at Paris, 6-9 July 2009*, Winona Lake, Indiana.
- KESSLER, K-H. (2002), Zu lú rabû, *NABU* 2002/53.
- MACGINNIS, J. (2003), A Corvée Gang from the Time of Cyrus, *ZA* 93, 88-115.
- MACGINNIS, J. (2004), Servants of the Sun-God: Numbering the dependents of the Neo-Babylonian Ebabbara, *BaM* 35, pp. 27-38.
- PETSCHOW, H.P.H. Lehrverträge, *RLA* 6 (1980-1983), 556-570.
- SAN NICOLÒ, M. (1950), *Der neubabylonische Lehrvertrag in rechtsvergleichender Betrachtung*, München.
- ZAWADZKI, S. (1997), A Contribution to the Understanding *širkūtu* in the Light of a Text from the Ebabbar Archive, *AoF* 24, 226-230.
- ZAWADZKI, S. (2021), The Hindanaeans in the Neo-Babylonian Empire, *AfO* 54, 379-405.

Stefan ZAWADZKI <stefanzawadzki@wp.pl>