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A Compendium of Official Correspondence from Seleucid Uruk

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Abstract: YOS 20, 87 is a scholarly cuneiform tablet from Hellenistic Uruk. The study of its unusual content shows that it is an Akkadian translation of a collection of Greek official documents issued by the Seleucid administration in the first quarter of the third century BC, concerning the rebuilding of the Bīt Rēš, the main sanctuary of Uruk at the time. These works, which had been recognized on the ground by archaeologists a long time ago, remained unattested until now in the textual records. YOS 20, 87 therefore significantly enhances our understanding of the temple's history and provides a valuable addition to the dossier of Seleucid euergetic policy in Babylonia.

Keywords: Hellenistic Uruk, third century BC, Seleucid letters, translation, euergetism, Bīt Rēš temple

YOS 20, 87 is an Akkadian cuneiform clay tablet from the ancient city of Uruk, in Southern Babylonia. It was originally unearthed by illegal excavators around the beginning of the twentieth century, probably in the sector of the ancient religious complex of the Bīt Rēš, dedicated to the god Anu, which had been the main Urukean sanctuary in the second half of the first millennium BC. The tablet was then acquired from the antiquities market by the John Pierpont Morgan Library,[1] and subsequently housed in the Yale Babylonian Collection, where it remains today.[2] Although the left half of the document is missing, the presence of a colophon on the reverse leaves no doubt about its belonging to the corpus of scholarly documents.[3] No date formula has been preserved, but the occurrence of several dates in the main body of the text indisputably shows that it was composed during the Hellenistic period. Despite its publication as a hand copy in the *Yale Oriental Series* in 2012,[4] the importance of YOS 20, 87 for the history of Hellenistic Uruk and, more generally, for Seleucid studies has not yet been fully appreciated.[5]

1 The museum number of the tablet is MLC 2653. Detailed photographs are available online at the following address: https://collections.peabody.yale.edu/search/Record/YPM-BC-002601 (last accessed on the 25th of January, 2022). MLC 2653 belongs to a group of five tablets from Hellenistic Uruk which presumably came from the same source and were likely acquired as a single lot by the Morgan Library Collection under the numbers MLC 2651–2655. Cf. Doty/Wallenfels 2012: 1. MLC 2651 (YOS 20, 92) is a contract recording the sale of food allowances under the reign of Seleucus IV (187–175 BC); MLC 2652 (YOS 20, 60) and MLC 2655 (YOS 20, 61) are duplicate deeds of a real estate sale dated to 192 BC; MLC 2654 (YOS 20, 10), on the other hand, is much earlier (295 BC), and records a prebend sale from the Bīt Rēš. No obvious prosopographical ties can be established between our text and these documents.

2 The tablet was deposited in Yale University from 1926 onwards, and eventually sold by the Morgan Library to the University in 1966. Cf. Beaulieu 1994: viii.

3 Ossendrijver 2020: 326, *pace* Doty/Wallenfels 2012: 31.

4 Doty/Wallenfels 2012: pl. 171–172. A preliminary transliteration and translation of the text has also been published online by the HBTIN project in 2014 (http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/hbtin/P297041, last accessed on the 6th of July, 2022).

5 See, however, Ossendrijver (2020: 326–330).

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YOS 20, 87 (MLC 2653)

Dimensions : 11.7 × 7.5 × 1.8 cm.
Landscape format. Left half of the tablet missing.[6]

Obverse

1. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x]-˹*su*ʔ˺ *ul-*˹*te*˺*-mi-da-a-* ˹*an*ʔ˺-[*a*ʔ*-šu*$_2$ʔ]
2. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x]-MEŠ *u*$_3$ *u*$_2$*-de-e šа*$_2$ E$_2$ DINGIR-˹MEŠ˺ [*šа*$_2$ UNUG$^{ki?}$]
3. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x] ˹x˺ *a-na* UNUG^{ki} ˹*i*˺-[x x x]
4. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x]-˹*šu*$_2$ʔ˺*-nu i-pal-lah*$_3$*-u*ʾ *a-na ṭe*$_3$*-e-*˹*mu*˺ [*a*ʔ*-ga*ʔ*-a*ʔ]
5. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x] ˹x˺ *u*$_3$ ˹*li*˺-[x x x]

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6. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x] ^{I}*ki-*˹*din-*^{d}60˺ *u* ^{lu_2}˹UNUG˺[^{ki}*-a-a*]
7. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x] ˹ŠU ʔ˺ UNUG^{ki} [x] ˹x˺-MEŠ *mah-*˹*ru*˺-[*u*$_2$ x x x]
8. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x] ˹KI *u* TA˺ *at-ta-*˹*ar*˺*-ru-u*$_2$ NU *at-*[x x x x]
9. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x]-˹x˺-ʾ *la-pa-ni* ^{lu_2}*qi*$_2$*-pu-u*$_2$*-tu*$_2$ *šа*$_2$ E$_2$.GAL *a-*˹x˺ [x x x]
10. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x *a*ʔ*-na*ʔ ^{I}]˹*ki*˺*-din-*^{d}60 ˹*u*$_3$˺ ^{lu_2}UNUG^{ki}*-a-a li-bu-ku-u*$_2$ [x x x x]
11. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x]-˹x˺-ʾ *a-na muh-hi ṭe*$_3$*-e-mu* *a-ga-*[*a* (x x x)]
12. [(x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x)] ˹iti˺SIG$_4$ U$_4$ 28-KAM$_2$ MU 22-KAM$_2$ [(x x x x)]

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13. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x]-˹*gu*ʔ*-ra*˺*-a*ʾ *šu-*˹*lum*˺ *il-ta-pa-ar* LUGAL ^{I}˹*at*˺-[*ti-*ʾ*u-ku-su*]
14. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x] *il*/*al*]-˹*ta*˺*-pa-ar a-na* ^{I}*a-ga-na-ti-i-su u*$_3$ [^{I}x x x x]
15. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x *i*ʔ]-˹*de*˺*-e-ku-u*ʾ *šа*$_2$ *ina nap-har ne*$_2$*-pi-iš gab-bi* ˹x˺ [x x x x]
16. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x] ˹*šа*$_2$ʔ˺ *nin-da-ba-ne*$_2$*-e u*$_3$ U$_4$ EŠ$_3$.EŠ$_3$-MEŠ *lib*$_3$*-bu-u*$_2$ [x x x x x]
17. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x]-˹x˺*-u*$_2$ *ṣa-lam*-MEŠ *šа*$_2$ DINGIR-MEŠ *a-na* UNUG^{ki} *ib-ba-ak-*˹*u*˺ [x x x x]
18. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x] ˹x x x˺ *gi-nu-u*$_2$ ˹*it*˺*-ti-ir la u*$_2$*-*˹*qa*ʔ˺-[*ar*ʔ*-ra*ʔ*-bu*ʔ]
19. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x]-˹˺ *at-tu-un* ˹*lib*$_3$ʔ˺-[*bu*ʔ]-˹*u*$_2$ʔ˺ *šа*$_2$ *ṭe*$_3$-˹*e*˺-[*mu a*ʔ*-ga*ʔ*-a*ʔ]
20. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x]-˹x˺*-di šа*$_2$ ˹DINGIR˺-MEŠ ˹*a*˺*-na* UNUG^{ki} *i-te-*˹*er*˺(-)[x x x x]
21. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x] ˹x *it*ʔ˺*-ti-ir la i-qar-ru-bu*(-)[x x x x]
22. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x] ˹*šu*$_2$ʔ*-u*$_2$˺ *mah-ru-u*$_2$ *lu-u*$_2$ *ka-*˹x˺ [x x x x]

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23. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x] ˹^{lu_2}˺*ṭup-šar-ri* DIŠ U$_4$ ^{d}60 ^{d}EN.LIL$_2$.LA$_2$ *šа*$_2$ [x x x x]
24. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x] *šar-rat* ^{f}*a-pa-am a-na* ^{I}*ip-pu-*[x x x x]
25. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x]-*bi ana e-peš u*$_3$ *ik-ta-*˹*šid*(-)x˺ [x x x x]
26. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x] ˹*e*˺*-peš lib*$_3$*-bu-u*$_2$ *šа*$_2$ LUGAL ˹x˺-[x x x x x x]

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6 The extent of the missing part can be determined from both the curvature of the tablet and M. Ossendrijver's (2020: 315–316) reconstruction of the colophon. The length of each break, however, remains approximate: the number of [x] appearing on each line is an estimate of the maximum number of signs, but some of the lost parts probably contained blank spaces, which are frequent in the preserved text.

Reverse

27. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x]-˹x˺-*ku-nu-šu₂ lib₃-bu-u₂-šu₂ ep₂-ša₂-a*ʾ MU 28-˹KAM₂˺ [U₄ x-KAM₂ (*ša₂*) ^{iti}x]

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28. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x] *a-gan-nu iq-ṭa-bu-u₂ ina pa-ni-ia* E₂ *re-eš* [x x x x]
29. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x] ˹E₂˺ DINGIR-MEŠ *ša₂* UNUG^{ki} *in-ne₂-ep-pu-uš u₃* ˹*ul*˺ [x x x x]

{*blank space of two lines*}

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30. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x] ˹*a-na*˺ *muh-hi* ^{I}*ki-din-*^{d}60 : : : *a-*˹x˺ [x x x]

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31. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x $^{d?}$]˹60$^{?}$˺ ^{lu_2}*ṭup-šar-ri* DIŠ U₄ ^{d}60 ^{d}EN.˹LIL₂.LA₂ x˺ [x x x x]
32. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x E₂] ˹*re*˺-*eš* E₂ DINGIR-MEŠ *ša₂* UNUG^{ki} *a-na* ˹x˺ [x x x]
33. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x *ṭe₃*]-˹*e*˺-*mu iš-kun-u*ʾ *ša₂* E₂ *re-eš* E₂ DINGIR-MEŠ [*ša₂* UNUG^{ki}]
34. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x *a-na*] ˹*muh-hi*˺ *e-peš ša₂* E₂ *re-eš ka-lu-*˹*u₂*˺ [x x x]
35. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x E₂$^{?}$] ˹DINGIR$^{?}$˺-MEŠ *a*ʾ *in-ne₂-ep-pu-uš* [x x x x]
36. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x] *ṭe₃-e-mu ša₂-ki-in* [(x x x)]

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37. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x]-˹*u₂*˺-*a ṭe₃-e-mu iš-kun ba-nu-u₂ ša₂* ˹E₂˺ [*re-eš*$^{?}$]
38. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x] ˹*ka*˺-*lu-u₂ li-im-ma-na-a-šu₂ ul-tu ša₂* [x x x x]
39. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x] ˹x˺ SA DU MU 37-KAM₂ U₄ 10-KAM₂ *ša₂* ^{iti}GAN *ṭe₃-e-*˹*mu*˺ [*ša₂-ki-in*$^{?}$]

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40. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x] *ša₂* ^{I}*ki-din-*^{d}60 ^{lu_2}MAŠ.MAŠ ^{d}60 *u an-tu₄* [(x x x)]
41. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x] ^{I}*se-lu*]-˹*ku*˺ *u* ^{I}*at-ti-*ʾ*u-ku-su* LUGAL-MEŠ *iš-*˹*ṭur*˺-[*u₂*$^{?}$]

{*blank space of one line*}

42. [IM ^{I}PN DUMU *ša₂* ^{I}PN ^{lu_2}MAŠ.MAŠ$^{?}$ ^{d}60 *u an*]-*tu₄* ^{lu_2}UMBISAG DIŠ U₄ ^{d}60 ^{d}EN.LIL₂.LA₂ {*erasure*}
43. [*qat₃* ^{I}PN DUMU *ša₂* ^{I}PN A ^{Id}]˹30˺-TI-ER₂ *a-na a-ha-zi-šu₂* GID₂.DA U₄-MEŠ-*šu₂* DIN ZI[^{ti_3}-*šu₂*]
44. [*kun-nu* SUHUŠ-MEŠ-*šu₂ la* GAL₂^{e} GIG-*šu₂ u* MUD EN$^{u_2\text{-}ti}$-*šu₂*] SAR-*ma u₂-kin* MUD ^{d}60 *u an-tu₄ li-iṣ-ṣur-šu₂ li-*[*ša₂-qi₂-ir*]
45. [x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x *la*] ˹TUM₃˺-*šu₂ ina me-reš-*<*ti*>-*šu₂ la u₂-šam-kuš-šu₂ ina* ITI-*šu₂ a-*˹*na*˺ [*maš-tak-ku*]
46. [EN-*šu₂* HE₂.GUR-*šu₂* (x x x x x x x x x x)] (erasure)

Comments

1: *ul-*˹*te*˺*-mi-da-a-*˹*an*$^{?}$˺*-*[*a*$^{?}$*-šu₂*$^{?}$]: *lamādu* D perfect 3cs, with a 1cp dative pronoun (cf. CAD L: 57–58, s.v. *lamādu* 7a). The same form can be found in CT 49, 144 (Babylon, ca. 118 BC), l. 13, *ul-te-mi-i-da-na-a-šu₂* "he informed us that". Cf. Hackl (in press).[7]

2: E₂ DINGIR-˹MEŠ$^{?}$˺ [*ša₂* UNUG$^{ki?}$]: Restitution based on the parallels with ll. 29 and 32.

4 and 19: *ṭe₃-e-mu* [*a*$^{?}$*-ga*$^{?}$*-a*$^{?}$]: Hypothetical restitution based on the parallel with l. 11.

8: *at-ta-*˹*ar*˺*-ru-u₂*: *arû* Gtn preterite 1cs, with a subordination marker *-u* (cf. CAD A/2: 314, s.v. *arû* 2a). We understand it as a quote from the Seleucid king.

9: ^{lu_2}*qi₂-pu-u₂-tu₂ ša₂* E₂.GAL: Contrarily to our previous assumption (Clancier/Monerie 2014: 191), *qīpūtu* must not be understood as an abstract noun, but as the plural of *qīpu* (cf. CAD Q: 264). To our knowledge, the office of *qīpu ša ēkalli* (or its Greek equivalent) is otherwise unattested.

10: *li-bu-ku-u₂*: *abāku* G precative 3 mp (CAD A/1: 6, s.v. *abāku* 3b2′). The same verb is found again on l. 17 about divine statues, as well as in the *Uruk Prophecy*, a Late Achaemenid or Early Hellenistic text from Uruk, again in connection with the transfer of divine statues (SpTU 1, 03 r. 4 and 13, cf. infra n. 72).

7 We are grateful to Francis Joannès for drawing our attention to this reference.

12: Official correspondence recorded in Greek epigraphy often ends with a line break, followed by a dating formula aligned to the right of the stele. See, e.g., the so-called Heliodorus stele from Maresha, in Idumea (cf. Cotton-Paltiel et al. 2017). There is a possibility that the scribe followed the same model here, in which case the beginning of the line may have been a *vacat*.

13: [...]-ʳ*gu*ʔ*-ra*¹*-a*ʾ *šu-*ʳ*lum*¹: This sequence could be part of a Greek personal name, possibly with an ending in -γόρας. Cf. ᴵ*pi-la-a-gu-ra-a* used in reference to the Cypriot king Philagoras in Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions (e.g., RINAP 4, 01 v. 64). If this assumption is correct, this individual could be the recipient of document C. The fact that it is followed by *šu-lum* (for *šulmu*, "greetings"), which we understand as a translation of χαίρειν, i.e., the standard formula found at the beginning of Greek official letters, lends weight to this hypothesis. The form *šu-lum* (instead of *šul-mu*) occurring in YOS 20, 87 is attested in Neo-Assyrian letters (cf., e.g., SAA 10, 166, l. 3; SAA 13, 176, l. 3; SAA 17, 101, l. 2).

14: ¹*a-ga-na-ti-i-su u*₃ [ᴵx x x x]: The most likely identification for this clearly Greek anthroponym is Ἀγνόθεος, as proposed by Doty/Wallenfels (2012: 42). The following break after the conjunction *u* probably contained another personal name. Both appear to have been the joint recipients of an official letter.

15: [*i*ʔ]-ʳ*de*¹*-e-ku-u*ʾ: *dekû* G durative 3mp. It is difficult, in the present state of the document, to determine if this verb concludes a sentence which is lost in the preceding break or if it must be interpreted as part of what follows. We therefore limit ourselves, with all due caution, to rendering the verb's primary meaning ("to remove", cf. CAD D: 124 s.v. *dekû* 1).

16: *nin-da-ba-ne*₂*-e u*₃ U₄ EŠ₃.EŠ₃-MEŠ: To our knowledge, the plural form *nindabānê* instead of the expected *nindabû* or *nindabê* is otherwise unattested. There is no doubt, however, that it refers to food offerings (cf. Linssen 2004: 164), in connection with *eššēšu*-days (Linssen 2004: 45–51), as well as with regular offerings (*ginû*, cf. Linssen 2004: 162–163), which appear in l. 18.

18: ʳ*it*¹*-ti-ir la u*₂*-*ʳ*qa*ʔ¹*-*[*ar*ʔ*-ra*ʔ*-bu*ʔ]:** This hypothetical restoration of *qerēbu* D durative 3mp is based on the parallel of l. 21, which belongs to the same section, where this verb is found (though in a G durative form with a passive meaning, cf. CAD Q: 234 s.v. *qerēbu* 4) in connection with the same negative adverb *lā* and the same verbal hendiadys with *ittir* (*watāru* G durative 3cs).

24: ¹*ip-pu*-[x x x x]: This Greek personal name is clearly formed on the anthroponymic component Ἱππο-, but the following break prevents us from determining the exact name of this individual.

25: *ana e-peš*: Given the general content of the document, we understand *epēšu* in the sense of "to build" (CAD E: 197–199, s.v. *epēšu* 2b3′). Cf. *Antiochus Cylinder* i. 6–7: *inūma ana epēš Esaggil u Ezida libbī ublamma*, "When I decided to (re)build Esagil and Ezida."

27: *lib*₃*-bu-u*₂*-šu*₂ *ep*₂*-ša*₂*-a*ʾ: For *libbūšu*, see CAD L: 173, s.v. *libbu* 4a2′c′. Concerning *ep*₂*-ša*₂*-a*ʾ (*epēšu* G imperative 2cp), the collation of the line does not support the reading EGIR*ʾᵃ* proposed on the HBTIN website.

28: *iq-ṭa-bu-u*₂: On the phonetic alteration of the *-t-* into an emphatic *-ṭ-* after *-q-*, which is attested in other sources from the Hellenistic period, see Jursa/Debourse (2017: 84).

30: The fact that this section (VI) only occupies a single line, combined with the presence of three successive separation marks in the form of two superimposed oblique signs, suggests that this section is a scribal heading rather than another official document. The exact meaning of this disjunction between the last two documents and the rest of the compendium remains difficult to grasp.

33: *iš-kun-u*ʾ: The verbal form as it stands should be interpreted as a preterite 3mp, the use of an *aleph* being a common way to indicate the long final vowel of the plural form. However, we cannot exclude the hypothesis that the verb could be a preterite 3cs with an unusual form of the subordination marker *-u-*, rendered here with an *aleph* (cf. OECT 9, 12, l. 12, ˡᵘ²*na-din-u*ʾ, where the *aleph* is used to render a short vowel).

34 and 38: E₂ *re-eš ka-lu-*ʳ*u*₂¹: The use of *kalû* instead of the expected *kalûšu* is consistent with the use of πᾶς after the substantive in Greek, which does not require an anaphoric pronoun (cf. Liddell/Scott: 1345, s.v. πᾶς B).[8]

36 and 39: *ṭe*₃*-e-mu ša*₂*-ki-in*: This sentence appearing in both cases at the very end of the section, after the date (at least in the case of section VIII), which usually concludes Hellenistic official documents, seems to find no clear parallel in Greek epigraphy. It could be an addition by the cuneiform scribe, stating that the order has

8 We are thankful to F. Joannès and M. Ossendrijver for their insights on the understanding of these lines.

been duly carried out. Note that the sentence occurs only in sections VII and VIII, both of which are apparently separated from the preceding documents by a scribal heading (section VI).

38: *li-im-ma-na-a-šu₂*: This verbal form can be understood either as *limmannāšu* (*manû* N precative 3cs with ventive and 3ms pronominal suffix) or as *limmannâšu* (*manû* N precative 3fp with 3ms pronominal suffix). We understand *manû* N in the sense of "to be assigned, delivered" (Cf. CAD M1: 227, s.v. *manû* 12c).

39: ...] ⌜x¹ SA DU: This sequence could be the end of a personal name. The line, however, is far too damaged to allow any certainty.

40–46: Our reconstruction and translation of this section follow M. Ossendrijver's study of the tablet's colophon (2020: 315–316).

Translation

(*Section I*)

[.....]os[?] informed [us (that)]
[..... the .....]s and paraphernalia of the sanctuary [of Uruk[?]]
[.....] ... to Uruk, ...[.....]
[.....] their [.....] they will obey [this[?]] order
[.....] ... and may [.....]

(*Section II*)

[.....] Kidin-Anu and the Uruk[eans]
[.....] ... Uruk, the [...]...s were receiv[ed .....]
[.....] ... and since I rule, I have not [.....]
[.....] ..... from the palace administrators ..... [.....]
[..... to[?]] Kidin-Anu and the Urukeans, may they transfer [.....]
[.....] ..... concerning this order [.....]
[(.....)] Month *simānu*, the 28th, year 22 (SEB) [(.....)].

(*Section III)*

[.....]goras[?], greetings. King An[tiochos] has written
[..... he has / I have] written to Hagnotheos and [PN]
[.....] they will remove[?]. Concerning[?] all the ritual procedures ... [.....]
[.....] of[?] the food offerings and the *eššēšu*-festivals, in accordance with[?] [.....]
[.....]... they will transfer the statues of the gods to Uruk [.....]
[.....] ..... regular offerings in excess, they shall not pr[esent[?]]
[.....] ..., you(pl.), in accordance with [this[?]] ord[er]
[.....] ..... of the gods will retu[rn] to Uruk [.....]
[.....] in excess, they shall not be offered [.....]
[.....] ..... will be received[?]. May ..... [.....].

(*Section IV*)

[..... Kidin-Anu[?]], scribe of *Enūma Anu Enlil*, of/who [.....]
[.....] queen Apama to Hippo[.....]
[.....] ... for the building works and he/they completed [.....]
[.....] building works, in accordance with what the king ... [.....]
[.....] ... to/for you(pl.), act(pl.) accordingly! Year 28 (SEB), [the xth (of) month ...].

(*Section V*)
[28][.....] this, they declared in my presence. The Bīt Rēš [.....]
[29][.....] the sanctuary of Uruk is being (re)built and is not [.....].
{*blank space of two lines*}

(*Section VI*)
[30][.....] concerning Kidin-Anu : : : ..... [.....].

(*Section VII*)
[31][..... Kidin]-Anu[?], scribe of *Enūma Anu Enlil*, ... [.....]
[32][..... Bīt] Rēš, the sanctuary of Uruk, to ... [.....]
[33][.....] they[?] issued an [or]der (stating) that the Bīt Rēš, the sanctuary [of Uruk,]
[34][..... con]cerning the whole (re)building of the Bīt Rēš [.....]
[35][.....] this [sanc]tuary[?] is being (re)built [.....]
[36][.....] The order has been issued. [(.....)]

(*Section VIII*)
[37][.....]..... he issued an order, the (re)building of the Bīt [Rēš]
[38][.....] Let the whole [(re)building[?] of] the [Bīt Rēš[?]] be assigned to him, from [.....]
[39][.....]..... Year 37 (SEB), the 10th of month *kislīmu*. The order [has been issued[?]].

(*Section IX*)
[40][.....] that/of Kidin-Anu, exorcist of Anu and Antu, [(.....)]
[41][..... Seleu]cus and Antiochus, the kings, wrote.
{*blank space of one line*}
[42][Tablet of PN son of PN, exorcist (or "lamentation priest") of Anu and An]tu, scribe of *Enūma Anu Enlil*.
[43][Hand of PN, son of PN, descendant of] Sîn-lēqe-unnīnī. For his learning, lengthening his days, sustaining his li[fe],
[44][establishing his position, the absence of illness and revering his lordship,] he wrote it and placed it. He who reveres Anu and Antu shall take care of it and ap[preciate it].
[45][.....] shall [not] carry it off, shall not intentionally make it disappear (and) in the same month, to [the living quarters]
[46][of its owner, shall return it. (.....)].

Date of the Document

As mentioned above, no date formula has been preserved in the colophon.[9] The latest date mentioned in the document (10th *kislīmu* 37 SEB, i.e., 25th December 275 BC, l. 39), provides a *terminus post quem* to its production, which obviously predated the destruction of the Bīt Rēš temple complex, around 100 BC.[10] This general time frame, however, is too large to be useful, and a closer examination of the document's content allows us to refine this rough dating.

Firstly, M. Ossendrijver recently pointed out that the colophon of YOS 20, 87 contains an unusual formula (ll. 43–44, *ana ahāzišu ... išṭur-ma ukīn*, "for his learning, he wrote (it) and placed (it)"), which only appears in six other Urukean scholarly tablets, dated between 251 and 194 BC.[11]

9 If there ever was such a formula on the tablet, it should probably be in the break of l. 46 (cf. Ossendrijver 2020: 316).
10 On this destruction, see Kose (1998: 176–181).
11 Ossendrijver 2020: 314–330.

Secondly, although the names of the document's owner and scribe have not been fully preserved,[12] we know that the scribe belonged to the Sîn-lēqe-unnīnī clan, and that the owner was both a scribe of *Enūma Anu Enlil* and either an exorcist (*mašmaššu*) or lamentation-priest (*kalû*) of Anu and Antu (l. 42). Such a combination of titles is actually quite rare in Hellenistic Uruk, as it is currently attested for only four individuals[13] within a period of time spanning from 251 to 182 BC.[14] Interestingly, all these scholars were involved in some way in the production of the tablets bearing the aforementioned formula in their colophon,[15] which tends to confirm the dating of our tablet either to the second half of the third century BC or to the beginning of the following century.

Among these four scholars, however, only two are attested as owners of tablets written by scribes of the Sîn-lēqe-unnīnī clan, as is the case for our document: one is Šamaš-ēṭir / Ina-qibīt-Anu / Šibqat-Anu // Ekur-zākir, who was active in Uruk in the early second century BC and whose association with the lamentation priest Anu-ab-utēr / Anu-bēlšunu / Nidintu-Anu // Sîn-lēqe-unnīnī in the 190s BC is well-attested;[16] the other is Anu-ab-utēr himself, who worked with his nephew Anu-balāssu-iqbi, son of Nidintu-Anu, between 182 and 176 BC.[17] We will see that, among these two scholars, the former is the most likely to have been the owner of our text.

All of this allows us to date YOS 20, 87 with a reasonable degree of confidence to the turn of the third and second centuries BC. That is not to say, however, that the content of the text was composed during this period. The occurrence of a distinct feature in YOS 20, 87, namely the peculiar transcription of the name of Antiochus as ^{I}*at-ti-ʾu-ku-su* (ll. 13 and 41), actually advocates the contrary, since the assimilation of the nasal *-n-* to the dental *-t-*, which frequently appears in Urukean sources under the reign of Antiochus I (294–261 BC), quickly fell into disuse after his death to disappear completely after 251 BC.[18] Consequently, if our proposed dating of YOS 20, 87 to the late third or early second century BC is accepted, we must conclude that its scribe either compiled earlier documents, or simply copied an older compilation.[19] The fact that the antiquated spelling ^{I}*at-ti-ʾu-ku-su* occurs in what seems to be the document's title (ll. 40–41) tends to support the second hypothesis, i.e., that YOS 20, 87 was simply copied from an earlier manuscript, although the idea that the text could be an original compilation cannot be entirely ruled out.[20] Be it as it may, the (now lost) source material of our tablet can be tentatively dated to the first half of the third century BC, when the aforementioned phonetic assimilation in the transcriptions of Antiochus' name was used by Urukean scribes.

Nature of the Document

As can be seen from the translation above, YOS 20, 87 is divided into nine sections, all clearly singled out by dividing lines on the tablet and apparently arranged in chronological order (cf. **Fig. 2**). Such an arrangement suggests that the author – be it the scribe of YOS 20, 87 or the scholar who produced the original manuscript from which our tablet was copied – drew on earlier sources to compose his text. The presence of various strange linguistic features, which can sometimes obscure the meaning of the document, also gives the impression that

12 On the distinction between scribe and owner, see, e.g., Ossendrijver (2011a: 634).

13 These scholars are the exorcists Anu-ah-ušabši / Kidin-Anu // Ekur-zākir (attested as owner of scholarly tablets between 251 and 228 BC), Anu-ah-ušabši / Ina-qibīt-Anu // Ekur-zākir (213–212 BC) and Šamaš-ēṭir / Ina-qibīt-Anu / Šibqat-Anu // Ekur-zākir (194–193 BC), as well as the lamentation-priest Anu-ab-utēr / Anu-bēlšunu / Nidintu-Anu // Sîn-lēqe-unnīnī (191–176 BC). On these individuals, see, e.g., Robson (2007 and 2008: 240–260); Boiy (2010); Ossendrijver (2011a and 2011b); Stevens (2013: 224–231); Escobar/Pearce (2018).

14 The earliest tablets recording both titles at the same time for the same individual are UCP 9-9 and UVB 15, 37, both dated to 251/250 BC; the latest is TCL 6, 25 (= ACT, 194), dated to 182 BC.

15 Ossendrijver 2020: 324.

16 On Šamaš-ēṭir and Anu-ab-utēr, see Robson (2007). The latter was probably the scribe of ACT, 192 (= A 3408), dated to 194 BC, which bears the same unusual formula found in the colophon of our document. As observed by M. Ossendrijver (2011a: 636), it is likely that the owner of ACT, 192 was Šamaš-ēṭir himself.

17 Ossendrijver 2011b: 216.

18 On this phenomenon, see Monerie (2014: 44–45). Its latest occurrence for the transcription of the royal name Antiochus is found in YOS 20, 28, l. 29.

19 On text copying and its importance for scribal learning and the conservation of the scholarly collections, see Clancier (2009: 221–229).

20 Many colophons of scholarly tablets begin with the phrase: "Written and collated according to its original" (*kīma labīrīšu šaṭir-ma bari*), showing that these documents had been copied from older manuscripts. Although YOS 20, 87 does not seem to have included this statement, it is known that some scribes did not bother to mention it in their colophons (cf. Ossendrijver 2020: 325).

the Urukean scholar who composed the original manuscript did not work from a blank page: first, the basic Akkadian syntax requiring that the verb always appears at the end of the sentence does not seem to have been consistently applied, which is surprising for the work of a Sumero-Akkadian scholar.[21] Likewise, the royal title, which always appears after the king's name in Akkadian cuneiform texts, precedes the name in the main body of our document.[22] Finally, two of the three dates preserved in the document are expressed by stating the year before the month and the day, while cuneiform scribes normally expressed dates in a month/day/year order.[23]

Such a combination of oddities, which are all very unusual in an Akkadian context, finds a fitting explanation if we assume that they were the result of a translation from Greek to Akkadian,[24] as: a) stating the year before the month and the day, which is almost never attested in Hellenistic cuneiform sources,[25] was the common way to express a date in Greek documents;[26] b) the unusual expressions *šarru Attiʾukusu* (l. 13) and *šarrat Apam* (l. 24) find exact parallels in the Greek titles *basileus Antiochos* and **basilissa Apamè*;[27] and c) the peculiar Akkadian syntax can be accounted for by the fact that it derives from original(s) in Greek, which does not necessarily require the verb to be at the end of the sentence.[28]

Interpreting YOS 20, 87 as a collection of Greek documents translated to Akkadian also sheds light on other parts of the text (cf. **Fig. 1**).

Fig. 1: Akkadian formulae in YOS 20, 87 and Greek parallels in Seleucid official correspondence.

Akkadian formulae in YOS 20, 87	**Parallels in Seleucid official correspondence**
ipallahū ana ṭēmu [*agâ*$^{?}$ (...)] *u lī*[...] ("they will obey [this$^{?}$] order [(...)] and may [...]"), ll. 4–5	καλῶς ἂν οὖν ποιήσαις συντάξας ἐπακολουθήσαντας τοῖς ἐπισταλεῖσιν συντελεῖν ὥσπερ οἴεται δεῖν ("You would do well, therefore, by giving orders for your subordinates to obey the orders and carry out things as he thinks fit"), SEG 37, 1010 (= Ma 1999 No. 4), ll. 13–16.
šulmu ("greetings"), l. 13	χαίρειν ("greetings"), *passim.* Cf., e.g., SEG 39, 1284 (= Ma 1999 No. 2), l. 8.
libbū ša ṭēmu [*agâ*$^{?}$] ("in accordance with [this$^{?}$] order"), l. 19	κατὰ τὸ παρὰ Νικομάχου τοῦ οἰκονόμου πρόσταγμα ("in accordance with the order of Nikomachos the *oikonomos*"), OGIS 225, l. 38 (= RC 20, l. 6).

21 See, e.g., l. 14, "[*al*/*il*]-*ta-par a-na* ^{I}PN" instead of the expected "*a-na* ^{I}PN [*al*/*il*]-*ta-par*", or l. 28 "*iq-ṭa-bu-u₂ ina pa-ni-ia*" instead of "*ina pa-ni-ia iq-ṭa-bu-u₂*". This unusual syntax, combined with the fact that not a single sentence is completely preserved on the tablet, obscures the understanding of YOS 20, 87, and it is sometimes impossible to ascertain whether a given word is the beginning of a new sentence or the continuation of the previous one.

22 Compare, e.g., the *Antiochus Cylinder* (5R66) ii. 24: ^{I}*an-ti-ʾu-ku-us* LUGAL KUR.KUR (lit. "Antiochus, king of the lands") and ii. 26–27: ^{f}*as-ta-ar-ta-ni-ik-ku ḫi-rat-su šar-rat* (lit. "Stratonike, his consort, the queen") with YOS 20, 87 l. 13: LUGAL ^{I}*at-*[*ti-ʾu-ku-su*] (lit. "king Antiochus") and l. 24, *šar-rat* ^{f}*a-pa-am* (lit. "queen Apama").

23 See the dates in l. 27 (with the day and the month in the lacuna) and l. 39. The date in l. 12, on the other hand, follows the expected order.

24 Actual translations of this kind are not unattested in the cuneiform sources from the Hellenistic and Early Parthian periods. See, e.g., the expression *bīt tāmarti* (lit. "house of observation") referring to the theatre of Babylon, which is a direct translation from Greek *theatron* (cf. van der Spek 2001: 447). Likewise, the small Urukean dossier of cuneiform sacred manumission deeds, dated to the second century BC, shows signs of translation from original Greek formulae (cf. Monerie 2015: 415–419).

25 The only known cuneiform example outside YOS 20, 87 is McEwan 1986, l. 14, a quitclaim from Uruk datable to ca. 169 BC. We gratefully acknowledge P.-A. Beaulieu for bringing this text to our attention.

26 Although in Greek, the usual date order was year/month/day (cf. Bikerman 1938: 194), and not the hybrid year/day/month found in YOS 20, 87, l. 39. This divergence can be tentatively explained by the fact that in Greek documents, the month was expressed in the genitive form, which our scribe may have translated as u_4 10-KAM$_2$ *ša*$_2$ ^{iti}GAN, with the addition of a *ša* between the day and the month to render the Greek genitive.

27 The use of *basilissa* to refer to Apama, wife of Seleucus I, is attested by the Milesian civic decree I. Didyma, 480, datable to ca. 299 BC (cf. Widmer 2016: 21–23; Harders 2016: 34). Although the decree actually uses Ἀπάμη ἡ βασίλισσα (ll. 4–5), the occurrence of this title before the name of a queen is well attested in Seleucid official documents (cf., e.g., IK Iasos 28, 4, l. 4, βασίλισσα Λαοδίκη).

28 Although the Akkadian syntax had already begun to lose its rigidity in the Late Achaemenid Period (cf. Beaulieu 2021: 30), the fact that the title and colophon of YOS 20, 87 (ll. 40–46), which are not translations, are written in good formulaic Akkadian and do not share any of the oddities found elsewhere in the document (see, e.g., l. 41, [^{I}*se-lu*]-*ku u* ^{I}*at-ti-ʾu-ku-su* LUGAL-MEŠ) suggests that the syntactic peculiarities of our text are related to the fact that it is largely a word-by-word Akkadian translation from Greek original documents.

Akkadian formulae in YOS 20, 87	Parallels in Seleucid official correspondence
libbū ša šarru […] (“according to what the king […]”), l. 26	καθάπερ ὁ βασιλεὺς γέγραφεν (“according to what the king wrote”) SEG 16, 710 (= RC 19), l. 16.
libbūšu epšā (“act$^{pl.}$ accordingly”), l. 27	συντελείσθω πάντα τοῖς προγεγραμμένοις ἀκολούθως (“let everything be done in accordance to the instructions written above”), OGIS 224 (= Ma 1999 No. 37), ll. 32–33.

Judging from the above, YOS 20, 87 can be best described as a compendium of seven official documents, which were translated from Greek to Akkadian in the first half of the third century BC and compiled in a single text. These documents will hereafter be referred to as documents A to G (cf. **Fig. 2**).

Fig. 2: Content of the sections of YOS 20, 87.

Section	*Type*	*Content*	*Corresponding date*
Section I (ll. 1–5)	**Document A**: official document, possibly a covering letter between Seleucid officials.	Fragmentary: cultic paraphernalia are mentioned, possibly in the context of their return to Uruk.	No date (ca. 290 BC?)
Section II (ll. 6–12)	**Document B**: letter from the king (Antiochus I?) sent to a Seleucid official (who might be the author of document A).[29]	The document mentions Kidin-Anu and the Urukeans, a reception of undetermined nature and a transfer order. Palace administrators are mentioned.	6th July 290 BC
Section III (ll. 13–22)	**Document C**: letter between Seleucid officials (the addressee is presumed to be […]goras$^{?}$).	The document apparently follows a royal letter from Antiochus I (which could be document B). Mention of a letter to two Seleucid officials (one of whom is named Hagnotheos). The document itself concerns ritual offerings and the return of cult statues to Uruk.	No date (ca. 290–284 BC)
Section IV (ll. 23–27)	**Document D**: letter or covering letter sent by a Seleucid official to a scribe of *Enūma Anu Enlil* (probably Kidin-Anu).	The document mentions building works (most likely on the Bīt Rēš). It follows an interaction (letter?) between queen Apama and a certain Hippo[…], as well as an order from the king (which could be document E).	284/83 BC
Section V (ll. 28–29)	**Document E**: official document (possibly from the king or from queen Apama).	Ongoing building works on the Bīt Rēš are mentioned.	No date (ca. 284–275 BC)
Section VI (l. 30)	Scribal heading for the following sections?	“[…] concerning Kidin-Anu”	
Section VII (ll. 31–36)	**Document F**: official letter sent to a scribe of *Enūma Anu Enlil* (probably Kidin-Anu).	Ongoing building works on the Bīt Rēš are mentioned, as well as an official order. The section ends with the (scribal?) indication that the order has been issued.	No date (ca. 284–275 BC)
Section VIII (ll. 37–39)	**Document G**: letter, probably sent to a Seleucid official.	The document mentions an order, building works on the Bīt Rēš and an assignment. The section ends with the (scribal?) indication that the order has been issued.	25th December 275 BC
Section IX (ll. 40–46)	Compendium title (ll. 40–41) and colophon (ll. 42–46).		No date preserved

29 The occurrence of Kidin-Anu and the Urukeans with a third person precative on l. 10 (*Kidin-Anu u Urukāya libbukū*) suggests that they are not the addressees of this document.

Since the precise nature of these documents and the identity of their authors and addressees often elude us, it remains difficult to assess whether they should be combined in sets or read independently. It would be tempting, for instance, to interpret document A as the covering letter of document B, and document C, which begins with a reference to a previous letter from Antiochus I (l. 13), as part of the same set. Similarly, document D, which also seems to refer to a royal order of some sort (ll. 26–27), might have been linked to the seemingly laconic document E. Caution, however, must be exerted due to the fragmentary state of the tablet.

Despite these uncertainties, we know from the title of the tablet ("[...] that/of Kidin-Anu, exorcist of Anu and Antu, [...] Seleucus and Antiochus, the kings, wrote.", ll. 40–41) that at least some of these documents were *prostagmata*, i.e., official orders issued in the form of letters.[30] As a matter of fact, the Akkadian word *ṭēmu* ("command, order, instructions"), which appears six times in our document,[31] could be a translation of the Greek *prostagma* ("ordinance, command"). Cuneiform sources from Northern Babylonia such as the astronomical diaries and the chronicles regularly mention the reception of leather documents (^{kuš}*šipištu*) sent to local authorities by the royal chancery, but their content is rarely reproduced *verbatim*, and never quoted extensively.[32] In the case of YOS 20, 87, the letters received from the Seleucid administration were fully translated from Greek to Akkadian and compiled in a single document.

The question of the nature of the medium on which the original manuscript of this compendium was inscribed remains open. One would naturally think of a clay tablet, a writing board or a leather document, but the hypothesis that this *editio princeps* could have been inscribed on a (bilingual?) stone stele cannot be entirely ruled out, as it was customary for local communities of the Seleucid empire to have official correspondence engraved on stelae – sometimes at the request of the Crown – and to put them on display in their main sanctuaries.[33] Several examples of clay tablet bearing texts copied from such stelae are attested in Hellenistic Babylonia,[34] the most interesting case for our study being the so-called *Lehmann text*, which is currently known by two manuscripts on clay tablets (CTMMA 4, 148 A and B): it was copied from a (now lost) stone stele erected in 236 BC in the small courtyard of the Esagil, the main sanctuary of Babylon, and contains a speech by the temple administrator (*šatammu*) followed by a decision of the local assembly.[35]

Seleucid Administration in Babylonia

Despite the comparative wealth of the Babylonian documentation, surprisingly little is known of the satrapy's administration during the first decades of the Seleucid era. The additional evidence found in YOS 20, 87 provides valuable insight into these matters. First of all, at least five officials appear in the document:[36] [...]os[?] (l. 1), who seems to have been a collaborator of document A's author; [...]goras[?] (l. 13), to whom document C was addressed; Hagnotheos (l. 14), who appears with an individual whose name is lost in a break as co-addressee of an official letter around 290–284 BC; and Hippo[...], who is mentioned in document D in connection with the queen (l. 24). Although the exact positions held by these individuals remain undetermined,[37] it is not unreasonable to assume that most of them were Seleucid officials operating at various levels of the satrapal administration. These in-

30 On the subtle distinction between *prostagma* and *epistolē*, see Capdetrey (2007: 336–337); Bencivenni (2011: 140–146).

31 Ll. 4, 11, 19, 36, 37 and 39.

32 For a study of these attestations, see Sciandra (2012, especially: 234–236). On Hellenistic royal correspondence in Greek sources, see Welles (1934); Bertrand (1985); Virgilio (2011: 19–75); Ceccarelli (2013: 297–330).

33 Cf., e.g., SEG 37, 1010 (= Ma 1999 No. 4), ll. 46–50, καὶ τῆς ἐπιστολῆς τὸ ἀντίγραφον ἀναγράψαντας εἰς στήλας λιθίνας ἐχθεῖναι ἐν τοῖς ἐπιφανετάτοις ἱεροῖς, "and to write up the copy of the letter on stone stelae and expose them in the most conspicuous sanctuaries" (letter from Antiochus III recorded on a stone stele found in Pamukçu in ancient Mysia, dated to 209 BC).

34 Cf. Frahm 2005.

35 On this document, see Monerie (2018: 197–202).

36 Judging from the general content of YOS 20, 87, more officials were probably mentioned in the lost parts of the tablet. The sequence "[...] ⌜x⌝ sa du" (l. 39) at the end of document G, for instance, might be the end of the name of yet another Seleucid official, although the poor state of conservation of the line precludes any certainty.

37 It was customary for Hellenistic chanceries to leave out this kind of information in their official correspondence (Holleaux 1933: 26; Bertrand 1985: 480). The cases of [...]os[?] (l. 1) and [...]goras[?] (l. 13), whose names are not followed by any title, suggest that YOS 20, 87 follows this practice.

dividuals acted as intermediaries in the transmission of the royal orders and maybe, in some cases, as issuers of official *prostagmata*.[38]

Another interesting feature of YOS 20, 87 is the hitherto unattested reference to "palace administrators" (*qīpūtu ša ēkalli*, l. 9) found in document B (290 BC), although the Greek title behind this Akkadian periphrasis is difficult to identify. The office of *qīpu* is well-attested in the Neo-Babylonian and Early Achaemenid sources, where it refers to the so-called "royal resident", a member of the temple's high administration in charge of the sanctuary's obligations towards the Crown,[39] but there is little chance that this office was intended here: firstly, because the Hellenistic counterpart of the sixth century BC *qīpu* is attested in the cuneiform sources as *paqdu* in Akkadian or *episkopos* in Greek;[40] secondly, because the title of *qīpūtu ša ēkalli* does not suggest that they were temple officials.

A more promising lead would be to understand them as officials of the local *basilikon*, the royal institution in charge of managing the Crown's resources, which played a major part in the local implementation of royal euergetic actions.[41] This idea would fit the – admittedly fragmentary – context of their occurrence, since the document mentions something being apparently transferred "from the palace administrators" (*lapāni qīpūtu ša ēkalli*) in the context of the temple's building works (l. 9). However, the fact that the *basilikon* is consistently rendered as *bīt šarri* in the cuneiform sources contradicts this hypothesis, as the cuneiform scribes usually made a clear distinction between the *basilikon* (*bīt šarri*) and the royal palace (*ēkallu*).

As a result, the most reasonable assumption is probably that these *qīpūtu ša ēkalli* were officials in charge of the management of a royal palace. Interestingly, a *rab ēkalli* (lit. "palace manager") is also mentioned in a debt note from Babylon datable to ca. 261–257 BC (Hackl 2013, No. 124 = BM 41919, l. 3), but the potential relationship between these two offices cannot be determined in the present state of the documentation. Likewise, the identification of the palace where these *qīpūtu ša ēkalli* operated, be it the old palatial complex of Babylon, the newly built palace of Seleucia-on-the-Tigris, some secondary royal residence near Uruk, or another palace outside Babylonia (in Susa?), remains out of reach.

Kidin-Anu and the Urukeans

Let us now turn to the local authorities of Uruk. Similarly to the Seleucid letters addressed to the temple administrator (*šatammu*) of the Esagil and/or the "Babylonians" (i.e., the temple assembly representing the city) recorded in the astronomical diaries and chronicles from the third century BC,[42] the final recipients and/or main beneficiaries of the documents translated in YOS 20, 87 seem to have been a certain Kidin-Anu, along with the Urukean temple assembly. This can be deduced from the fact that "Kidin-Anu and the Urukeans" are mentioned twice in document B (ll. 6 and 10), that Kidin-Anu appears alone in the title of the compendium ("[...] that Kidin-Anu, exorcist of Anu and Antu, [...] Seleucus and Antiochus, the kings, wrote.", ll. 40–41) as well as in section VI, which seems to have been a subtitle of some sort ("[...] concerning Kidin-Anu [...]", l. 30), and probably again in the first lines of documents D (l. 23) and F (l. 31), where the addressee's name is expected. Taken together, these elements suggest that this Kidin-Anu was the head of the Urukean community in the first quarter of the third century BC, just like the *šatammu* of Esagil was the head of the Babylonians.

Although Kidin-Anu was a common personal name in Uruk at the time, the identity of this individual is quite clear: he is most certainly Kidin-Anu, son of Anu-ah-ušabši, descendant of Ekur-zākir, an important Urukean figure of the Early Hellenistic period, whose career is well-documented by the local sources (**Fig. 3**).[43]

38 As pointed out by M. Holleaux (1933: 14), some *prostagmata* could be issued by Seleucid officials, as can be seen from OGIS, 225, ll. 37–38 (covering letter of an order of Antiochus II from Didyma, dated to 254/53 BC), where two Seleucid officials, Metrophanes and Nikomachos, are referred to as having issued their own *prostagmata*, while the king sent another one. On the transmission of royal orders in the Seleucid empire, see Capdetrey (2007: 344–359).

39 Levavi 2018: 98–99 and 103–104.

40 Clancier/Monerie 2014: 204–205.

41 A *basilikon* is in fact attested in Uruk during the Seleucid period. On this institution and its role in royal euergetism, see Capdetrey (2007: 422–425); Clancier/Monerie (2014: 205–206).

42 On these occurrences, see Sciandra (2012: 226–228).

43 On this identification, see already Ossendrijver (2020: 329).

Fig. 3: Attestations of Kidin-Anu / Anu-ah-ušabši // Ekur-zākir in the cuneiform sources from Uruk.

Document	*Document Type*	*Role {and official titles} (w/ lines)*	*Date*
OECT 9, 01	Quitclaim for arable land	Witness (r. 8′)	ca. 315–311 BC
TCL 13, 234	Sale of arable land	Witness (r. 13)	312 BC
VS 15, 51	Sale of real estate	Witness (r. 9)	ca. 305–294 BC
VDI 1955/4, 06	Sale of prebend share	Witness (r. 4)[44]	300 BC
TCL 6, 38	Ritual prescriptions for daily offerings	Copyist of ritual texts {Urukean, exorcist of Anu and Antu, high priest of the Bīt Rēš} (r. 47–48)	ca. 294–281 BC
YOS 20, 87	Compendium of official documents	Addressee of royal letters {exorcist of Anu and Antu, and possibly scribe of *Enūma Anu Enlil*}	ca. 290–275 BC
BRM 2, 04	Sale of prebend share	(First) witness (r. 1)	283 BC
YOS 20, 17 // Corò 2018 No. 09	Sale of prebend share	(Co-)owner of an *ērib bīti* prebend before Anu, Antu and other gods (o. 5–6)	276 BC
BRM 2, 10	Sale of slave	(First) witness (r. 5)	275 BC
YOS 20, 20	*Donatio mortis causa*	(First) witness (r. 5)	270 BC

Kidin-Anu, son of Anu-ahu-ušabši, was probably born around the middle of the fourth century BC, at the end of the Achaemenid period. He was a member of one of the most prominent priestly families of Uruk, the Ekur-zākir clan, which was known to produce expert exorcists (*mašmaššu* or *āšipu*).[45] The earliest attestations of his activities, during the Diadochi period (ca. 315–300 BC), document him as a simple witness for legal transactions. However, Kidin-Anu seems to have gained prominence at the turn of the third century BC, when the sources describe him as an Urukean (i.e., a member of the assembly of Uruk), as an exorcist of Anu and Antu, and as an *ērib bīti* (lit. "temple enterer") of the *cella* of Anu and Antu, the most prestigious categories of priests in the Bīt Rēš.[46] He may also have been an expert in celestial matters, if the title of "scribe of *Enūma Anu Enlil*" at the beginning of documents D (l. 23) and F (l. 31), which seems to state the addressee's profession, can be interpreted as relating to Kidin-Anu.[47]

More importantly, Kidin-Anu also acted as "Elder Brother" (*ahu rabû*) of the Bīt Rēš, the temple's most prominent sacerdotal position at the time, which probably explains why he was both the head of the city's assembly and the main local interlocutor of the Seleucid administration, just like the high administrator (*šatammu*) of the Esagil temple in Babylon.[48] This prominence is indirectly confirmed by the fact that Kidin-Anu consistently appears as first witness, a position of honour, in the legal deeds mentioning him between 283 and 270 BC (cf. **Fig. 3**).[49] Since YOS 20, 87 (l. 6) already mentions him as a prominent figure in 290 BC, it can be

44 Kidin-Anu appears in this instance with his brother Ša-Anu-iššû.

45 On exorcists and exorcism in Late Babylonian Uruk, see Corò (2005); Clancier (2014).

46 Kidin-Anu appears as Urukean in TCL 6, 38, r. 47; as exorcist of Anu and Antu in TCL 6, 38, r. 48 and YOS 20, 87, l. 40; as *ērib bīti* in YOS 20, 17 // Corò 2018 No. 09, o. 5–6. On this last status, see Monerie (2018: 369–371).

47 The fact that Kidin-Anu's son Anu-ah-ušabši and grandson Anu-ušallim bore the titles of exorcist of Anu and Antu, scribe of *Enūma Anu Enlil* and Elder Brother of the Bīt Rēš supports this hypothesis, as these scholarly professions and titles were often inherited from father to son (cf. Escobar/Pearce 2018: 271). Note that M. Ossendrijver (2020: 330) has proposed to identify Kidin-Anu with the famous astronomer Kidinnu (known as Kidenas in the Classical sources), although this identification remains speculative.

48 TCL 6, 38, r. 48. On the *ahu rabû*, see Waerzeggers (2010: 45–46); Debourse (2022: 222–228). The available sources suggest that there was no *šatammu* and only one *ahu rabû* in the Bīt Rēš at the beginning of the Seleucid era. In the early second century BC, a *šatammu* of the Urukean temples (AO 6498, l. 2′, cf. Clancier/Monerie 2014: 236–237) and two *ahu rabû* are attested at the same time (TCL 6, 15, r. 3′ and 5′), but this does not necessarily apply to the time of Kidin-Anu, as the institutional organisation of the Urukean temples evolved substantially over the Hellenistic period (cf. Clancier/Monerie 2014: 220–223). For a comparable case of temporary disappearance of the office of *šatammu* of the Esagil in Babylon in the Achaemenid period, see Hackl (2018: 172–177).

49 Although the order of appearance in the witness lists of these cuneiform legal texts is not always meaningful, the appearance of Kidin-Anu as first witness in three deeds between 283 and 270 BC is probably not coincidental. Interestingly, two of these deeds present unusual features which might explain Kidin-Anu's intervention as a witness: the first one is BRM 2, 10, a cuneiform deed of sale for a female slave dated to 275 BC, at a time when the Seleucid administration had already initiated a reform entailing the end of the record-

inferred that Kidin-Anu held this office of *ahu rabû* between the 290s BC and ca. 270 BC, after which he disappears from the sources.[50]

Kidin-Anu, however, is chiefly known for his appearance in the colophon of TCL 6, 38, the only document mentioning explicitly his title of *ahu rabû*. This text is a composite set of instructions for the preparation of the ritual meals presented to the divine statues in the Bīt Rēš. Although the tablet itself was probably inscribed in the early second century BC, its famous colophon states that it was originally copied by Kidin-Anu, three generations earlier:[51]

> Hand of Šamaš-ēṭir, son of Ina-qibīt-Anu, son of Šibqat-Anu. Writing board of the cultic ordinances of Anu (*paraṣ anūtu*), of the holy purification rites (and) the ritual regulations of kingship, together with the purification rites of the gods of the Bīt Rēš, the Irigal, the Eanna and the (other) temples of Uruk, the ritual activities of the exorcists, the lamentation priests, the singers and all the experts, (so) that, later on, everything which the apprentice holds will be available to an expert. (Written) in accordance with the tablets that Nabû-apla-uṣur, king of the Sealand, carried off from Uruk and then, Kidin-Anu, Urukean, exorcist of Anu and Antu, descendant of Ekur-zākir, Elder Brother (*ahu rabû*) of the Bīt Rēš, saw those tablets in Elam, copied them in the reign of kings Seleucus (I) and Antiochus (I) and brought them to Uruk.[52]

Several aspects of this text require clarification. First, we have seen that the scribe of TCL 6, 38, Šamaš-ēṭir / Ina-qibīt-Anu / Šibqat-Anu // Ekur-zākir, was a strong candidate for being the owner of YOS 20, 87. The fact that both texts allude to a refoundation of the Bīt Rēš's cultic activities under Seleucus I and Antiochus I on the one hand, and that Kidin-Anu is central to the history of both documents on the other, lends weight to this hypothesis.[53] If this assumption is correct, the scribe of YOS 20, 87 would then most likely be Anu-ab-utēr / Anu-bēlšunu / Nidintu-Anu // Sin-lēqe-unnīnī, and the tablet could be dated more securely to the first decade of the second century BC, when these two scholars are known to have worked together.[54]

Secondly, many commentators have stressed that the contents of the colophon could not be taken at face value, since the Bīt Rēš and Irigal did not exist as such under Nabu-apla-uṣur (i.e., Nabopolassar, 626–605 BC), who allegedly carried off these temples' ritual tablets to Elam.[55] As a matter of fact, most historians agree that the colophon's account, which states that Kidin-Anu found these ancient tablets there, copied them and brought them back to Uruk, is probably a *pia fraus* fabricated by the local priests to assert the antiquity of their temple and its cult.[56] This does not necessarily imply, however, that Kidin-Anu never travelled to Susa or that he did not copy Neo-Babylonian ritual texts there.[57] Be it as it may, TCL 6, 38 perfectly fits into the context of the restoration

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ing of slave sales on cuneiform tablets (cf. Monerie 2018: 251–253, with earlier bibliography); the second one is YOS 20, 20, dated to 270 BC, the only known cuneiform document mentioning the city of Antioch-on-the-Ištar-Canal, which was either the name of a newly founded *polis* near Uruk or a Greek alternative name for Uruk at the time (cf. Monerie 2018: 214–215).

50 A *terminus post quem* to Kidin-Anu's taking up office as Elder Brother of the Bīt Rēš is provided by VDI 1955/4, 06, dated to 300 BC, where Kidin-Anu appears in the witness list (r. 4), but not in first position. Considering that he appears as first witness in later deeds, it is not unreasonable to suppose that Kidin-Anu was not yet *ahu rabû* at the time.

51 On this colophon, see notably Beaulieu (1993: 47–49); Waerzeggers (2010: 115–118); Krul (2018: 102–106); Ossendrijver (2020: 327–329).

52 TCL 6, 38, r. 43–50. Translation slightly adapted from Ossendrijver (2020: 327–328).

53 According to Boiy (2010: 176–177), Šamaš-ēṭir may have been Kidin-Anu's great grandson.

54 Cf. Robson 2007.

55 According to P.-A. Beaulieu (1993: 47), this fabrication rests on a historical event recorded in the chronicle ABC, 2, which states that "Nabopolassar returned to Susa the gods of Susa whom the Assyrians had carried off and settled in Uruk" in 626 BC (ABC, 2, ll. 16–17).

56 On this matter, see chiefly Beaulieu (1993: 47–49). The assertion of antiquity of the Bīt Rēš temple and "cultic ordinances of Anu" (*paraṣ anūtu*, on which see Krul 2018: 140–142) can be found in other texts from this period, such as the *Uruk prophecy* (SpTU 1, 03, r. 12), which P.-A. Beaulieu (1993: 48) links to an Early Seleucid renovation of the Bīt Rēš, i.e., the one mentioned in YOS 20, 87; the *Šulgi chronicle* (SpTU 1, 02, o. 13, cf. Cavigneaux 2005), which was copied by Kidin-Anu's son and successor as Elder Brother of the Bīt Rēš, Anu-ah-ušabši; and the cuneiform stamped inscription of Anu-uballiṭ~Kephalon, who renovated the temple in 202 BC (WVDOG 51 pl. 108, ll. 4–7, cf. Krul 2018: 36–37 and 92–96).

57 Cf. Stevens 2013: 226; Krul 2018: 105. A strong argument in favour of some historical background to this account has been brought forth by C. Waerzeggers (2010: 115–118), who stressed the composite nature of TCL 6, 38, which was apparently based on a corpus of earlier documents, one of them at least being an original text referring to Neo-Babylonian temple offerings. Interestingly, Babylonian copies of scholarly documents from Elam are attested for the mid-second millennium BC: see UM 29-15-393, with a colophon stating that the tablet is the "copy of a writing board from Susa" (cf. Rutz 2006).

of the Bīt Rēš temple and its cult in the early third century BC documented by YOS 20, 87, to which we shall now turn our attention.

The Building Works on the Temple Complex

Despite their fragmentary state, the translated documents collected in YOS 20, 87 obviously focus on building works performed on the Bīt Rēš during the first quarter of the third century BC. Little is known of the temple's early days: indirect evidence suggests that the first version of the cultic complex was probably built at some point between the seventh and the fifth century BC,[58] but by and large, the shrine remains poorly documented before the Macedonian conquest, due to the dearth of explicit written sources and to the fact that most of the archaeological remains of this initial state (stratum 2θ) have been destroyed by later renovations. It is commonly thought, however, that the so-called *Schiefer Trakt* excavated in the eastern part of the temple complex belongs to this initial stage (cf. **Fig. 4**).[59]

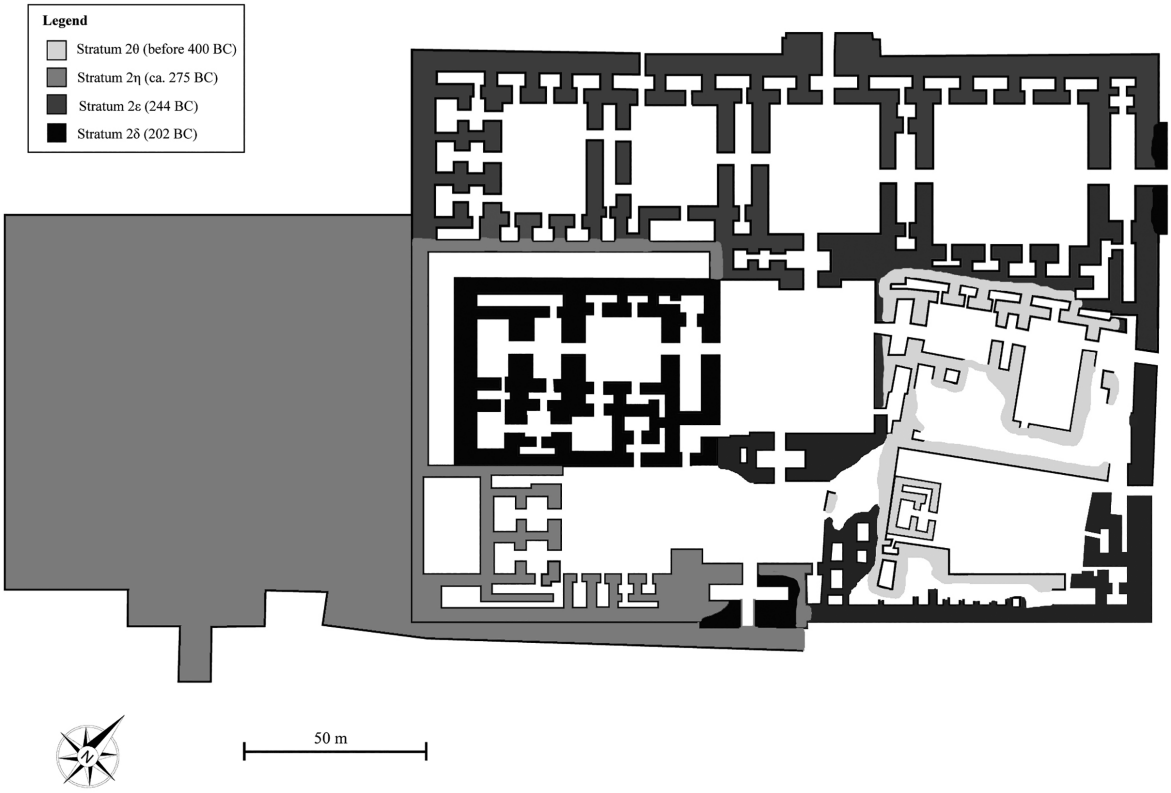

Fig. 4: Schematic rendering of the four building phases of the Bīt Rēš, based on Kose (2013: 334).

The temple's next building phase (stratum 2η) has long been identified on the ground: like its earlier counterpart, it was largely destroyed by later renovations, but the southwestern part of the complex still shows significant remains of this period. As a matter of fact, this phase seems to have been less a renovation than an extension of the temple complex: new buildings and courts were created next to the *Schiefer Trakt* including, presumably, a first version of the temple's main *cella*, which has been completely destroyed by later renovations. Moreover, a new ziggurat dedicated to the god Anu – the largest monument of this kind ever built in Mesopota-

58 Kose 1998: 187; Kose 2013: 334; Beaulieu 2018: 196.

59 Kose 1998: 134–135.

mia, in terms of ground surface – was erected to the southwest of the complex, over an earlier temple tower from the seventh century BC.[60]

Until now, however, this second phase could only be dated relatively to other archaeological strata, i.e., between the end of the fifth (stratum 2θ) and the middle of the third century BC (stratum 2ε)[61], as the written sources remained much more elusive on this phase than on the subsequent ones, initiated by the *šaknu* Anu-uballiṭ~Nikarchos (third phase, stratum 2ε) and the *rab ša rēš āli* Anu-uballiṭ~Kephalon (fourth phase, stratum 2δ), which were completed in 244 and 202 BC respectively.[62] The new insight provided by YOS 20, 87, documenting building works on the Bīt Rēš complex, now allows us to securely date the archaeological stratum 2η to the first quarter of the third century BC.

A cursory reading of the tablet provides a chronological outline of these works: the first explicit reference to building activities appears in document D (l. 25), dated to 284/83 BC; documents E and F, which are datable to ca. 283–275 BC, both mention the fact that the works are still under way (ll. 29, 34, 35), while document G, in December 275 BC, refers to an official order concerning an assignment to rebuild the temple (l. 37 and perhaps l. 38). This last order may have enabled the completion of the temple's extension, as the tablet does not record any later document. These milestones suggest that the Bīt Rēš's second building phase probably lasted around a decade, between the mid-280s and the mid-270s BC, a time span which is broadly consistent with the estimated duration of the subsequent renovations (ca. 260–244 BC for the building works of the third phase, and ca. 215–202 BC for the fourth).[63]

It is also worth noting that unlike documents D-G, the preserved parts of documents A–C do not refer to building activities, but focus instead on cultic matters: cultic paraphernalia (l. 2) are mentioned in document A (ca. 290 BC), while document C (ca. 290–284 BC) refers to rituals and festivals (ll. 15–16), food offerings (ll. 16, 18, 21) and, most interestingly, to the transfer (*abāku*) of divine statues to Uruk (l. 17),[64] as well as the return (*târu*) of something related to the gods towards the city (l. 20). The use of these verbs, which contrasts with the mere "entry" (*erēbu*) of the divinity into the renovated sanctuary after a temporary sojourn in a nearby temple usually recorded in the cuneiform sources,[65] suggests that the cult statues installed in the *cella* of the Bīt Rēš after the temple's second building phase were not in Uruk in the first half of the 280s BC.[66] In this regard, the building phase documented by YOS 20, 87 appears as a genuine refoundation of the local cult, in a much more fundamental way than the following works undertaken by Anu-uballiṭ~Nikarchos and Anu-uballiṭ~Kephalon.[67]

But if these cult statues were not located in the temple in the beginning of the third century BC, where were they? Although the answer to this question shall remain hypothetical in the present state of the documentation, the much-discussed colophon of TCL 6, 38 (cf. supra) provides an obvious parallel to the situation recorded in our tablet, since it refers to the plunder of ritual tablets containing, among other things, the "cultic ordinances of Anu" (r. 44–46) which were "carried off from Uruk" (r. 47) and later copied "in the land of Elam" by Kidin-Anu, who brought them back to the city (r. 47–50) at the time of Seleucus I and Antiochus I's coregency (ca. 296–

60 Kose 1998: 135–144; Kose 2013: 336.

61 Stratum 2ζ, which consists of minor interventions carried out shortly before stratum 2ε, is not relevant for our study (cf. Kose 1998: 133).

62 On these later construction phases, see Kose (1998: 144–176); Kose (2013: 336–337); Krul (2018: 34–38).

63 For these estimations, see Monerie (2018: 374–380).

64 Note that the same verb appears in document B (l. 10), dated to July 290 BC, in connection with Kidin-Anu and the Urukeans, which may imply that both documents refer to the same situation.

65 Ambos 2007: 306–313. Contemporary building inscriptions, such as the *Antiochus cylinder* (5R66, Borsippa, 268 BC) and the *Nikarchos Cylinder* (YOS 1, 52, Uruk, 244 BC), follow this pattern, referring only to the entry of (the cult statue of) the god into its newly renovated temple (5R66, ii. 10; YOS 1, 52, l. 16).

66 It is not improbable that the "paraphernalia of the sanctuary" referred to in document A (l. 2) were also not in the city at the time, since the sequence "to Uruk" appears in the next – albeit very fragmentary – line. The fact that document A might be a covering letter of document B tends to reinforce this hypothesis. A similar instance of temple renovation combined with the refoundation of its cult is documented in Uruk under the reign of Nabû-kudurrī-uṣur (Nebuchadnezzar) II (604–562 BC), who reinstalled the statue of the goddess Ištar-of-Uruk in the Eanna temple, two centuries after the statue had been deported to Babylon by a Chaldean king (cf. Beaulieu 2003: 129–138).

67 It is worth noting in this regard that YOS 20, 87 actually contains the earliest known occurrence (l. 28, in document E, ca. 284–275 BC) of the temple name "Bīt Rēš", which remains unattested before the early third century BC.

281 BC),[68] i.e., when YOS 20, 87's documents A–C record a refoundation of the temple's cultic activities under the supervision of the same Kidin-Anu, assisted by the temple assembly of the "Urukeans". This could suggest that the cult statues which were brought back to Uruk in the 280s BC were also formerly located in "the land of Elam," i.e., Susiana, and that Kidin-Anu managed to transfer them back to Uruk, with the active support of the Seleucid Crown.

This parallel with TCL 6, 38, however, does not allow us to answer all the questions raised by the analysis of YOS 20, 87: How was the cult organised *before* this refoundation? And who was responsible for this situation? The former question lies entirely beyond the scope of the available documentation, be it textual or archaeological. As for the latter, many commentators have pointed out that, despite the assertions found in TCL 6, 38 (r. 47), the Neo-Babylonian king Nabu-apla-uṣur (626–605 BC) probably had nothing to do with this event, since the Bīt Rēš did not exist as such at the time.[69] In this regard, a Late Achaemenid king[70] or Antigonus Monophtalmus[71] would probably make more likely suspects for this cultic disruption. What is certain, in any case, is that the Seleucid involvement towards the Bīt Rēš went far beyond the mere funding of local building works: YOS 20, 87 indisputably shows an active support from the Crown, which enabled the Urukean authorities to organize a cultic refoundation in the Bīt Rēš, as well as a considerable extension of the city's religious complex.[72]

Seleucid Euergetism in Babylonia

Being built in sun-dried and kiln-fired clay bricks, Mesopotamian temples had to be rebuilt from the foundations on a regular basis. As caretaker of the kingdom's ritual activities, the king was traditionally expected to ensure that the sanctuaries did not fall into decay, and initiate renovation works when needed.[73] However, by the time of Alexander's conquest, this tradition had been ignored by the rulers of Babylonia for two hundred years: the last king to comply was Cyrus II (539–530 BC), who had carried out building works in the Ekišnugal temple in Ur, and possibly in the Eanna in Uruk.[74] The available sources do not indicate that any of his successors performed this traditional duty until the Macedonian conquest in 331 BC, when Alexander decided to rebuild the Esagil complex in Babylon.[75] In doing so, the Macedonian king dissociated himself from Achaemenid practices, and revived the old Sumero-Akkadian custom of royal patronage over the temples, which in this respect echoed the Greek practice of euergetism.

Although the conqueror's untimely death prevented him from completing this task, the first Seleucids decided to follow his path after the crisis of the Diadochi wars. This is especially true of Antiochus I, who spent some years in Babylonia in the early third century BC: it was then that he completed, with the help of his war elephants, the clearing of ruins of the Esagil complex, which had been initiated forty years earlier by Alex-

68 See Hackl (2020) for the revised dating of the beginning of this coregency.

69 Beaulieu 1993: 47; Krul 2018: 105–106.

70 A possible candidate could be Darius III (336–330 BC), who had to cope with a Babylonian revolt during his reign. This poorly documented revolt is hinted at by BagM Beih. 2, 88, a king list written by the priests of the Bīt Rēš during the Hellenistic period, which records, in an admittedly broken context, the reign of an individual "[...] whose other name is Nidin-Bel" (r. 1′), just before the accession of Darius III. Cf. Safaee 2017. This usurper may or may not have been the same as the equally poorly attested Ara'siuqqa referred to as king in a tablet from Larsa, datable to the 330s or 320s BC (BRM 2, 51, cf. Joannès 2001: 257). *If* Darius III had to suppress a local usurpation in Southern Babylonia during his accession year, *and if* the personnel of the Bīt Rēš had supported this revolt, a deportation of the temple's cult statues and cultic material to Susa *could* have been carried out as a punishment.

71 Antigonus controlled much of Babylonia and Susiana between 316 and 309 BC. His predatory actions against the local temples are well-attested. Cf. Monerie 2018: 129–130 and 141–142.

72 This conclusion gives credit to P.-A. Beaulieu's (1993: 49) hypothesis of a "double layer" in the *Uruk Prophecy*, by which he assumes that the last kings mentioned in this *vaticinia ex eventu* can be identified with both Neo-Babylonian kings *and* Hellenistic kings at the same time. The prophecy's description of kings 10 and 11, which suits well the action of Seleucus I and Antiochus I in Uruk, is quite compelling in this regard. See especially the description of king 10, who "will establish the cultic ordinances of Anu" (*paraṣ anūtu*, SpTU 1, 03, r. 12), "transfer" (*abāku*) a cult statue to make it "dwell in Uruk" (r. 13–14), "rebuild the temples of Uruk" and "restore the sanctuaries" (r. 14).

73 Schaudig 2010; Waerzeggers 2011.

74 Kuhrt 2007: 74–75. Contrarily to what is sometimes thought, nothing in the famous *Cyrus Cylinder* allows us to infer that the Persian conqueror performed building works on the Esagil temple.

75 Arrian, *Anab.*, 3, 16, 4 and 7, 17, 1–3; Strabo, 16, 1, 5. Cf. Monerie 2018: 95–102.

ander;[76] moreover, we now know that he actively supported the extension of the Bīt Rēš complex in Uruk (completed around 275 BC), and the famous *Antiochus Cylinder* (5R66) shows that he also rebuilt the Esagil temple in Babylon (ca. 270 BC)[77] as well as the Ezida temple in Borsippa (ca. 268 BC).[78]

The considerable extension of the Bīt Rēš religious complex, resulting in the doubling of the size of the temple and the erection of the largest ziggurat ever built in Mesopotamia, was thus part of an active policy of religious euergetism conducted by the first Seleucids in Babylonia.[79] In this regard, YOS 20, 87's mention of queen Apama, who was Seleucus' spouse and Antiochus' mother, in 284/83 BC (l. 24), is particularly interesting,[80] as her interaction with two Seleucid officials in the context of the Bīt Rēš's building works is highly reminiscent of her agency in the renovation of the oracular sanctuary at Didyma, fifteen years earlier.[81] Both interventions accord with the documented support by Hellenistic queens for religious institutions and festivals as one of the key avenues for female royal benefaction.[82]

Similarly, the many references to official orders (*ṭēmu*, ll. 4, 11, 19, 36, 37 and 39) and/or royal letters (l. 13) recorded over more than fifteen years for the sole refoundation of the Bīt Rēš, show an actual involvement from the first Seleucids in this kind of euergetism, in accordance with the long-known testimony of the *Antiochus Cylinder* – although the cylinder's assertion that the king made a personal trip from the Levant to Borsippa to attend the ceremonial laying of Ezida's new foundations in 268 BC should probably be taken with a pinch of salt.[83]

Antiochus I, however, was one of the very last heirs to the multimillennial Sumero-Akkadian tradition of royal support to temple building. After his death in 261 BC, Seleucid support in favour of Babylonian temples gradually evolved towards new – and cheaper – forms of *euergesia*, such as land grants and tax exemptions for Babylonian cities.[84] Although the temple assemblies indirectly benefitted from these donations through their

76 BCHP, 6, o. 4′–9′. Cf. also chronicle BCHP, 5, o. 8–12, which records Antiochus' personal participation to religious ceremonies in two temples of the god Sîn in Babylon.

77 Cf. 5R66, i. 6–13. On the chronology of the Esagil renovation, see Horowitz (1991).

78 On this important document, which is currently the last known cuneiform royal inscription, see Stevens (2014), who provides relevant bibliography. Stevens (2014: 82) rightly points out that, although this clay cylinder from Borsippa is the only cuneiform royal inscription ascribed to Antiochus I, it would be unwise to infer any special relationship between this king and the god Nabû, to which the Ezida was dedicated. The fact that Antiochus also conducted renovation works on the Esagil in Babylon and on the Bīt Rēš in Uruk utterly invalidates this assumption (*contra*, e.g., Erickson 2011; Kosmin 2014).

79 It is worth noting that this kind of religious euergetism was not limited to Babylonia, or even to the Seleucid kingdom itself. See, e.g., I. Didyma, 480, ll. 7–14, which alludes to the rebuilding and embellishment of Didyma's oracular sanctuary by Seleucus and Antiochus of around 299 BC, when Miletus was under Antigonid control. Cf. Marcellesi 2004: 167–169.

80 Until now, the latest known attestation of Apama was the Milesian decree I. Didyma, 480, datable to ca. 299 BC, which had led some scholars to believe that the queen had passed away shortly after this date, and that Seleucus had then quickly married Stratonike. The new evidence provided by YOS 20, 87 invalidates this hypothesis. On this debate, see Müller (2013: 208–209) and Engels/Erickson (2016, 43–44), with references to earlier literature.

81 I. Didyma, 480, ll. 7–10. Cf. Widmer 2016: 27–31. See also her possible involvement in the foundation of the *polis* of Apamea-on-the-Orontes around 300 BC, suggested by a Roman mosaic recently unearthed on this site by illegal excavators. Cf. Olszewski/Saad 2018: 371–372.

82 Bielman Sánchez 2003: 56. See, e.g., the contemporary case of queen Stratonike's many votive donations to the temple of Delos (cf. Ramsay 2016: 98–99), as well as her alleged role in the (re)building of the sanctuary of Hierapolis-Bambyke (Lucian, *D. Syr.* 17, cf. Cohen 2006: 175).

83 Cf. 5R66, i. 8–16. The cylinder's statement that Antiochus moulded the temple's "first brick" (cf. Schaudig 2010: 150) in "the land of Hatti" (i.e., Syria Seleukis) *before* transporting the brick all the way to Borsippa casts some serious doubt on the fact that the king personally attended the Ezida's foundation laying ceremony in 268 BC. If Antiochus was indeed on his way to Borsippa, why did he organize the moulding of the first brick that far ahead of time? If, on the contrary, Antiochus financed the building works but *only* attended the first brick ceremony before sending a royal delegate in his stead, the historical sequence makes much more sense. If this hypothesis is correct, the cylinder's scribe would only have slightly "corrected" the course of events to make it match the traditional royal prerequisites concerning temple building and depict Antiochus as a good Mesopotamian king. Earlier cuneiform royal inscriptions are full of minor historical distortions of this kind (cf. Charpin 2008: 245).

84 Clancier/Monerie 2014: 206–210; Monerie 2018: 193–205. The last known occurrence of Seleucid religious benefaction is dated to 224 BC, when Seleucus III funded an offering of eleven oxen, a hundred sheep and eleven ducks to the Esagil temple in Babylon for the New Year's festival, to be used in a royal cult ceremony (BCHP, 12, o. 3′–7′). This self-serving benevolence must have proven much less costly to the Crown than the temple renovations undertaken by Seleucus' ancestors.

role as managing institutions of these cities during the third century BC, the transformation of several of these cities into *poleis* in the early second century BC inverted this situation, by gradually subordinating the management of temple affairs to the control of the new *polis* institutions.[85] By that time, the age-old tradition of royal support for lavish temple renovations, which had been revived a century earlier by the first Seleucids, was long gone.

Concluding Remarks

Despite its poor state of conservation, which leaves many questions unanswered, YOS 20, 87 provides extremely valuable insights into an otherwise poorly documented period of Uruk's history, as well as a significant addition to the corpus of Seleucid official correspondence. One last point, however, remains to be addressed, which concerns the purpose of the document. It appears methodologically unsound to attempt to link its proposed dating (probably the early second century BC for the tablet, and possibly the middle of the third century BC for the text itself) to any contemporaneous event or any kind of revendication: the text was written in cuneiform Akkadian, a language and script only understood by temple scholars at the time. Having no external audience and no proper legal value, YOS 20, 87 was therefore relevant only to the priestly community itself. Why these official documents were originally translated, compiled and later copied by local scribes is a complex question, which cannot be clarified in detail, but probably involved considerations on the historical and institutional memory of the Bīt Rēš.

In this regard, our tablet finds an interesting biblical parallel in *Ezra* 1–6, which can be dated to the late fourth century BC:[86] the text gives an account of the building of the Second Temple two centuries earlier, and extensively quotes royal letters sent by the Persian kings – one of which is translated to Hebrew –, in order to account for delays in the building works in Jerusalem, and to keep a record of the goodwill shown by the Persian kings towards the temple community.[87] Although this piece of priestly scholarship later became an integral part of the Biblical Canon, there is reason to believe that it was originally a local account of the refoundation of the Yahwistic cult in Jerusalem.[88] Likewise, YOS 20, 87, which also records translated royal letters concerning building works and cult refoundation, was probably meaningful to a small number of local priests only, beginning with the owner of the tablet, Šamaš-ēṭir, who may have been Kidin-Anu's own great grandson.[89]

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85 Clancier/Monerie 2014: 210–224; Clancier 2017.

86 On this text, see, e.g., Fried (2012), who provides earlier bibliography.

87 Some of these documents are at least partly spurious. Cf. Grabbe 2006.

88 Fried 2003: 30–50.

89 The fact that TCL 6, 38 is roughly contemporary to YOS 20, 87 and was probably written by the same Šamaš-ēṭir, seems consistent with this rationale.

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