

Article

People with Libyan names in Mesopotamian texts

Mattias Karlsson

Independent researcher

Abstract

In terms of foreign relations, ancient Libya is regularly tied to Egypt and Egyptology. It is rarely linked to Mesopotamia, the other great river-based civilization of the region. Nevertheless, there are a number of people with Libyan names mentioned in Assyrian-Babylonian texts. Proceeding from the premise that it is relevant to talk of a Libyan ethnicity also in this period of intermingling of Egyptians and Libyans and that personal names are meaningful and express identity on the part of the name giver, the people with Libyan names in question are presented and discussed from various biographic and demographic viewpoints in the present article.

أشخاص يحملون أسماء ليبية في نصوص بلاد الرافدين
ماتياس كارلسون

فيما يتعلق بالعلاقات الخارجية، ارتبطت ليبيا القديمة بانتظام بمصر وعلم المصريات، ونادراً ما يتم ربطها ببلاد الرافدين، الحضارة العظيمة الأخرى القائمة على نهر في المنطقة. ومع ذلك، هناك عدد من الأشخاص المذكورين بأسماء ليبية في النصوص الآشورية-البابلية. وعند المضي قدماً من منطلق أنه من المناسب أيضاً الحديث عن عرق ليبي في هذه الفترة من اختلاط المصريين والليبيين، وأن الأسماء الشخصية ذات معنى وتعبّر عن الهوية من جانب صاحب الاسم، فإننا في هذه المقالة نعرض الأشخاص ذوي الأسماء الليبية و نتناول سيرهم الذاتية و الديموغرافية من وجهات نظر متعددة.

Keywords: Egypt, Mesopotamia, Libyan names, Egyptians, Libyans

In the debate on the relevance of the ethnic term ‘Libyan’ in Egypt of the Third Intermediate Period (1069–664) and of the Late Period (664–332), there seems to be two different, opposing trends. On the one hand, some scholars argue that the term is largely irrelevant, on account of the close interaction between Libyans and Egyptians at this point in history.¹ On the other hand, there are scholars who suggest that the term still is relevant and that identified Libyan cultural traits (in addition to language) served as ethnic cues also in this period of close contact between Egyptians and Libyans.² In its dealing with personal names of Libyan etymology, this article leans towards the latter approach and additionally picks up on the presumption that personal names are meaningful and express identity on the part of the name giver.³

The research conducted on Libya and Libyans of ancient times tends to stay within the narrow confines of Egyptology and in the sphere of ancient Egypt. Much less often, Libya(ns) is/are studied in connection with the contemporary and equally significant and river-based civilization in Mesopotamia. As a matter of fact, a number of people with Libyan names are mentioned in texts from the Neo-Assyrian empire (934–612), Chaldean Babylonia (626–539) and Achaemenid Babylonia (539–331).⁴ This article will focus on these people, with the intention of trying to answer who they were (in terms of sex and age), what they did (in terms of profession), when and where they lived, and how they ended up in Mesopotamia.

People with Libyan names in texts from Assyria and Babylonia

Seventeen persons bearing one of five different Libyan (male) names (*Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u*, *Lamintu* (Nimlot), *Susinqu* (Sheshonq),

Tak(i)lāta/i (Takelet) and *Usilkānu* (Osorkon) are attested in texts from the Neo-Assyrian empire, Chaldean Babylonia and Achaemenid Babylonia.⁵

Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u

Nine people with the name *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u* appear in Assyrian and Babylonian texts. Although the PNA-entry by R. Mattila (2/I, p. 443) cautiously concludes that this name is ‘possibly Libyan’, there are other studies that have demonstrated convincingly that *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u* is likely Libyan and derived from the name *Hrbs* (Leahy 1980; 1993, 57; Draper 2015, 3–4; Mahlich 2022, 145), attested in the Egyptian onomasticon (*ÄPN* 1, 253:27; *DN*, p. 843).⁶

A man with the name *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u* (here written ^m*Ḫal-bi-šū*) features in a text (SAA 16, no. 63) from Nineveh and (possibly) the reign of the Assyrian king Esarhaddon (680–669). This letter-text is directed at the king, and it brings up an accusation against six men and one woman, servants of the governor, about their having committed crimes in Guzana against the Assyrian king. In this context, the anonymous (due to lacunae) writer reports that *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u* and *Bar-uri*, eunuch and cultic official of the god Baal-Rakkab of the city of Sam’al, have informed him of misdeeds committed by *Tarši*, the city scribe of Guzana. *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u* is presented as ‘from Samaria’ (*Samirināiu*) and as ‘[a servant of] the king’ (*[arad] šarri*). The circumstances leading to this individual being in western Asia are difficult to pin down, but it is likely that he or older relatives of his came to western Asia forcibly through deportation.⁷

A second man with the name *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u* (here written ^m*Ḫa-la-bé-e-še*, ^m*Ḫa-la-bé-e-si*, ^m*Ḫal-la-bé-še*, ^m*Ḫal-bi-[e-šū]*) is mentioned in several texts from the archive of *Inurta-šarru-ušur*, Nineveh, and the reign of the Assyrian king

Corresponding author: Mattias Karlsson, email: mattias.karlsson.uu@gmail.com

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Ashurbanipal (668–631) and later, namely when he acts as a witness when *Puṭi-Athiṣ* buys the boy *Aḫu-iddina* from the cook and the boy's grandfather *Abdi-Kurri* in a case of adoption (SAA 14, no. 442), and when *Inurta-šarru-ušur* lends barley to *Ēdu-šal[lim]* (SAA 14, no. 436). He also appears as the seller of the slave woman *Puṭu-šisi*[...] to *Inurta-šarru-ušur* for 50 shekels of silver (SAA 14, no. 435). The same text describes *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u* as a copper smith (*nappāḫ erē*) and as a son of *Illāia*. He is also presented as under the command of the prefect *Abdi-Samsi*, another witness in the document. The texts in question do not indicate how this *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u* came to Assyria.⁸

A third man with the name *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u* (here written ^m*Ḫa-la-bē-šú*, ^m*Ḫa-la-bē-šú*) is referred to in a document (StAT 2, no. 177) from the N31-archive, Assur, and 617 BCE as a witness when *Pūnašti* borrows silver from *Kiṣir-Aššur* and *Urdu-Aššur*, and in a document (StAT 2, no. 192) from the same archive and city (but from 629 BCE) as the father of *Urdu-Bēlti*, who borrows silver from *Urdu-Aššur*. The texts in question do not suggest the circumstances behind this *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u* coming to Assyria.⁹

A fourth man with the name *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u* (here written ^m*Ḫa-na-bē-eš?*) is brought up in a text (StAT 2, no. 53) from Assur and 700 BCE as the owner of a property in Guzana. This property (and the one of a certain *Ribišiši*) is situated next to a building which is bought by *Qišerāia* from *Sama*, 'the Damascene'. The text in question does not indicate how this *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u* came to western Asia.¹⁰

A fifth man with the name *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u* (here written ^m*Ḫa-la-bē-su*, ^m*Ḫa-la-bē-e-su*) appears in a document (CM 31, pp. 446–48) from Sippar and the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II as an 'oblate' (*širku*) of the Ebabbar temple who receives textiles. At the same time, he is presented as a 'headman' (*rab ešerti*). Supposedly the same individual is referred to in the ration lists *JCS* 46, pp. 59–62, CT 56, no. 87, CT 56, no. 724 and *Iraq* 28, pl. 44 (BM 57337), likewise from Neo-Babylonian Sippar. The texts in question do not suggest the circumstances behind this *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u* coming to Babylonia.¹¹

A sixth man with the name *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u* (here written ^m*Ḫa-la-bi-zu*) features in a text (BAH 30, p. 928 (text B)) from Babylon and the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II as linked to the palace in Babylon and as receiving a ration of sesame oil. He appears in the context of Philistine princes and sailors, and it seems that *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u* is tied to the profession of sailor. The text in question does not indicate how this *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u* came to Babylonia.¹²

A seventh man with the name *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u* (here written ^m*Ḫa-la-bi-e-su*, ^m*Ḫa-la-ba-e-su*) is mentioned in a text (*IMT*, no. 3) from Nippur and 431 BCE as renting out farmland to *Enlil-šum-iddin* of the *Murašū* firm for 30 years in return for yearly payments of 50 *kurru* of dates. *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u* is presented as a son of *Paṭ-Ēsi*, and he rents out the farmland together with a namesake of his. It is noteworthy that the name of the father of *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u* is Egyptian. The text in question does not suggest the circumstances behind this *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u* coming to Babylonia.¹³

An eighth man with the name *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u* (here written ^m*Ḫa-la-bi-e-su*, ^m*Ḫa-la-ba-e-su*) is referred to in a document (*IMT*, no. 3) from Nippur and 431 BCE as renting out farmland to *Enlil-šum-iddin* for 30 years in return for yearly payments of 50 *kurru* of dates. *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u* is presented as a son of a man named *Mukēšu*, and he rents out the farmland together with his namesake. It is noteworthy that the name of the father of *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u* does not seem to be Egyptian. The nature of the relationship between the two *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u* is unclear. The text in question does not indicate how this *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u* came to Babylonia.¹⁴

A ninth man with the name *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u* (here written ^m*Ḫa-la-bi-e-si*) is brought up in a text (NABU 1999, no. 6b) from Babylon and 404 BCE as holding land property, together with *Nuḫḫu-libbi-[ilāni?]* and *Bēl-...*, in the context of someone whose name is lost (but with the patronym *Ardīya*) paying the rent (in barley) owed by *Tattannu* to someone whose name is lost (but with the patronym *Bēl-ušuršu*) for a field of arable land in the town *Ḫuṣṣu-...*. The text in question does not suggest the circumstances behind this *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u* coming to Babylonia.¹⁵

Lamintu

One person with the name *Lamintu* appears in the Assyrian text corpus. As concluded in the PNA-entry by E. Frahm (2/II, p. 652), this name is clearly Libyan, corresponding to the name *Nmrt* (Nimlot), which is attested in the Egyptian onomasticon (*ÄPN* 1, 204:11).¹⁶

A man with the name *Lamintu* (written ^m*La-mi-in-tú*) corresponds to a historic individual. *Lamintu* / *Nimlot* II features in a text (RINAP 5/1, no. 11) from Nineveh and 644–642 BCE as the ruler of the Egyptian city of Hermopolis, a ruler who was appointed as vassal by Esarhaddon and re-appointed by Ashurbanipal. The question of how he became a part of the Neo-Assyrian empire is difficult to answer, but it was voluntary in the sense that he chose not to resist but was forced in the sense that he surrendered in light of the threat of Assyrian arms.¹⁷

Susinqu

Two people with the name *Susinqu* are mentioned in the Assyrian text corpus. As concluded in the PNA-entry by H. Baker and R. Mattila (3/I, p. 1161), this name is evidently Libyan, corresponding to the name *Ššnq* (Sheshonq), which is attested in the Egyptian onomasticon (*ÄPN* 1, 330:6; *DN*, p. 970).¹⁸

A man with the name *Susinqu* (here written ^m*Šu-sa-an-qu*) is referred to in a text (SAA 6, no. 142) from Nineveh and 692 BCE as a witness when the Egyptian scribe *Šil-Aššur* buys a house in Nineveh from *Šarru-lū-dāri*, *Atar-suru* and the woman *Amat-Su'la*. *Susinqu* is qualified as 'the king's (probably the Assyrian king's) brother/son-in-law' (*ḫatan šarri*). The text in question does not indicate how this *Susinqu* came to Assyria.¹⁹

A second man with the name *Susinqu* (here written ^m*Su-si-in-qu*) corresponds to a historic individual. *Susinqu* is brought up in a text (RINAP 5/1, no. 11) from Nineveh and 644–642 BCE as the ruler of the Egyptian city of Busiris, a ruler who was installed as a vassal by Esarhaddon and then was re-installed by Ashurbanipal. The question of how he became a part of the Neo-Assyrian empire is difficult to answer, but it was voluntary in the sense that he chose not to resist but was forced in the sense that he surrendered in light of the threat of Assyrian arms.²⁰

Tak(i)lāta/i

At least two people with the name *Tak(i)lāta/i* appear in texts from Assyria and Babylonia. As concluded in the PNA-entry by M. Capraro and R. Zadok (3/II, p. 1303), this name is evidently Libyan, corresponding to the name *Tklṭ* (Takelet), which is attested in the Egyptian onomasticon (*ÄPN* 1, 394: 25).²¹

A man with the name *Tak(i)lāta/i* (here written ^m*Ta-ki-la-a-ti*, ^m*Ta-ki-la-ti*) features in a text (SAA 14, no. 26) from Nineveh and 645 BCE as a witness when *Luqu* lends silver to *Sukki-Aya* and *Rēmut-ilāni*, and in a text (SAA 14, no. 154) from Nineveh and 627 BCE as a witness when *Abdūnu* buys the slave girl

Aḫāt-abīša from *Nabū-bēlu-ušur*. The texts in question do not suggest the circumstances behind this *Tak(i)lāta/i* coming to Assyria.²²

A second man with the name *Tak(i)lāta/i* (here written ^m*Tak-la-a-ta*, ^m*Tak-la-ta*) is mentioned (twice) in a text (CM 31, pp. 446–48) from Sippar and the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II as an ‘oblate’ (*širku*) of the Ebabbar temple who receives textiles. Supposedly the same individual is referred to (as receiving barley rations) in texts *JCS* 46, pp. 59–62, CT 56, no. 87, and CT 56, no. 664, likewise from Neo-Babylonian Sippar. The texts in question do not indicate how this *Tak(i)lāta/i* came to Babylonia.²³

Usilkanu

Three people with the name *Usilkanu* are referred to in texts from the Neo-Assyrian empire. As concluded in the PNA-entry by D. Schwemer (3/II, pp. 1421–22), this name is evidently Libyan, corresponding to the name *Wsrkn* (Osorkon), which is attested in the Egyptian onomasticon (*ÄPN* 1, 87: 2; *DN*, p. 129).²⁴

A man with the name *Usilkanu* (here written ^m*šī-il-kan-ni*) corresponds to a historic individual. *Usilkanu* is brought up in two texts (RINAP 2, nos 63; 82) from Assyria and the reign of Sargon II as ‘the king of Egypt’ (*šar māt Mušri*) who delivers an ‘audience gift’ (*tāmartu*) of 12 large horses to Sargon II when Assyrian forces approached Egyptian territory in 716 BCE. *Usilkanu* is probably to be identified with Osorkon IV of Tanis. *Usilkanu* was integrated into the Neo-Assyrian empire in the sense that he was in direct contact with Assyria, delivering exclusive gifts to the Assyrian king.²⁵

A second man with the name *Usilkanu* (here written ^m*šī-il-ka-a-nu*) appears in a fragmentarily preserved text (StAT 2, no. 268) from Assur and 644 or 629 BCE as the sealer of a document whose details are unclear, although it seems to bring up an obligation for *Usilkanu* to pay one mina of silver.

Usilkanu is defined as a ‘servant of the paternal household’ (*ardu ša bīt abīšu*) of someone named *Šumma-Nabū*. The text in question does not suggest the circumstances behind this *Usilkanu* coming to Assyria.²⁶

A third man with the name *Usilkanu* (here written ^m*šī-il-ka-nu*¹) features in a poorly preserved document (StAT 3, no. 97) from the N31-archive, Assur, and the later part of the seventh century BCE as a witness in a debt note concerning silver. A certain *Hur-waši* and (at least) two other individuals (with names partly lost) borrow silver from an individual whose name has not been preserved. The text in question does not indicate how this *Usilkanu* came to Assyria.²⁷

Conclusion

Proceeding from the ideas that the ethnic term ‘Libyan’ was relevant also in Egypt’s Third Intermediate Period and Late Period (1), that personal names were meaningful and expressed identity in ancient Egypt (2) and that relations between ancient Libya and Mesopotamia are not often examined in scholarly research (3), this article focuses on people with Libyan names in Mesopotamian texts, thus highlighting relations between Libya and Mesopotamia during the greater part of the first millennium BCE (934–331). At least 17 individuals having one of five different Libyan (male) names (*Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u*, *Lamintu* (Nimlot), *Susinqu* (Sheshonq), *Tak(i)lāta/i* (Taketlot) and *Usilkānu* (Osorkon)) are attested in documents and royal inscriptions from the Neo-Assyrian empire, Chaldean Babylonia and Achaemenid Babylonia.

There are some patterns discernible from the data presented in the above table. These patterns can be seen as clearly or potentially meaningful, probably or evidently coincidental and more or less informative. Of course, the limited amount of data (prosopography of 17 individuals) makes it difficult to arrive at general and wide-reaching conclusions.

name	sex	age	role(s)	date BCE	place	sources
<i>Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u</i>	male	adult	royal official?	680–669?	Guzana?	SAA 16 63
<i>Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u</i>	male	adult	witness, slave seller	634–612	Nineveh	SAA 14 435; 436; 442
<i>Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u</i>	male	adult	witness, patronym	629–617	Assur	StAT 2 177; 192
<i>Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u</i>	male	adult	property owner	700	Guzana	StAT 2 53
<i>Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u</i>	male	adult	oblate, headman	604–562	Sippar	CM 31, 446–448; <i>JCS</i> 46, 59–62; CT 56 87; 724; <i>Iraq</i> 28, pl. 44 (BM 57337)
<i>Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u</i>	male	adult	sailor?	604–562	Babylon	BAH 30 928 (text B)
<i>Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u</i>	male	adult	land owner	431	Nippur	<i>IMT</i> 3
<i>Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u</i>	male	adult	land owner	431	Nippur	<i>IMT</i> 3
<i>Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u</i>	male	adult	land owner	404	Babylon	<i>NABU</i> 1999, 6b
<i>Lamintu</i>	male	adult	vassal ruler	644–642	Hermopolis	RINAP 5/1 11
<i>Susinqu</i>	male	adult	witness, prince	692	Nineveh	SAA 6 142
<i>Susinqu</i>	male	adult	vassal ruler	644–642	Busiris	RINAP 5/1 11
<i>Tak(i)lāta/i</i>	male	adult	witness	645–627	Nineveh	SAA 14 26; 154
<i>Tak(i)lāta/i</i>	male	adult	oblate	604–562	Sippar	CM 31, 446–448; <i>JCS</i> 46, 59–62; CT 56 87; 664
<i>Usilkanu</i>	male	adult	ruler	716	Tanis	RINAP 2 63; 82
<i>Usilkanu</i>	male	adult	business agent?	644/629	Assur	StAT 2 268
<i>Usilkanu</i>	male	adult	witness	650–612	Assur	StAT 3 97

Having said that, all of the 17 individuals with Libyan names in Mesopotamian texts are male and adults. This pattern is clearly meaningful but not very informative, with ancient Near Eastern societies centred on patriarchal structures and adult male individuals.²⁸

Turning to the data on professions and functions, it is striking that the group of 17 'Libyans' generally appear in the relevant text corpus as in possession of social agency (at the very least), even if excluding the subgroup of three (vassal) rulers who resided in Egypt and interacted with the Neo-Assyrian state. Only the 'oblate/temple slave' (being under the command of various headmen) *Taklāta* is clearly without substantial social agency. This pattern may be coincidental, considering the limited amount of data, but it may also be meaningful, tied to the apparent integration of African individuals and groups in Mesopotamian society.²⁹ In some ways, Libya and Libyans left their mark not only on Egypt but also on Mesopotamia.

Moving on to the temporal aspect, it is interesting to note that a majority (11/17) of the attestations of people with Libyan names in Mesopotamian texts derives from the Neo-Assyrian text corpus. This pattern is probably meaningful and (if so) quite informative, indicating that the Libyan imprint on Egypt may have been stronger in the Third Intermediate Period than in the Late Period, when Greeks settled in Egypt in large numbers and altered the population structure of the delta (in particular) that had developed in the Third Intermediate Period.³⁰

Finally, the data are meaningful but less informative with regard to the spatial aspect, with 12 people with Libyan names in Mesopotamian texts appearing in the main cities of Assyria (three in Assur, three in Nineveh) and Babylonia (two in Babylon, two in Sippar, two in Nippur). The circumstance that one or two people with Libyan names in Mesopotamian texts seem to be linked to the provincial and north-Mesopotamian city of Guzana stands out, although this may be the result of a mere coincidence.

Regarding how the people with Libyan names in Mesopotamian texts (excluding the subgroup of three, Egypt-residing (vassal) rulers) ended up in Mesopotamia, the above-mentioned sources are silent. On the other hand, there were mass deportations following the numerous battles between Egyptian/Kushite and Assyrian/Babylonian/Persian armies, notably those in 701, 671, 664, 605, 601 and 525 BCE.³¹ The periods of Assyrian (671–ca. 656) and Persian (525–404, 343–332) domination over Egypt may also explain the migration, with mass deportations not directly tied to battles taking place. It is also possible to conceive that some of the people with Libyan names in Mesopotamian texts were later-generation immigrants. The circumstance that the name of the father (*Mukēšu*) of one of the *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u* in text *IMT*, no. 3, which appears to be non-African, hints at the complex integration processes involved.³²

Notes

1 Notably Baines 1996; Riggs and Baines 2012.

2 Notably Leahy 1985; O'Connor 1990; Ritner 2009.

3 This is partly contrary to the standpoint of R. Zadok (1992, 139), who argues that the Libyan names Shoshenq and Takelot attested in texts from Egypt's Late Period are 'originally Libyan, but since they were used as royal names in Egypt, their bearers were in all probability Egyptians'. For the idea that names were meaningful (and not just randomly given) in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, see Ranke 1935; Stamm 1939.

4 Chaldean Babylonia refers to the Neo-Babylonian state or empire (with Nebuchadnezzar II (604–562) as a prominent ruler), while Achaemenid Babylonia refers to Persia-dominated Babylonia.

5 It has been suggested that the (royal) names Necho (Akkadian *Nikkú*) and Psamtek (Akkadian *Pišamelki/Pisamiski*) may be Libyan in origin as well

(Steindorff 1890, 346–47; Edel 1980, 36–37), but these etymologies are not established beyond doubt. The same applies concerning the name *Uširihūhūrti* attested in a Neo-Assyrian text (STAT 2, no. 53) and the name *Taḫarīhata* attested in a Neo-Babylonian text (*JCS* 46, pp. 59–62), classified as/suggested to be Libyan by C. Draper (2015, 2–3) and by A.C.V.M. Bongenaar and B.J.J. Haring (1994, 71) respectively. Consequently, individuals bearing these names are not brought up in the present study. Notably, *Uširihūhūrti* is actually referred to as an 'Egyptian' (*mušurāiu*) in the document in question.

6 Regarding the etymology of this name, see also Tallqvist 1914, 83; Weidner 1939, 928; Wiseman 1966, 156; Zadok 1983, 73; 1992, 141; Vittmann 1984, 66; Bongenaar and Haring 1994, 66; Spar, Logan and Allen 2006, 449; Hackl and Jursa 2015, 175; Karlsson 2022, 151; 2024, 17–18.

7 Guzana was a city in the Habur region, situated (north-)west of the Assyrian heartland (RGTC 7/2-1, pp. 187–89). Samerina/Samaria was the main city of the north-Israelite state Bit-Humri (RGTC 7/1, pp. 209–11). The ethnonym does not necessarily imply ethnic belonging. It can also (as is likely in this case) indicate previous place of residence. The text does not refer to any other African individual. The social status of *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u* seems to have been rather high, judging by his function as a 'servant of the king' (=royal official?).

8 *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u* appears in fourth place in the first list of witnesses, which contains around 20 witnesses and several Egyptian names, while he appears in fifth place in the second list of witnesses, which contains eight names and several Egyptian names. *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u* is consequently attested in a clearly African milieu. His roles as witness and slave-seller indicate that he was not without social agency. R. Mattila (PNA 2/1, p. 443) adds that this individual may be identical with *Hallabēše* 4. of PNA. The identification of a *Hallabēše* 4. (made by A. Schuster in the same PNA-entry) should be rejected, though. The PNA-entry in question refers to SAA 14, no. 161, r. 12, but this document does not mention a *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u*. The closest is *Ḫašbasnu*[...] on line r. 18. The relevant line (r. 12) does not even contain a name, but summarizes that there are three guarantors of the transaction.

9 This individual and the textual attestations of him are brought up in two PNAo-entries by H. Baker, who (without explanation) refers to the name as a 'new lemma': *Hallabēšu*. Regarding social status and onomastic-ethnic context, four people witness the loan in text STAT 2, no. 177, with *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u* appearing in second place. One other name is Egyptian, and the prominent Egyptian *Lā-turammanni-Aššur* heads the list. Five people witness the loan in text STAT 2, no. 192. Several witnesses have Egyptian names, and *Lā-turammanni-Aššur* heads the list yet again. His role as a witness suggests that he was not without social agency. The N31-archive, to which the two documents in question belong, is commonly seen as an archive of Egyptians (Pedersén 1986; Donbaz and Parpola 2001). The exiled *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u* clearly lived in an African milieu.

10 Notably, the name is here written *Ḫanabeš*. H. Baker (PNA 2/1, p. 449) does not give any suggestions as to the meaning and etymology of this name but implies that it is linked to *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u*. C. Draper (2015, 3) equates *Ḫanabeš* with *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u*, which he concludes is a Libyan name. Concerning social status and onomastic-ethnic context, it may be noted here that the fourth witness of the document in question is a man referred to as 'the Egyptian', and that Baker describes *Ḫanabeš* as a 'landowner in Guzana'. Notably, *Ḫanabeš* is mentioned along with a Damascene and with people from Samaria. For a possible connection (perhaps an identity) with the afore-mentioned, Samaritan *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u*, see Zadok 2015, 165.

11 There are numerous individuals with Egyptian names in these documents specifically and in the Neo-Babylonian Ebabbar archive generally (Bongenaar and Haring 1994). Regarding social status, although *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u* does not appear as a priest, he nevertheless features in a leading, administrative function in the temple sphere.

12 By contrast, E. Weidner (1939, 928) regards the name as Philistine, largely because of the Philistine context. He also points to a man with the same name described as coming from neighbouring Samaria (the *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u* discussed first in the present article). Regarding onomastic-ethnic context, there are several individuals with Egyptian names in the ration lists of Nebuchadnezzar II's palace in Babylon (Weidner 1939).

13 By contrast, V. Donbaz and M. Stolper (1997, 166) seem to view the name as hybrid and containing the name Isis, judging by their transcriptions *Ḫalabali-Esuli*. The *Murašû* firm was an institution focused on land enterprise around Nippur (Stolper 1985). The name *Paṭ-Ēsi* corresponds to Egyptian *P3-di-3s(t)*, which means 'the one whom Isis has given' (*ĀPN* 1, 121:18). In his position as landowner, *Ḫal(l)abēs/še/u* clearly had social agency.

14 Again, and by contrast, V. Donbaz and M. Stolper (1997, 166) seem to view the name as hybrid and containing the name Isis, judging by their transcriptions *Ḥalabali-Esuli*. Regarding the name *Mukēšu*, names beginning with *mu* are common in Akkadian, being the first element of many participles. Note, however, the study by E. Mahlich (2022, 102) which lists this name as Egyptian. Also this *Ḥal(l)abēs/še/u* clearly had social agency.

15 By contrast, the transcription *Ḥalabi-Esi* suggests that M. Stolper (1999, 7), the publisher of the text, views the name as a hybrid name that incorporates the name of the Egyptian goddess Isis. The document does not mention another African individual. His position as landowner suggests that *Ḥal(l)abēs/še/u* possessed social agency.

16 Regarding the etymology of this name, see also Haigh 1871, 115; Steindorff 1890, 353–54; Ranke 1910, 30; Tallqvist 1914, 120; Yoyotte 1960, 23–24; Onasch 1994, 56; Mahlich 2022, 112–13; Karlsson 2022, 46–47.

17 As remarked by E. Frahm (2/II, p. 652), *Lamintu* was a successor and (possibly) grandson to Nimlot D, who opposed Piye, king of Kush, in the latter's campaign for control over the whole of Egypt. *Lamintu* appears (in 18th place) in a list of (20) Assyrian vassals in Egypt. Hermopolis (Akk. *Ḥimuni*, Eg. *Ḥmnw*) was a city in middle Egypt (RGTC 7/2-1, p. 227). It is not known whether *Lamintu* ever visited Assyria, as his fellow rulers Necho I of Sais and Sharru-lu-dari of Pelusium did (albeit as prisoners after a failed revolt) (RINAP 5/1, no. 7).

18 Regarding the etymology of this name, see also Haigh 1871, 114; Steindorff 1890, 351; Ranke 1910, 34; Tallqvist 1914, 226; Yoyotte 1960, 23–24; Zadok 1992, 146; Onasch 1994, 53; Mahlich 2022, 161–62; Karlsson 2022, 84.

19 Concerning social status and onomastic-ethnic context, there are ten witnesses, and the list is headed by *Susinqu*. Several of the other witnesses have Egyptian names. As concluded by H. Baker and R. Mattila (PNA 3/I, p. 1161), the in-law was probably the Assyrian king, although the possibility that it was an Egyptian ruler cannot be excluded entirely. W. Struve (1927) and K. Radner (2009) both argue that the king was Sennacherib. For the idea that *Susinqu* was married to Sennacherib's daughter *Šadditu*, see the PNA-entry *Šin-ahḫē-eriba* by E. Frahm (PNA 3/I, p. 1115). The social status of *Susinqu* was obviously very high. He may have arrived in Assyria as a prisoner of war following the clash between Assyria and Kushite Egypt at Philistine Eltekeh in 701 BCE.

20 This *Susinqu* is referred to (in eleventh place) in a list of (20) Assyrian vassals in Egypt. Busiris (Akk. *Puširu*, Eg. *Pr-Wsir*) was a city situated in the Nile delta (RGTC 7/2-2, p. 483). It is not known whether *Susinqu* ever visited Assyria, as his fellow rulers Necho I and Sharru-lu-dari did (albeit as prisoners) (RINAP 5/1, no. 7).

21 Regarding the etymology of this name, see also Tallqvist 1914, 228; Yoyotte 1960, 23–24; Vittmann 1984, 65; Zadok 1992, 139, 141, 143; Bongenaar and Haring 1994, 71; Spar, Logan and Allen 2006, 454; Mahlich 2022, 174; Karlsson 2022, 91–92; 2024, 59.

22 His role as witness implies that he did not lack social agency in the society in which he lived. *Takilāti* appears in fourth (of seven) and second (of 22) place in the lists of witnesses. As for onomastic-ethnic context, the name in question is the only name with African etymology.

23 As for social status and onomastic-ethnic context, there are numerous other individuals with African names in these texts specifically and in the Neo-Babylonian Ebabbar archive generally (Bongenaar and Haring 1994), and *Taklāta* appears as a workman under the supervision of a number of different headmen. Of course, it is fully possible (perhaps even likely) that several individuals named *Taklāta* are referred to in these documents.

24 Regarding the etymology of this name, see also Weidner 1941–44, 45; Albright 1946, 24; Yoyotte 1960, 23–24; Onasch 1994, 6–7; Mahlich 2022, 44; Karlsson 2022, 96–97.

25 Notably, Egypt is described as remote, and *Usilkanu* is spoken of as 'overwhelmed by fear of the brilliance of the god Ashur', leading to his sending of the 'audience gifts', portrayed as exclusive. According to D. Kahn (2001, 9), *Usilkanu* functioned as a vassal to the Kushite king, Shabaka. Tanis (Akk. *Ša'nu*, Eg. *D'nt*) was a city in the eastern part of the Nile delta (RGTC 7/2-2, pp. 550–51).

26 Concerning onomastic-ethnic context, there are six witnesses listed, and none of these have an African name. The text is classified by V. Donbaz and S. Parpola (2001, 189) as a document about the 'purchase(?) of a slave', and the circumstances in which *Usilkanu* seems to have functioned as a representative and as regulating a debt(?) suggest that he was not entirely without social agency in his society and days.

27 The names of four witnesses have been preserved, and *Usilkanu* appears as number two, with the name of one other witness being possibly Egyptian. The

Egyptian context is enhanced by the observations that *Ḥur-waši* is Egyptian (Eg. *Ḥr-wš(ḫ).w*), *ĀPN* 1, 246: 23) and that the text belongs to the 'Egyptian' N31-archive (Pedersén 1986; Donbaz and Parpola 2001). His role as a witness indicates that *Usilkanu* was not a social outcast.

28 For studies on (the subordinate status of) women and femininity in the ancient Near East, see Bahrani 2001 and Stol 2016 (particularly pp. 690–91). Also ancient Egypt, which is often referred to as a culture in which women enjoyed a strong position, was a place where men dominated (Robins 1993, particularly pp. 190–91). For a recent and comprehensive study of children in the ancient Near East, which not least touches upon the role and status of children in societies, see Henriksen Garroway 2014.

29 Judging by the prosopographic data of African individuals in Assyria, Egyptians, Kushites and Libyans do not appear to have been particularly discriminated against (nor privileged) in Neo-Assyrian society (Karlsson 2022, 217).

30 Regarding the migration of Greek population elements to (northern) Egypt, not least to the delta city of Naukratis, in the Late Period, see e.g. Thissen 1977 (summary).

31 The battles in question are the battle at Eltekeh between Kushite Egypt and Assyria (701), the Assyrian (re)conquest of Egypt (671, 664), the battle at Carchemish between Saite Egypt and Babylonia (605), the battle at the Egyptian border between the same antagonists (601) and the Persian conquest of Egypt (525).

32 We can only speculate as to why the father of *Ḥal(l)abēs/še/u* (may have) had a non-African name (*Mukēšu*) and why he chose to give his son a Libyan name. The former may be explained by the processes of integration and the latter may be explained by *Mukēšu* deciding to assert his family roots.

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