

Blindness in Nuzi Texts

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Summary

Nine texts issued from the site of Nuzi (modern Yorgan Tepe, Iraq) attest the Akkadian term UB-BU-TU, referring to people, with different spellings and contexts. Various etymological interpretations of the term have been proposed, the most followed being *upputu*, “blind (person)”. However, the debate is far from closed, and recent studies have questioned such view (1.). This paper aims at assessing the Nuzi evidence (2.–3.), supporting the traditional interpretation of the term as “blind (person)”, and setting the whole topic in the context of the employment of sightless people as workforce in the Ancient Near East (4.).

1. Introduction¹

The textual corpus from the Kingdom of Arrapḫe² yields various instances of the Akkadian term UB-BU-TU³ to designate people. A variety of interpretations of its etymology and meaning exist, and up to now there have been two main treatments of the subject:

- a) In the first, Cassin determined that the term should be read *ub-bu-tu = ubbutû*, therefore taken as a verbal D-stem adjective from the root $\sqrt{\text{BT/Ṭ}}$ (Old Babylonian $\sqrt{\text{ḪBT/Ṭ}}$). She stated: “Il ne désigne donc pas à proprement parler un métier, mais plutôt la situation dans laquelle un individu se trouve par l'action d'un autre. (...) Il est une personne qui a fait l'objet d'une saisie (...)”

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- 1 This paper has been written thanks to a Ramón y Cajal contract, granted by the Spanish Ministry of Economic Affairs and Competitiveness. Thanks are expressed to B. Lion (Université Paris 1, Sorbonne) and Ph. Abrahami (Université Lumière Lyon 2), who made several corrections and suggestions. I also thank A. Löhnert (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München), who revised the text, offered numerous comments, and provided the author with photographs and collations of the documents under discussion. Of course, any mistakes are the author's sole responsibility. Abbreviations follow the *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und vorderasiatischen Archäologie*.
 - 2 Since most of the documents mentioned in this paper come from the site of Nuzi (modern Yorgan Tepe), and not from Arrapḫe (modern Kirkūk), the expression “Nuzi texts” will be used for the written documentation coming from any site in the vicinity of Nuzi.
 - 3 For the sake of clarity, I employ the spelling UB-BU-TU throughout the paper; note, however, that this spelling is not attested within the Nuzi corpus. In texts from Nuzi, the UB-BU-TU appear in two forms: in the plural as UB-BU-TA-ti (feminine, HSS 15, 278; RA 56, 76 no. 9) or UB-BU-TUM-ti (masculine, HSS 14, 166), or in the singular (UB-BU-DU, UB-BU-TUM or UB-BU-TI). However, in HSS 16, 176 and HSS 16, 194, the singular form is used to refer to two of these people. Cf. also fn. 86.

de la part d'un tiers (organisme d'État ou citoyen privé), et qui travaille pour une période déterminée au profit exclusif de ce dernier."⁴ That interpretation was supported by von Soden, who interpreted the term as *ubbutu(m)* III, "In Nuzi eine Menschenklasse/Schuldgebundener" (AHw 1400a), from the verb *ebētu(m)* II, "binden" (AHw 183a).

- b) In the second treatment, Farber studied the Akkadian term *uppuṭu*, "blind," in cuneiform sources. He concluded that the root of this Akkadian term would be $\sqrt{\text{PT}}$, which presumably derived from the Old Babylonian root $\sqrt{\text{HPD}}$; therefore, his interpretation was that the sequence UB-BU-TU should be read *up-pu-tū*.⁵ Such is the interpretation followed by the recent volume CAD U/W 188–89.⁶

Thanks to Farber's expert treatment, interpretation (b) has prevailed until today. However, recent research has either questioned it in favour of Cassin's proposal,⁷ or simply refused to state a preference one way or the other.⁸ This study aims to review the matter in the context of the abundant research that has arisen in recent years about the use of sightless workers in other periods and areas of the Ancient Near East (for which see 4.).

2. The term UB-BU-TU: The Attestations

The number of texts attesting the term UB-BU-TU has not grown since the above mentioned studies of Cassin and Farber.⁹ Nine cases are at hand; they are set out below in chronological order of publication

a) AASOR 16, 31 + EN 10/3, 207

This is a marriage contract from the ^fTulpun-Naya archive (room N 120). Recently, a join has been achieved, and it has been possible to provide a full transliteration of the document with its corresponding collations.¹⁰ The first part of the text and its body read as follows:

4 Cassin 1958a: 232–33.

5 Farber 1985: 216–18, 231–33; see also Shaffer 1965: 33; CAD A/2 246a.

6 However, CAD U/W 13 provides as cross-reference *arbu*, "fugitive, person without family" (cf. CAD A/2 239b). The sign UB was initially read by Lacheman as *ár*, but this value is not common in Nuzi (see von Soden – Röllig 1967: 31 no. 161); in addition, the abstract form *arbutu* is not expected in these contexts (see 2.).

7 CDA 417b, "encumbered by debt?"; Fincke 1993: 181 and 427 (with doubts).

8 Fadhil 1983: 342a; Abrahami – Lion 2012a: 32, fn. 109; Dosch (1993: 31; 2009: 111) rejected the interpretation of Cassin but offered no alternative, except for the case of HSS 13, 212.

9 Abrahami and Lion confirm (personal communication) that there are no new cases among the texts unearthed in the palace of Nuzi.

10 Abrahami – Lion 2012b: 262–64. See the photographs at <http://cdli.ucla.edu/P388510>.

¹Declaration of ²⁻³‘Kisaya; ²⁻³thus she has spoken to ⁴‘Tulpun-Naya before t[hes]e witnesses:
⁴⁻⁵“Why do you want to give me as wife to Mannuya, the UB-BU-TI? ⁶⁻⁸Take me away from
 (the house of) Mannuya and give me as wife to Ar-Teya, son of Awiš-kipa.”
⁹⁻¹¹And (according to this) declaration (‘Tulpun-Naya) has given ‘Kisaya as wife to Ar-teya,
 son of Awiš-kipa.

The main part of the document was published in 1936. The editors suggested that the term could mean “baker.”¹¹ Since then various scholars have discussed AASOR 16 31+, and some of them have commented on the term UB-BU-TI. Breneman, for example, supports Pfeiffer and Speiser’s proposal,¹² Grosz supports Cassin’s,¹³ while Abrahami and Lion do not express any preference.¹⁴

It is clear that ‘Kisaya had no wish to be engaged to Mannuya. The reason is not given, but there are two possibilities: either Mannuya belonged to a social class with limited rights (Cassin),¹⁵ or he really was blind. In this latter sense, Farber points out: “Ein schwerwiegender Körperfehler wie Blindheit stellt dagegen, zumal wenn schon im Vorfeld der Eheschließung vorgebracht, ein sehr viel überzeugenderes Ehehindernis dar.”¹⁶

b) HSS 13, 212

This administrative text is a list of *rākib narkabti* who had or had not paid the *iškaru* tax.¹⁷ It comes from room A 34 and has been discussed recently by Dosch and Maidman, who provide a transliteration (not collated), translation, and commentary.¹⁸

In l. 16, the sequence DUMU-MEŠ *ta-a-a* [LÚ] UB-BU-DU can be read. The term *mārē* does not need to refer to the previous names, since other, previous occurrences (DUMU-MEŠ PN, in ll. 8 and 9) are clearly isolated.¹⁹ For its part, interpreting the fragmented section is much more difficult. Originally, Dosch suggested reading the sequence as *Taja* [DUMU *ku*]-*ub-bu-du*, Kubbudu being a

11 Pfeiffer – Speiser 1936: 89, fn. 4.

12 Breneman 1971: 78.

13 Grosz 1987: 149, fn. 18; implicitly also Cassin 1994: 130.

14 Abrahami – Lion 2012a: 32, fn. 109. Other works do not discuss the matter, e. g., Pfeifer 2009: 374–75; Justel 2012: 164–65; 2014: 35.

15 Note that in the related marriage adoption contract AASOR 16 30: 7–8 it is stated: “And ‘Tulpun-naya shall give ‘Kisaya as w[if]e to whomever of her’ slaves she wishes” The personal name is written ⁴*túl*-*pu-na-a-a* (collation in Abrahami – Lion 2012a: 56), and not ⁴*tul-pu-na-a-a* (as transliterated in AASOR 16, p. 27).

16 Farber 1985: 217.

17 See the comments by Lion, forthcoming.

18 Dosch 2009: 109–11; Maidman 2010: 219–22.

19 As is the case with this plural term (*mārē*) in other administrative records of the kind; see, e. g., HSS 5, 92, HSS 13, 6, HSS 15, 25 and HSS 16, 366 in Dosch 2009: 83–84, 90, 105–8, 111–13.

personal name attested in Nuzi,²⁰ however, in her latest revision, she considered other possibilities and transliterated DUMU.MEŠ *Ta-a+a* [LÚ/ku-]ub-bu-tù/du.²¹ For his part, Maidman just reads DUMU.MEŠ *Ta-a-a* [] up-pu-tù and translates “the sons of Taya ... *upputu*.”²²

In my opinion, the restoration [DUMU] should be excluded, since in this administrative list no other two-part filiation (DUMU PN DUMU PN) is attested.²³ It would be more probable that the scribe wanted to clearly identify this Taya, father of the *rākibū narkabti*. The transliteration proposed in HSS 13 (DUMU-MEŠ *ta-a-a* [LÚ] UB-BU-DU) is therefore more plausible.

c) HSS 14, 166

This administrative text (room R 49) contains the distribution of grain among several people. It has not received much attention, although recent photographs are available.²⁴ The transliteration is as follows (collations by B. Lion marked with *):

- 15 ANŠE ŠE *a-n*[*a* ŠE-BA]
 2 *ša ni-iš é-ṽ-ti-ṽ**
ša URU-DINGIR-MEŠ
 4 6 ANŠE 1 (*pi*) 1 BÁN 6 ŠILA ŠE *a-na* 18 ṽLÚ ṽ *ta-lu-uḫ-le*
 LÚ(erased) 2 LÚ UB-BU-TUM-*ti*
 6 ŠU-NÍGIN 21 ANŠE 1 (*pi*) 1 BÁN 6* ŠILA ŠE
 ṽ*i-ṽ-na* É *qa-ri-ti*
 Lo [š]a MUNUS-LUGAL
 [š]a URU *nu-zi*
 R [*i-n*]a ITI-ḫi ḫi-ṽ*ia-ṽ*[*r*]i
na-aš-ru

(Rest not inscribed)

¹⁻³15 *imēr* of barley fo[r rations] of the *nīš bīti* of Āl-ilāni; ⁴⁻⁵6 *imēr* 1 (*pi*) 1 *sūtu* 6 *qa* of barley for 18 *taluhlē*, 2 UB-BU-TUM-*ti*.

⁶⁻¹¹Total: 21 *imēr* 1 (*pi*) 1 *sūtu* 6 *qa* of barley were deducted from the granary [o]f the queen [o]f Nuzi, [i]n the month of Ḫiya[r]i.

20 Dosch 1993: 31. As far as I know, it is attested in HSS 19, 45: 37, JEN 62: 2, JEN 98: 2, JEN 107: 2, JEN 230: 27, JEN 978: 3. Lacheman indicated (unpublished manuscript) that the name was present also in JENu 387, but I am not able to find the occurrence in the published copy (JEN 795, according to Maidman 2005: 70). Note that no further Taya, son of Kupputu, is attested.

21 Dosch 2009: 109.

22 Maidman 2010: 221–22.

23 Nor in the related documents indicated by Dosch 2009: 109 (HSS 13, 6; HSS 13, 300; HSS 15, 25; HSS 16, 332; HSS 16, 455).

24 <http://cdli.ucla.edu/P408735>; see an abstract in Mayer 1978: 62.

On the grounds that in this and other documents they appeared in the company of *taluhlē* (some kind of dependent worker), Cassin suggested that the UB-BU-TUM-*ti* must share some of the formers' characteristics, and that the term therefore designated dependent workers. However, we cannot be certain of the nature of these *taluhlē*, who also occur in HSS 16, 194 (see *infra*), and many different hypotheses have been advanced.²⁵ The UB-BU-TUM-*ti* are thus people who received rations from the palace, as did other workers at Nuzi, whether they were slaves, dependent workers or freemen. Note that the quantities delivered *per capita* – if distributed evenly among *taluhlē* and UB-BU-TUM-*ti* – are large, either monthly or even annually.²⁶

d) HSS 15, 237²⁷

Another administrative text, coming from room F 25; a full transliteration was provided by Cassin.²⁸ Again, it contains the distribution of barley among different people and groups of people. In ll. 11–12 we read:

2 ŠILA ŠE a-na LÚ-MEŠ ḫa-bi-re-e
12 ša UB-BU-TI ù LÚ tap-pè-šu

2 *qa* of barley for the 'abirū of the UB-BU-TI and his fellow.

The nature of the relationship between the different groups mentioned is not clear, and Farber even rejects the very existence of this *tappū* in the Nuzi corpus.²⁹ The UB-BU-TU, perhaps together with another person, could have supervised the 'abirū, a well-known group of people in the Ancient Near East and, specifically, within the Nuzi corpus.³⁰

e) HSS 15, 278³¹

Another administrative text, in this case coming from room D 3. Since no full transliteration has been provided previously, I do so here:³²

25 See esp. Richter 2013: 435a, with previous bibliography.

26 See, e. g., Wilhelm 1980: 22; 1985: 25.

27 The original tablet is no longer in Harvard, and the photographs housed at the museum do not show this specific passage, which is written on the edge (comm. by A. Löhnert).

28 Cassin 1958a: 226–27.

29 Farber 1985: 218, fn. 19; see, however, the case of JEN 59 in CAD T 188b (with doubts) and Dosch 1993, esp. 94–95.

30 See in general, with previous bibliography, Bottéro 1954; 1972–1975: 14–27; 1980: 201–13; Greenberg 1955; Loretz 1984; Durand 2004–5: 563–584.

31 The original tablet is no longer in Harvard, and no photograph of the text is available (comm. by A. Löhnert).

32 Due to the fragmentary state of preservation, I am not able to provide any accurate translation.

- 1¹ [+[?] A] ANŠE ŠE-MEŠ ¹a-na¹ šu-ku-nu
 2 1[+[?] A]NŠE ŠE a-na wa-šá-aš-ši-wa
 1[+[?] AN]ŠE ŠE ki-ma [m]u-ut-tù-šu
 4 1 BÁN [ŠE] a-na qa-a-a-[ti³³
 a-n[a] ŠU ¹ka₄-an-t[ù³⁴ na-a]d-nu
 6 1 [A]NŠE 5 BÁN ŠE a-n[a
 3 BÁN ŠE a-na za-an-ni¹ ù¹ [a-n]a ¹pá-ap-pa/pá¹-[si³⁵
 8 ¹a¹-[n]a pá-i-pá³⁶ na¹-ad¹-nu
 [n+] 1 ANŠE ŠE a-na zì-[D]A
 10 ¹a¹-na ¹ut-háp-ta¹-e¹
²[?] ANŠE 2 BÁN 4 S[ILA Š]E-MEŠ
 12 [n+] 1 ANŠE ŠE a¹-[na x] ¹xx¹
 Lo [x x x Š]E a-na zì-DA
 14 [a¹-na¹ ¹ut-h]áp-ta-e
 R [x ANŠE] 2 BÁN ŠE a-na ¹ur-ḫi-til-la
 16 ša U[RU] ¹ú-lam¹-me
¹x¹ ŠE a¹-na ¹na¹-[x]¹-a¹?
 18 ⁵ BÁN¹ ŠE a-na ¹[
 [x] URU ¹ú-la[m-m]e³⁷-e
 20 ¹19¹ ANŠE ŠE ¹a¹-[na ni]-iš é-ti
 š[a U]RU ¹ú-lam-m[e-(e)]
 22 [x x a]-na 2 L[ú-MEŠ x x x]-¹x¹-DINGIR-ú
 [x BÁN] ŠE¹ a-na 3 L[ú-MEŠ
 24 [x] ŠE a-na ¹a¹-[xx] ša URU ¹ú-lam¹-m[e-(e)]
 [x] ANŠE³⁷ [x x] ¹a-na¹
 26 [x L]ú¹-MEŠ UB¹-BU-[T]A-ti
 [š]a šU ¹er-wi-ḫu-ta
 28 [x]+1 ANŠE ŠE a-na ¹ú-bá-ru-ti
 Le [š]U-NÍGIN 57 ANŠE ¹x¹-[
 30 [i-na IT]I ḫi-in-zu-ur-ri
 [ša n]a-áš-ru

For our purposes, the key section is to be found in ll. 25–27, where the text reads: “[... measures of barley] for the UB-BU-[T]A-ti [wh]o are under the supervision of Erwi-ḫuta.” That person could be the same Erwi-ḫuta³⁷ who supervised the other groups of workers, like the *taluhlê* mentioned above.³⁸

33 On the *qayyātu*, a parched grain product, in Nuzi, see also Cassin 1958b: 20; 1962: 78–79; AHw 466a. Note that the Kantu mentioned in l. 5 often receives barley for this product, e. g., HSS 14, 141: 4–6.

34 See already Cassin – Glassner 1977: 77a (transliterated as *ka-an-tu*, with doubts). This Kantu is a recipient of barley for further processing in a dozen or more texts from the palace; see, e. g., HSS 14, 51 and HSS 14, 151 (cf. previous footnote).

35 The term *pappāsu* often occurs together with *zannu*; see esp. Cassin 1958b: 20, and further attestations in AHw 824b.

36 Paipa is a well-known baker (*ēpū*); see Cassin – Glassner 1977: 104b.

37 Perhaps he was the palace governor of Zizza; see e. g. Mayer 1978: 132 (suggestion by A. Löhner).

38 Cassin 1958a: 232.

f) HSS 16, 176

This is an administrative text about the distribution of barley, coming from room D 6, and transliterated in the edition itself.³⁹ Recipients of barley are various persons (women and men) and groups of people, among others the four women and singers who live with Šimaya (ll. 6–7), and the three men, a woman and a singer of Kelip-ukur (ll. 27–29). It is noteworthy that several people appear in other documents relating to royal journeys, where the Akkadian term *uatnannu/utnānu* (see HSS 16, 194 below) is mentioned.⁴⁰ Each entry amounts to three *imēr* of barley, but sometimes the amount is higher (five *imēr* in l. 6) or lower (one *pi* and thirty *qa* in l. 27).

The relevant part reads (ll. 19–24, checked after photograph, provided by A. Löhnert):

[x ANŠE] ŠE a-[na x LÚ-MEŠ]
 20 [UB]-BU-TUM
 R [x]-[x]-at-ta-[x]-[⁴¹
 22 [3* ANŠE*] ŠE a-na 2 L[Ú-MEŠ]
 UB-BU-TUM ša URU (erasure)
 24 na-ni-ia-we

[... *imēr*] of barley f[or the ... UB]-BU-TUM, [...]; 3 *imēr* of barley for the two UB-BU-TUM of the city of Naniya.⁴²

g) HSS 16, 194

This is an administrative text of unknown provenance about the distribution of barley; a transliteration is provided in the *editio princeps*.⁴³ The text reads (ll. 1–5, photograph, provided by A. Löhnert, collated):

39 Lacheman 1958: 53–54.

40 On the Hurrian term *uatnannu/utnānu*, of obscure meaning, see AHW 1398, CAD A/2 499a, CDA 417a, as well as Deller 1987: 61b–62a; Jakob 2003: 218–19; and, recently, Llop – Shibata 2016: 86. For a list of texts where this term is attested see Deller 1987: 61b–62a. Hel[tip-Teššup] (HSS 16, 176: 16) appears in HSS 14, 49 and HSS 14, 52; and if the restoration of [Š]atta-[uazza] is correct (see below in l. 21), he appears in HSS 14, 52 as well as 55–58.

41 The sequence was read in the *editio princeps* as [mš]a-at-ta-[ú-az-za], followed by Cassin – Glassner 1977: 121b and Zaccagnini 1974: 27 and 29. One argument in favor of such restoration is that a Šattu-uazza appears in other texts where the term *uatnannu/utnānu* is present (see above). The photograph housed in Harvard (provided to the author by A. Löhnert) suggests that the last preserved sign might be AN, UD or PI – even an *ú*, but this is far from sure. Another possibility is to restore the term *uatnannu/utnānu*, according to the parallel of HSS 16, 194 and other occurrences (see below), e. g. [a-na] [ú]-<a>-at-ta-a[n-nu], but that reading would be less probable.

42 For this city see Fincke 1993: 181; Müller 1994: 77.

43 Lacheman 1958: 59.

- [x ANŠE] ṚŠEṚ* a-na 21 LÚ-MEŠ
 2 [ta-l]u-uh-le-e
 [i-na] ṚITṚ* -ḫi ḫu-ú-ri
 4 [x A]NŠE 2 BÁN ŠE a+na 2 LÚ UB-BU-TI
 Ṛa-naṚ* A-MEŠ ú-a-at-ta-nu⁴⁴

[... *imēr*] of barley for the 21 [tal]uḫlē, [during] de month of Ḫiyari; [... *i*]mēr of barley, 2 *sūtu*⁴⁵ of barley for the two UB-BU-TU, for the water of the carriage.

As Cassin suggests, those people may have been in charge of watering horses.⁴⁵ In fact, the expenditure in this text may have occurred in relation to royal journeys, as might be the case in HSS 16, 176 above; at least one person is also found in other texts mentioning carriages (*uatnannu/utnānu*).⁴⁶ As in HSS 14, 166, these UB-BU-TU also appear together with *taluhlē*, though in the present case they do in separate entries.

h) HSS 19, 118

This is a loan contract presumably from room V 428,⁴⁷ showing how Šennaya son of Kuttukka received a slave from Artaya. The text was transliterated and translated by Shaffer.⁴⁸ Ll. 18–23 can be translated as follows: “Whoever among them breaks the contract shall pay two female slaves, or he shall deliver a slave – who is neither ú-UB-BU-UT nor maimed (*še-bi-ir*) – and a young female slave, in the town of Nuzi.” Shaffer translated the term ú-UB-BU-UT as “blind” (= *ú-up-pu-ut*). The second term, *šebir* (< *šebēru*), denotes a physical defect⁴⁹ (although in Nuzi it is usually applied to animals⁵⁰). Because of the parallel between both terms, it is evident that the former must also refer to a physical defect.⁵¹

44 Deller 1987: 62a, indicates: “TA wohl nur Tippfehler für -na-” (i. e. *ú-a-at-na¹-nu*); but the photograph clearly shows a sign TA.

45 Cassin 1958a: 235, fn. 19; see also Lewy 1959: 13, fn. 1.

46 Uḫap-tae in HSS 16, 194: 11 appears also in HSS 14, 49 and HSS 16, 111.

47 Morrison 1987: 198 (P 401); Lion 1999: 322, fn. 35 (either V 428 or P 401).

48 Shaffer 1965: 32–33.

49 AHW 1206b 5; CAD Š/2 248 1c.

50 Shaffer 1965: 33, fn. 7; he established paragraphs 196–200 of the Laws of Ḫammu-rapi as a parallel to (*h*)*uppudu* – *šebēru*.

51 Farber 1985: 217.

i) RA 56, 76 no. 9

The last document in which the term UB-BU-TU appears is an administrative text, a further distribution of food rations, of unknown provenance. It is transliterated and translated in the *editio princeps*.⁵² Some measures of barley are distributed to different persons and groups of people: to Irwe-ḫuta, to Uṭḫap-tae, to Unap-Teššup, to some *taluhlē*, etc. The specific use of the barley is also indicated. The text reads (ll. 8–12, between horizontal lines):

Lo 2⁷ ANŠE 2 (BÁN) ŠE a-na 3 LÚ⁷-MEŠ
 UB-BU-TA-ti ša
 10 KIRI₆-MEŠ
 4 ANŠE ŠE a-na zì-DA
 12 a-na¹ut-ḫap-ta-e

^{8–10}Two *imēr* (and) two (*sūtu*) of barley, (for) the three UB-BU-TA-ti of the gardens.

^{11–12}Four *imēr* of barley for flour, for Uṭḫap-tae.

Again, as in HSS 14, 166 and HSS 16, 194, the UB-BU-TU appear together with *taluhlē* (ll. 14 and 19), though here (as in HSS 16, 194) they do in separate entries.

3. Further references to blindness in the Kingdom of Arrapḫe

There are no other attestations of the term UB-BU-TU (or its variants) in the texts from Nuzi, although the corpus does provide other data that are relevant for the present topic. Some legal texts include among their final clauses a reference to the fact that if someone violates the terms of the agreement, their eyes would be put out – in other words, they would be blinded.⁵³ The verb used is *napālu* G, and dictionaries cite various occurrences in Nuzi.⁵⁴

The clearest case of this is to be found in AASOR 16, 52, a marriage adoption contract by which Ḫanizu, slave of ʿUzna, gives his daughter ʿḪašil-lu as daughter (*ana mārtūti*) to ʿUzna, wife of Enna-mati.⁵⁵ The final part of the text reads (ll. 23–29):

52 Cassin 1962: 75–77.

53 On this matter see, in general, Roth 2007.

54 AASOR 16, 52: 29, JEN 65: 22, JEN 449: 13, JEN 452: 8, JEN 457: 11; see AHw 733b G4 (JEN 457 in AHw 734a D2a), CAD N/1 273a 1c (JEN 65 and JEN 457 in CAD N/1 275a 3a). According to these references, the form *napālu* G was employed in Middle Assyrian sources and in Boğazköy, while the intensive form was used in Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian texts.

55 On the marriage adoption agreements from Nuzi, see Fincke 2012 (with literature). A hand-copy of AASOR 16, 52 has never been published (transliteration and translation in AASOR 16, pp. 37–38, 103–4).

- šum-ma* ¹ḥa-ni-zu
 24 ¹ḥa-ši-il-lu
 la ú-za-ak-[k]_{a4} ù la ú-ba-aḥ-ḥé
 26 a-na ¹ú-uz-na la i-na-an-din
 ù ¹ú-uz-na
 28 IGI-MEŠ-šu ša ¹ḥa-ni-zu
 i-na-ap-pa-lu

If Ḥanizu does not clear ¹Ḥašil-lu or he does not look for her and does not give (her) to ¹Uzna, then ¹Uzna may put out the eyes of Ḥanizu.

Several of those cases occur in “servitude contracts”, where persons become slaves of another person.⁵⁶ In those cases, with the exception of JEN 457, the slaves are women and are sometimes called *‘abirū* (JEN 449, JEN 452). Moreover, generally speaking, the slave-owner is a member of the family of Teḥip-Tilla, son of Puḥi-šenni, or Teḥip-Tilla himself. With variations, the clauses towards the end of the contract stipulate that if the slave rebels, the master “shall put out her’ eyes and sell her” (*īnīšu i/unappalma ana šīmi inaddinaššu*).

JEN 65 is different in that it is a pseudo-adoption, an arrangement that was very common in Nuzi.⁵⁷ The final clause states that, in addition to the usual penalties of indemnity, the adoptee (Teḥip-Tilla) may put out ([ú/i]-na-pal-šu) the eyes of the adopter (Unnuki) and sell him (ll. 21–23).

Another text from Nuzi, JEN 431, also seems to refer to that practice but without using the verb *napālu*.⁵⁸ It is a marriage adoption contract by which ¹Muti-Bāšti gives her daughter ¹Aštun-Naya as daughter to ¹Uzna (in parallel to AASOR 16, 52 above, where ¹Uzna, wife of Enna-mati, son of Teḥip-Tilla, is the adopter too). At the end of the text, after the reference to witnesses and the seal impressions, we read (collated):

- [šum-ma] ^c ¹aš-tù-un-na-a^{-a}
 2’ [iš-tu] é ¹uz-na ú-uš-[ší]
 [IGI-ME]š ub-bá-tù-šu-ma a+na šÁ[M i-na-an-di-nu]

[If] ¹Aštun-naya lea[ves] the house of ¹Uzna, they shall destroy [(her) eye]s and she shall s[ell (her)].

Dictionaries translate this verb (*abātu* D) as “destroy (parts of the body)” and cite instances in Middle Assyrian sources, without citing the attestations from Nuzi.⁵⁹ If l. 3 really does refer to eyes, as seems likely, the scribe may have been

56 See Fincke 1994; for editions of the relevant texts, see Bottéro 1954: 51–53, 58–59.

57 See in general Justel 2016. The document mentioned was edited by Cassin 1938: 119–20.

58 For an edition of this text, see Maidman 2005: 235b.

59 AHw 5a D3, CDA 2a. CAD A/1 43–44 2d, however, just translates “to destroy, to ruin people”, and does not include references to body parts.

considering the formula using *napālu* G, before finally opting for the verb *abātu* D instead. What is striking here is the closeness of a form \sqrt{BT} ,⁶⁰ “to destroy,” and \sqrt{HPD}/\sqrt{PT} ,⁶¹ “blind.” In this sense, and according to the occurrence in JEN 431, it may be argued that the similarity between the two roots (i. e., \sqrt{BT} and \sqrt{PT}) prompted the scribe of JEN 431 to use *abātu* D with reference to the eyes.

In essence, the Nuzi corpus indicates that there was a group of people, referred to in the singular as UB-BU-TU, who received food rations, as did other workers. The UB-BU-TU also seem to have been of lower status, since a woman, ¹Kisaya, supposed to be married to a slave (AASOR 16, 30), temporarily is betrothed to an UB-BU-TU (AASOR 16, 31+). This inferior status may be associated with a physical impairment, as indicated by HSS 19, 118. The impairment could be partial or complete blindness, a condition that crops up frequently in the Nuzi corpus – never as the result of illness, but always of corporal punishment.

4. Blind people as workforce in the ancient Near East

One of the main arguments for interpreting the term UB-BU-TU in the Nuzi texts as meaning “blind”⁶² is that, in the ancient Near East more generally, there is abundant evidence for blind people working in palace contexts. That testimony has been expanded by recent studies. It should be noted that, on several occasions, some Sumerian and Akkadian terms referring to blind people (e. g., IGI-NU-DU₈, IGI-NU-TUKU, *lā nāṭilu*, etc.) have been interpreted not literally, but from a sociological or legal perspective (e. g., “unskilled workers”). Specific cases are shown in the following survey, which covers different periods and areas.

In the Pre-Sargonic period, a number of administrative texts speak of the IGI-NU-DU₈, literally “blind.”⁶³ Since they worked under the supervision of gardeners and whitewashers, their work involved handling water. Interpretations of the term IGI-NU-DU₈ fall into two groups: some take it literally (“blind”),⁶⁴ others as simply denoting semi-slaves or unskilled workers.⁶⁵ The second inter-

60 Note that the root is \sqrt{BD} in Ugaritic (DUL 7), Hebrew (Ges. 2b) and Aramaic (DNWSI 4–5).

61 Farber (1985: 216–18, 231–33) suggested that the root \sqrt{PT} may be derived from the Old Babylonian root \sqrt{HPD} .

62 In other words, for reading the sequence UB-BU-TU as *up-pu-tú* = *upputu*. As indicated in 1., Farber 1985 already reached this conclusion.

63 A cone of Urukagina mentions blind people working in the palace; see Kramer 1963: 318 (mentioned by Hoffner 2002: 69, fn. 45). Cf. also Krispijn 2001: 259.

64 E.g., Bauer 1967: 194, 611; Gelb 1973: 87; Farber 1985: 217; Wu 1998: 95; Wilcke 2003a: 159; 2003b: 55; Glassner 2000: 50, fn. 75.

65 E.g., Deimel 1928: 117; Selz 1989: 72; Prentice 2010: 23–24.

pretation has recently been discredited.⁶⁶ In none of the texts the IGI-NU-DU₈ are referred to by their name.

The main work⁶⁷ on the subject in the Ur III period has recently corrected the assumption that there are no relevant attestations.⁶⁸ In fact, it seems that instead of using IGI-NU-DU₈, in the Neo-Sumerian period another term was adopted, namely, IGI-SE₁₂-A.⁶⁹ If this is indeed the case, grain distribution texts mention blind men and women, who had a semi-slave status and worked in various activities such as weaving, milling, and singing.

As for the Old Babylonian period, Farber collected most of the evidence for the terms for “blind.”⁷⁰ Once more, blind men and women carried out a variety of activities, working, for example, in gardens or mills. Sometimes, people seem even have been blinded deliberately. Similarly, a recently published text from Alalaḫ VII (AOAT 282, 502 no. 2) mentions a “blind” man (LÚ IGI-NU-TUKU); it is a distribution of grain among different groups of people, e. g., weavers (sg. UŠ-BAR), captives (sg. *asīru*), and wet nurses (sg. UM-ME-GA-LÁ).⁷¹

As for Middle Assyrian sources, documents mentioning IGI-NU-DU₈ (KAJ 180 and VS 19, 71) have been well known for some time. The common view was that they referred to blind people.⁷² The proposal that the term actually denotes “unskilled workers”⁷³ (in line with other similar proposals for the Pre-Sargonic period) was not widely accepted,⁷⁴ and its rejection for earlier periods rules out its application to the Middle Assyrian sources. The blind people mentioned in the Middle Assyrian sources were probably prisoners of war, whose eyes had been put out. Documents from Dūr-Katlimmu mention a certain Ellil-aḫa-ēriš, a palace slave entitled to rations of barley, who is usually referred to as LÚ IGI-NU-TUKU – and in an unpublished text as LÚ *la da-gi-lu*.⁷⁵

In relation to the Middle Babylonian sources discussed in part by Farber,⁷⁶ new and important data have been published in the last few years. The very recent and most comprehensive treatment of the formulas proper to the *kudu-rrētu* proves once and for all that the term “blind” – written syllabically (*lā nāṭilu*) or logographically (IGI-NU-TUKU or IGI-NU-GÁL) – must be taken literally, since it appears in tandem with other disabilities, chiefly deafness.⁷⁷ What is more, blind people are mentioned in various lists of people, some of them

66 Heimpel 2009b: 43–44 (with previous literature).

67 Heimpel 2009b: 43–48; see already idem 2009a: 94, 117–18, 354.

68 Farber 1985: 221.

69 See recently Steinkeller 2013; Bartash 2014.

70 Farber 1985, esp. pp. 211–12, 221–23.

71 Transliteration in Zeeb 2001: 503.

72 See, e. g., Gelb 1973: 87.

73 Garelli et al. 1982.

74 Postgate 1988: 172.

75 See Röllig 2008: 169b; Jakob 2003: 289.

76 Farber 1985: 223–24. His interpretation was accepted by Hölscher 1996: 226b.

77 Paulus 2014, esp. pp. 224–25, 265.

well-known, like BE 14, 120, which mentions them alongside other workers, such as butchers and gardeners.⁷⁸ In his study of administrative texts concerned with workers, Tenney concludes that 1.26 % of the workers registered in administrative texts were blind; he argues that these workers were really blind.⁷⁹

Hittite sources published in recent decades also provide new data. Texts from Tapikka include a document listing blind people and people with sight (HKM 102). The most coherent interpretation of the document is that the blind were leaders of rebel groups who had been blinded. Although this corporal punishment was not provided for in the Hittite Laws, it was mentioned in edicts and comparable texts.⁸⁰ There are even several letters that mention that some of these blind people worked in mills, that is, they were used as workforce.⁸¹

Two further archives, whose publication postdates Farber 1985, attest the existence of blind people, but they do not imply their use as workforce. The excavations at Tell Meskene, ancient Emar, have yielded a will (Emar 6, 91) which states that at some time, a man had given a female slave and her blind husband (l. 28, LÚ IGI-NU-TUKU), as compensation for repairs to a house. Discussions of the text have always taken the term literally.⁸² Similarly, Emar 6, 205, a legal text whose interpretation has been revised recently,⁸³ mentions a blind girl and uses the term IGI-NU-TUKU (l. 21), also taken literally.⁸⁴ Finally, the corpus of Neo-Assyrian sources contains a case (SAAB 2, 25 no. 5) concerning a young, blind (NU-IGI) slave girl who is sold.⁸⁵

5. Conclusions

It is almost certain that the term UB-BU-TU at Nuzi is to be interpreted as *up-pu-tú*, i. e., the Akkadian adjective *uppuṭu*, meaning “blind.”⁸⁶ This conclusion is in line with other studies on the term, most importantly Farber 1985. Despite the doubts raised by various scholars, this remains the most plausible

78 See esp. Sassmannshausen 2001: 55a (and other references to the same text, pp. 36b, 518).

79 Tenney 2011, esp. pp. 60–62 (cf. previously Brinkman 1982: 5): “The rosters say nothing about how these workers lost their sight or the severity of their sight loss. Some possible causes are cataracts, birth defects, vitamin A deficiency, or (in the case of prisoners of war) deliberate blinding. This is a topic worth further consideration.” (p. 62). Tenney (pp. 60–61, fn. 66) does, however, consider the possibility of the term meaning “unskilled workers.”

80 See Hoffner 2002: 66–67, as well as Altman 2012: 109 and Bryce 2010: 84.

81 Hoffner 2002: 67–68.

82 Arnaud 1985–87, vol. 3: 103; Yamada 1994: 3; Undheim 2001: 66; Westbrook 2003: 665, fn. 25. Durand 1990: 52 provides no further comments on this matter.

83 Yamada 2014: 139–41.

84 Arnaud 1985–87, vol. 3: 217; Yamada 2014: 140.

85 Radner 1997: 188 (see also pp. 147, 173).

86 Accordingly, the concrete spellings should be read as follows: *up-pu-tù* (HSS 13, 212: 16), [*up*]-*pu-tu₄* (HSS 16, 176: 23), *up-pu-ti* (AASOR 16, 31+: 4, HSS 15, 237: 12, HSS 16, 194: 4), *ú-up-pu-uṭ* (HSS 19, 118: 21), *up-pu-tu₄-ti* (HSS 14, 166: 5), and *up-pu-tá-ti* (HSS 15, 278: 26, RA 56, 76 no. 9: 9).

interpretation. In one case, the term *uppuṭu* is clearly used with reference to someone with a physical disability. Furthermore, in Nuzi, there are references to persons who are intentionally blinded as corporal punishment (see 3.).

The nine occurrences of the term in the texts from Nuzi (see 2.) show that those people – men and women – were employed as workforce. In this sense, parallels from other periods and regions, some of them published in the last decades, show that blind people, both men and women, were not excluded from employment as manpower (see 4.). In fact, the status of these persons in Nuzi does not seem very different from that of the other workers that appear in the administrative records.

This conclusion gives rise to the further question⁸⁷ of whether those people attested in Nuzi were blind because of illness or old age,⁸⁸ or because they had had their eyes put out deliberately. Both possibilities are attested in the ancient world, as recent studies have demonstrated.⁸⁹ If those people were blinded intentionally, they may have been prisoners of war, which seems to have been the case in other ancient Near Eastern archives (see 4.).⁹⁰ The Nuzi sources indicate some sort of military conflict with the Assyrians, but we cannot establish its exact nature with any precision.⁹¹ They may also have been blinded as punishment for their crimes, a practice attested to in a number of contracts (see 3.). However, the Nuzi sources make no explicit reference to the actual application of that form of corporal punishment.⁹² In addition, the fact that the blind people received food rations in the normal way would suggest that they were blinded by natural causes, not by the application of corporal punishments or because they were captured by the enemy.

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87 Cf. Tenney 2011: 62 (“This is a topic worth further consideration”); and previously Brinkman 1982: 8.

88 See, e.g., Stol 1986; Biggs 1987–90: 626b–27a; Fincke 2000.

89 Létoublon 2010; Trentin 2013.

90 For ancient Greece, see Tatti-Gartzziou 2010; for Rome, see Trentin 2013: 100–3.

91 Cf. Maidman 2008; 2010: 15–20; 2011a; 2011b; see also Dosch 2009: 72–73.

92 See Zaccagnini 2003: 611.

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