

102) *ginnu*-silver from the time of Nebuchadnezzar (and Nabû-aḥḥē-iddin's term as temple administrator*) — One of the most interesting features regarding the much debated term *ginnu*-silver (*kaspu ša ginnu*) is its widespread use in a rather distinct time frame.¹⁾ In the present note I will not engage with the interpretation of the term *ginnu*; my contribution will instead focus on the earliest attestation of the word. In the process, I will also discuss the temple administrator (*šatammu*) of Eanna Nabû-aḥḥē-iddin and the dates in which he held his office, which will constitute the time-frame for the early attestation of *ginnu*-silver that is discussed here

As regards the disappearance of *ginnu*-silver from the records, except for one text, BM 79000, written in Babylon in 1 Art (most probably Art I), there is currently no *ginnu* attestation which post-dates the Babylonian revolt in Xerxes' second year (484 BC). The first dated attestation of *ginnu*-silver is found in GC 2, 101 (4 Cyr); the text states that temple smiths are prohibited from melting it down.²⁾ Further restrictions regarding the use of *ginnu*-silver are found in a more or less contemporary private letter, CT 22, 40 (= Hackl, Jursa and Schmidl, *Spätbabylonische Privatbriefe*, no. 210); in both texts the restrictions come from the crown. Jursa (AOAT 377: 482) has shown that we can push the earliest mentioning of *ginnu*-silver further back into the Neo-Babylonian Period, by another letter, YOS 3, 153, which can be securely dated to 13-17 Nbn on prosopographical grounds. It seems however that the term *ginnu*-silver was known even earlier than the reign of Nabonidus, as will be demonstrated by TCL 9, 117:

AO 10327 = TCL 9, 117

[im^{ld} x-x]-bul-liṭ-su a-na^{ld} +ag-šeš^{meš}-mu
 2 [e]n-ia^d +en u^d +ag šu-lum tin ù gíd.da u₄-mu
 á en-ia liq-bu-ú u₄-mu-us-su^d +en u^d +ag
 4 a-na tin zi^{meš} ù gíd.da u₄-mu šá en-ia
 ú-šal-lu a-na ugu mim-ma šá en iš-pu-ru ...
 ...
 34 8 gín kù.babbar pe-šu-ú^{kuš} [hi[?]-in[?]-du[?]]
 šá 1 1/2 ma.na kù.babbar ḥa-aṭ^{ku} [hi[?]-in[?]-du[?]]
 36 kù.babbar šá gi-nu a-na ḥi-ši-iḥ-t[u₄ šá]
¹lib-luṭ a-na en-ia ul-t[e-bi-lu]
 38 e-lat 2-ta^{kuš} ḥi-in-de-e-tu₄
 kù.babbar šá gi-nu
 ...
 áš-šal-šú^d dumu.é a-na ugu en-ia a-šá-lu
 50 tu-un-da-áš!(T. ma)-ši-ri-an-na-a-šú
¹x¹³) igi-ka ul ni-mu-ur
 52 [dingir/en lu-ú] i-de ki-i¹ a[?]-di [...]

(1-5) [letter of ...]-bullissu to Nabû-aḥḥē-iddin, my lord. May Bēl and Nabû decree my lord's well-being, vigour and long life! Daily, I pray to Bēl and Nabû for the prosperity and long life of my lord. Regarding all that the lord has written ...

(34-39) I am (also) having brought to my lord - for the requirements of Libluṭ - eight shekel of white silver (and) one bag of 1 1/2 mina of silver, the remainder of the *ginnu*-

silver bag. (This is) apart from the two *ginnu*-silver bags ...

(49-52) Thrice I have asked the (god) Mār-bīti about my lord. Have you abandoned us? We have not seen your face. ... [the god/lord should] know that until ...

TCL 9, 117 has been known to Assyriologists for many years, and the reading “kù.babbar šá gi-nu” was recognized already by Ebeling (NBU 1930-34, no. 342: 36, 39). Thus, the reason for it slipping under the radar must be attributed to the chronological question; when was the letter written? Our answer to this question will be based on palaeography, “museum archaeology,” and, most importantly, prosopography (focusing our attention on the addressee, Nabû-aḥḥē-iddin, due to the sender’s half-broken name).

By examining diagnostic sign forms used by the scribe, we can firmly assign the letter to the Neo-Babylonian period (rather to the Achaemenid one). In fact, although less conclusive, the shape of some of the signs might point to a Nebuchadnezzar date; sometime in the first half of the NeoBabylonian Empire. First, we notice the overall straight form of the wedges, characteristic of the Neo-Babylonian period, and clearly distinguishable from the often slanted wedges of the Achaemenid period. Two additional “Neo-Babylonian features” that should be mentioned here are the “meš” sign and the “še” element (i.e., the “še” sign itself, as well as the four wedges which are part of the *bu*, *tu*, *li* signs etc.)⁴⁾

Next we turn to the origin of the letter; not the place in which it was written, but where was it sent to (and found at). Most of the TCL 9 letters come from the Eanna archive in Uruk, while a smaller part of the collection originates from the private archive of the Babylon branch of the Egibi family. Within these two archives, two men by the name of Nabû-aḥḥē-iddin could be considered as a possible identification of our addressee (the fact that the writer refers to the addressee as his “lord,” forces us to look for a man of some importance as a possible candidate):

1) the Babylonian Nabû-aḥḥē-iddin/Šulāya//Egibi, and 2) Nabû-aḥḥē-iddin/Nergal-ušallim//Nūr-Sîn from Uruk. When we look at TCL 9, 117’s museum number, AO 10327, we can see that all of the nearby numbers (AO 10324-26, TCL 9, 121, 119, 94, respectively) unquestionably come from Uruk. Moreover, we do not have Egibi letters from the family’s second generation; i.e., from Nabû-aḥḥē-iddin/Šulāya, and the museum numbers of the Egibi letters in the Louvre fall into a different range (on the private letters of the Egibi family see Hackl, Jursa and Schmidl, *Spätbabylonische Privatbriefe*: 109ff.). Therefore, we should assign the letter to the Eanna archive and examine the addressee, Nabû-aḥḥē-iddin, in this light.⁵⁾

As mentioned above, giving the general chronological horizon we have argued for, and the assigning of TCL 9, 117 to the Eanna archive, Nabû-aḥḥē-iddin can be identified as the well-known temple administrator; son of Nergal-ušallim descendent of the Nūr-Sîn family. This is evident first and foremost from the form of address. The writer addresses Nabû-aḥḥē-iddin as his “lord” (*bēlu*), a clear indication for Nabû-aḥḥē-iddin’s high status within the temple. The prosopography of the high level Eanna officials is well known, and there is no other plausible identification apart from this temple administrator. Again, this identification also fits the time frame suggested by the palaeography of the letter.

Kleber (AOAT 358: 29) lists Nabû-aḥḥē-iddin’s term as 14-17 Nbk. However, she also notes that his predecessor’s last attestation is in 3 Nbk and his successor’s first attestation is in 20 Nbk, and so Nabû-aḥḥē-iddin’s own term was probably longer than 14-17 Nbk (ibid: 119, n. 365). The documentation proving his longer stay in office is actually available to us. The end date of his term is clear; his last attestation as temple administrator (full three-part name and title) comes from 19 Nbk (YOS 17, 33). The earliest reference to Nabû-aḥḥē-iddin as temple administrator is in 4 Nbk (YBC 7429). Both of these attestations seem to fit perfectly with his predecessor’s and successor’s last and first attestations (respectively) as mentioned above. The beginning of his career is, however, still unclear. That is because his predecessor in office, Nabû-nādin-

šumi, is actually attested in 7 Nbk (YOS 17, 317), still with his title; i.e. while Nabû-aḥḫē-iddin is already addressed as temple administrator in 4 Nbk, Nabû-nādin-šumi still holds his title for three or four more years.

The question of Nabû-aḥḫē-iddin's first year in office will remain unanswered for the moment. Personally, I believe that Nabû-aḥḫē-iddin's term was indeed 4-19 Nbk. Nabû-nādin-šumi's 7 Nbk's attestation needs to be clarified, but I think it would be much harder to explain Nabû-aḥḫē-iddin's attestation in 4 Nbk as temple administrator in the middle of Nabû-nādin-šumi's term. One can argue, for example, that the scribe of YOS 17, 317 miswrote the date of the document, or perhaps addressed Nabû-nādin-šumi as temple administrator out of habit (although he was no longer in office), or, that some unknown administrative and/or political considerations brought Nabû-nādin-šumi back from retirement; be that as it may, for the time being, the question will remain open.





Returning to the question of the earliest use of the term *ginnu*-silver; we can now confirm that *ginnu*-silver was used in Babylonia during first half of Nebuchadnezzar in one way or another. It must be stressed that this is an isolated attestation in an exceptionally well-documented period. The sheer number of administrative and economic texts from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar – with not even one attestation of *ginnu*-silver – affirms that TCL 9, 117 is a clear exception. This cannot be attributed to the coincidence of textual preservation. The slightly damaged and general context in which the term is mentioned in this letter might prove to be of little value for establishing the function and characteristics of *ginnu*, but the time in which it was first introduced can certainly contribute to the debate. And finally, does the fact that the first three (or three out of four) attestations of *ginnu*-silver come from the epistolographic material have any significance? Although all three letters come from different contexts (private, Eanna, Ebabbar) and are spread over three or four decades, one might argue, for example, that the term was used in day-to-day life prior to be officially adopted by authorities.

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1 See Jursa, AOAT 377: 480ff. for a survey and discussion regarding the main scholarly opinions.

2 According to Vargyas (*kaspu ginnu*: 263), the earliest *ginnu* attestation is S. 138 (Bertin 796) dated to 4 Cyr. However, the text should actually be dated to Darius (Jursa, AOAT 377: 482, n. 2629, the tablet was collated by J. Hackl).

3 Line 51: The copy clearly has a sign before "igi" (a clear photo of this part of the tablet was not available to us); one would perhaps think of *ina*, but then we would expect a stative or a N-form of *amāru*.

4 E.g. meš:  (l. 12)  (l. 17), tu:  (l. 18), and bu:  (l. 19). A thorough documentation of the subject is beyond the scope of the present note. The palaeography of the Neo- and Late Babylonian archival documents is currently studied by M. Jursa and R. Pirngruber at the University of Vienna.

5 It should be noted that the shape of the tablet itself stands out when compared to contemporary Eanna letters; it is relatively large (8.7x4 cm; see the table in TCL 9: 1ff. for the tablets dimensions), rectangular, with sharp angles and flat edges. We can thus say with some confidence that the letter was not sent by an Urukian official. Further support can be seen by the mentioning of the god Mār-bīti who did not have significant presence in Uruk (if any); see Beaulieu, *Pantheon of Uruk*: 342. It might point to Borsippa as the origin of our letter (on Mār-bīti in Borsippa see Waerzeggers, *The Ezida temple*: 22, 26ff.), although the fact that the writer

addresses Nabû-aḥḫē-iddin as his “lord” should again be noticed. Generally speaking, a Borsippean priest would not be likely to address his Urukean colleague as his superior, and we would expect to find “brother” (*aḫū*).

Yuval LEVAVI <yuval.levavi@univie.ac.at>

Institut für Orientalistik, Universität Wien, Spitalgasse 2, Hof 4, 1090, WIEN