

60) The adventures of a fugitive slave in the Old Babylonian period: new data — ARN 135 (= Ni 3038)¹⁾ is a Type III tablet (from Nippur) of which the first part—equal to about one-third of the entire tablet—has not been preserved. It represents the missing part of NATN 354 (= CBS 10171),²⁾ that the present writer had published as Text 3 in NABU 2022/89 (= SPADA 2022), together with two more tablets (EES 180 rev. i 16–rev. ii 2 = Text 1, and CUSAS 43, 59 obv. 9’–14’ = Text 2). All of them deal with the payment of compensation by the owner of a female slave for the damage she caused during her attempt to escape.

Transliteration and translation of Text 3 in its entirety are offered below, together with photographs of NATN 354 and Ni 3038.³⁾

Text 3

Publication: NATN 354; ARN 135

Museum n°: CBS 10171+Ni 3038

CDLI: P121052; P313251

Measurements: 4.8×2.1×1.9 cm; 4.8×5.5×2.5 cm

Obv. 1 BA.BUR₂ a-li₂-a-lī
 2 GEME₂ LUGAL.INIM.GI.NA
 3 MU KUR MAR.DU.ŠE₃
 4 A.RA₂ 3.KAM BA.ZAḤ₃.A
 5 U₃ E₂ i-din-mi-šar¹ NAR¹
 6 IN.DEG_x.DEG_x.GA
 7 ZIZ₂.DA.BI.ŠE₃
 8 ½ MA.NA KUG.BABBAR
 9 ¹LUGAL.INIM.GI.NA LUGAL.A.NI
 10 ¹i-din-mi-šar NAR.RA
 11 IN.NA.AN.LA₂
 12 UD KUR₂.ŠE₃
 13 ¹i-din-mi-šar NAR
 Rev. 14 ZIZ₂.DA.BI.ŠE₃
 15 ¹LUGAL.INIM.GI.NA.RA
 16 INIM NU.UM.ĜA₂.ĜA₂.A
 17 MU LUGAL.BI IN.PAD₃

... Ali-aḫī, the female slave of Lugal-inim-gina, because she had fled to the land of Amurru for the third time and had (illegally) picked up things in the house of Iddin-mīšar, the musician, Lugal-inim-gina, her owner, has paid to Iddin-mīšar, the musician, half a mina of silver as its (= of the pilferage) compensation. In the future, Iddin-mīšar, the musician, will not raise a claim against Lugal-inim-gina concerning this compensation; he has sworn it on the king’s name.

Textual notes

1. In SPADA 2022 I extensively discussed the verbal form (BA.BUR₂/BA.BALA⁴⁾) that appears at the beginning of the three texts, without reaching an acceptable solution. While in Texts 2 and 3 it occurs in the same line as the slave’s name, in Text 1 the verbal expression occupies the first line and the personal name the second one. Furthermore, a DIŠ sign appears in Text 1 (in front of both terms), and in Text 2 (in front of the verbal form only), while Text 3 does not have one.

Unfortunately, I have no further proposals to make, so the expression BA.BUR₂/BA.BALA that opens the text still remains unclear.

5. The personal name of the musician in whose house the slave arrived and committed pilferage is here clearly Iddin-mīšar, and not Iddin-Išum, as read in SPADA 2022. Checking photographs of Texts 1 and 2 again, it turns out that in Text 1 the name is definitely to be read Iddin-mīšar,⁵⁾ while in Text 2 it seems preferable to maintain the reading [Id]din-Išum.

8. Differently from Text 1, the amount of silver that Lugal-inim-gina paid to Iddin-mīšar as compensation for the damages suffered is half a mina and not one-third mina.⁶⁾

12–17. Here there is a no-contest clause to prevent any future claims by Iddin-mīšar regarding the compensation received from Lugal-inim-gina, while in Texts 1 and 2 it does not occur.⁷⁾



Fig. 1 NATN 354 (CBS 10171)

Discussion

Of the three tablets that record the episode starring Lugal-inim-gina, his slave and the musician Iddin-mīšar (or Iddin-Išum), only one is provenanced and certainly comes from Nippur (Text 3), while the other two are unprovenanced. That the same story is taught as an exercise in geographically distant scribal schools seems to confirm the idea that elementary education in Mesopotamia was relatively standardized, with minimal variation in the curricula and the texts from place to place.

To go into more detail, the model contracts housed in the Schøyen Collection (like our Text 2) seem more similar to those coming from Nippur⁸⁾ (Text 3) than the contracts housed in the Cotsen Collection (Text 1).

Notes

* I am grateful to Franco D'Agostino, to whom I submitted some of my doubts on the interpretation of these texts, for providing me with helpful comments. Needless to say, I bear full responsibility for any errors or omissions. I also wish to express my gratitude to Steve Tinney and Philip Jones (Associate Curators of the Babylonian Section of the Penn Museum, Philadelphia) for making the measures of NATN 354 available to me.



Fig. 2 ARN 135 (Ni 3038)

Abbreviations follow CDLI's list, available at <https://cdli.mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de/abbreviations> (accessed July 5, 2023).

1. This tablet had only been published as a copy by Çiğ in 1952. I thank the Arkeoloji Müzeleri of Istanbul for sending me the photographs published here and for making the measures of ARN 135 available to me.

2. In addition to the content, this is confirmed by the fact that both fragments present the same width. As regards the thickness, the measurements sent to me were clearly taken at two different points (respectively the upper part and the center of the tablet) and for this reason they differ by a few mm.

It is not unusual for fragments belonging to a single tablet from Nippur to be found scattered in the cuneiform collections of Istanbul, Philadelphia, Chicago, and Jena. The archaeological finds of the Babylonian Expedition in Nippur, in fact, were divided among the Ottoman authorities and the American excavators.

3. The photograph of NATN 354 is available on CDLI at the following address: <https://cdli.mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de/dl/photo/P121052.jpg> (accessed July 5, 2023).

4. This variation is clearly explained by the extreme similarity of the signs BUR₂ and BALA, which are easily confused, especially in the Old Babylonian period.

5. Zsombor Földi, after reading my article in NABU, had already suggested to me to read Iddin-mīšar in Text 1 (personal communication, November 2022).

6. From a new check of the photograph, it seems that also in Text 2 it is half a mina, and not one-third as erroneously indicated in SPADA 2022: 199. This confirms the correct reading provided in SPADA 2019: 122.

7. In Text 1 some lines are missing before the last two lines of the text, but the presence of the verb IN.NA.LA₂.E immediately before the promissory oath does not seem to support the presence of the no-contest clause in the missing text.

8. This similarity is also evident from other model contracts found in both curricula, of course with some differences; see SPADA 2018 and SPADA 2019. See also what was noted by GADOTTI and KLEINERMAN 2021: 30–31.

Bibliography

- GADOTTI, A., and KLEINERMAN, A., 2021, *Elementary Education in Early Second Millennium BCE Babylonia*, CUSAS 43, University Park.
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- 2022, “The adventures of a fugitive slave in the Old Babylonian period”, *NABU* 2022, 198–201, no. 89.

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61) More about *lā watar** — The newly published volume of Old Babylonian letters from the Schøyen collection (ARKHIPOV–GEORGE 2023) contains five additional instances of *lā watar*, the expression I studied in a recent article (ARKHIPOV 2023). Three of them fall within the scope of the meanings I described in the paper. In one case, the expression refers to an action that is taken much later than it would be appropriate (cf. *ibid.*: 6–8):

aššum ina libbi mātim wašbāti u nīnu-ma ina ḥarrānim wašbānu-ma lā qerbēnu šarram lā šināti tušālik-ma awlê ša ištu Nūr-Adad eqlam šabtū la 'wa¹-ta-ar tekkim

Since you stayed at home, while we were away travelling and not near at hand, did you mislead the king and are **now finally** taking away (land) from men who have occupied the land since (the reign of) Nūr-Adad? (no. 112: 4–14)

Two other instances, though in rather difficult contexts, must refer to events that have been long awaited (cf. *ibid.*: 8–10):

la wa-ta-ar-ma ḥarām 'apru u ḥarām ilqūnim-ma ina qātī Išar u Mišar ištaknū

Now at last they wore crowns(?) of palm fronds and even took a palm frond for me and placed it in the hands of the gods Išar and Mišar. (no. 128: 18–23)

la wa-(ta)-'ar¹ iškaram ušallamku

Now at last, I am making good to you the whole work-assignment (field). (no. 137: 14)

However, the two remaining instances, both from the same letter, shed a new light on the meaning of the expression.¹⁾ In particular, they confirm the traditionally posited predicative usage of the expression, which I was reluctant to accept in my paper (*ibid.*: 3–4):

mimma ša kīma niṭliki ana aḥṭki šūbilī šumma lā niṭliki naṭū la ma-'ta-ar¹

Send your brother anything you like. If you don't like (to do so), it's alright, **no problem!** (no. 162: 22–24)

anāku ilam lumtaḥḥar-ma ilum gimillī litēr ūlašum anāku ana manni ašassi šumma lā šalim naṭū la ma-ta-ar

I myself will approach the god and the god will reward my patronage! Who else can I call upon? If he isn't in favour, that's alright, **no problem.** (no. 162: 37–41)

This clarifies the Old Assyrian passage that uses the expression in a remarkably similar way:

šim 1[+x] šiqil ḥurāšim annakam ana PN addan 8 gín.ta ašabbat-ma abī attā šim ḥurāšim addan šumma lā kīam la wa-tár

'I can pay the price of 1+x shekels of gold here to PN. I will take it at 8:1, and – you are my father! – I will pay the price of the gold. If this is not so, **no problem!**' (Nešr. C 1: 33–37, published by VEENHOF 1989: 518–520)²⁾

This also confirms the traditional interpretation for one of the Old Babylonian instances of *lā watar*:

anniātim aštapparakkum la wa-ta-ar

I have kept writing this to you. **No more!**³⁾ (W 20473: iv 6-7, published by FALKENSTEIN 1963, 56–71)

Finally, this is a point in favour of the lexicalization path from “no further” referring to the previous situation to “finally, at last” (and similar) referring to the actual situation (cf. the overview in ARKHIPOV 2023: 15).

Notes

* The research has been supported by RFBR grant 20-512-22002.

1. They also represent the earliest examples of the form *lā matar* (*w > m), which was previously known only from lexical lists.