

14) Neo-Babylonian nagû — The term *nagû*, particularly common in Neo-Assyrian sources, is relatively rare in Neo-Babylonian texts. It appears occasionally in royal inscriptions, usually accompanied by the adjectives *nesû* or *bēru* (*nagû nesûti* or *bērûti* ‘remote, distant provinces’). It is equally seldom found in Neo-Babylonian administrative documents, where, however, its translation often poses problems.

While AHW attributes to *nagû* a single meaning (‘Bezirk’, *ibid.* 712a), CAD distinguishes between two denotations. The first one is well-established ‘district, province’ (CAD N/1 122-123); the second - ‘(an object or building made of wood)’ (*nagû* B, *ibid.* N1 123) - is a Neo-Babylonian term attested in a single document from the Eanna archive, GCCI 1, 414:

(silver for) ¹*i-di šá 4* ^{lú}*hūn.gá.me* ²*šá ul-tu* ^{giš}*na-ge-e* ^{giš}*hū-ša-bi* ^{sic!}*i-na-áš-šú-nu*
 ‘wages of four hired workmen who (will) carry poles from the n.’

Obviously, preceding the word ‘province’ with the determinative for wood would make little sense, the authors of CAD have therefore rightly treated this occurrence separately. A new text, that became known only after CAD N had been published, enables us now to narrow down the meaning proposed by the dictionary:¹

YOS 19, 113

1. ^m*mu-d*^{nà} *a-šú šá* ^m*man-na-da-mu-ú*
2. *pu-ut en.nun*^{ti} *šá na-gi-i šá* ^d*gašan unug*^{ki}
3. *šá ugu íd.lugal na-ši* ^m*mu-d*^{nà} *ina* ^d*en*
4. ^d*nà* ^d*gašan unug.ki* ^d*na-« na-a » u a-de-e*
5. *šá* ^d*nà-im.tuku lugal tin.tir.ki it-te-me*
6. [*k*]*i-i mam-ma* ^{giš}*hū-ša-bi a-na pir-ki*
7. [*ina lib-bi*] « *id-du-ku?* » *mim-ma šá si-pir ina lib-bi*
8. [*na?-gi?-i? it?*]-*tab?-šu?u « a »-na-ku ad-du-ku?-ú-ma*
9. [*gi.meš? at-ta*]-*še-« du »-nu u a-di mam-ma*
10. [*šá-nam-ma x*] « *x la/te? bi ma* »

¹ The text is - to the best of my knowledge - unparalleled, hence its reconstruction is to a large extent speculative.

11. [ina du-zu šá^m]d^{nà}-lugal-ùru lú.sag lug[al]
 12. [lú.en pi-qit?]-tu-ú
 Gimillu/Zērija//Šigûa
 Šillāja/Balāṭsu//Nabû-ēṭir
 Ibni-Ištar/Nergal-šumu-ibni//Kurî
 Scribe: Ištar-mukîn-apli//Zērija
 Uruk, 18.2.1Nbn

6. For *pirku*-guarantees see Stolper, “No Harm Done: On Late Achaemenid *pirku* Guarantees,” AOAT 252 (1997), 467-477 and comprehensively CAD P 403-407.

7. *iddûku*: a Perf. form of *dâku* (cf. *ḥuṣābu dâku* in JCS 28, 7: 20 and YOS 3, 200: 30).

sipru: see CAD S 304b ‘(mng. uncertain)’ and Š/1 77b ‘trash’. *sipru* appears here next to *ḥuṣābu*, just as in ABL 292: 16, where it is listed among things that might block the canal that should be filtered out; it could be a tree product (small twigs, leaves etc.).

12. The spelling is unusual; we expect lú.pi-qit-tu/ti Eanna. Maybe a verb finishing the sentence begun in l. 10 rather than the title of Nabû-šarru-uṣur should be restored here?

Iddin-Nabû/Manna-damû guarantees guarding of the *n.* of the Lady of Uruk located on the Royal Canal. Iddin-Nabû took an oath by Bēl, Nabû, Lady of Uruk (and) Nanāja, as well as by the majesty of Nabonidus, king of Babylon, (saying): “Nobody shall illicitly cut timber (^{siš}*ḥuṣābu*) [therein]. I will not personally cut off any *sipru* that will [app]ear in [the *naḡû*?] and I will not harv[est the reeds], and (also) [not ...] to² (*adi*) anybody [else.]”

The reference to the location of the *naḡû* on the Royal Canal indicates that we must be dealing with a topographical element rather than an object. It also seems improbable that an object would be a subject of guarding contract of this kind. The temple usually used such arrangements to secure its more distant properties: date groves (YOS 7, 122, YOS 7, 126, YOS 7, 156) and fishing ponds (Kleber, WZKM 94 (2004), p. 152). A similar contract (YOS 7, 89) specifies the duties of a new watchman of a *bīt akītu*, also located some distance from the temple precincts. The meaning ‘object made of wood’ has therefore to be rejected.

I would like to turn now to other Neo-Babylonian occurrences of our term, quoted by CAD in the first entry (‘district, province’). GCCI 1, 210 has been listed together with examples of *naḡû* appearing in a restricted sense ‘as toponym’ (b 1’-2’):

(dates as allowance for) ¹10 érin.meš ²šá dul-lu ina é níg.ga ³šá ina muḥ-ḥi na-ge-e ip-pu-uš^{si}
 ‘the workmen who did work in the storehouse situated on the *n.*’

Nagû without any closer designation (as e.g. Old-Babylonian ‘*nagûm ša PN*’) makes little sense as a toponym and hence cannot specify the location of the storehouse. Moreover, the preposition *ina muḫḫi* does not go well with the meaning ‘district’, even in its narrow, toponymical sense; instead, one should rather expect that *ina* would be used, as is the case with all other examples quoted by the dictionary. The author of the entry obviously felt that the phrasing of this fragment - in accordance with the meaning offered - was awkward and left *nagû* untranslated. Since translation following the meaning *nagû* A does not make good sense, I would like to propose that this occurrence should be treated together with the two above texts and refers to the same topographical element.

The second Neo-Babylonian example quoted in CAD under *nagû* A comes from a letter BIN 1, 63:

⁶lú.a.kin šá lú.šà.tam ⁷ù^{md}nà-šeš-mu ⁸a-na na-gi-i ⁹a-na muḫ-ḫi šad-di-pi ¹⁰it-tal-ku
 ‘a messenger of the *šatammu* and Nabû-aḫu-iddin went to the *n.* because of *šadīpus*’

9. CAD N1 123a reads: KUR *di pi* (left untranslated). There is little doubt we are dealing here with *šadīpu*, according to CAD Š/1 48b ‘(small wooden object)’. CAD quotes two texts here. The first one (unpublished BM 49239) records a delivery of 7300 ⁸ⁱ*šadīpus*; I do not know the context, but the large quantity of *šadīpus* suggests, that we might be dealing with, perhaps, planks, poles or twigs used as building material (rather than with a finished product or object). This becomes even more plausible when we look at the second text: Nbn 753 is a settlement of accounts in which expenses for *šadīpu(s)* are found among those for building materials (next to cane); money issued for its purchase is received by Šamaš-mudammiq, a temple carpenter.² Ahw (1124a) leaves the word untranslated.

Again, it seems plausible that we are dealing with the same term as the one appearing in the texts above.

What was *nagû*?

CAD’s translation ‘building made of wood’ has certainly been inspired by the determinative preceding the term in GCCI 1, 414. However, one should bear in mind that wood was an expensive material and, although it was certainly widely used in construction work, we do not know of buildings made exclusively of it; in general, names of buildings are not preceded by the determinative for wood (see e.g. names of major storehouses: *bīt*

² Although according to Bongenaar (*Prosopography*, p. 406) it is more probable that he appears here in his capacity as a merchant.

karê, bīt makkuri, bīt qatê, šutummu, (bīt) qarīti).³ It does often appear, however, before the names of areas where trees grow (*giškirû, gišqīštu*, see also *gišatallû* attested in lexical lists and *apu* ‘reed thicket’ written *giš.gi*). Therefore, maybe *nagû* was not *made* of wood, but rather a source of it?

In both GCCI 1, 414 and YOS 19, 113 references to *ḥuṣābu* are found. In the former workmen bringing it from the *nagû* are mentioned, in the latter - a watchman undertakes to keep guard over *ḥuṣābu* in the *nagû* belonging to the temple. Also in BIN 1, 63 the reason for visiting *nagû* are wooden *šadīpus*. *nagû* could therefore be a grove that served as a local source of timber.

ḥuṣābu, most often encountered in Neo-Babylonian texts as a date-palm product to be delivered by gardeners, also appears with a more general meaning ‘timber’, ‘piece of wood’ or ‘pole’.⁴ As such we find it sometimes next to trees and cane. BIN 1, 165 records a delivery of *ḥuṣābu* together with willow (*ḥilēpu*) and Euphrates poplar (*šarbātu*). All three products appear in YOS 6, 122 and YOS 6, 148, two *Beweisurteile* written on the same day and before the same body but concerning two different individuals; both texts refer to fishing in the *tamirāte* of the Lady of Uruk as well as misappropriation of willow, poplar, cane or (any) timber (*ḥuṣābu*) from Eanna’s fields, forest or *tamirtu*. In JCS 28, 7 a group of carpenters is sent to a forest (*qīštu*) in order to cut timber, *cuttings?* and branches (*ḥuṣābu, kuburrû u urê*).⁵

Forest, a natural source of trees, was obviously not a regular element of the south Babylonian countryside, but it does occasionally appear in documents. Working in a local forest is mentioned in JCS 28, 7 and a temple cadastre of Eanna TCL 13, 230 lists *qīštu*, whose side was 1000 cubits long, between a drained land and a meadow.⁶ An important source of trees and cane was certainly the riverside (see rental contracts YOS 6, 67 from Uruk and BE 8, 118 from Nippur imposing onto gardeners the duty of planting willows along canals) and wet, often marshy areas where water was available most of, or throughout the year. *Tamirtu*, the area where the two suspects from YOS 6, 122 and 148 could have committed their crime, is a good example of the latter. The exact translation of the term remains

³ An exception is possibly *giškankannu* (BRM 1, 90: 1; 94: 1; 95: 2), if in fact a building and not a potstand is meant.

⁴ Cf. CAD H 258. On trees and timber in Mesopotamia see BSAG 6, especially van Driel, *ibid.* 171-176 for Neo-Babylonian material.

⁵ Following CAD N/1 113b and van Driel, BSAG 6, 172, but note that the meaning of *kuburrû* remains problematic.

⁶ *Qīštu*(TIR)-ša-Esangil in VS 3, 24: 3; 19 should be emended to 50e (*ḥanšê*); see van Driel, *Elusive Silver* 303.

problematic,⁷ but it was undoubtedly an area particularly abundant in water, and hence fish, reeds and trees.⁸ It is common as an element of geographical names and appears as a determinative. In BRM 1, 38, *the* sale of part of a *ḥanšû* in Dilbat, we find ⁶ *ga*[rim?]*na*-[*g*]u-ú. Both BR 8/7, 22 and Zadok, RGTC 8, 233 treat it as a toponym, but it is equally possible that *nagû* refers here to a topographical element; note that in the Old-Babylonian texts from the times of Hammurabi on *nagû* is prefixed by *ugāru*.⁹ All these facts together indicate that *nagû* could be located in marshy areas, particularly abundant in the Uruk region.

It is difficult to ascertain whether trees (and hence *nagû*) were cultivated or whether they constituted a natural element of the local countryside. Although planting willows on the banks of canals is mentioned in Neo-Babylonian documents (see above),¹⁰ it certainly does not refer to organizing a grove, in which case one would expect a *zāqipānūtu* contract similar to those drawn in the case of date groves or fruit orchards. It seems therefore more probable that the latter is the case. Whatever its beginnings were, it is not surprising that a grove of this kind would be entrusted for protection to a watchman; numerous references to guarding of forests (*qištu*) in earlier periods indicate that it must have been a regular practice.¹¹

Size of *nagû*

Since only one guard has been put in charge of it, the *nagû* could not have been large. One may compare YOS 19, 113 with similar contracts for guarding date groves in the area of the Takkiru Canal:

YOS 7, 122

Bitqu-ša-Bel-ēṭir up to Nāru-ša-Silim-Bēl - one watchman

YOS 7, 126

Nāru-ša-Silim-Bēl up to Nār-Lāsūtu (including fields on the other side of the canal) - two watchmen

⁷ See particularly Stol, BSAg 4, 176-181, van Driel, *ibid.* 142-144 and Cole, JNES 53/2 (1994), 92⁺⁵⁹.

⁸ Cf. the above *Beweisurteile* and PBS 2/1, 111 and 112, contracts for guarding fish in *tamirtus*, see also mB examples in van Soldt, BSAg 4, 108.

⁹ Cf. Stol, BSAg 4, 176-7.

¹⁰ See also planting of tamarisks mentioned in Old-Babylonian documents (Van De Mieroop, BSAg 6, 157).

¹¹ See CAD M1 343a and Q 273-275, AHw 621a.

YOS 7, 156

Takkiru-canal up to Harri-kibbi, Raṭu swamp and Bīt-Nabû-gaddu - six watchmen

Bitqu-ša-Bēl-ēṭir, Nāru-ša-Silim-Bēl, Nāru-ša-Silim-Bēl and Nār-Lāsūtu are tributaries of Takkiru (Bitqu-ša-Bēl-ēṭir is definitely the most important and hence probably the biggest one), so we may assume that plots of land located on them were smaller than the territory extending from Takkiru, a major canal, up to Harri-kibbi, a canal running probably more or less perpendicular to it, and Raṭu and Bīt-Nabû-gaddu. Such proportions emerge also from a map of Uruk's surroundings reconstructed by D. Cocquerillat (*Palmeraies* pl. 3a); the map is obviously very speculative, but it does give an approximate idea of the geography of the region.

It seems that, as one might expect, the number of individuals to whom guarding has been entrusted was proportional to the area to be watched over.¹² A *nagû*, secured by one watchman, could have had the size of a plot of land stretching from Bitqu-ša-Bēl-ēṭir to Nāru-ša-Silim-Bēl. Still, other factors (like distance from the city or topographical features of the area) could have mattered when decisions concerning the number of watchmen were being made; these assumptions should therefore be treated with a grain of salt.

Location of *nagû*

In the case of YOS 19, 113 some details concerning the location of the *nagû* may be established. It was certainly located at a distance from the temple (and hence the city), as is clear from the fact that it was guarded by a specially appointed watchman, and not by the temple guards. The reference to the Royal Canal indicates that it was probably to be found north of the city; *Nār šarri* was Uruk's major watercourse that flowed from the north, passing through the major date-growing areas, then along the eastern city wall, at some stage also entering the city.¹³ If GCCI 1, 210 refers to the same *nagû*, it must have been situated next to a *bīt makkûri*.¹⁴

Conclusions

¹² Cf. also a single watchman to whom guarding of fishing ponds in *tamirtu* Binā'tu has been entrusted in Kleber, WZKM 94 (1994), p. 152.

¹³ See especially Adams and Nissen, *The Uruk Countryside*, 45 and Joannès, TEBR, pp. 115-116.

¹⁴ Probably the same storehouse on the Royal Canal is mentioned in YOS 17, 274: 6. The watchmen of *bīt makkûri* appear also in allowances lists AnOr 9, 8: 51, VS 20, 129: 5' and YOS 6, 229: 14.

Summing up, the Neo-Babylonian *nagû* must have been a kind of grove, a source of local timber of apparently not as high quality as that imported from Lebanon or Tilmun, but still valuable enough to be watched over and worth the inspection of temple officials. It was possibly located in marshy areas some distance from the city. In Uruk it was situated north of the city on the Royal Canal, probably next to a *bīt makkūri*.

At the moment, all but (possibly) one of the attestations come from Uruk, which might be an accident of preservation; however, it would not be surprising if *nagû* turned out to be another term characteristic exclusively to the Eanna archive.¹⁵

It is difficult to determine the origins of the term *nagû* in the meaning ‘grove’. Did it develop independently from some difficult to trace cognate or is it rather a neosemantism that evolved from the meaning ‘district, province’? Hopefully new texts will enable us to establish it, as well as to specify what the difference between *nagû* and *qištu* was. As for now, their exact semantic range remains to us equally imprecise as other south Babylonian topographical denotations, e.g. reed marsh (*appāru, aqammu*), reed thicket (*apu, qīšu*) and irrigated land (*tamirtu, ugāru, ušallû*).

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15 Like, e.g., *šīhu*.