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 pappar-dilû-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. ṭ 10 gur še
2. iš ḫu-tu-ma-gir
3. i-na kar babila₃
4. a-na še-ep₂-suen
5. id-di-nu
6. ḫu-tu-ma-gir
7. i-na kar larsak₂
8. 10 gur še-a-am
9. ḫa-ma₂-hi-ir

Reverse
1. ka-ni-ik-su

(Regarding) the 10 gur of barley which was given by Šamaš-māgir to Šēp-Sîn 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 Šîn-uselli; before Ubārrum, the colonel, son of Ilī-mālikī; before Šamaš-muballi†. (Month:) "W ork-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) ḫu-tu-ma-gir, son of Māri-ummī, servant of Adad and Nergal?
2) Šamaš-māgir, son of Māri-ummī, servant of Adad and Nergal?
3) Šamaš-māgir, son of Māri-ummī, servant of Adad and Nergal?
4) Šamaš-māgir, son of Māri-ummī, servant of Adad and Nergal?

(Regarding) the 10 gur of barley which was given by Šamaš-māgir to Šēp-Sîn 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 Šîn-uselli; before Ubārrum, the colonel, son of Ilī-mālikī; before Šamaš-muballi†. (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 Nergal?.
2) Šamaš-māgir, son of Māri-ummī, servant of Adad and Nergal?.
3) Šamaš-māgir, son of Māri-ummī, servant of Adad and Nergal?.
4) Šamaš-māgir, son of Māri-ummī, servant of Adad and Nergal?.

§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
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 puḫḫi) and presumably saved transportation costs.3

§2.1.3. Philological Notes

rev. 1-3. Examples of the cancellation clause (amāru + ṣepû) 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 ṭuppu, 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-ummî (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-ummî 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-muballit, 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 and 33), probably at regular intervals. However, under the reign of Samsu-iluna he was no longer the Overseer of Merchants,7 but his importance appears to have remained higher than those of the ordinary tamkārû.

Sin-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.

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


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.

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-liššu s. Nabi-ilishu (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-liššu s. Nabi-ilishu,\(^11\) who was active in the second half of Rim-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-liššu—who used it. Unfortunately, to our knowledge, an individual called Šamaš-muballit s. Ilī-liššu is not yet attested in the legal-administrative text material from Larsa. For a parallel

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\(^8\) 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 Ezinunna (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-liššu, ku3-dim2: VS 13, 72 (RS 33); YOS 8, 110 (RS 49).

\(^13\) YOS 8, 125 (RS 30+); in line 33, read ugula lu2-ku3 di-\textsuperscript{3}. 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 Iššu-nāṣir s. Sin-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.
§2.2. JHU T202 (figure 3)
Disbursement of pappardilû-stones, from Uruk
Date: Nabonidus 8 iii 2

§2.2.1. Transliteration and Translation

Obverse
1. 20 ₃₄-babbar-dili
2. ina igi₁₄ marduk-geš
3. u₁ zalg₂₄₃₀

Reverse
1. itisig₄ u₄ 2-kam
2. muₚ₄-kam₁₄ ag-nil₂-tuku lugal babila₁(]DIN.TIR]ki

20 pappardilû-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

pappardilû-stones were used as seals, in jewelry, as amulets, and as ingredients in magico-medical recipes. Thought perhaps to be agate, pappardilû is described in STT 1, 108 obv. 17-18 as “the stone whose appearance is black ... and is flecked with white” (abnu šikinšu šalimmat ... pása edish). Nbn 245: 12 records that two pappardilû-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.

The stones are described as being ina pān (“at the disposal of”) 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. 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. 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, 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 pappardilû 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. pappardilû.
17 Jursa 2005: 56.

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

§2.2.3. Prosopographical Notes

Marduk-šumu-lišir [s. Balāsu // Nūr-Sīn] (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-Sīn [s. Nabū-tabni-usur // Nūr-Sīn] (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-Sīn in other texts together, where they are described as jewelers, makes it very likely.

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