

Two Tablets from the Johns Hopkins University Collection

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§1. Introduction

§1.1. JHU T061 is an Old Babylonian receipt recording the payment of a barley debt.¹ The tablet was written at Larsa in the third year of Samsu-ilūna (1749–1712 BC). JHU T202 is a neo-Babylonian receipt from Uruk, dating from the eighth year of Nabonidus (556–539 BC) and records the disbursement of twenty *pappardilū*-stones. Both tablets come from the Johns Hopkins University Archaeological Museum cuneiform tablet collection, a catalogue of which is currently being prepared by the museum staff.²

§2. Text Apparatus

§2.1. JHU T061 (figure 1)

Receipt of barley, from Larsa

Date: Samsu-iluna 3 vi 22

§2.1.1. Transliteration and Translation

Obverse

1. 10¹ gur še¹
2. ša¹ dutu-ma-gir
3. i-na kar babila²ki
4. a-na še-ep-dsuen
5. id-di-nu
6. 1¹dutu-ma-gir
7. i-na kar larsaki
8. 10 gur še^{a-am}
9. ma¹-hi-ir

Reverse

1. ka-ni-ik-šu

2. i-ma-ar-ma
3. i-be-ep-pe₂
4. igi d¹suen-u₂¹-se₂-li
5. igi u-¹bar-rum¹ PA-PA dumu i₃¹-li₂¹-ma-li-ki
6. igi¹ dutu-mu-ba-li₂-i¹t
7. i¹iti¹kin-dinanna u₄ 22-kam
8. mu sa-am-su₂-i-lu-na lugal i¹sa-am-su₂-i-lu¹-[na]-na-ga-¹ab¹-[nu-uh-ši]

Seals (see figure 2)

- 1) dutu-ma¹-gir / dumu ma-ri-um-mi / ¹ARAD₂¹
 d¹iškur¹ / ¹u₃¹ d¹nergal²¹
- 2) dsuen-¹u₂¹-se₂-el-li / dumu¹ nu-ur₂¹-dutu /
 ([ARAD₂ ... ?])
- 3) u-bar-ru-[um] / ¹dumu¹ i₃-li₂-ma-li-[ki] /
¹ARAD₂¹ d¹an-mar-tu¹
- 4) dingir-¹li-tu₃¹-[ul] / ¹dumu¹ na-bi-i₃-¹li₂¹-[šu] /
¹ARAD₂¹ d¹nin-si¹-an-[na]

(Regarding) the 10 gur of barley which was given by Šamaš-māgir to Šēp-Sin at the quay of Babylon: Šamaš-māgir has received (those) 10 gur of barley at the quay of Larsa. Should he (i.e., Šamaš-māgir) see his sealed document, he will break it. Before Sin-uselli; before Ubārrum, the colonel, son of Ilī-mālikī; before Šamaš-muballit. (Month:) “Work-of-Ištar,” 22nd day; year: “Samsu-ilūna, the king, (dug the canal called) Samsu-ilūna-the-source-of-abundance-for-the-people” (= Si 03).

Seals:

- 1) Šamaš-māgir, son of Māri-ummī, servant of Adad and Nergal².
- 2) Sin-uselli, son of Nūr-Šamaš, (servant of ... ?).
- 3) Ubārrum, son of Ilī-mālikī, servant of An-Martu.
- 4) Ilī-liṭṭul, son of Nabi-ilišu, servant of Ninsianna.

§2.1.2. Commentary

§2.1.2.1. JHU T061 is a rare example of the payment of a “debt” (a promissory note), to be understood here as describing a loan and its repayment in two different

¹ For a preliminary translation and the broader context of this document see Földi 2012.

² UAM curator Sanchita Balachandran graciously assisted us in our work. We are grateful to her, as well as to the Johns Hopkins Archaeological Museum for permission to publish these tablets and to colleagues at the Department of Near Eastern Studies for helping with collations.

geographical places: *Šēp-Sîn* had received 10 gur (ca. 3000 liters) of barley from *Šamaš-māgir* in Babylon. He returned the barley amount in Larsa. The text thus acts as a receipt for *Šēp-Sîn* to guard against any fraudulent future claim: *Šamaš-māgir* agrees to break, and thus cancel, any remaining tablet which might record the original contract. A similar text is *YOS* 12, 8, in which the exact amount of barley received from PN1 is to be given back to him in another town; the transaction is designated as an exchange (*ana puhhi*) and presumably saved transportation costs.³

§2.1.3. Philological Notes

rev. 1-3. Examples of the cancellation clause (*amāru* + *hepû*) are rare in Old Babylonian documents. *TS* 54⁴ (Kutalla, Ha 41) anticipates such a cancellation clause by requiring any sealed document (*kunukku*) that surfaces (*elû*) be broken. In *CHJ* HE 135, any *kunukku* and *namhartu* appearing in the hands of the business partner must be broken.

rev. 2 The verb *amāru* (“to inspect”) is used usually with *tuppu*, but *kaniku* is also attested (cf. *AHw* *amāru* A5; *CAD* *amāru* A3). This clause is used primarily in *tappûtu* contracts.⁵

§2.1.4. Prosopographical Notes

Šamaš-māgir s. *Māri-ummī* (obv. 2, 6; seal 1): Since the father’s name is rarely attested in the Larsa material, this person is almost certainly identical with *Šamaš-māgir* s. *Māri-ummī* in *Berens* 102, an undated list.

Šēp-Sîn (obv. 4): The place and the period suggest that he must be identical with the well-known *Šēp-Sîn* s. *Šamaš-muballiṣ*, who was Overseer of Merchants of Larsa at least from Ha 34 until Ha 42.⁶ As royal official, he was obliged to travel to Babylon several times (cf. *AbB* 2, 16

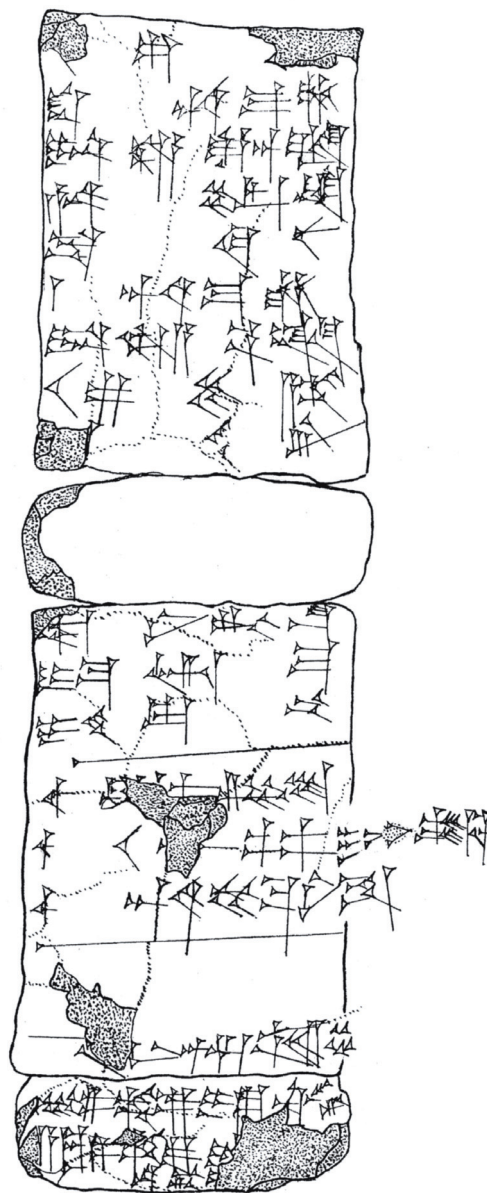


Figure 1: Hand copy of JHU T061

and 33), probably at regular intervals. However, under the reign of *Samsu-ilūna* he was no longer the Overseer of Merchants,⁷ but his importance appears to have remained higher than those of the ordinary *tamkārū*.

Sîn-uselli s. *Nūr-Šamaš* (rev. 4; seal 2): His seal impression is the only one of which not only the inscription, but also part of the iconographic scene is preserved. The reason behind this, however, is that on the seal no space has been left free for the inscription; therefore, the seal-cutter cut it in the narrow spaces between the figures.

⁷ See *Stol* 1982: 129, in detail *Földi* 2012: §4.2.

³ On the different costs of transportation, see *Breckwoldt* 1995-1996: 71-75.

⁴ Editions: *Schorr*, *VAB* 5, 235; *Charpin* 1980: 121, 239.

⁵ On such documents see *Eilers* 1931 and *Dole* 1965.

⁶ Though *Renger* (2000: 167) dates *Šēp-Sîn*’s earliest occurrence in this office to Ha 36/09/21 (probably a mistake for Ha 36/11/21, which is the date of *Stol* 1982, no. 11), and in this he is followed by *Stol* (2004: 920-921), the text *VS* 18, 9, is dated two years earlier (Ha 34/08/18). The latest of such texts is *CHJ* HE 130 (Ha 42/09/09, already *Renger ibid.*). For a list of *Šēp-Sîn*’s occurrences, see *Stol* 1982: 190-191.

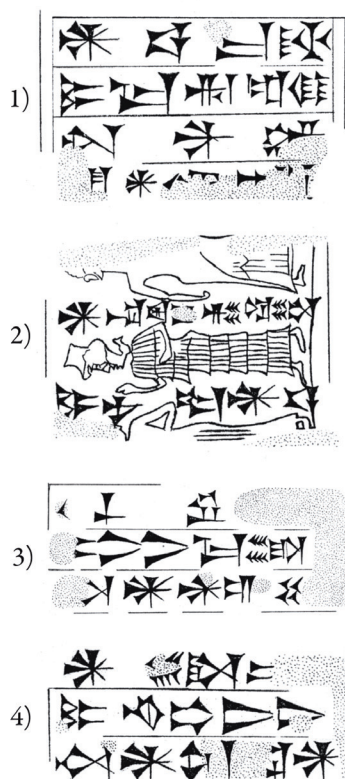
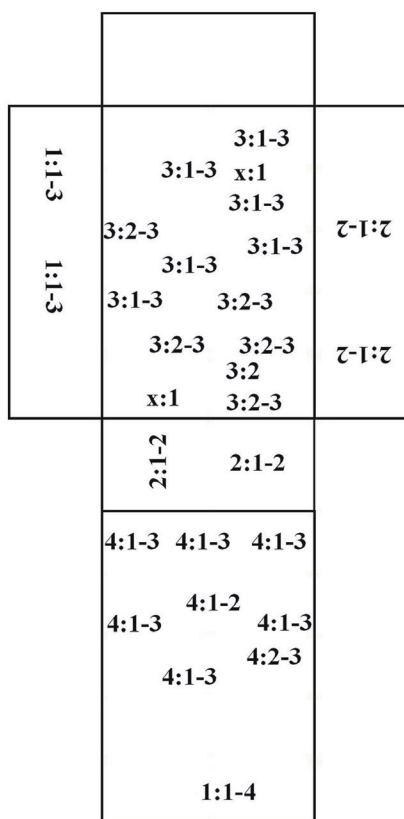


Figure 2: Seals impressed on JHU T061 and their positions on the tablet surface

Ubārrum, colonel, s. *Ilī-mālikī* (rev. 5; seal 3): For the reading of the father's name we are indebted to Gábor Kalla. It is somewhat surprising that a cylinder seal inspected by Archibald Henry Sayce at Jerusalem, bore the same inscription.⁸ According to William W. Hallo, "no actual impression of a seal on an ancient tablet (or vessel) has yet been successfully identified with an extant ancient seal."⁹ Unfortunately, we were unable to find any information on the present whereabouts of the cylinder seal in question. Could the owner provide its exact measurements, it would be of great help to decide whether the same seal has been impressed on JHU T061 or not.

Šamaš-muballit (rev. 6) and *Ilī-liṭṭul* s. *Nabi-ilišu* (seal 4): The fourth seal names an owner not mentioned by the text, therefore it must have been used by someone else, probably a descendant of the original owner.¹⁰ This seal was originally used by a goldsmith called *Ilī-liṭṭul* s. *Nabi-ilišu*,¹¹ who was active in the second half of Rīm-Sîn I's (1822–1763 BC) reign.¹² Another document, drawn up presumably some time later, refers to him as Overseer of Goldsmiths.¹³ Considering that this seal cannot have been used by *Šēp-Sîn* (see above), it was probably *Šamaš-muballit*—a son of *Ilī-liṭṭul*?—who used it. Unfortunately, to our knowledge, an individual called *Šamaš-muballit* s. *Ilī-liṭṭul* is not yet attested in the legal-administrative text material from Larsa. For a parallel

⁸ See Sayce 1924, no. 6.

⁹ Apud Buchanan 1981: xii. For the possible candidates see Hallo 2001; the only known exception to this rule is the *Bilalama* seal from Ešnunna (see Reichel 2003).

¹⁰ For Sippar examples of seal borrowing see Teissier 1998: 116–117.

¹¹ See *VS* 13, 72 (RS 33); for a similar restoration of its inscription see *HG* no. 1483.

¹² *Ilī-liṭṭul*, ku₃-dim₂; *VS* 13, 72 (RS 33); *YOS* 8, 110 (RS 49).

¹³ *YOS* 8, 125 (RS 30+); in line 33', read ugula¹ lu₂ku₃¹-dim₂¹. The identification is supported by further prosopographical connections between the *VS* 13 and *YOS* 8 texts mentioned here. The leading person of the archive (mentioned above), *Ubār-Šamaš* purchases real estate in *VS* 13, 79, and *YOS* 8, 110. The scribe *Dummuqum* appears as witness in both documents (*VS* 13, 79: "scribe," *YOS* 8, 110: last witness). In *YOS* 8, 125, one finds the innkeeper *Ilšu-nāšir* s. *Sîn-šemi* acting as witness, as well as in *VS* 13, 79. *VS* 13, 72, is also prosopographically connected to other texts from the archive, cf. the innkeeper *Iddin-Šamaš* (also in *VS* 13, 68 and 71). It is perhaps not a mere coincidence that two of the five persons can be connected through their fathers to the circle of *Ubār-Šamaš*.

seal history, cf. the seal of *Qulalum* s. *Šērum-ilī*, which was used first by its original owner,¹⁴ but later by his son *Šamaš-māgir*.¹⁵

§2.2. JHU T202 (figure 3)

Disbursement of *pappardilū*-stones, from Uruk

Date: Nabonidus 8 iii 2

§2.2.1. Transliteration and Translation

Obverse

1. 20 ^{na}babbar-dili
2. *ina* igi ^{ld}marduk-mu-geš
3. *u* ^lzalag₂-^d30

Reverse

1. ^{iti}sig₄ ^u4 2-kam
2. mu 8-kam ^{ld}ag-ni₂-tuku lugal babila_x([DIN.TIR])^{ki}

20 *pappardilū*-stones made available to Marduk-šumu-līšir and Nūr-Sîn; (month:) “Bricks,” 2nd day; 8th year of Nabonidus, king of Babylon.

§2.2.2. Commentary

pappardilū-stones were used as seals, in jewelry, as amulets, and as ingredients in magico-medical recipes.¹⁶ Thought perhaps to be agate, *pappardilū* is described in *STT* 1, 108 obv. 17-18 as “the stone whose appearance is black ... and is flecked with white” (*abnu šikinšu šalimma ... pūša edih*). *Nbn* 245: 12 records that two *pappardilū*-stones were valued at four shekels of silver. We are therefore dealing in JHU T202 with a relatively large disbursement, worth perhaps forty shekels of silver. For comparison, the average wage in the neo-Babylonian period was 1-4 shekels of silver per month.¹⁷

The stones are described as being *ina pān* (“at the disposal of”)¹⁸ Marduk-šumu-līšir and Nūr-Sîn, two men who are elsewhere described as jewelers employed by the Eanna temple (see below). The lack of witnesses, filiations and seal impressions, suggests a relatively informal transaction related to the temple economy involving well-known temple tradesmen, for which such notes are common. They record the transfer of temple property to someone for the completion of a task, often for the production of an object for which the temple provides the raw materials.



Figure 3: Hand copy of JHU T202

Given the nature of the transfer—semi-precious stones—we might reasonably infer the production of some temple paraphernalia. We would then expect the craftsmen to return the goods to the temple, with the clause: finished goods PNs *mahir*—“(finished goods) were received from PNs.” This is the way the temple kept track of who had responsibility for their resources.¹⁹ An interesting case of the disappearance of such precious goods from the temple is discussed by Payne 2008; BM 114525 and *YNER* 1, 1, describe the temple authorities’ attempts to limit any illicit losses of material when contracting work to craftsmen in the reign of Cyrus.

Although our tablet does not give an indication of original provenience, the *ina pān* clause is common in the Eanna (Uruk) archive,²⁰ a location made secure by the appearance of Marduk-šumu-līšir and Nūr-Sîn, known Uruk craftsmen. Given the prevalence of Uruk tablets in the erstwhile Goucher College (near Baltimore) cuneiform collection (now at Yale), this may give a clue as to the modern source of the tablets at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore. That *pappardilū* stones were handled by the

¹⁴ See *VS* 13, 79 (RS 39).

¹⁵ See Anbar 1975, no. 8 (Si 03); *TCL* 11, 197 (Si 03).

¹⁶ *CAD* s.v. *pappardilū*.

¹⁷ Jursa 2005: 56.

¹⁸ See Jursa 2005: 47-48.

¹⁹ See Payne 2007: 82-85; we are grateful to the author for her suggestions, and for providing us with a copy of her dissertation.

²⁰ See Gehlken 2004.

Eanna temple is demonstrated in other tablets from the archive, including *GCCI* 2, 182.

§2.2.3. *Prosopographical Notes*²¹

Marduk-šumu-lišir [s. *Balāssu* // *Nūr-Sîn*] (obv. 2): He is attested as a jeweler in the Eanna archive from the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar to Cyrus and is mentioned in the “Craftsmen’s Charter” (BM 114525 and *YNER* 1, 1).

Nūr-Sîn [s. *Nabû-tabni-ušur* // *Nūr-Sîn*] (obv. 3): He is also a jeweler (*YNER* 1, 1) and appears as a witness as

well as a prebend holder (*BIN* 1, 137); attested from Nabonidus to Cyrus.

While the lack of filiations in our text make a definite identification impossible, the Eanna setting and the appearance of a *Marduk-šumu-lišir* and *Nūr-Sîn* in other texts together, where they are described as jewelers, makes it very likely.

²¹ See Payne 2007: 269-270, 272.

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