

Seleucid Tablets from Uruk in the British Museum

Text Editions and Commentary

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5 Urban Properties

The collection provides substantial evidence for urban properties that were purchased, transferred as gifts, or, less frequently, appear as the object of divisions of inheritance and quitclaims; no evidence on the lease of urban properties is extant.¹

Urban properties consist of houses, unbuilt plots and, in two cases, shops situated in various areas of the city of Uruk.

It comes as no surprise that the largest number of them are located in the five best-documented districts of the city in the Hellenistic period:² that of the Adad temple (8), of the Šamaš Gate (7), of the Ištar Gate (4), of the Orchard (1) and of the Lugalgirra temple and Lugalkisurra Gate (2). In addition, one is located in the Emihallake temple district (**No. 81-RE**), one in the district of the Ehiliesu temple a.k.a. the Ehilianna, within the Fortress of Uruk.

An interesting group of seven contracts (plus a duplicate) record properties that lay in the district of the ‘Fortress of Anu’ a.k.a. the ‘Village of the temples’,³ an area so far only scantily documented and exclusively in the later Seleucid period.⁴ Finally, the exact location of five more cannot be determined, due to the poor state of preservation of the relevant tablets.

The distribution of the properties by district is summarised in the Table 12, below.

Table 12. Distribution of properties in the different districts

District	Transaction	Type of property	Orientation	Text Nos.
Temple of Adad	sale	• completed house with door jambs fixed	WENS	58-RE//59-RE
			NSWE	102-RE
		• house, door jambs fixed, wooden door and lock installed	NSWE	74-RE//75-RE
		• <i>bīt ritti</i> (house), property of Anu	NSWE	86-RE
		• east-facing suite, <i>ritti</i> (?), its corridor and the exit to the right of the Sartennu canal, property of Anu	NSWE	95-RE
	quitclaim	• house	NSWE	57-RE
Šamaš Gate	sale	• completed house and undeveloped plot	NSWE	14-RE; 33-RE; 45-RE
		• undeveloped plot	NSWE	79-RE; 80-RE
		• warehouse	NSWE	93-RE
	gift	• undeveloped plot	NSWE	108-RE
	quitclaim	• houses and undeveloped plots	NSWE	32-RE

1 Two of the tablets, though recording urban properties, are too fragmentary and their typology and cannot be determined. Urban properties are rarely the objects of lease contracts in Seleucid Uruk.

2 According to Baker 2009, p. 94.

3 On this district and the fortification of the city districts connected to both the Rēš and Ešgal temple, see Baker 2014, p. 200.

4 Published documents mentioning the Village of the temple of the gods of Uruk’ include VS 15 13 (146 SE); VS 15 22 (d.l.); VS 15 27 (156 SE); maybe in VS 15 34 (d.l.); YOS 20 88 (d.l.). According to Baker the earliest attestations of the Fortress and Village go back to 157/156 BC and 168 BC respectively. Baker 2014, p. 200. On the Village of the temple see also Monerie 2015, pp. 426-427.

District	Transaction	Type of property	Orientation	Text Nos.
Ištar Gate	sale	• <i>bīt ritti</i> house, door jambs fixed, roofed-house, door and lock	NSWE	3-RE
		• house and undeveloped plot	WENS	63-RE
		• undeveloped plot	NSWE	37-RE
	sale <i>ana bīt rittūtu</i>	• <i>bīt ritti</i> , property of Anu, completed house	NSWE	92-RE
Fortress of Anu alias Village of the temples, in the Ešgal temple	sale <i>ana bīt rittūtu</i>	• <i>bīt ritti</i> , property of Anu, completed	NSWE	99-RE
		• <i>bīt ritti</i> house, passageway and courtyard, property of Anu, completed		100-RE//101-RE
		• <i>bīt ritti</i> (house, property of Anu)	NSWE	105-RE
Fortress of Anu alias Village of the temples, within Uruk	sale <i>ana bīt rittūtu</i>	• <i>bīt ritti</i> , property of Anu, undeveloped plot		104-RE
Hiliesu temple alias Hilianna temple, within the wall of Uruk	sale <i>ana bīt rittūtu</i>	• <i>bīt ritti</i> suite facing est, alley and undeveloped plot, property of Anu	NSWE	103-RE
Village district	allocations <i>ana bīt rittūtu</i> , subject to special conditions	• undeveloped plots, property of Anu	NSWE	97-RE
Ešgal temple				96-RE
Temple of Lugalgirra	sale	• house	NSWE	36-RE
Mihallake Temple	sale	• undeveloped plot	NSWE	81-RE
Lugalkisurra Gate	division	• undeveloped plot divided with a partition wall	WENS	6-RE
Market Gate	sale	• undeveloped plot	NSWE	27-RE
Orchard (kirimahhu)	sale	• completed house and undeveloped plot (and?) courtyard	NSWE	65-RE
Name lost	sale	• house and undeveloped plot	NSWE	42-RE
		• house	lost	46-RE
		• completed shop	WENS	60-RE
	lost	• house and undeveloped plot	lost	21-RE
		• undeveloped plot	NSWE	113-RE

5.1 Description and Orientation

As is typical for contracts from Hellenistic Uruk, the description of the properties that are the object of transactions includes, in addition to the indication of the district where the property is located, the indication of the neighbouring properties, either referring to their ownership status or to a significant boundary element adjoining it (e.g. a street, a canal, etc).

The terminology distinguishes between upper and lower *šiddu* (uš) and upper and lower *pūtu* (sag.ki), i.e. the fronts and the sides of the property (usually translated as ‘upper/lower long side or length; and upper/lower short side or width’ respectively). The fronts and the sides are a fixed sequence of pairs, with the long sides always coming first, as is clear from the following example (No. 37-RE: 3-12).

[...] **23 cubits**, the upper long side, to the **north**, adjoining the access-way of Anu-abu-utēr/Nanāya-iddin, the buyer of this unbuilt plot; **23 cubits** the lower long side, to the **south**, adjoining the house of Nidinti-Anu/Rabi-Anu; **22 cubits** the upper short side, to the **west**, adjoining the house of Ana-rabūti-Anu/Nanāya-iddin and adjoining the house of Anu-ab-utēr/Nanāya-iddin, the buyer of this unbuilt plot; **22 cubits** the lower short side, to the **east**, adjoining the street of the bank of the Ištar canal; total: 23 cubits the lengths, 22 cubits the widths, (is the) measurement of this unbuilt plot: this unbuilt plot, as much as it is, all of it [...].

The dimensions of the sides are offered in cubits. It is clear from the documents providing the dimensions of the sides that the term long side and short side reflected the actual size of the sides

of the property; this also applied to those cases where the property was irregularly shaped, being conceived as the sum of two or more contiguous blocks. The fact that the distinction between long and short sides represented a standard feature in the description of the properties is underlined by the application of this terminology also to square properties.⁵

Moreover, the scribal tradition of recording the fronts first, followed by the sides, has a bearing on the description of the orientation of the property. Most frequently the long sides of the property were the northern and the southern ones, so that many contracts feature a 'NSWE-pattern'. When the opposite is true, and the longer sides lay to the west and east, the description has a 'WENS-pattern', with the western and eastern borders described first, followed by the northern and southern ones, as in **No. 6-RE**: 2-6:

[...] **24 cubits** the upper long side to the **west**, adjoining the house of Nidinti-Anu/Anu-ahu-ittannu; **24 cubits** the lower long side, to the **east**, adjoining the house of Anu-bēlšunu/Šamaš-ētir; **2 5/6 cubits**, the upper short side to the **north**, adjoining the undeveloped plot of Mušallim-Anu/Anu-ahu-ittannu; **2 5/6 cubits** the lower short side, to the **south**, adjoining the undeveloped plot of Anu-bēlšunu/Šamaš-ētir [...].

Four contracts (plus a duplicate of one of them) in the BM collection describe the property that is their object according to the 'WENS-pattern'. A synthesis of the orientation-patterns of the properties in the BM collection is offered in Table 13:

Table 13. Orientation-pattern of urban properties

Orientation	Text No.
WENS	6-RE; 63-RE; 58-RE//59-RE; 60-RE
NSWE	14-RE; 3-RE; 42-RE; 27-RE; 32-RE; 33-RE; 36-RE; 37-RE; 45-RE; 57-RE; 65-RE; 74-RE//75-RE; 79-RE; 80-RE; 86-RE; 92-RE; 93-RE; 95-RE; 96-RE; 108-RE; 81-RE; 97-RE; 99-RE; 100-RE//101-RE; 102-RE; 103-RE; 104-RE; 105-RE; 113-RE
lost	21-RE; 46-RE

Only in two cases (**No. 96-RE** and **No. 97-RE**) does the description not correspond to the actual size of the sides (i.e. the scribe does not turn the more common 'NSWE-pattern' into a 'WENS-pattern' in order to conform to the actual size of the sides).

Unsurprisingly, the two documents are written by the same scribe and they are the only extant examples of allocation of tenured property from Hellenistic Uruk that have come down to us; another point worth stressing is that in the two tablets the scribe uses numerals to indicate the points of the compass instead of the more common logograms.⁶

In the corpus from Hellenistic Uruk a substantial number of contracts supply no dimensions at all for the properties:⁷ this also applies to some of the properties in the BM collection (see Table 14). The reference to the compass directions, conversely, is never omitted from the description of the property, probably because of the relevance of topographical features for the correct identification of the property.⁸

⁵ Baker 2011, pp. 307-317. On the use of this terminology in an agricultural context see Liverani 1996 (esp. pp. 33-39). For Uruk in the Neo-Babylonian period, in particular, Cocquerillat 1968, pp. 15-25; interesting comparisons are available for Nuzi (Zaccagnini 1979) and Emar (Mori 2003).

⁶ For the editions of the two texts, see below. Other documents where numbers are used instead of logograms for the point of the compass include: YOS 20 88; BiMes 24 35; BRM 2 41, 43 and 45; VS 15 24 and 30; NCTU 5. In OECT 9 10 and 41, VS 15 34 and 50 a mixture of the two systems is used.

⁷ See Baker 2011, p. 319, where the datum has been interpreted in connection to taxation as a possible indication that in the Hellenistic period it is the value of the property and not its size that is relevant for levying taxes.

⁸ Baker 2011, p. 319.

Table 14. Documents with no measurements

Text	Orientation
32-RE	NSWE
74-RE//75-RE	NSWE
79-RE	NSWE
80-RE	NSWE
86-RE	NSWE
92-RE	NSWE
95-RE	NSWE
99-RE	NSWE
102-RE	NSWE
105-RE	NSWE

5.2 Shape

Twelve of the properties described in the contracts that belong to the BM collection are rectangles (see Table 15). They can be either of regular or of slightly irregular shape, as **Nos. 3-RE** and **45-RE**, where the short side to the east is slightly smaller than its western counterpart.⁹ As Baker already noted with regard to the Hellenistic era conventions, small irregularities of this kind, though detailed in the description of the borders, are usually rounded up to the longer dimension in the summary section of the property's description.¹⁰

Only one document records a square-shaped property (**No. 36-RE**); five contracts (and two duplicates) involve properties of complex shape, described as the sum of either two or four contiguous blocks (see Table 15, for the details); six contracts do not preserve the relevant section or preserve it only partially, while ten tablets (and a duplicate) do not supply any dimensions at all (see Table 14, above). One example is anomalous (**No. 33-RE**): the size of the N/S pair of sides is in fact described, while we have no information on the dimensions of W/E pair.

Whatever their shape, the properties show a clearly prevailing orientation according to the 'NSWE-pattern'. On this basis, a scenario of urban properties of mostly rectangular shape, a large number of which, with the long sides facing N, co-existed with a small group of properties whose long sides faced W, may thus be reconstructed.¹¹

Table 15. Irregularly and regularly shaped properties in the BM collection

Shape	Size	Orientation	Text No.
rectangle	24×25/6	WENS	6-RE
rectangle	23×22	NSWE	37-RE
rectangle	8 1/3×9	NSWE	93-RE
rectangle	50×65	NSWE	96-RE
rectangle	20×11	NSWE	108-RE
rectangle	43×10	NSWE	81-RE
rectangle	22×26 5/6	NSWE	97-RE
rectangle	40×16	NSWE	103-RE
rectangle	40×25/6	NSWE	104-RE
rectangle (?)	16×5 1/2 (?)	WENS	60-RE
rectangle, slightly irregular	30×30×25×23	NSWE	3-RE

⁹ **No. 03-RE**: short side to the west: 25 cubits; short side to the east: 23 cubits; in the summary section rounded up to 25 cubits; **No. 45-RE**: short side to the W: 13 5/6 cubits; short side to the east: 12 5/6 cubits; in the summary section rounded up to 13 5/6 cubits.

¹⁰ Baker 2011, p. 317.

¹¹ Falkenstein 1941, p. 14, fn. 3.

Shape	Size	Orientation	Text No.
rectangle, slightly irregular	49×49×13 5/6×12 5/6	NSWE	45-RE
square	18 5/6	NSWE	36-RE
complex	4 blocks	NSWE	14-RE
complex	4 blocks	WENS	63-RE
complex	2 blocks	WENS	58-RE//59-RE
complex	2 blocks	NSWE	65-RE
complex	2 blocks	NSWE	100-RE//101-RE
anomalous	only N/S size given	NSWE	33-RE
lost	—	lost	42-RE
lost	part. lost	lost	21-RE
lost	part. lost	NWSE	27-RE
lost	—	lost	46-RE
lost	—	NSWE	57-RE
lost	—	lost	113-RE

5.3 Houses

The most represented type of property in the collection are houses. They are mainly finished (*bītu epšu*); additionally, some have door jambs fixed (**Nos. 58-RE//59-RE** and **102-RE**), wooden door and lock installed (**No. 74-RE//75-RE**); at least one is roofed (**No. 3-RE**).¹² A few are simply described as ‘houses’, with no further reference to their general conditions (**Nos. 46-RE; 86-RE; 57-RE; 36-RE; 105-RE**).

Nine contracts involve houses associated with an unbuilt plot of land (**Nos. 14-RE; 33-RE; 45-RE; 104-RE; 65-RE; 63-RE; 42-RE; 21-RE; 32-RE**); others are associated with different structures: a corridor and a courtyard (**Nos. 100-RE//101-RE**); a corridor and an unbuilt plot, and an unbuilt plot (and?) a courtyard (**No. 65-RE**).¹³

Table 16. Type of houses

Type of house	Text
house	46-RE; 86-RE; 57-RE; 36-RE; 105-RE
completed house	99-RE; 92-RE
completed house, door jambs fixed	58-RE//59-RE; 102-RE
house, door jambs fixed, door and lock installed	74-RE//75-RE
house, door jambs fixed, roofed, door and lock installed	3-RE
house, corridor and courtyard, completed	100-RE//101-RE
house(s) and undeveloped plot(s)	63-RE; 42-RE; 21-RE; 32-RE
completed house and undeveloped plot	14-RE; 33-RE; 45-RE
completed house and undeveloped plot (used as / and?) courtyard	65-RE
east-facing suite, corridor and undeveloped plot	103-RE
east-facing suite, corridor, exit towards the right of the right of the Sartenu canal	95-RE

In **Nos. 95-RE** and **103-RE** only part of a house is the object of the transaction; this is described in both cases as ‘east-facing suite’: the use of a term referring to part of the house (instead of its entirety) seems to reflect the fact that the original property was in divided ownership;¹⁴ its implications in the case of **No. 95-RE** are discussed below in § 5.3.2.

¹² See Baker forthcoming for the interpretation of the term as ‘roofed’.

¹³ On unbuilt urban land in the first millennium BC, see Baker 2009.

¹⁴ Baker 2015, p. 376.

To turn to **No. 103-RE**, it is clear that Idat-Anu *alias* Šalammaya, the purchaser, comes into possession of a tenured suite originally belonging to the house of Ana-rabûti-Anu, who is, in fact, still the owner of the *bît ritti* to the south of it.

The *bît ritti* of Ana-rabûti-Anu is located next to an unbuilt plot used as an exit both for the suite that is now being sold to Idat-Anu and for the *bît ritti* of Ana-rabûti-Anu himself. Very unusually, the contract gives the exact size of this plot, a narrow strip measuring $2 \frac{5}{6} \times 52$ cubits (see Fig. 7).

As the contract suggests, this grants both Ana-rabûti-Anu and Idat-Anu *alias* Šalammaya an access to the major public street.

Given its strange shape and its composite nature (as it consisted of a house, an unbuilt plot and a courtyard) and since it already adjoins to the north a lesser public street, it is possible that the purchased suite was used by Idat-Anu somehow in connection to his official position as an *arad ekalli* of the temple.

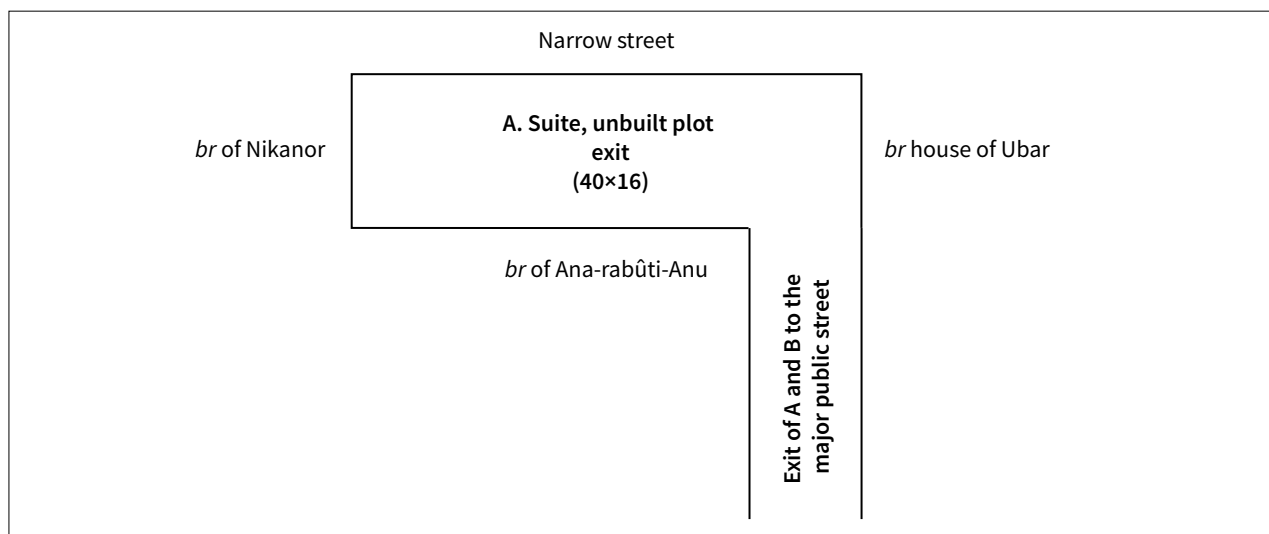


Figure 7. Reconstruction of the property sold in **No. 103-RE**

5.3.1 Tenured Houses

Six contracts (**Nos. 86-RE; 105-RE; 3-RE; 100-RE//101-RE; 99-RE; 92-RE**; see Table 17) involve tenured houses, all property of Anu. One of them is located in the Adad temple district (**No. 86-RE**); two in the Ištar Gate district (**Nos. 03-RE** and **92-RE**); the remaining lay in the district of the Fortress of Anu (**Nos. 105-RE; 100-RE//101-RE; 99-RE**).

Among them, **Nos. 03-RE** and **86-RE** are formulated as ordinary sales. All the other documents include the formula specifying that the sale is conditional, i.e. the property is sold *ana bît rittûtu*. This is also emphasised by the confirmation clause, where the house is described as 'tenured'. As we have shown elsewhere, this clause implies that the buyer undertakes the responsibility to fulfil all the obligations towards the temple connected with the property in question, not only the ownership.¹⁵

Table 17. Tenured houses (all described as *bīt ritti*, *makkūr Anu*)

Type	District	<i>ana br</i> formula	<i>br</i> in confirmation	Text
house	Adad temple	no	no	86-RE
	Village = Fortress	yes	yes	105-RE
house, door jambs fixed, roofed, with door and lock installed	Ištar Gate	no	no	3-RE
completed house	Village = Fortress	yes	yes	99-RE
	Ištar Gate	yes	yes	92-RE
completed house, corridor and courtyard	Village = Fortress	yes	yes	100-RE//101-RE
east-facing suite, corridor and undeveloped plot	Ehiliesu, aka Ehilianna	yes	yes	103-RE
east-facing suite, corridor, exit towards the right of the right of the Sartenu canal (attribution uncertain)	Adad temple	no	no	95-RE

Of the two ‘suites facing E’ (see above, Table 17), the one in the Adad temple **No. 103-RE** was a tenured property; that in the Ehiliesu (**No. 95-RE**) probably was tenured too (but the relevant lines of the tablet are unfortunately poorly preserved).

5.3.2 Completed Houses in the Temple of Adad District: The Case of No. 95-RE

The contracts that concern houses located in the Adad temple district refer only to finished houses, with the door jambs fixed and in one case (**Nos. 74-RE//75-RE**) also a wooden door and a lock installed.¹⁶

One transaction records a property whose state of preservation is not described; the house is labelled only ‘tenured house, property of Anu’ (**No. 86-RE**): I wonder whether the absence of any further indication is due to its being a tenured house.

Table 18. Houses located in the Temple of Adad district

Type of house	Text
completed house with door jambs fixed	58-RE//59-RE; 102-RE
house, door jambs fixed, wooden door and lock installed	74-RE//75-RE
<i>bīt ritti</i> (house), property of Anu	86-RE
east-facing suite, <i>ritti</i> (?), its corridor and the alley to the right of the Sartenu canal, property of Anu	95-RE
house	57-RE

Particularly interesting is the property object of transaction in **No. 95-RE**. The document records the purchase of a tenured ‘suite, facing east’, property of Anu, with its corridor and its access to the right of the Nār-Turnu canal.¹⁷

According to Baker, the term *bīt šadî* (lit. ‘house of the east’), alongside those indicating the other directions of the compass, was used to designate part of a house; she has convincingly shown that the term referred to a location of the room opposite that indicated by its name.¹⁸ This means that the *bīt šadî* of **No. 95-RE** was not located in the east corner of the house it belonged to, but it was an east-facing suite, thus lying in its western corner; the suite might have represented one of the small rooms of the house.

This east facing suite is bought by a woman named ^tTaddin-Nanāya *alias* ^tHanā, the wife of Halil-Nergal/Šulē-Adad; the seller is Rihat-Ištar/Bagana-Anu//Hibāya, who is identified as ^tTaddin-Nanāya’s

¹⁶ On the properties located in the Adad temple district see Del Monte 2004; Baker 2005 and Del Monte 2000 and 2004.

¹⁷ On this canal see the commentary to **No. 95-RE**.

¹⁸ Baker 2013, pp. 376-385.

father.¹⁹ It adjoins to the north and to the east a lesser public street (the ‘narrow street way of the people’); to the west the house of Anu-zēru-iddin/Nidinti-Anu//Ah; and most interestingly, to the south, it borders the house of Halil-Nergal/Šulē-Adad, her husband.

Apparently Halil-Nergal bought this particular house, some time earlier, from the same seller: the transaction is recorded in VDI 1955/4 5 (where Rihat-Ištar/Bagana-Anu//Hibāya is in fact the seller and Halil-Nergal the buyer).²⁰

According to the description of the property, Halil-Nergal bought a north-facing completed suite of the house belonging to Rihat-Ištar, with its corridor and a completed shop, all ‘properties of Anu’ lying to the right of the Nār-Turnu canal, in the Adad temple district.²¹ The suite borders to the north the courtyard of Rihat-Ištar; to the south the house of Idat-Anu²²/[...]Adad; to the west the house of Anu-zēru-iddin/Nanāya-iddin//Ah and to the east the lesser public street. We do not know if, by the time VDI 1955/4 5 was written, Halil-Nergal had already been married to Rihat-Ištar’s daughter or not; what is clear is that shortly after he bought this property, his wife purchased an extra room adjacent to it.

The suite’s size is not given in **No. 95-RE**. However, Halil-Nergal in VDI 1955/4 5 buys a property, consisting of a suite, a shop and a corridor, measuring 31×11 cubits in total, for 15 š of silver; conversely, the price paid by his wife ^fTaddin-Nanāya for a suite belonging to the same block, adds up to 3 š of silver, only. It is reasonable to suppose that this last one was substantially smaller.

It is likely that ^fTaddin-Nanāya bought the suite in order to provide her husband’s property with an exit to the right of the canal. Why ^fTaddin-Nanāya bought it instead of Halil-Nergal (who had already conducted business with Rihat-Ištar earlier on) still remains to be explained. A possibility is that the suite belonged in the original hereditary line to some prospective heir of Rihat-Ištar other than his daughter (maybe one of ^fTaddin-Nanāya’s brothers?) and that Taddin-Nanāya bought it from her father, to the advantage of her husband, in order to prevent the possibility of losing it upon her father’s death. Another, simpler, explanation might be sought in Rihat-Ištar’s need to maintain the property within the paternal family control, at the same time granting his daughter’s new family the advantage of gaining access to the canal.²³

5.3.3 Size and Price of Tenured Houses

Only two of the contracts concerning tenured houses provide their size. The first (**No. 3-RE**) records the purchase of an almost rectangular, well-equipped house, in good condition, of about 30×25 cubits, for the total price of 15 š of silver; the document dates to the beginning of the Seleucid period. The second (**Nos. 100-RE//101-RE**) concerns a complete house, associated with a corridor and a courtyard; the irregular shape of the house is described as the sum of two contiguous blocks, one measuring 13×9.5 cubits and the other 14.5×12.5 cubits. The price paid for the property amounts to 14 š. According to the description, a dividing wall separates the house from its eastern neighbour. The document dates to the end of the Seleucid period.

Despite the size of the two houses being very different, the price paid is almost identical in the two contracts. This might either be due to the different location of the two properties (one in the district of the Ištar Gate, the other is located in the Fortress district) or, given the chronological gap

¹⁹ Pace Monerie 2015, p. 441, fn. 93 (and Appendix 2), whose interpretation of the text relies on a misreading of the tablet and must be thus revised. See below the commentary to **No. 95-RE** for more details.

²⁰ The patronym of Halil-Nergal in VDI 1955/4 5 (obv. 13 and rev. 7) is poorly preserved. Collation of the extant traces on the original makes it likely that Halil-Nergal’s patronym is Šulē-Adad. See also Monerie 2015, p. 441 (the suggested integration of this name as Kidin-Anu in HBTIN must thus be rejected).

²¹ Collation of the tablet in July 2007 shows that the name of the canal mentioned in VDI 1955/4 5, obv. 3 is Nār-Turnu (íd *túr-nu*). The name of the canal was tentatively transliterated *dur^r-nu* in Del Monte 2000, p. 193, who interpreted it as the Durnu canal (pp. 192 and 202). See also the commentary to **No. 95-RE** below. I wish to thank Natalia Koslova for allowing me to access the collection of the State Hermitage Museum.

²² Restoration HBTIN.

²³ On arrangements between heirs in order to counteract the fragmentation of the family assets see Baker 2015, p. 402.

between the two transactions, it might indicate a substantial change in the value of tenured houses between the beginning and the end of the Seleucid period.

Finally, it cannot be excluded that the lesser value of the tenured house described in **No. 100-RE//101-RE** reflects its particular status, as indicated by the irregularity of the property and the existence of a party wall between this house and the one located to its east.²⁴

Table 19. Sizes and prices of tenured houses

Type	Orientation	Text No.	Size	price
<i>bīt ritti</i> property of Anu (simple sale, transfer not <i>br</i>)	NSWE Adad	86-RE	no mes	30 š
completed house, property of Anu, <i>bīt ritti</i> ,	WENS Fortress	99-RE	no mes	50 š
<i>bīt ritti</i> (house, property of Anu)	NSWE Fortress	105-RE	no mes	13.5 š
house, <i>bīt ritti</i> , property of Anu, completed, door jambs fixed, roofed, with door and lock installed	NSWE Ištar	03-RE	30×25ca	15 š
house, passageway and courtyard, completed, property of Anu, <i>bīt ritti</i>	WENS Fortress	100-RE//101-RE	13.5×9.5/14.5×12.5	14 š
completed house, property of Anu, <i>bīt ritti</i>	NSWE Ištar	92-RE	no mes	13 š

5.4 Properties Located in the Village District

A group of documents in the collection concern tenured properties that lay in districts of the city of Uruk whose names refer, variously, to the Fortress of Anu, the Village (of the temple), and the Ešgal.

The Fortress of Anu is equated to the Village of the temple in five tablets, where the district is described either simply as ‘the Fortress of Anu, a.k.a. the Village’ (**No. 104-RE**), or with an additional reference to the Ešgal temple as ‘the Fortress of Anu, a.k.a. the Village of the temple, in the Ešgal temple’ (and **Nos. 99-RE, 100-RE//101-RE, 105-RE**).²⁵

Two more tablets refer either to a district of ‘the Village’ (**No. 97-RE**) or to the ‘Ešgal district’ (**No. 96-RE**) respectively; finally, a district named ‘the Ehiliesu temple a.k.a. the Ehilianna, in the Fortress of Uruk’ (a *hapax* in the corpus) is mentioned in **No. 103-RE** (see Table 20, below).

Table 20. Contracts mentioning the Fortress, the Village and the Ešgal

Location	Text No.	Type	Date SE
Fortress of Anu aka the Village of the temple, in the Ešgal temple, within Uruk	99-RE	<i>bīt ritti</i> , property of Anu	149 SE
	100-RE//101-RE	<i>bīt ritti</i> house, passageway and courtyard, property of Anu, built on	156 SE
(Fortress of Anu aka the) Village of the temple, district of the Ešgal, within Uruk	105-RE	<i>bīt ritti</i> (house, property of Anu, NSWE)	160 SE
Fortress of Anu aka the Village of the temple, within Uruk	104-RE	<i>bīt ritti</i> , property of Anu, undeveloped plot	(lost)
District of the Village in Uruk	RE-30	assignment of undeveloped plot,	144 SE
Ešgal temple in Uruk	96-RE	<i>bīt ritti</i> , property of Anu	139 SE
Hiliesu temple <i>alias</i> Hilianna temple, within the Wall of Uruk	103-RE	<i>bīt ritti</i> east house, passageway and undeveloped plot, property of Anu (NSWE)	159 SE

²⁴ On party walls as a factor correlating to status, see Baker 2015, p. 401.

²⁵ A shorter formula mentioning the ‘Fortress of Anu a.k.a. the Village of the temple’ occurs in **No. 104-RE** and in **No. 105-RE**. The name of the district is broken in **No. 105-RE**; its restoration as the ‘Fortress of Anu aka the Village of the temple’ is however possible on the basis of its connections to **No. 104-RE**: see commentary to the text below for details. It is worth noting that the scribes of the documents mentioning the Ešgal in addition to the Fortress and the Village might have been father and son: see commentary to the text below. A full analysis of the prosopography of the individuals living in this particular area of the district is currently in preparation by the present author. As noticed above, minor variations in the description of the properties in this period are the norm.

According to Baker, both the Rēš and the Ešgal temples were known as the ‘Fortress of Anu’ already in the second century BCE, and the Ešgal district was also referred to as ‘the Village’: this would have been an indication that the two main temples of Uruk, together with their associated residential areas, were at that time enclosed by a perimeter wall (if not a real fortification), and conceived as fortified, probably as a means of defence against the Parthian threat, since the walls of Uruk had been already in ruins by the time.²⁶

What about the different names attested in our sources, then? To what district or districts do they refer? Prosopographical connections between the documents referring to the Fortress/Village district and those mentioning the Fortress/Village+Ešgal suggest that the two formulas are simple variants for the name of the same district.

In fact, an individual named Makkaya/Arad-rēš(/Anu-ahu-ittannu), the *magallaya*, purchases both the property in the Fortress/Village district that is the object of **No. 104-RE** (an undeveloped plot) and the properties in the Fortress/Village+Ešgal district recorded in **Nos. 100-RE//101-RE** (a house, a passageway and a courtyard) and **No. 105-RE** (a house).²⁷ Makkaya, who is additionally described as the owner of a house lying north of the courtyard that is part of the main property in **No. 100-RE**, has a clear interest in tenured properties that we might expect were located in the same area: it is thus plausible that at least in these cases, the district referred to is the same, whether the Ešgal is mentioned or not.

In **105-RE** Makkaya buys a tenured house from the hands of a certain Haninnā, son of ^fAbū. The contract is dated to 160 SE. Haninnā is also mentioned in a contract written 16 years earlier (**No. 97-RE**, dated SE 156), that records the assignation of an unbuilt plot of land, property of Anu, in the context of the *bīt ritti* system to a worker in clay of the temple named Nikolaos=Rihat-Anu.²⁸ The unbuilt plot lays in ‘the Village’ district.

As illustrated in Fig. 8, the plot adjoins to the north the house of Haninnā/^fAbū/Rihat-Ištar and the exit-way of the house of Illūt-Anu/Ina-qibīt-Anu, that also borders the plot to the west; to the east, the plot adjoins the house of Idat-Anu-/Rihat-Anu; while to the south it opens onto the ‘narrow street, passage of the People’.

Comparing the property assigned to Nikolaos in **No. 97-RE** with the one purchased by Makkaya in **No. 104-RE** many similarities arise.

In particular, as Fig. 9 shows, the plot described in **No. 104-RE** (that has an irregular shape and is subdivided in two contiguous plots in the description) adjoins to the south a public street, like the one in **No. 97-RE**; to the east of the plot lay a house belonging to Idat-Anu/Rihat-Anu, as in the previous contract. To the west and partly to the north is the exit of a certain Ina-qibīt-Anu/Illūt-Anu, probably the son of the Illūt-Anu/Ina-qibīt-Anu whose exit occupied the same direction in **No. 97-RE**.

It seems thus plausible that the plot described in **No. 104-RE** is the same that was assigned to Nikolaos 16 years earlier and that Haninnā, who at the time was the owner of a house to the north of the plot of Nikolaos, bought it at some point in time between 144 and 160 SE from him, maybe in order to get access to the public street. Meanwhile, following the death of Illūt-Anu, the alleys lying to the north and west of the unbuilt plot were inherited by his son Ina-qibīt-Anu. Other modifications probably occurred in the meantime, as implied by the slightly different size (and shape) of the two plots: in fact, while the eastern border of the plot described in **No. 104-RE** is still almost the same size as that of **No. 97-RE** (the 26 5/6 cubits of **No. 97-RE** are now 25 and 5/6 i.e. 9 and 5/6+16), the southern one, adjoining the street, is four cubits smaller than previously (namely, 16 cubits vs. the original 22): one might either suggest that Idat-Anu somewhat enlarged his own house at the expense of the unbuilt plot, or that the narrow strip of 4×16 cubits that is placed between the house of Idat-Anu and the plot of Haninnā was originally not accounted for in the description, maybe because it housed some (provisional?) ‘structure’ not yet assigned to anybody. The plot that was originally assigned *ana bīt rittūtu* to Nikolaos adjoined to the north the house of Haninnā. In **No. 104-RE**, in place of the upper right corner of the original plot stands the house of Makkaya.

26 Baker 2014, pp. 200-203. Conversely, Monerie thinks that the district of the Village of the temple did not lay in the vicinity of the temples themselves, but ‘more likely at the periphery, close to the city walls’: Monerie 2015, pp. 426-427 and fn. 80.

27 On the different spellings of this name in the texts, see commentary to **No. 105-RE** below.

28 Corò 2012, with previous literature.

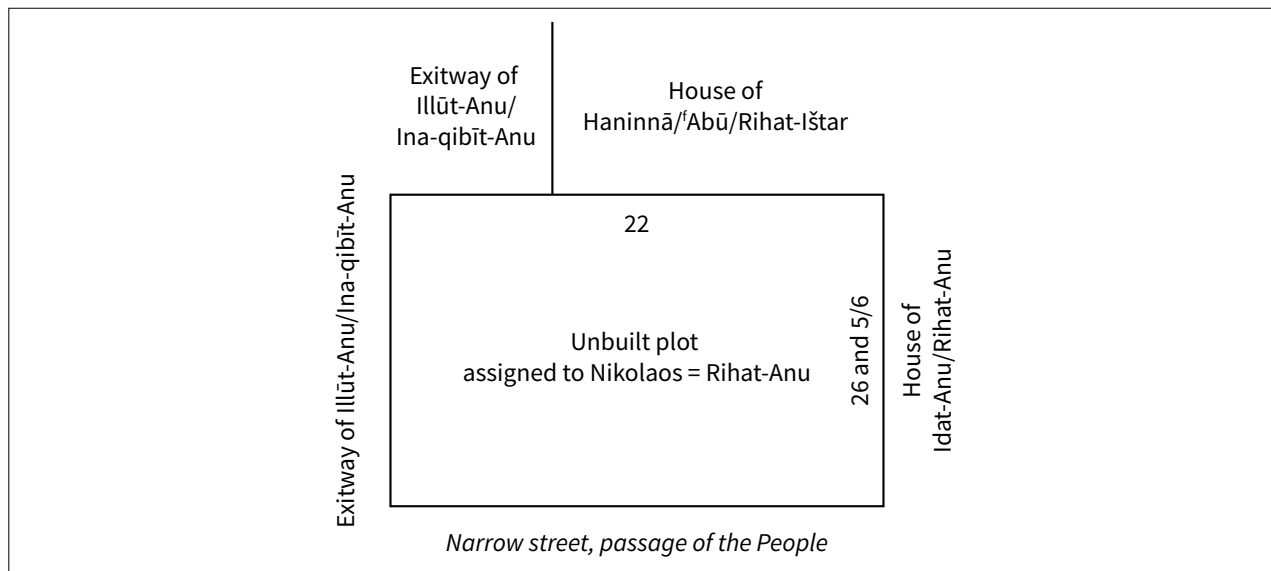


Figure 8. Property in **No. 97-RE**

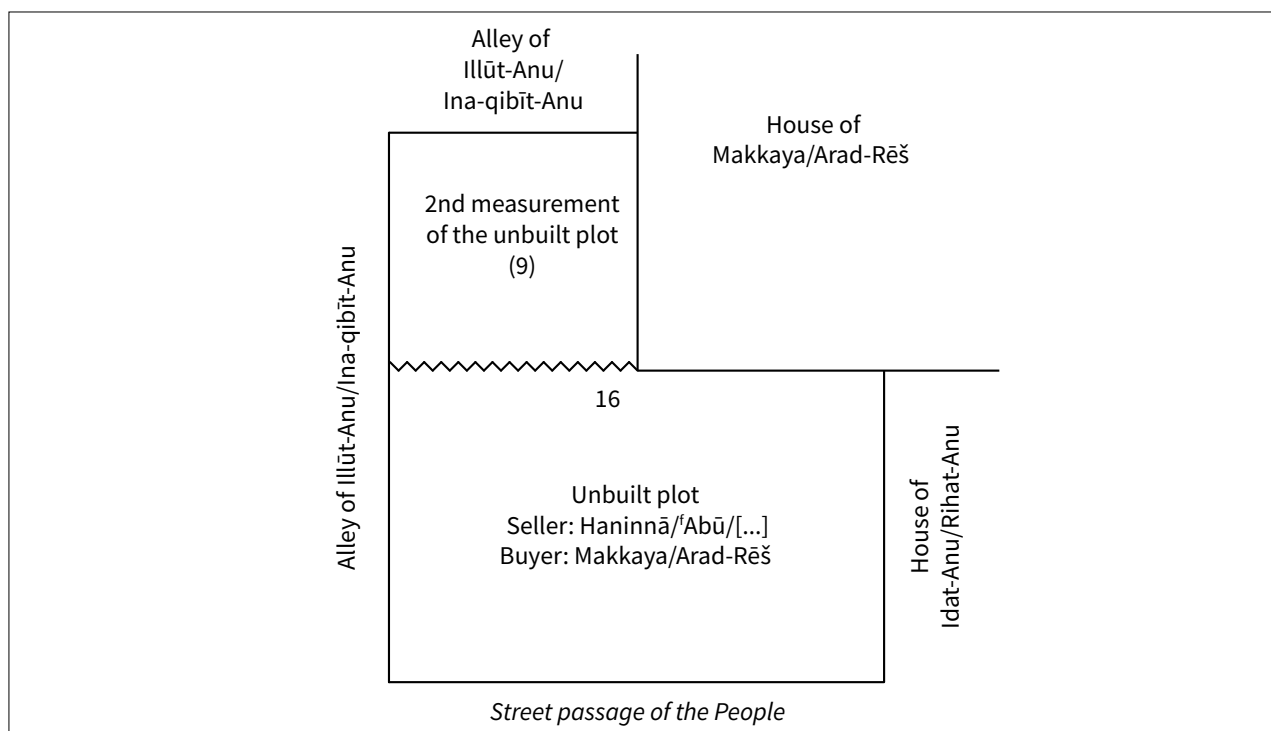


Figure 9. Description of the property recorded in **No. 104-RE**

A possible scenario is that Haninnā after buying the plot from Nikolaos, as required by the allocation rules, had built a house on it in the corner adjoining his already existing house, maybe with the aim of enlarging it. He then sold it to Makkaya, who some time later ended up buying what remained of the adjoining plot of tenured land that was still in the hands of Haninnā. The reason for these operations still remains unclear.

Be that as it may, if the interpretation offered so far proves correct, it would endorse the idea that the name “Village” for the district where the property recorded in **No. 97-RE** is located is used to refer to the same district that is named the “Fortress of Anu, a.k.a. the Village of the temple of the gods”, in **No. 104-RE**.

No. 97-RE is also linked to **No. 96-RE**: in fact, they are the only two contracts from Hellenistic Uruk producing evidence for the temple practice of allocating large unbuilt plots of urban land as tenured properties, in order to develop as housing the areas that accommodated them. This practice, which required the official intervention of the temple authorities in the person of the *rāb ša rēš āli ša Uruk*, has been investigated elsewhere.²⁹

The two documents, which date five years apart (**No. 96-RE** is in fact dated to 139 BC and **No. 97-RE** to 144), are written by the same scribe, i.e. Ina-qibīt-Anu/Labaši/Lišir//GA. However, while **No. 96-RE** refers to the assignation of a plot in the Ešgal temple district, **No. 97-RE** involves a plot in the Village district.

None of the individuals mentioned in **No. 97-RE**, neither as principals nor as neighbours, occurs in **No. 96-RE**, making it difficult to ascertain if ‘Ešgal temple’ could also be used as short for the full name of the Fortress/Village district.

In addition, **No. 96-RE** is connected on prosopographical grounds to **No. 103-RE**, which records the purchase of a ‘east-facing suite’ with its connected passageway and unbuilt plot in the area of the Ehiliesu temple district, a.k.a. the Ehilianna, in the ‘Fortress of Uruk’.³⁰ In fact, the Idat-Anu *alias* Šalammāya who acts as buyer in **No. 103-RE** is the son of Haninnā/Rihat-Belēt-šēri, the worker on clay of the temple, who is assigned the plot of unbuilt land recorded in **No. 96-RE**. It is thus conceivable that the “Ehilianna in the Fortress of Uruk” of **No. 103-RE** is the same “Ešgal district” mentioned in **No. 96-RE**.³¹

One should stress that **No. 103-RE** and the other contracts mentioning the Fortress differ in that the first document refers to a Fortress ‘of Uruk’, the others to the Fortress ‘of Anu’. A Fortress of Uruk is only mentioned, to my knowledge, in three documents, all dating to the early Seleucid period (**No. 17-AL**, YOS 20 18 and YOS 20 19; see 4.1.1, above). There, it is always connected to the bank of the moat and lies in the periphery of Uruk, as one might infer also from the fact that the contracts mentioning this area have arable land as object; conversely, the urban connotation of the Ehiliesu temple district and its destination as a housing area is apparent from the fact that the property described in **No. 103-RE** adjoins either houses or urban plots of lands or city streets (here included a major public street); the different names can thus be simply considered variants.³²

29 See Corò 2012.

30 The peculiar nature of the property involved in this contract has been discussed above (see 5.3 Houses).

31 If this were the case, we might also see here a point towards the connection of the Ehilianna temple with the Ešgal in the Late Seleucid period. On the location of this temple see Linszen 2004, p. 192, commentary to l. 4, with previous bibliography.

32 The properties neighbouring the east-facing suite sold in **No. 103-RE** are detailed in Fig. 7 above; for more details see the edition of **No. 103-RE**, below.

5.5 Unbuilt Plots

5.5.1 Independent Unbuilt Plots

Independent undeveloped plots are the object of eleven contracts. Six of them record purchases (**Nos. 79-RE; 80-RE; 37-RE; 81-RE; 27-RE; 113-RE**); one is a gift (**No. 108-RE**); one is a division (**No. 6-RE**), one is a conditional sale *ana bīt rittūtu* (**No. 97-RE**); two are assignments of tenured plots (**Nos. 96-RE; 97-RE**), a typology that is attested in the BM collection for the first time and so far represents a hapax in Hellenistic Uruk.³³

The plots are located in various districts of Uruk, including the Šamaš Gate, the Ištar Gate, the Lugalkisurra Gate, the Market Gate districts, the district of the Emihallake temple and that of the Fortress of Anu (see Table 21, for details). Interestingly, the last three are not among the five best documented districts of the city: the presence of unbuilt land there might indicate that these areas were still not densely occupied at this time.³⁴

Table 21. Independent unbuilt plots in the BM collection

Type	District	Transaction	Text No.
Regular plots			
undeveloped plot	Šamaš Gate	sale	79-RE; 80-RE
		gift	108-RE
	Ištar Gate	sale	37-RE
	Temple Mihallake		81-RE
	Market Gate		27-RE
	(unknown)		113-RE
undeveloped plot divided with a partition wall	Lugalkisurra Gate	division	6-RE
Tenured plots			
undeveloped plots, property of Anu	Village	Allocation <i>ana bīt rittūtu</i>	97-RE
undeveloped plots, property of Anu	Ešgal temple		96-RE
undeveloped plot, <i>bīt ritti</i> , property of Anu	Fortress of Anu <i>alias</i> Village of the temples	Sale <i>ana bīt rittūtu</i>	104-RE

5.5.2 Tenured Unbuilt Plots

Within the BM collection, only unbuilt plots located in the district of the Fortress of Anu/Village are classified as tenured properties; here belong also the two plots that are the object of allocations *ana bīt rittūtu*, following a written order issued by the *rāb rēš āli* of Uruk. It has been argued elsewhere that these documents reflect the origins of a new process of allocation of land enacted by the temple, in order to develop the areas they involve as housing.³⁵

The allocation of unbuilt plots of land *ana bīt rittūtu* entailed for the owner the obligation to build a house on it and settle there, and to fulfil specific services on behalf of the temple, upon request. As the evidence on tenured houses located in the same district show, the owner of the plot, after improving the property, could sell it, making a profit out of it: the obligations connected to the property had to be taken over by the new owner, as the formulary of the contracts explicitly states (“this house belongs as a *bīt ritti* to PN, forever”).

Tenured independent unbuilt plots are, on the contrary, only rarely sold in Hellenistic Uruk.³⁶ this might indicate that improving them before selling, while not a precondition, was the norm (represent-

33 Corò 2012.

34 On independent *kišubbū* plots as an index of occupation density within the city, see Baker 2009, esp. pp. 93-95.

35 On these contracts see above § 5.4. On the *bīt ritti* system, see Corò 2012.

36 See Baker 2005, pp. 30-33 for a survey; **No. 104-RE** may now be added to the documents listed there.

ing an advantage from both the seller's and buyer's perspectives). Exceptions, such as the one that might be represented by **No. 104-RE** (discussed above), find a rationale in the complex business relationship linking the buyer and the seller.

5.5.3 Untenured Unbuilt Plots

We have evidence for eight *kišubbûs* that are not qualified as tenured properties in the collection. None of them lays in the Village district.

As Baker recently suggested, unbuilt plots next to urban properties were often purchased by individuals aiming at extending their own properties.³⁷ This might have been the case in **No. 37-RE**, where Anu-ahhē-iddin buys, for 6 š of silver, an almost square *kišubbû*, measuring 23×22 cubits, in the Ištar Gate district; the plot adjoins to the north Anu-ahhē-iddin's access-way and to the west his own house.

Among the untenured unbuilt plots which are the object of our contracts is also one that is divided by a party wall (**No. 6-RE**), probably in connection with a division of inheritance between members of the same family. The practice of dividing plots for hereditary purposes may also be implied in the description of the unbuilt plots located in the Šamaš Gate district which are the object of **Nos. 79-RE** and **80-RE**, for which we know that they are "2/3 of half of a *kišubbû*" and "a half share in a *kišubbû*, that he owns jointly with his brothers".

5.5.4 Unbuilt Plots Belonging to a House Complex

Nine contracts mention unbuilt plots belonging to a house complex (see Table 22). They are part of houses (both finished or not) and may be associated also with other structures, such as corridors and courtyards. The contracts give no explicit information on their use.³⁸

No. 103-RE refers to an unbuilt plot transferred in connection with part of a house and a corridor (this text has been discussed above).

Table 22. Unbuilt plots belonging to a house complex

Type	Text
house(s) and undeveloped plot(s)	63-RE; 42-RE; 21-RE; 32-RE
completed house and undeveloped plot	14-RE; 33-RE; 45-RE
completed house and undeveloped plot (used as / and?) courtyard	65-RE
east-facing suite, corridor and undeveloped plot	103-RE

5.6 Shops

Two contracts in the collection concern *kuruppus*, i.e. shops (see Table 23).

Table 23. Shops in the BM collection

District	Transaction	Type	Text
lost	sale	completed shop	60-RE
Šamaš Gate	sale	completed shop	93-RE

³⁷ Baker 2009, p. 93.

³⁸ Baker suggests that they might have housed ephemeral structures. Baker 2009, pp. 92-93.

Discussing the meaning of the term *kuruppu*,³⁹ Baker has noted that in the Hellenistic period these structures shared a number of typical features: in particular, they were more valuable than other types of urban properties; they were characterised by a good location, usually on a major public street; they were bordered at a rear by a house (or in one case an unbuilt plot); they were typically situated next to another *kuruppu*, on the same street front,⁴⁰ and were rectangular in shape (with one of the short sides adjoining the street).

The data drawn from our two documents confirm the scenario outlined by Baker for the location of the *kuruppus*; conversely, differences may be noticed with regard to the price and the specific side adjoining the street.

Both the *kuruppu* described in **No. 60-RE** and the one in **No. 93-RE** bordered on the ‘wide street, way of the gods and the king’. A house lay most probably to the north of the *kuruppu*, i.e. opposite the street, in **No. 60-RE**: the name of the owner and the type of property are lost; however, since to the west and to the east the *kuruppu* adjoined the house of Tattannu and its second measurement, respectively, it is not unlikely that a block of the same irregularly shaped house laid north of it.

The *kuruppu* described in **No. 93-RE** adjoined the public street to the east; to the west stood an unbuilt plot belonging to Anu-zēru-iddin/Anu-uballit//EZ, whose properties (a house and alley) bordered on the *kuruppu* also to the north and to the south.⁴¹

While the *kuruppu* described in **No. 60-RE** (whose location within the city is lost) was clearly rectangular in shape, with a shorter side measuring about one third of the longer (16×5 1/2 cubits), and had one of its short sides adjoining the street, the other (**No. 93-RE**) was almost square (measuring 8 1/3×9 cubits) and adjoined the street on the (slightly) longer side. Additionally, no *kuruppu* bordered on the main one in either case, and the *kuruppu* in **No. 93-RE** was sold for 4 š of silver only (the purchase price is lost in **No. 60-RE**), a price exceptionally low compared to that of other *kuruppus*; a discrepancy for which I have, at present, no plausible explanation.

5.6.1 Ownership Patterns: Women and *kuruppus*

Nos. 60-RE and **93-RE** share two additional features that may be useful in order to investigate the ownership patterns of this type of properties. First, both documents involve women as sellers (and also as guarantors, together with a male relative of theirs); second, the properties adjoining the *kuruppus* on the three sides other than bordering on the public street belong to the same individual.

I will take into consideration the question of women first. The association of women and *kuruppus* seems to be a key-feature of this type of transactions: as Table 24 shows, six out of nine contracts from Hellenistic Uruk concerning *kuruppus* record a woman, either as the owner of shops bordering the main one (BRM 2 1; BiMes 24 34), or as the seller (BiMes 24 33; BiMes 24 34; RIAA² 293; **Nos. 60-RE** and **93-RE**); one document features two women, one as the seller and the other as the buyer (BiMes 24 34).⁴²

³⁹ On the reading of *kuruppus* as “shops” see Baker 2010. A reading “shops” (in Italian, “botteghe”) for these buildings was first suggested by Del Monte, who also pointed out that they regularly adjoined the Processional Way (i.e., the major public street) and had the housing quarters at a rear (Del Monte 2000, p. 179, fn. 7, and p. 200).

⁴⁰ Baker 2010.

⁴¹ It is interesting to note that an individual named Anu-zēru-iddin/Anu-uballit appears as the owner of a *kuruppu* and an unbuilt plot in the Šamaš Gate district 35 years later, in SE 165, as we know from RIAA² 295//BRM 2 50; we might expect that the two properties did not lay much apart from one another.

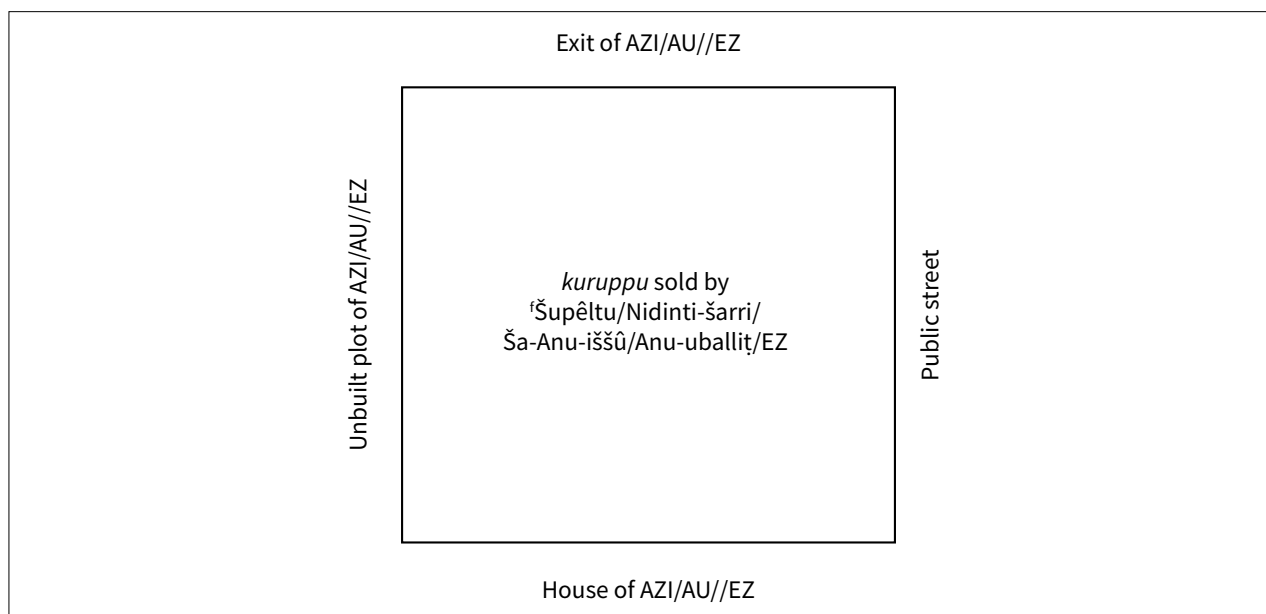
⁴² *Kuruppus* are mentioned also in BiMes 24 37, BiMes 24 46//RIAA² 295 and VDI 1955/4 5, but no woman appears as owner in these documents.

Table 24. Women in documents involving *kuruppus*

Text	District	Transaction	Women involvement
BRM 2 1	Orchard	lease of <i>k.</i>	owner of <i>k.</i> , bordering the main one
BiMes 24 33	Ištar Gate	sale of <i>k.</i>	seller
BiMes 24 34	Ištar Gate	sale of <i>k.</i>	seller buyer owner of <i>k.</i> , bordering the main one
RIAA ² 293	Lugalirra temple	sale of <i>k.</i>	seller
60-RE	lost	sale of <i>k.</i>	seller
93-RE	Šamaš Gate	sale of <i>k.</i>	seller

The question arises why women so frequently held *kuruppus*. It would be tempting to see an answer to this question in the connection between the function of the *kuruppu* and some typical women-related activities. However, both their interpretation as ‘shops’ and the fact that this pattern of feminine ownership is a trend but not a rule, would not fit this scenario very well.

An alternative explanation might be sought in the location of the *kuruppus*: lying on a public street and representing a sort of ‘appendix’ of the house that (usually) stood behind it, *kuruppus* might have been preferential items in connection with dowries. The woman’s family might have preferred to assign her, as part of the dowry, a ‘functional room’ facing the street, instead of any other more internal part of the house, as a contract such as **No. 93-RE** might suggest: here, in fact, the properties bordering the *kuruppu* of Šupêltu belonged to an individual who might have been her grand-uncle (as shown in Fig. 10).⁴³

Figure 10. Schematic representation of the *kuruppu* sold in **No. 93-RE**

⁴³ See below, commentary to **No. 93-RE**.

5.6.2 Ownership Patterns: Adjoining Properties

The fact that the properties adjoining the *kuruppu* on the sides other than bordering on the public street belong to the same individual is a further common feature of **Nos. 60-RE** and **93-RE**. A comparison with all the contracts that deal with *kuruppus* show that the same pattern applies only to another *kuruppu*, namely that sold in BiMes 24 34 (where, however, the owner of the adjoining properties is also the seller).

In BiMes 24 33 and RIIA² 293 (see Table 25), on the other hand, the buyer of the *kuruppu* appears also as the owner of one of the properties adjoining it, suggesting that through the new purchase both Dumqi-Anu and Nanāya-iddin are trying to enlarge their properties and maybe getting access to the major public street.

Table 25. Ownership of adjoining properties in RIIA² 293 and BiMes 24 33

	RIIA² 293	BiMes 24 33
Seller	Šupêltu/Anu-māru-ittannu W Anu-uballit/Anu-ahu-ittannu	Nidinti-Nanāya/Anu-ittannu/Anu-uballit W Lâbâši/Tanitti-Anu/Ah
Buyer	Dumqi-Anu/Tattannu-Nanāya/Rihat-Anu	Nanāya-iddin/Kittu-Anu/Lâbâši
N	public street	Kephalon/Anu-balāssu-iqbi//Ah
S	Dumqi-Anu/Tattannu-Nanāya/Rihat-Anu	public street
W	narrow street	Nanāya-iddin/Kittu-Anu/Lâbâši
E	Anu-uballit/Ilūt-Anu	narrow street

