

Remarkable Women from Tikunani. The Role of Women in Palatial Administration

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1. *Introduction*

Nowadays, works on women and their historical dimension cover almost all topics. The subjects that are most productive and most attractive for the public include those relating to women in spheres of power: queens, princesses, priestesses, etc. The list of titles in that regard, in respect of the topic in the Ancient Near East, is immense.² More recently, attention has been focused on, for example, women who appear to manage public affairs; the best known case is that of the *šakintū* (sg. *šakintu*), from Neo-Assyrian sources (see § 6). Unfortunately, such research cannot be carried out for all the eras and areas of the Ancient Near East; the sources are greatly varied, and sometimes the role of women in the public (administrative) sector is almost non-existent, or the textual sources do not provide sufficient data. Fortunately, on other occasions, we are able to identify some of those women, who, it would seem, held a specific post in the administration of the kingdom or city.

2. *Texts from Tigonānum/Tikunani*

This contribution focuses on the written sources of Tigonānum, *i.e.* Tikunani, the capital city of a small Hurrian kingdom of the same name. This requires some explanation, as it is not a well-known site.³

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2. For example, see the titles mentioned in Marsman 2003: 326–389, as well as the recent Budin and MacIntosh Turfa 2016, in general.

3. What follows is just a brief abstract; more details will be provided in future publications.

The cuneiform tablets of Tikunani were found in illegal excavations, presumably during the late 1980s. The exact place where the clandestine excavators found the tablets is not known. Some previous works stated that that place would be the area around present-day Diyarbakir or Bismil, where the borders of Iraq, Turkey, and Syria meet; however, recent research point the region of the Upper Ḥabūr river as the probable region of provenance.⁴ The kingdom of Tikunani, mentioned by its older name of Tigunānum, was known in texts from Mari (18th century BC).⁵ However, original texts from the illicit dig remain unknown.



In 1996, M. Salvini published four texts, presumably originating from Tikunani, and kept in a private collection;⁶ in addition, he established that there were many more unpublished documents,⁷ but up to now only six administrative texts that supposedly originate from that archive have been published.⁸ The texts

4. See especially Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 72, George *et al.* 2017: 97–100.

5. Groneberg 1980: 236, Charpin and Ziegler 2003: 240.

6. Salvini 1996.

7. Salvini 1996: 7 n. 4, 1998: 305, 2000: 56.

8. One by Wilhelm and Akdoğan 2010, and five as CUSAS 34 59–63.

excavated in Tikunani changed hands, possibly on several occasions, and they have been conserved in private collections. At the beginning of the 1990s, the late Prof. W. G. Lambert (1926–2011) of the University of Birmingham examined about 450 cuneiform texts from Tikunani, kept in a private collection in London and that were later sold at auction at Christie's. Lambert copied some of those cuneiform texts, transliterated them, and even made some comments, but he did not distribute the results, which were carefully noted in his work notebooks. When Lambert died, the academic executor of his estate, Prof. A. R. George (School of Oriental and African Studies, London), worked partially on the content of those notebooks, and published twenty divinatory texts (his line of research at the time).⁹ Meanwhile, there remain unpublished over 400 cuneiform texts from Tikunani; known only through Lambert's notebooks, since the current location of the originals is unknown, and according to George, "[the original texts] are not believed to be currently under study".¹⁰ Some time ago, George provided some scholars with several of Lambert's transcriptions to assess the potential of the Tikunani texts. On that basis, an international project was set up (2016–2018) with researchers from Spain, Germany, and Austria, who have begun to work on those sources. That work is the basis of what I shall now relate.

Through Lambert's transcriptions (abbreviated *WGL Folios*), we know that the Tikunani texts are made up of more than 20 letters, some 360 administrative texts, about 40 legal texts, 20 divinatory texts, a broken royal inscription, and a number of fragmentary school texts. In addition, the notes speak of a text drafted in Hurrian, as well as of a complete rectangular prism written on eight columns (both already published by Salvini in 1996).

Those texts were certainly looted from the palace of the capital Tikunani during the reign of a monarch called Tunip-Teššup, who appears to have lived around 1600 BC. That detail is important, because the nature of the texts is wholly public. All that they contained pertained to the state: correspondence between kings, records of people, of animals administered by the palace, of tribute from surrounding cities, etc. It is especially in those administrative records that women appear. In most cases, they are nameless women who have been handed over in transactions that are sometimes unclear, or to whom something has been given.¹¹ On other occasions, we know the names of those women, although there is not an exact indication of the remit of the administrative text.¹² At other times, we do know the function, since we are given an indication of whether (or not) they received a certain amount of wool or other products.¹³ However, there are more explicit texts that set out, on an individual basis, what properties were received by a series of women. The most notable case is that of the woman called Ennana.

9. George 2013: 285–319.

10. George 2013: 285.

11. *E.g.* *WGL Folios* 7661 ("list of women and men slaves from named cities"), 7930, etc. *Cf.* the exemplary case of Alalah VII in Zeeb 2001.

12. *E.g.* *WGL Folios* 7862, 7863, etc.

13. *E.g.* *WGL Folios* 7653 ("barley rations not taken"), 7659 (see below).

3. The Case of Ennana

There are 18 Tikunani administrative texts that mention a woman called Ennana.¹⁴ According to the numbering provided by Lambert, those texts are:

Text	WGL numbering	WGL Folios
1	36	7645
2	79	7688
3	80	7689
4	81	7690
5	82	7691
6	83	7692
7	84	7693
8	85	7694
9	86	7695
10	148	7757
11	196	7814
12	219	7889
13	220	7890
14	222	7892
15	225	7895
16	353	8034–8035
17	354	8036–8037
18	—	8148–8151

Except for no. 18, the other texts are fairly similar: an indication is given of an amount of wool, its destination or provenance, and finally that Ennana took it. One example is no. 5:¹⁵

Obv.

- 10 MA-NA SÍG
 2 *a-na* 2 TÚG ZI-GA
 1½ MA-NA SÍG
 4 *a-na* TÚG ^dEN.ZU *šar-ri*
 10 MA-NA SÍG
 6 *a-na* 10 GÚ-È-A
 ZI-GA

14. The personal name Ennana is not Hurrian (*i.e.* *Enna=Na(ya)*) but Akkadian, from the verb *enēnu*, “to grant a favor”; see this use in other personal names in *AHw* 217a, *CAD* E 164b. *CDA* 74a refers to the term *ennānum*, “supplication, petition”, attested in Old Assyrian sources (cf. also *AHw* 219b, “Freundlichkeit”). Note that such a name, with this same spelling, is attested in *MAD* 1 4: 8 (Old Akkadian period).

15. I have preferred not to include the transcription of the remaining seventeen texts, since it would surpass the intention of the paper. Instead, I provide the reader with transliterations and translations of several, key texts.

Rev.

8 ^{lf}*en-na-na**il-qè*¹⁻²Ten minas of wool for two ...¹⁶ garments.³⁻⁴1½ minas of wool for the garment of Sîn, of first-class.⁵⁻⁷10 minas of wool for ten cloaks ...⁸⁻⁹Ennana has taken.

In the first 17 texts, not everything detailed is always given to Ennana. Sometimes the text states that some portion of the items was taken by other people, although no indication is given concerning who they were; it is only that the verb form is given in the plural (no. 4, no. 8). For its part, no. 14 does not explicitly indicate that Ennana took the goods, but her name appears just before the dating.

Text no. 18 is certainly exceptional. It constitutes a long summary or memorandum, prepared when at least three previous tablets were copied. The text is divided into three differentiated parts: a list of wool received by Ennana (ll. 1–36), a list of wool received by another woman called Karḫa (§ 3, ll. 37–46), and a list of wool handed over to the city of Uttupena (ll. 47–56). The end includes a mention of what was taken to another city with a partial name (ll. 57–58), as well as a total sum and the dating using the eponymal system (ll. 59–60). It is clear that, as with the usual archival practice in the ancient Near East, the system was as follows: the palace kept a record of what was handed over to each person, those details being kept together. At the end of the period (probably one year), the total amounts were tallied; that was done by adding up what was handed over to each person, in order. The calculation contained in no. 18 largely exceeds, and does not tally with, the other texts, nos. 1–17. From that, it must be deduced that those missing records have not been found, or that they were discarded in due course. That system is certainly the one that we also find in the tally made of the ‘*abirū*’ who appear in the famous Prism of Tunip-Teššup;¹⁷ portions of that same tally, in the same order, appear in unpublished texts.¹⁸

The texts do not provide any additional details regarding Ennana. In almost all of them she appears as ^{lf}Ennana, *i.e.* with both masculine and feminine determinatives.¹⁹ In only two cases (no. 1: 4, no. 7: 8) does Enanna appear only with the masculine determinative, and in another two (no. 11: 7, no. 14: 9) only with the feminine determinative. In these cases, the rest of the text was very similar to the others, *i.e.* we are certainly dealing with the same person. The use of (only) masculine determinatives before women’s

16. The sequence ZI-GA equates to the Akkadian *tebû/tēbû* (*MesZL* p. 279–280), “sich erheben, Erhebung”, etc. (see *AHw* 1343b, *CAD* T 321), as well as to *šitu* (*MesZL* p. 280), “exit, expenditure” (*AHw* 1106–1107, *CAD* Š 219–221). However, it would seem that the Tikunani administrative texts refer to a type of garment or cloak; for that reason, Lambert also leaves it untranslated (*WGL Folios* 8150–8151). In that regard, see the term *TÚG zigû* from the Old Babylonian and Middle-Babylonian periods, “ein Tuch?” (*AHw* 1525b, but *cf.* *CAD* Z 109a); and the term attested in Mari *zakûm*, translated by Durand (2009: 137–138) as “étoffe qui a une finition brillante”.

17. Salvini 1996.

18. See Justel 2018.

19. As is the case with other texts, *e.g.* no. 18: 37, concerning the woman called Karḫa; and with various references to the woman called Azzu, and others (*e.g.* *WGL Folio* 7699).

names is not strange in Old Babylonian sources,²⁰ but it is indeed strange in the texts from northern Mesopotamia from that period. For the case of Middle Babylonian sources and those of Nuzi, it has been recently proposed that such a use of determinatives was reserved for women of some prominence in society.²¹ For their own part, it appears that the Tikunani texts (at least literary and divinatory texts) made frequent use of the feminine determinative, because it appears preceding even generic feminine names.²²

What did Ennana do with those materials? Data exist in the texts to indicate that she would have taken on the task of preparing the wool that she received and transformed it into finished products: dresses, shirts, and other items of which the significance sometimes escapes us. Two texts (no. 7: 7, no. 18: 1) indicate that Ennana took the wool “for making (things)” (*ana epēši*), a usual expression in Tikunani administrative texts. In that regard, a key issue is: Was she the person who made the finished products, or could it be that she ran a workshop? That question does not have a clear answer. However, it is important to highlight the fact that the amount of wool she handled was immense: according to text no. 18: 36, in a single accounting year, Ennana appears to have received “eleven talents (and) four minas of wool”. Other texts suggest that other women might have handled those amounts; for example, according to no. 18: 46, in that same accounting year, Karḫa received “twenty talents (and) forty-four minas of wool”. In that regard, we must look at other texts, such as *WGL Folio 7659*, which Lambert transcribed, apparently incompletely. It says:

ʿtup-pī [SÍG
 2 5 MA-NA ʿtù-[
 5 MA-NA ʿa-kà-ap-ni
 4 5 MIN ʿmu-šu-un-na
 ...
 End 2 GÚ-UN 34 MA-NA SÍG² a-na TÚG
 e-pè-ši [x]-ki

¹[Tablet] (recording) [the wool ...].

²Five minas: Tu[...].

³Five minas: Akapni.

⁴Five minas: Mušunna.

...

End Two talents (and) thirty-four minas of wool for making garments ...

It can be seen that each woman—maybe the weavers—received five minas of wool. Although we lack context, that amount is, in any case, far removed from the amounts received by women like Ennana. For that reason, we should probably suppose that Ennana and other women (see § 3) ran large workshops and oversaw production, which would have come under the ægis of the palace.

20. See implicitly Brinkman 2007: 1.

21. Brinkman 2007, Abrahams 2011; for the case of Babylonian sources from the first millennium, see Wunsch 2006.

22. George 2013: 108a.

4. *Other Women in Tikunani*

Although Ennana is the woman for whom we have the most information, the Tikunani sources refer to other women of some importance. Mention has already been made of the large amount of wool handled by Karḫa, who appears in text no. 18. Just one other text mentions that woman: *WGL Folios* 8058–8059:

Obv.

3 TUG 5 MA-NA A-TA-AN
 2 KI-LA-BI
 3 TUG US 6 MA-NA A-TA-AN²³
 4 KI-LÁ-BI

Rev.

a-na ^f*kàr-ḫa*
 6 *na-dì-in*

¹⁻²Three garments, the weight five minas each.

³⁻⁴Three second-class garments, the weight six minas each.

⁵⁻⁶They have been given to Karḫa.

Another woman who appears on several occasions in the sources is Azzu.²⁴ Those documents have a structure similar to those concerning Ennana. For example, *WGL Folio* 7719 says: “One ... garment, the weight two minas, in charge of Azzu.”²⁵ However, the most revealing text is *WGL Folio* 7699, a brief memorandum. It states that Azzu received various amounts of wool to make (*epēšī*) finished textile products. That text also refers to two other women who are not present in other administrative texts, and who were also given materials to process. Azzu’s name and the names of the other two women (^f*nu-pur-e-li* and ^f*na-šī²-ru²-ni*) are all preceded by masculine and feminine determinatives.

Finally, there are references to other named women who may also have handled properties owned by the palace administration. One of them is ^f*mu-balma*, of whom a brief text has been conserved which

23. A-TA-AN instead of the usual TA-A-AN = TA-ÀM. This sequence seems to have been usual in Tikunani. In fact, transposition of signs is well attested in peripheral Akkadian, e.g. in Nuzi (see already Berkooz 1937: 22); this very same chain is to be found, for example, in AASOR 16 55: 35, HSS 5 79: 29, HSS 19 144: 17, JEN 441: 10, etc. However, in other Tikunani documents the sequence was correctly written, e.g. *WGL Folio* 7643: 2.

24. The occurrences are *WGL Folios* 7699, 7719, 7720, 7723. She also appears in *WGL Folio* 7653, “barley rations not taken” (Lambert’s label), but the characteristics of the text are clearly different from the rest.

25. ¹I TÚG-ŠÀ-XX ²MA-NA A-TA-AN ³KI-LÁ-BI ⁴*i-na* ŠU ^f*az-zu*. TÚG-ŠÀ-XX appears several times in the Tikunani administrative corpus. Lambert always designed the two, similar signs, but they do not correspond to what is expected, either the sequence GA-DÙ or the sign GADA (at least present in *WGL Folio* 7907: 4), to render TÚG-ŠÀ-GA-DÙ or TÚG-ŠÀ-GADA = *šakattù*, “a kind of garment.” Note that this term is attested also in peripheral Akkadian, as in Alalah, Mari, Boghazköy, Nuzi and Amarna (see *AHw* 1139, *CAD* Š/1 158–159).

states that she was given wool to make finished goods (*WGL Folio 7785*). Another woman is ^f*na-šu-un-pí*, to whom the palace gave a certain amount of silver, although we do not know why (*WGL Folio 7709*). In addition, there is the case of another woman, who only appears in the administrative text *WGL Folio 7894*:

Obv.
 12 TÚG *nu-ša-bu*
 2 *a-na xx-šu*²⁶
 ^f*a-tá²-ma²-mu-gal/wa²*
 4 LUGAL *tu-ni-ip-te-eš-šu-up*
 a-na URU nu-ú-uš-na-i.KI

Rev.
 6 *i-di-in*

¹⁻³Twelve cushions in charge² of ...

⁴⁻⁶The king Tunip-Teššup has given to the city of Nūšnai²⁷.

Based on that text, it is clear that the woman worked in some capacity for the royal administration, as appears to have been the case with the other women referred to in this work.

5. Women in Administration, Taken from Other Archives

The key question is: when should we consider that the women act as part of the palace administration? It has been shown that, at least in the various cases cited above, and specifically in the case of Ennana, this appears to be the case. Let us look at other examples: based on geographical and cultural proximity, I shall first show three specific cases: those taken from Hittite archives, from Nuzi, and from Alalaḫ.

That topic in the Hittite sources was the subject of a recent contribution. Here M. Vigo indicates:

“The analysis of the corpus of administrative Hittite texts, even if somewhat fragmentary and scarcely exhaustive, highlights a prominent role of women of power, linked to the royal family, in different aspects of the Hittite administration (diplomatic affairs, households commitments, management of incoming goods, record keeping practices, etc.).”²⁸

26. It is probable that *a-na qa-ti-šu* should be understood here, as in other cases within the corpus of Ennana.

27. Lambert noted *nu-ú-tá³-na-i*, but a city spelled *nu-ú-uš-na-i* is present in other unpublished texts from Tikunani (e.g. *WGL Folio 7952*: 4, LUGAL URU *nu-ú-uš-na-i.KI*), even in other texts from the Ennana corpus, e.g. no. 14: 7 and no. 18: 47.

28. Vigo 2016: 333–334.

What is most relevant is what Vigo calls “implicit agency”, women who carry out administrative tasks.²⁹ Many of them worked for the palace in textile production, but their specific tasks are unknown to us. For example, two important texts give the amount of textiles allocated to the woman called Anni. Vigo even indicates:

“Due to the very fragmentary state of preservation of the tablets, it is impossible to ascertain whether Anni takes charge of the finished products to be stored somewhere, or simply takes the bundles of wool in order to process them. At any rate, it is quite clear that women are involved in the palace administration at different levels.”³⁰

As regards Nuzi, the palace precinct was found to contain records on the woman called Tulpun-Naya. The complete study of that archive was recently carried out.³¹ Above all, legal documents of various types have been conserved. We do not know why that documentation was kept in the palace. It has been suggested, with reservations, that the palace may have confiscated their property, including their family archive.³² That possibility is difficult to prove; perhaps Tulpun-Naya was related to important palace administrators, and the fact that her name occurs several times only preceded by masculine determinatives may indicate that she was an important person (§ 3, and *cf.* below).

With respect to Alalah, the case of the woman called Zazē is well known to us.³³ Several administrative tablets indicate that Zazē was in charge of a group of carpenters who may have made furniture, and that her business was operated from within the palace. Zazē was an important person, and she was linked to the administration in some way. In fact, there are other important figures who kept (part of) their private archives in the palace. In that regard, Von Dassow indicates:

“Although other explanations for the presence of family archives within government buildings are conceivable, an explanation predicated on assuming that the people and their activities occupied the same space as their documents accords best with the limited information available from the contents of the archives at issue, the prosopography of those individuals attested outside their own documents (e.g., as witnesses to other documents drawn up before the king), and the fact that each archive was found in a distinct location.”³⁴

Thus, it is fairly plausible that those women, whose record of activities was kept at the palace, were involved in some way with the palace administration.³⁵

A separate case is that of the *šakintū* (sg. *šakintu*) from the Neo-Assyrian sources, which I raise because they have been covered exhaustively in recent times.³⁶ That figure was the queen’s right hand,

29. Vigo 2016: 340–343.

30. Vigo 2016: 342.

31. Abrahams and Lion 2012; *cf.* the comments by Jas 2000: 218–219.

32. Abrahams and Lion 2012: 49, following Charpin 2010: 14 for the case of Mari; see *contra* Von Dassow 2005: 50 n. 91.

33. See especially Von Dassow 2005: 24, 47, Von Dassow 2008: 147–148, 321.

34. Von Dassow 2005: 47a.

35. *Cf.* also Von Dassow 2010: 44–45.

and is mentioned in over 50 texts. Those women were present in many royal palaces; they had considerable administrative resources and a large number of subordinates. Throughout Neo-Assyrian history, *šakintū* are recorded as employees in a total of 23 different administrations, especially the capitals of Assur, Kalḫu, and Nineveh. In fact, in Kalḫu and in Nineveh alike, the post of *šakintu* is attested in a number of different palaces. In addition, the administration of many provincial cities were headed by a *šakintu*. Thus, it is clear that the *šakintū* were not only active close to the queen; they were also present in those cities in which the queen had a certain financial interest.³⁷

6. Conclusions

The unpublished Tikunani texts, as set out in Lambert's notes, show the kingdom's palace documentation during the reign of the king Tunip-Teššup. A sizeable part of the *ca.* 450 cuneiform texts is administrative in nature. Those administrative sources include some texts that show women receiving a series of products, generally wool, for subsequent processing into fabrics, clothing, and other textile products. Sometimes, the women who receive those goods appear just once in the Tikunani sources; at other times, they appear more than once. As shown above, a woman named Ennana appears in 18 different texts. In essence, Ennana received wool that she then had to transform into finished products of very different types.

Given the nature of the administrative sources, we do not know much about those women. It is even difficult to assess their activities, because we do not know the dating of the texts, where the texts were found, etc. The key point is to determine if the women's activity must be understood as being in the public or private context. In other words, it is a matter of knowing if the palace assigned products to those women, who, as people in charge of their own workshops, processed the products and sold them back to the palace; or if the women were in charge of palace workshops, thus making them officials or civil servants of some type. The latter possibility is the more probable for several reasons:

- a) The texts available to use are undoubtedly from the palace archives. As has been indicated, additional explanations can be offered for that location, but the most probable is that the workshops and the women carried out their work in the palace or in connected outbuildings.
- b) The allocated amounts of raw materials, *i.e.* wool, is sometimes extremely high; in particular, see no. 18. For that reason, it is practically impossible that women like Ennana were able to process all that work, alone, within a reasonable amount of time.
- c) The parallels in the Hittite archives and other Hurrian ones (as is the case with Tikunani) show that, in effect, there were women to whom those tasks were allocated, and not just as regards textile products (which is the most usual case), but also manufacturing wood.

For all the foregoing, it appears that those women carried out their activities, at least partly, in a managerial capacity for the palace. The parallels presented above (§ 5) show that sometimes they may

36. The main work on the subject is currently Svärd 2015.

37. Svärd 2015: 91–105; see an abstract in Svärd 2016: 131–132.

have been important women. The most representative case is that of the *šakintū*. It is obvious that those women administrators were high-ranking state-level civil servants, far removed from the scant sphere of influence that would have been exerted, in principle, by the women of Tikunani, Alalah, or Nuzi. However, it is also true that in any case, all the women mentioned were part of the civil service of the kingdom, which was centralized in the palace. We do not know if Ennana, the best known of those women civil servants in Tikunani, may have had links to the royal family or with other high-society circles, as has sometimes been suggested for the Hittite women administrators or for Tulpun-Naya in Nuzi.

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