Strahil V. Panayotov and Cornelia Wunsch:
New Light on George Smith’s Purchase of the Egibi Archive in 1876 from the Nachlass Mathewson

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Chapter 9
New Light on George Smith’s Purchase of the
Egibi Archive in 1876 from the Nachlass Mathewson
Strahil V. Panayotov and Cornelia Wunsch

Introduction

The present article publishes newly discovered texts belonging to the largest Neo-
Babylonian private archive of the Egibi family. As an introduction a brief history
of the purchase of the Egibi tablets in 1876 by George Smith will be provided.
It bases itself mainly on unpublished materials kept in British Museum and in
archives in Bulgaria.

9.1 Peter Mathewson and George Smith

The texts edited here are housed in a village named Kotel, situated in the East
Balkan Mountains of Bulgaria. In accordance with the present volume’s theme,
the history of these texts bears witness to the globalization of the final years of the
Ottoman Empire. Four well-preserved tablets and a broken one arrived in Kotel
from Baghdad, brought there by George Smith’s last assistant, Peter Mateev, bet-
ter known as Mathewson in the study of Sheila M. Evers in 1993, dealing with the
Egibi Tablets and George Smith. She collected the material from the British Mu-
seum and the British Library.\(^1\) Apart from the letters and diaries kept in London
additional information was discovered recently by Panayotov in Kotel’s “Pante-
onea” Museum, which possess an unpublished biography of Mathewson.\(^2\) The
five Egibi tablets, which Mathewson donated to the city some time before his
death in 1940, are housed in the same museum.\(^3\)

Mathewson accompanied Smith during his last ill-fated Orient journey; Smith
died during the final part of this journey in Aleppo on August 19, 1876 at

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\(^1\)See (Evers 1993, 107–117).

\(^2\)The manuscript was edited by Veliko Jordanov the Chief Librarian of the National Library of Sofia in 1943. The citations here are made after an English translation from the Bulgarian text.

\(^3\)Four tablets will be published here, the fifth one with a well-preserved seal of Kabti-ilāni-Marduk from the Suḥaja family will be published elsewhere.
6 pm in the house of the British Consul Skene.\textsuperscript{4} In his youth Mathewson went to study in Malta and afterwards in Robert College in Constantinople. Later, he found work in the British Post Office in the City of Sultans. Being an official with access to telegraph maps and knowledge of several languages, he was introduced to different people as dragoman and assistant. When George Smith was in Constantinople in 1875/6, Mathewson was asked to join Smith’s expedition as an assistant and dragoman; he accepted. Mathewson functioned as translator and intermediary with the different authorities. Such a position required a certain social status within the Ottoman Empire, which Mathewson did not possess, but the English General Consul and Supreme Court Judge in Constantinople, Sir Philip Francis,\textsuperscript{5} supported him by helping to arrange an English passport for the Bulgarian Mathewson.

I learnt that Mr Smith would probably let you conduct the excavations.\textsuperscript{6} Being Bulgarian you will not have the influence needed for the authorities. It is in your interest to be taken for an English citizen, so we can arrange it at the consulate to enroll you as a British subject and the necessary passport will be issued but there is an obstacle—the ending of your name can give you away in front of the Turkish authorities so it is good to change it with Mathews or Mathewson. I chose the second and became an absolute British subject and an Englishman for the people.\textsuperscript{7}

\textsuperscript{4}Smith’s death is described in telegrams and letters in the British Museum as well as in the Biography of Mathewson in Kotel, and in documents kept in the National Library in Sofia. The exact time of Smith’s death is mentioned in a letter of Mathewson to the Chief Librarian of the British Museum, Mersina, On board the S.S. “Alphée” August 26, 1876 [BM OP 53 C 14 A Oct. 76 (Stamp: BM 11 Sept. 1876 No. 4512)]. The British Museum was informed in various ways about the death of Smith. See, for example, a telegraph from Mathewson: Post Office Telegraphs in [(BM OP 51 C 14 Oct. 76 (Stamp: BM 4 Sept. 1976)]. Mr. Skene, the British Consul in Aleppo, informs the authorities through the Post Office & Submarine Telegraphs [BM OP 53 C 14 Oct. 76 (Stamp: BM 5 Sept. 1876 No. 4435)] and a letter to John Winter Johnes of the British Museum two days after the death of Smith: Aleppo August 21, 1876 [BM OP 53 C 14 Oct. 76 (Stamp: BM 9 Sept. 1876 No. 4495)]. See for secondary literature also (Sayce 1876; Evers 1993, 108). For a description of his grave see (Sánchez 2006, 275f.).

\textsuperscript{5}On the English Consulate-General and the influence of Sir Philip Francis, see (Berridge 2009, 90ff.).

\textsuperscript{6}Reference for that plan can be found in a letter from Smith to his wife May as well: “If I am successful this year I will come home in July and leave the excavations in charge of my assistant who is a very good and likely party.” (Letter of G. Smith to his wife May. Dated in Constantinople, March 5, 1876). Another clue is to be found in a Letter of Mathewson to the Chief Librarian of the British Museum, Mersina, On board the S.S. “Alphée” August 26, 1876 [BM OP 53 C 14 A Oct. 76 (Stamp: BM 11 Sept. 1876 No. 4512)].

\textsuperscript{7}From the biography of Peter Mateev.
The main goal of Smith’s last expedition was, first of all, another excavation in Nineveh with the goal of finding more cuneiform artefacts. Meanwhile, Smith was informed that Michael Marini, an antiquities dealer in Baghdad, was offering cuneiform tablets to the British Museum. These tablets would later turn out to belong to the Egibi archive. This is one of the reasons why Smith first went to Baghdad and not to Mosul.

Smith’s purpose was to dig up the ruins of ancient Nineveh, but he was ordered to go to Baghdad in order to examine a collection of clay tablets with cuneiform script about the existence of which the British Museum had been informed. He was supposed to buy them if they were worth buying.

In order to reach Baghdad, both companions travelled with a steamer down the Euphrates River. They took the ship from a location on the Euphrates River parallel to Aleppo. Smith and Mathewson arrived in Baghdad on April 20, 1876.

Although hungry and tired on our arrival at Baghdad, so impatient was he, that as soon as we had a wash, we went in search of Marini to see and arrange about buying the antiquities, which he should have had store for him. He [Smith] would constantly and completely disregard his bodily wants, but never for a moment would be put off the looking at anything with cuneiform on it.

After examining the tablets offered by Marini in Baghdad Smith realized their significance. He bought ca. 800 of them. That day can be understood as the birth of the modern study of Egibi tablets.

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8For the earlier excavations of Smith, see (Smith 1875, vii–viii). See also (Reade 1993, 51).
9See (Evers 1993, 107f.; Wunsch 2000, 1f.). There were not only Egibi tablets among the acquired texts in 1876. Smith bought, for example, also a Babylonian manuscript of Gilgamesh Tablet XII from Marini, see (George 2003, 416). See also (Clancier 2009, 125ff.).
10The land road to Mosul from Aleppo was taken by another scholar who accompanied Smith and Mathewson until Aleppo. This was the Finnish pioneer, Karl Fredrik Eneberg. See (Aro and Mattila 2007, 7ff.). Smith did not get along with Eneberg, and his travel to the Orient was “not at Smith’s will.” From the Biography of Peter Mateev.
11From a Letter of Mathewson to the Chief Librarian of the British Museum, Mersina, On board the S.S. “Alphée” August 26, 1876 [BM OP 53 C 14A Oct. 76 (Stamp: BM 11 Sept. 1876 No. 4512)].
12From a Letter of George Smith to J. Winter Jones The Principal Librarian, Baghdad, May 17, 1876 [(BM OP 51 5 Aug. 76 (Stamp: BM 14 Jun 1876 No. 3024)].
The collection of tablets in Baghdad, found somewhere in the area of Babylon, was examined and bought out by Mr Smith. They were 5,6,7 centimetres long and 4 to 5 centimetres wide which turned out to be mostly contracts for purchases and sales—the English call them tablets, the French savonnettes as they looked like little bars of soap—about a thousand pieces [...] The contracts on these tablets were of a special value. They had the name of the king, the year, the month and the day of his reign. It was very useful for solving the gaps in the order and chronology of the reign of kings. These contracts had been sealed by the trader and a mark from the nail of the illiterate person or a seal.\textsuperscript{14}

While both companions were in Baghdad the political situation of the country was getting worse and riots were causing regular trouble. In 1876 the Ottoman Empire was in turmoil. Smith and Mathewson faced difficulties as well, while waiting for permission to excavate at Nineveh. Although Smith had a firman from Constantinople, he had to wait for the decision of the English Consul General in Baghdad. Therefore, Smith had to leave Baghdad for 10 days, from the 28 April to the 8 May. He went to Kurnah to speak with the Consul General about the planned excavation.\textsuperscript{15} Besides the riots, another wave of cholera outbreak made the conditions in the country impossible for excavating. After returning from Kurnah Smith knew his mission had failed and that he had to leave the country soon. He wrote to his wife May (Mary): “I am glad to say I am coming home [...] This country is going all to smash.”\textsuperscript{16} All together, Smith stayed for about a month in Baghdad, during which period he devoted himself completely, in a manic manner, to the study of the tablets. As Evers pointed out, the information in the notebooks of Smith, which he wrote during this time in Baghdad, provided essential aid to the first paper on the Egibi tablets by Boscawen (Evers 1993, 108).

In Baghdad while proving over the tablets, making out a complete list of them [...] and making notes on the more interesting ones, he would get up and walk about the room, shaking all over, at these time he would always take some brandy, which would steady his, I may say already shattered nerves. Again he would sit down, but only for

\textsuperscript{14}From the Biography of Peter Mateev.
\textsuperscript{15}From the Biography of Peter Mateev. See (Evers 1993, 107). Letter of Mathewson to the Chief Librarian of the British Museum, Mersina, On board the S.S. “Alphée” August 26, 1876 [BM OP 53 C 14A Oct. 76 (Stamp: BM 11 Sept. 1876 No. 4512)]. See also the Letter of Smith to Chief Librarian of the British Museum, Baghdad May 17, 1876 [BM OP 51 5 Aug. 76 (Stamp: BM 14 Jun 1876 No. 3024)].
\textsuperscript{16}From a letter of Smith to his wife, May 17, 1876 Baghdad. On that day Smith wrote also to John Winter Johnes, The Principal Librarian of the British Museum, see above.
a few minutes, to get up and say that his head was anything but right, but that an hour’s walk in the garden would set him up again. We go into the garden but scarcely have we walked for five minutes, when he would say, “I feel better, let us go in and give another trials at the tablets.” We go in and in a minute he is convinced that his head will not help him. This would happen a dozen times in a day. At times he would feel better especially in the morning after a good night’s rest, then he would go over many tablets. The way he used to go to work was: he would sort all the tablets, into the different reigns and again into number of years each reign contained. He would then say there are so many days work for me, dividing them also. When however he felt better, he would not stop after his self-allotted work is done, but would go on doing the next and the next. At these […] times it would take him a couple of days and more to do one day’s work. When he finished all, he would want to look again at one or two particular tablets, and in looking for them, he would go over the whole lot, finding sometimes a few missing. His excuse would be: “Never mind Peter, we have nothing to do, this is an amusement for me, we will soon be in the saddle and then all your troubles and mine will be over […]” he worked very hard to study them, the tablets, and make as many notes as he could. Another reason was, to satisfy his own curiosity as to what they may contain new to him.17

On May 26, Smith received an official statement that he had to leave the country.18 Smith and Mathewson had to take a ship from Basra and proceed to the Suez Channel. There were several factors that prevented this plan. Firstly, Smith and Mathewson had to stay under quarantine in Kurnah. There, the unbearable heat and the bad conditions during the quarantine worsened the health of Smith.19 Meanwhile, the political state of the Empire was getting ever worse. On May 30, during their stay under quarantine at Kurnah, the old sultan Abd Al-Aziz was forced to commit suicide. The new sultan Murad V remained in his position for only three months.20 Crucially, the export of the antiquities was banned during this time. While staying near Kurnah on a ship, Smith and Mathewson understood that the tablets had not passed customs. Smith did not want to go back without

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17 From a Letter of Mathewson to the Chief Librarian of the British Museum, Mersina, On board the S.S. “Alphée” August 26, 1876 [BM OP 53 C 14A Oct. 76 (Stamp: BM 11 Sept. 1876 No. 4512)].
18 Information from his diaries see (Evers 1993, 107).
20 From the Biography of Peter Mateev.
the tablets. Therefore, both companions had to return to Baghdad, from Kurnah, in order to resend the tablets:

Our [first] arrival in Baghdad caused the delay of the excavations. The Resident opposed the endeavour [for excavation]. The country was engulfed by riots, a revolt in Bosnia-Herzegovina flared up and war was being expected […] Mr. Smith had to obey. I arranged the tablets wrapped with cotton wool in two trunks and we were ready to return through Basra and the Suez Canal. We handed over the trunks to the Resident – Colonel Nixon\(^{21}\) to transfer them through the customs and send them with the first ship after our departure. During our stay Baghdad was struck with plague. We found an English ship and were put under ten-day quarantine in the ship itself. A ship came, then another but the trunks did not arrive, our quarantine was over and Mr. Smith said he would not go back without the trunks, the only acquisition from this expedition. When we returned to Baghdad we realised the Resident had tried to carry the trunks through the customs but in vain – taking out antiques was forbidden.\(^{22}\)

After returning to Baghdad to send the trunks again, Smith was informed that Marini was offering newly acquired tablets. Smith had the chance to inspect them. He bought ca. 2600 additional tablets.\(^{23}\) The acquired tablets were packed, sealed in trunks, and sent through the Custom House again. This was made possible because of the “friendship” of Mathewson with the Customs Director.\(^{24}\)

I went to the Customs Director, a travel companion from Aleppo to Baghdad, started to shout that the trunks did not contain anything else but stones, so he ordered the officer to examine them, which he did in the most carefree manner, thus they passed unimpeded. I had them loaded in the ship travelling to Basra and from there to the British Museum in London by naval ship.\(^ {25}\)

On June 18, 1876 the tablets from both purchases were sent with a ship to the British Museum.

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\(^{21}\)The Resident stayed in his position during the next year as well (Makiya 1969, 43).

\(^{22}\)From the Biography of Peter Mateev.

\(^{23}\)See also (Evers 1993, 107f.; Wunsch 2000, 1ff.).

\(^{24}\)Their friendship started on the steamer to Baghdad. Mathewson prepared the good relations with hunting birds and rabbits on the steamer’s stops. Mathewson used to slaughter the animals in proper manner for the Custom Director and give him the proper meat.

\(^{25}\)From the Biography of Peter Mateev. The description at the end is not detailed enough. It refers to the shipping of the old and the newly acquired tablets, which is evident from the other materials.
Regarding the three boxes (cases) with the antiquities: On June 17, I got the Pacha’s order to the Chief of the Custom House, to allow the antiquities in three cases to pass. Next day Sunday 18, I passed them through the custom house and delivered them into the hands of Mr. Cobrough’s man, and saw them placed in their storeroom, ready for shipment to Bassorah, to be there again shipped, by Mr. Cobrough’s principals, for London. I paid freight to Bassorah and insurance to London to Mr. Cobrough. Mr. Cobrough promised to get the bills of lading for the three cases from Bassorah and send them to Mr. Smith, to English Consul, Aleppo. At Aleppo\textsuperscript{26} I enquired for the letter, which should have contained them, but none had arrived. The boxes were sealed in Baghdad, very carefully, with the parcel post seal of the Consular Post office. The seals were sunk in the wood at the opening of the lid. The boxes were also sealed or fastened each by a leader Custom house seal […] The address on the boxes is as follows “Chief Librarian British Museum London. This side up.” The antiquities are carefully packed each piece or fragment separately in cotton. In one of the boxes is the lion Mr. Smith had brought two years previous.\textsuperscript{27}

After resending the previously acquired tablets with the recently purchased tablets Smith and Mathewson took the land road to Aleppo. During the stay in Baghdad Smith decided not to go back by ship from Basra but to proceed to Aleppo over land. One important reason for taking the land road was Smith’s wish to try excavating in Nineveh again. Another reason was the climate in the South and the quarantine in Kurnah. They were so bad that Smith did not want to go through them again. Therefore, Smith decided to go back to Aleppo on horses. Unfortunately, this would turn out to be a fatal decision. Such a journey during that time of the year was possible only by traveling at night and resting during the day.

The heat was unbearable, the flies and mosquitoes were a real punishment. Mr. Smith decided that we should go back by land. Undoubtedly, not only had he a secret desire to visit the mounds of ancient Nineveh but he also hoped to find favourable conditions to undertake excavations.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{26}This has happened after the death of Smith.
\textsuperscript{27}From a Letter of Mathewson to the Chief Librarian of the British Museum, Mersina, On board the S.S. “Alphée” August 26, 1876 [BM OP 53 C 14 Oct. 76 (Stamp: BM 11 Sept. 1876 No. 4512)].
\textsuperscript{28}From the Biography of Peter Mateev.
After Smith decided to take the land road, he informed his wife about the new matters with a letter:

You will be surprised to hear that I have returned to Baghdad, I might have been half way home by now, but I tried to go South to India and from there to Egypt and then home but there was quarantine to keep at the most pestilential place in the whole country. I would not stand it and after a week took advantage of the offer of some more antiquities here to return and purchase them. I am now going North to Mosul and from there home in that direction there is quarantine so I shall have to endure 2 weeks there before getting on. I start Friday June 17 [...].

The second quarantine of 15 days was at Kifri in the Diyala district. Both companions had to stay there after exiting Baghdad. The conditions there exhausted Smith and formed “another great trial of his health.”

On his way back to Aleppo, Smith was concerned that the shipped tablets would be stuck in customs again. Letters to the British Museum show his concern. Smith wrote two letters to the Principal Librarian; on July 16 from Mosul and the on August 2 from Diyarbakir. From Mosul he wrote:

My Dear Sir, I arrived here (in Mosul) two days ago on my way back, I have obtained permission to export the purchases and passed them through the Custom House, I must delay my report on my proceed- ings and on them until my return [...].

From Diyarbakir:

There are three cases marked “Principal Librarian British Museum” which I expect will arrive in England before me. They contain my collection but I have not yet had notice that they are shipped and do not know how to advise you about them. In any case if they arrive they had better wait until I arrive when I will see to them.

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29 From a Letter of George Smith to his wife May, Baghdad June 14, 1876.
30 From a Letter of Mathewson to the Chief Librarian of the British Museum, Mersina, On board the S.S. “Alphée” August 26, 1876 [BM OP 53 C 14 Oct. 76 (Stamp: BM 11 Sept. 1876 No. 4512)]. See also (Evers 1993, 107f.).
31 See also the Biography of Peter Mateev.
32 From a Letter of Mathewson to the Chief Librarian of the British Museum, Mersina, On board the S.S. “Alphée” August 26, 1876 [BM OP 53 C 14 Oct. 76 (Stamp: BM 11 Sept. 1876 No. 4512)].
33 From a Letter of Smith to J. Winter Jones The Principal Librarian, Mosul July 16, 1876 [BM OP 53 C 14 Oct. 76 (Stamp: BM 28 Aug. 1876 No. 4334)].
34 From Letter of George Smith to J. Winter Jones The Principal Librarian, Diarbakir August 2nd 1876 [BM OP 53 C 14 Oct. 76 (Stamp: BM 28 Aug. 1876 No. 4335)].
The death of George Smith was caused by his weakness and exhaustion resulting from the night journeys from Baghdad to Aleppo. The main reason for taking the land road was the return from Kurnah to Baghdad, in order to resend the purchased tablets. By returning to Baghdad to resend the Egibi tablets to the British Museum, and subsequently by choosing the land road to Aleppo, it cost Smith his life. Smith turned out to be a victim of his own interests. Things might have gone differently, but in Baghdad Smith found no support from the authorities: “Mr. Smith lingered so long in Baghdad, because anything but assistance was given him there […].” Mathewson blamed the British Resident Colonel Nixon in Baghdad for the failed passage of the tablets through custom. According to Mathewson’s report, this was the main reason for what happened to Smith:

I pointed out that Mr. Smith had become a victim of the carelessness and clumsiness of the Resident (Colonel Nixon) in Baghdad. If he had sent the trunks and we had received them during the quarantine, we would have continued our journey by ship through the Suez Canal so that Mr. Smith would not have to be exposed to the long and tiring way by land.

9.2 The Cuneiform Tablets in Kotel

The four tablets published here are well preserved. It remains unclear why Mathewson chose them. It seems that he just took some tablets from Baghdad as a souvenir. KT 1463 and KT 1464 are made from very similar or the same grey clay. KT 1465 is made from brown clay and KT 1466 from light grey clay. The format of the four tablets is the wide spread ‘pillow-shape.’

9.2.1 No. 1

KT (=Kotel) 1463 = 5,3×6,8×1,9 cm. CDLI No. P431321

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>obv.</th>
<th>MA.NA KÛ.BABBAR šá md+ AG-ŠESMEŠ-MU A-šú šá mšu-la-a</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 Aᵐ-e-gi-bi ina UGU-ḫi mSUM-nu-nu A-šú šá</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 md+ AG-na-ṣir Aᵐ man-di-di šá ITI ina UGU-ḫi 1 ma-ni-e</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

35 From a Letter of Mathewson to the Chief Librarian of the British Museum, Mersina, On board the S.S. “Alphée” August 26, 1876 [BM OP 53 C 14 Oct. 76 (Stamp: BM 11 Sept. 1876 No. 4512)].
36 From the Biography of Peter Mateev.
37 Photographs of the texts are provided through open access in CDLI: http://cdli.ucla.edu. On the format see (Jursa 2005, 4f.).
38 The place on obv. 9 is not really broken. The signs seems more to be filled with hard-packed dirt.
Translation

One mina of silver, owed to Nabû-aḫḫē-iddin, son of Šulâ from the Egibi family, by Iddinunu, son of Nabû-nāṣir from the Mandidi family. Per month, one šiqlu of silver grows on one mina (that is, 20% interest per annum) at his debit. His house adjacent to the house of Iddin-Nabû and Nīqūdu, the sons of Aḫḫē-iddin-Marduk, and Nabû-ina-kāri-lūmur, his slave, are the pledge of (= pledged to) Nabû-aḫḫē-iddin. Another creditor will not have the right to dispose thereof until Nabû-aḫḫē-iddin is satisfied (with regard to) his silver.

In the presence of Kaššâ, his (that is, the debtor’s) wife, daughter of Iqīšâ from the Mandidi family.


Scribe: Nabû-aḫḫē-šullim/Iqīšâ//Irʾanni

Babylon, month Araḫsamna (viii), fifth day, year nine of Nabonidus, king of Babylon (547 BCE).
Figure 9.1: KT 1463 = 5,3×6,8×1,9 cm. CDLI No. P431321
Commentary

In this record Nabû-aḫḫē-iddin, head of the best-known branch of the Egibi family in the second generation, appears as a creditor of the considerable amount of one mina (ca. 500 gs.) of silver in 547 BCE. The debtor, Iddinunu, is known from one other document (Camb. 328, dating to the sixth year of Cambyses, twenty-three years later) wherein he acts as a witness to a debt note for seven minas of silver owed to Nabû-aḫḫē-iddin’s son. The fact that Iddinunu rarely emerges within the realm of the Egibi archive as it is known so far indicates that he is not one of their regular business partners but, rather, that the Egibis only on occasion financed some of his transactions. In 547 BCE Iddinunu may have been in his early career, although the pledge of a house and a slave suggest that he either came from a propertied background or had been successful in previous business. A secured loan at 20% interest per annum reflects ordinary business terms in the Neo-Babylonian period and we may therefore surmise that the Egibis did not have a stake in Iddinunu’s business deals. Close business partners, by comparison, operated on different terms in general. In such cases we tend to find short-term interest-free loans and ḫarrānu arrangements where a silent partner provides capital to the acting partner and shares profits as well as losses.

The record follows the formula of an uʾiltu (Verpflichtungsschein, rendered as an IOU, debt note or promissory note in English). Such abstract documents rarely name the purpose of the loan and, as in the present case, do not reveal anything about the reasons why the amount was owed or had been spent. There is no other record in the Egibi archive about the pledged objects; apparently the debtor was under no duress and did not have to sell house nor slave in forfeiture to pay his creditor.

At least one of the assets, be it house or slave—or both—seems to have been part of Iddinunu’s wife’s dowry or Iddinunu had transferred them as property to her in compensation for dowry silver that he had spent, a customary practice that can be regularly observed in private archives and has been described as “dowry conversion.” This fact transpires through the wife’s presence as a witness to the contract, introduced by the ina ašābi “in the sitting (= presence) of ” formula that sets her apart from normal, male witnesses (lāmušušušušušu). Both wife and husband come from the Mandidi family. The name is attested in all important Neo-Babylonian cities and originally derived from the prebendary office of “measurer” who supervises the commodity deliveries to and issues within the temple. Such intra-clan marriages are common among the propertied urban circles, especially for younger siblings. The exact degree of their relationship cannot be determined.

The three witnesses are attested in other Egibi documents while the scribe does not seem to have belonged to their realm.
### Translation

Twenty-eight šiqlū of silver (and) 21 kur (ca. 3780 litres) of dates, property of (the temple of) Nabû, are owed to Rīmūt-Bēl, son of Bēl-zēr-ibni from the Šammā family, and Gūzānu, son of Rīmūt from the Arad-Nergal family, by Šum-ukīn, son of Ša-Nabû-šū. In the month Tašrit (vii) he will pay these twenty-eight šiqlū of silver (and) 21 kur of dates. His field, planted (with date palms) and cultivated (with grain), at the Borsippa canal is the pledge of (= pledged to) Rīmūt-Bēl and Gūzānu.

Witnesses: Kīnâ/Bēl-erība//Dannēa, Bēl-uballīṭ/Adad-ušēzib

Scribe: Bēl-uballīṭ/Gimil-Gula//Egibi

Babylon, month Ulūl (vi), thirteenth day, year fifteen of Nabonidus, king of Babylon (541 BCE).
Figure 9.2: KT 1464 = 5,5×3,4×1,5 cm. CDLI No. P431322
Commentary

In this record there is no member of the main Egibi branch or their close relatives mentioned (the scribe comes from a different branch of this widely-spread family). Nevertheless, it can be attributed to their activities and, therefore, certainly derives from their archive. The document from the fifteenth year of Nabonidus (541 BCE) records a short-term debt of nearly one-half mina of silver and twenty-one kur of dates owed by an owner of agricultural land that is to be repaid within the next month, at the time of the date harvest. It may reflect a pre-paid purchase of dates, but it could also derive from a bridge loan that helped the debtor either pay fees and taxes on time, or purchase necessary equipment (such as tools or a draft animal). Again, the terse character of the uʾiltu hides the actual cause.

The debtor Šum-ukīn who pledges his field (which is partly planted with trees where it borders the Borsippa canal as its irrigation source and has arable land behind it) is known from other records. In 558 BCE, seventeen years prior to this tablet, he appears in Ner. 43 as a witness to a record of Iddin-Marduk, the father-in-law of Nabû-aḫḫē-iddin’s son Itti-Marduk-balāṭu that was drafted in Šaḥrīnu at the Borsippa canal, according to which two persons owe Iddin-Marduk more than one and one-half minas of silver for a purchase of onion seed (to be repaid in onions after the harvest) and pledge their field as a security. Ner. 43 clearly is connected to Iddin-Marduk’s whole-sale activities in the rural area between Babylon and Borsippa from where he shipped barley and dates to Babylon, thereby encouraging market production, especially of fringe commodities such as oniony vegetables. Šum-ukīn may have been a neighbor of the debtors. The fact that he owned land in the same area transpires from two other records: In Nbn. 103 from 553 BCE, his field is mentioned as the neighboring plot in a debt record of Iddin-Marduk issued in Šaḥrīnu at the Borsippa canal. The debtors, a woman and her son, owe one mina of silver because Iddin-Marduk had credited their rikis qabli obligation to the king. In view of the fact that fields that were subject to such military obligations usually had been allocated in larger units of adjacent plots we may surmise that Šum-ukīn (or his ancestors) had received his share under similar conditions of land for service.

According to Nbn. 4 (556 BCE, two years after Ner. 43 and fifteen years prior to our document) he had pledged his own field as a security for a previous debt to Iddin-Marduk’s harrānu business partner, and continued to do so. In another debt note (CM 3 371, date lost) he credited the obligation on dates that someone else owed to Iddin-Marduk. The commodities are said to be partly tithes originally owed to the temples of Nergal and Bēlet-ilī which Iddin-Marduk had bought up in advance. In a similar vein, according to the present document, Šum-ukīn’s current obligation was owed to the treasury of Nabû, that is, either a local
sanctuary devoted to this deity or, rather more likely, to the Ezida in Bosippa and attests to these temples’ rights to receive a tithe share from the yield in this region.

In the present record not Iddin-Marduk but Rîmût-Bêl from the Šammâ’ (also spelled Šambā’, Šappâ or Ammâ’) family and Gûzânu from the Arad-Nergal family appear as the nominal creditors. For Rîmût-Bêl’s connection with the Egibi family two records are indicative: According to CM 3 356, he owed three minas and forty-eight shekels of silver to Iddin-Marduk. Although the date is broken, the same amount is mentioned in Nbn. 755 and, therefore, both tablets were issued around 542 BCE. The latter shows Itti-Marduk-balâtu from the Egibi family as recipient of the aforementioned silver from Rîmût-Bêl in the presence of his father Nabû-ahhē-iddin as the proxy (ina našparti) of his father-in-law Iddin-Marduk. Itti-Marduk-balâtu was to keep the sum as it counted as part of the dowry that Iddin-Marduk’s daughter brought into the Egibi family. As a result of this union, the Egibis gained access to Iddin-Marduk’s profitable business network at the Borsippa canal. Rîmût-Bêl acted as one of Iddin-Marduk’s agents there (see, for example, CM 3 219). Gûzânu appears as witness, guarantor and debtor in similar business transactions for Iddin-Marduk.

The two witnesses and the scribe cannot be traced in other Egibi documents. The scribe, however, appears in records from the Nappāḫu archive from Babylon which otherwise has little overlap with the Egibi archive, despite the fact that their members were contemporaries who acted in the same city. Apparently they moved in different circles.

9.2.3 No. 3

KT 1465 = 5,2×4×1,6 cm. CDLI No. P431323

| obv. | 1 | 1(=60)+10 GUR ZÜ.LUM.MA šá mKI-dAMAR.UTU-TIN |
|      | 2 | A-šú šá md+AG-ŠEŠmeš-MU A m-e-gi-bi |
|      | 3 | ina UGU-ḫi md+EN-SUM.NA A-šú šá mri-mut |
|      | 4 | ina itiAB i-nam-din |
| rev. | 5 | lûmu-kin-nu mEN-šú-nu A-šú šá |
|      | 6 | md+EN-ŠEŠmeš-MU A md30-i-mit-tu4 |
|      | 7 | md+AG-ît-tan-nu A-šú šá mdU,GUR-ŠEŠ-MU |
|      | 8 | A mSIPA-ANŠE.KUR.RA |
|      | 9 | lûUMBISAG md+AG-MU-MU A-šú šá mna-din |
|      | 10 | A mŠEŠ-ia-ú-tú ŠI1.TIN.TIR ki itiAPIN |
|      | 11 | UD 23.KAM MU 3.KAM mku-ra-dáš |
|      | 12 | LUGAL TIN.TIR ki LUGAL KUR.KUR |
Figure 9.3: KT 1465 = 5.2×4×1.6 cm. CDLI No. P431323
Translation

Seventy kur (ca. 12600 litres) of dates are owed to Itti-Marduk-balāṭu, son of Nabû-aḫḫē-iddin from the Egibi family, by Bēl-iddin, son of Rīmūt. In the month Ṭebēt (x) he will deliver.
Scribe: Nabû-šum-iddin/Nādin/Aḫiyaūtu;
Babylon, month Araḫsamna (viii), twenty-third day, year three of Cyrus, king of Babylon (and) king of the lands (536 BCE)

Commentary

This debt note about 70 kur (ca. 12.600 liters) of dates is owed to Itti-Marduk-balāṭu, the head of the Egibi family in the third generation. He gradually took over his father’s business from about 549 BCE when the latter served the prestigious and certainly time-consuming office as a royal judge. As the eldest son he managed the affairs after Nabû-aḫḫē-iddin’s death in 543 BCE on behalf of all the heirs for at least seven years. Around 536 BCE, when this record was drafted, the inheritance division was well under way.

The background of the present debt note again is to be sought in the commodity trade. The debtor promises at the time of the date harvest to deliver the produce by the tenth month, that is, at least two months later. It is possible that the owed amount (which is worth over one mina of silver at the ‘ideal’ conversion rate of silver and dates) relates to the yield from his own grounds but he might as well have been involved as a local agent in the process of collection, storage, guarding and shipping of the date harvest on behalf of the Egibis and thereby helped to spread out the task beyond the seasonal peak. Again, the terse character of the record does not reveal much.

The debtor’s name is given as Bēl-iddin, son of Rīmūt, without any family affiliation and his identity, therefore, is difficult to verify. The absence of a family name in this context speaks against an identification with another contemporary person of the same patronymic who bears an ancestor name, namely Rīmūt from the Dēkû family, who is known as a neighbor of an Egibi house (for example, Nbn. 184, Cyr. 177, CM 20 10, Dar. 265+).

The first witness is well known as a ḫarrānu business partner of both Nabû-aḫḫē-iddin and Itti-Marduk-balāṭu between 569 and 527 BCE, that is, over forty-two years of joint business during which Bēlšunu acted as the junior partner. Inventories (CM 20 54, 56; Nbn. 787) and the final division record (TCL 13 160, CM 20 60) attest to the highly profitable nature of their venture. It did not only
comprise the trade in commodities but also date beer production (hundreds of vats are inventorised) and their delivery to the governor of Babylon, among others.

The scribe is also attested as a witness in Nbn. 1047, a debt note about the important amount of six minas of silver owed by Itti-Marduk-balāṭu as a result of his father’s acting as a depositary for funds held in escrow.

9.2.4 No. 4

KT 1466 = 5×3.9×1.9 cm. CDLI No. P431324

| obv. | 1 | ½ MA.NA KÙ.BABBAR šá mKI-d(bar!) AMAR.UTU.TIN A-šū |
| 2 | šá md+ AG-ŠEŠ(meš) MU A me-gi-bi |
| 3 | ina UGU md+ AG-EN-šú-nu A-šú šá mDUB.NUMUN |
| 4 | A md IM-še-e-a šá ITI ina UGU |
| 5 | 1 ma-ni-e 1 GÍN KÙ.BABBAR ina UGU-ḫi-šú |
| 6 | i-rab-bi e-lat ú-il-ti |
| 7 | šá 12 GUR ZÚ.LUM.MA |
| 8 | šá ina ki-is-kir-ra-ni-e-šú |
| 9 | in-ni-it-š-i-ri ri ù e-lat |
| lo.e. | 10 | ú-il-ti šá 3 GUR 1(PI) 4(BÁN) ŠE.BAR |
| 11 | mah-ri-e-ti |
| rev. | 12 | lú mu-kin-nu mri-mut A-šú |
| 13 | šá mA-ʾa DUMU mİR-dGIR₄.KÙ |
| 14 | md AG-ŠEŠ(meš) bul-liṭ A-šú šá mina-SÙḪ-SUR |
| 15 | DUMU mbi-bu-ú-a u lù UMBISAG |
| 16 | mMU md+ AG A-šú šá md AMAR.UTU-EN-NUMUN |
| 17 | DUMU mú-šur-a-mat.dÉ.A |
| 18 | TIN.TIR ki iṭi ŠU UD 27.KAM |
| 19 | ṢU 12.KAM md+ AG-I LUGAL TIN.TIR ḫ |

Translation

One-half mina of silver are owed to Itti-Marduk-balāṭu, son of Nabû-aḫḫē-iddin from the Egibi family, by Nabû-bēlšunu, son of Šāpik-zēri from the Adad-šē’a family. Per month, one šiqalu of silver grows on one mina (that is, 20% interest per annum) at his debit.

(This is) apart from a debt note for 12 kur of dates that have been paid from (what he owes according to) his ledgers, and apart from a previous debt note of 3;1.4 kur (ca. 600 litres) of barley.
Witnesses: Rīmūt/Aplâ//Arad-Nergal, Nabū-ḫḫē-bullit/Ina-tēšē-eṭir//Bibbû’a
Scribe: Iddin-Nabû/Marduk-bēl-zēri//Uṣur-amāt-Ea;
Babylon, month Dûzu (iv), day twenty-seven, year twelve of Nabonidus, king of
Babylon (544 BCE).

Figure 9.4: KT 1466 = 5×3,9×1,9 cm. CDLI No. P431324
Commentary

This is a debt note about half a mina of silver owed by Nabû-bēlšunu from the Adad-šē’a family at the ordinary interest rate of twenty per cent per annum. Noteworthy is the term *kiskirru* “income or dues registered in a special ledger or list on a wooden tablet” (CAD K p. 424 s.v. 2) that mostly occurs in the context of temple records, for example, in connection with prebendary income. Whether or not the present debt has something to do with Nabû-bēlšunu’s obligations as a prebendary is not clear. He only re-appears as a witness in two additional unrelated records from the Egibi archive of the same year: Nbn. 600 is a promissory note for a large-scale delivery of beer and Nbn. 679 records a statement regarding an escaped slave woman.

The *elat* clause which refers to previous debts owed by the same person that are not covered by the present document indicates that Itti-Marduk-balātu has advanced credit for some of Nabû-bēlšunu’s obligations at least during the twelfth year of Nabonidus.

Both witnesses are known from other Egibi texts. The scribe did not only during the same month issue the document Nbn. 616 for the Egibis (where the second witness also appears) but he is also known as a scribe from CTMMA 3 17, a tablet that belongs to the Esagilaya archive from Babylon.

9.3 Index of Personal Names

\[ a. = \text{ancestor of}; \ d. = \text{daughter}; \ f. = \text{father of}; \ s. = \text{son of}; \ \infty = \text{spouse of}. \]
\[ / = \text{a-šú šá: patronym follows}; \ // = \text{(A or DUMU): family name follows}. \]

Adad-šē’a (*mdIM-*šē-e-a*)
- a. Nabû-bēlšunu/Šāpik-zēri KT 1466 (no.4): 4

Adad-ušēzib (*mdIM-ú-šē-zib*)
- f. Bēl-uballit KT 1464 (no.2): 13

Aḫḫē-iddin-Marduk (*mŠEŠ-MU*-dAMAR.UTU)
- f. Iddin-Nabû KT 1463 (no.1): 6
- f. Nīqūdu KT 1463 (no.1): 6

Aḫiyaūtu (*mŠEŠ-ia-ú-tú*)
- a. Nabû-šum-iddin/Nādin KT 1465 (no.3): 10

Aplā (*mA-a*)
- f. Rîmūt//Arad-Nergal KT 1466 (no.4): 13

Arad-Nergal (*mIR*-dGIR₄,KÙ)
- a. Gūzānu/Rîmūt KT 1464 (no.2): 4
- a. Rîmūt/Aplā KT 1466 (no.4): 13
Bēl-ah-iddin $^{md+EN-ŠEŠ-MU}$
   f. Šulâ/Tunâ KT 1463 (no.1): 12
Bēl-ahḫē-iddin $^{md+EN-ŠEŠmeš-MU}$
   f. Bēlšunu//Sîn-imittu KT 1465 (no.3): 6
Bēl-erība $^{md+EN-SU}$
   f. Kînâ//Dannêa KT 1464 (no.2): 11
Bēl-iddin $^{md+EN-SUM.NA}$
   s. Rîmūt (debtor) KT 1465 (no.3): 3
Bēl-uballiṭ $^{md+EN-TIN-ît}$
   s. Adad-ušēzib (witness) KT 1464 (no.2): 12
   s. Gimil-Gula//Egibi (scribe) KT 1464 (no.2): 14
Bēl-zēr-ibni $^{md+EN-NUMUN-DÛ}$
   f. Rîmūt-Bēl//Šammâ KT 1464 (no.2): 3
Bēlšunu $^{mEN-šú-nu}$
   s. Bēl-ahḫē-iddin//Sîn-imittu (witness) KT 1465 (no.3): 5
Bibbû’a $^{mibi-ib-buú-a}$
   a. Nabû-ahḫē-bulliṭ/Ina-tēšê-eṭir KT 1466 (no.4): 15
Dannêa $^{mdan-ní-e-a}$
   a. Kînâ/Bēl-erība KT 1464 (no.2): 12
Egibi $^{më-gi/gi-bî}$
   a. Bēl-uballiṭ/Gimil-Gula KT 1464 (no.2): 15
   a. Itti-Marduk-balâtu/Nabû-ahḫē-iddin KT 1465 (no.3): 2; KT 1466 (no.4): 2
   a. Itti-Šamaš-balâtu/Nabû-zēr-līšir KT 1463 (no.1): 15
   a. Nabû-ahḫē-iddin/Šulâ KT 1463 (no.1): 1
Gimil-Gula $^{mŠU.dME.ME; gmil-lu-dME.ME}$
   s. Zēriya//Itinnu (witness) KT 1463 (no.1): 13
   f. Bēl-uballiṭ//Egibi KT 1464 (no.2): 14
Gûzānu $^{mguz-a-nu}$
   s. Rîmūt//Arad-Nergal (creditor) KT 1464 (no.2): 4,10
Iddin-Nabû $^{mMU-d+AG}$
   s. Ahḫē-iddin-Marduk (neighbor of pledged house) KT 1463 (no.1): 5
   s. Marduk-bēl-zēri//Ušur-amāt-Ea (scribe)KT 1466 (no.4): 16
Iddininu $^{mSUM-nu-nu}$
   s. Nabû-nāṣir//Mandidi (debtor) KT 1463 (no.1): 2 (∞ fKaššâ/Iqīšâ//Mandidi)
Ina-tēšê-eṭir $^{mina-SÛH-SUR}$
   f. Nabû-ahḫē-bulliṭ//Bibbû’a KT 1464 (no.4): 14
Iqīšâ (mBA-ša-a)
  f. fKaššâ//Mandidi KT 1463 (no.1): 11
  f. Nabû-ahhê-šullim//Ir’anni (scribe) KT 1463 (no.1): 16
Ir’anni (<m>ir-a-nî)
  a. Nabû-ahhê-šullim/Iqīšâ KT 1463 (no.1): 17
Itinnu (łūŠITIM)
  a. Gimil-Gula/Zêriya KT 1463 (no.1): 14
Itti-Marduk-balâtu (mKI-dAMAR.UTU.TIN)
  s. Nabû-ahhê-iddin//Egibi (creditor) KT 1465 (no.3): 1; (creditor) KT 1466 (no.4): 1
Itti-Šamaš-balâtu (mKI-dUTU-TIN)
  s. Nabû-zêr-lîšir//Egibi (witness) KT 1463 (no.1): 14
fKaššâ (fkaš-ša-a)
  d. Iqīšâ//Mandidi (ina ašâbi witness) KT 1463 (no.1): 10 (∞ Iddinunu/Nabû-nâšir//Mandidi)
Kînâ (mki-na-a)
  s. Bêl-erîba//Dannêa (witness) KT 1464 (no.2): 11
Mandidi (mman-di-di)
  a. Iddinunu/Nabû-nâšir KT 1463 (no.1): 3
  a. fKaššâ/Iqīšâ KT 1463 (no.1): 11
Marduk-bêl-zêri (mdAMAR.UTU-EN-NUMUN)
  f. Iddin-Nabû//Uṣur-amât-Ea KT 1466 (no.4): 16
Nabû-ahhê-bullît (mdAG-ŠEŠmeš-bul-liît)
  s. Ina-tešê-eṭir//Bibbû’a (witness) KT 1466 (no.4): 14
Nabû-ahhê-iddin (md+AG-ŠEŠmeš-MU)
  s. Šulâ//Egibi, (creditor) KT 1463 (no.1): 1,7,9
  f. Itti-Marduk-balâtu//Egibi KT 1465 (no.3): 2; KT 1466 (no.4): 2
Nabû-ahhê-šullîm (md+AG-ŠEŠmeš-GL)
  s. Iqīšâ//Ir’anni (scribe) KT 1463 (no.1): 16
Nabû-bêlšunu (md+AG-EN-šû-nu)
  s. Šāpik-zêri//Adad-šê’a (debtor) KT 1466 (no.4): 3
Nabû-ina-kâri-lûmur (md+AG-î-na-ka-a+ri-lu-mur)
  slave of Iddinunu/Nabû-nâšir//Mandidi KT 1463 (no.1): 6
Nabû-ittannu (md+AG-î-tan-nu)
  s. Nergal-ah-iddin//Rê’i-sîsî (witness) KT 1465 (no.3): 7
Nabû-nâšîr (md+AG-na-sîr)
  f. Iddinunu//Mandidi KT 1463 (no.1): 3
Nabû-šum-iddin (md+AG-MU-MU)
  s. Nâdin//Âhiyaûtu (scribe) KT 1465 (no.3): 9
Nabû-zēr-lišir ($^{md_+}$AG-NUMUN-SI.SÁ)
  f. Itti-Šamaš-balātu//Egibi (witness) KT 1463 (no.1): 15
Nādin ($^{m}na-$din)
  f. Nabû-šum-iddin//Aḫiyaūtu KT 1465 (no.3): 9
Nergal-aḫ-iddin ($^{md}$U.GUR-ŠEŠ-MU)
  f. Nabû-ittannu//Rēʾi-sīsī KT 1465 (no.3): 7
Nīqūdu ($^{m}ni-$qu-du)
  s. Aḥḫē-iddin-Marduk (neighbor of pledged house) KT 1463 (no.1): 5
  Rēʾi-sīsī ($^{m}$SIPA-ANŠE.KUR.RA)
    a. Nabû-ittannu/Nergal-aḫ-iddin KT 1465 (no.3): 8
Rīmūt ($^{m}ri-$mut)
  s. Aplā//Arad-Nergal (witness) KT 1466 (no.4): 12
    f. Bēl-iddin KT 1465 (no.3): 3
    f. Gūzānu//Arad-Nergal KT 1464 (no.2): 4
Rīmūt-Bēl ($^{m}ri-$mut,$^{d_+}$EN)
  s. Bēl-zēr-ibni//Šammā (creditor) KT 1464 (no.2): 2,10
Sîn-imittu ($^{md}$30-$i-$mit-$tu_4$)
  a. Bēlšunu/Bēl-aḫḫē-iddin KT 1465 (no.3): 6
Šāmīmā ($^{m}$šā-$am$-$ma$﹣)
  a. Rīmūt-Bēl/Bēl-zēr-ibni KT 1464 (no.2):
Ša-Nabû-šū ($^{m}$šā-$d_+$$^{d_+}$AG-$šu$-$u$)
  f. Šum-ukīn KT 1464 (no.2): 5
Šāpik-zēri ($^{m}$DUB.NUMUN)
  f. Nabû-bēlšunu//Adad-šēʾa KT 1466 (no.4): 3
Šulā ($^{m}$šu-la-a)
  s. Bēl-ahḫē-iddin//Tunā (witness) KT 1463 (no.1): 12
    f. Nabû-ahḫē-iddin//Egibi KT 1463 (no.1): 1
Šum-ukīn ($^{m}$MU-GIN)
  s. Ša-Nabû-šū (debtor) KT 1464 (no.2): 5
Tunā ($^{m}$tu-na-a)
  a. Šulā/Bēl-ahḫē-iddin KT 1463 (no.1): 13
Uṣur-amāt-Ea ($^{m}$ū-$s$ur-$a$-$mat$,$^{d_+}$É.A)
  a. Iddin-Nabû/Marduk-bēl-zēri KT 1466 (no.4): 17
Zēriya ($^{m}$NUMUN-ia)
  f. Gimil-Gula//Itinnu KT 1463 (no.1): 14
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Bibliography


