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An unfinished duplicate of a marriage contract from the reign of Darius I

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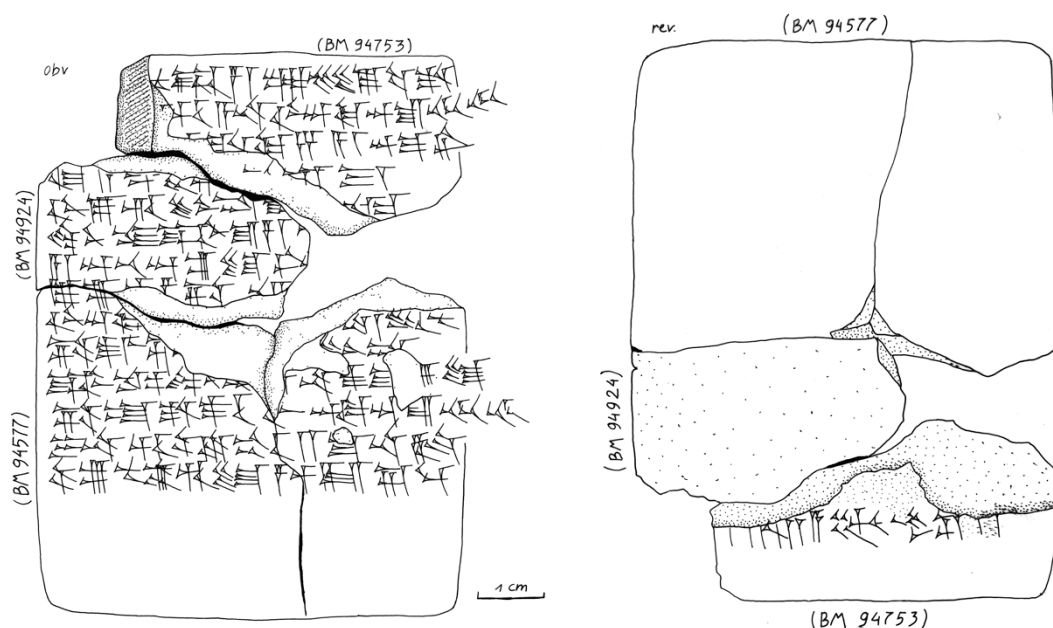
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119) An unfinished duplicate of a marriage contract from the reign of Darius I — BM 94577 + BM 94753 + BM 94924 (1901-10-12, 230 + 406 + 577) are three joining fragments of an unfinished duplicate of TuM 2/3 2, a marriage contract from the archive of the Ea-ilūtu-bāni family of Borsippa. Only half of the obverse and one line towards the bottom of the reverse of the tablet were inscribed; the remainder of the surface was left blank. It is unclear why the scribe did not finish the duplicate, or why he bothered to add that final line on the reverse only to give the name and (one?) title of the Persian king. There are other curious aspects to this duplicate that merit a brief note. The three fragments are published here with the kind permission of the Trustees of the British Museum.



Francis Joannès included an edition of TuM 2/3 2 in his study of the Ea-ilūtu-bāni archive (1989, 3, 166–8) and, in the same year, Martha Roth also presented an edition of this text in her study of the Neo-Babylonian marriage contract (1989 no. 24b, 86–9). The tablet was written on the seventh day of month *Ṭebētu* (X) of the 28th year of Darius I in the city of Borsippa. It contains a dialogue contract between the groom, Ahūšunu of the Nanāhu family, and ^fAmat-Sutīti of the Ilī-bāni family, the mother of his bride-to-be, ^fLurindu. They settled the dowry at two minas of silver, a house, furniture, utensils and textiles. After the witnesses, the name of the scribe, the city and date, an extra clause was added that refers to an earlier contract (^{na4}dub). That contract is said to be dated to the 26th day of month *Arahsamna* (VIII) of the 28th year, about six weeks earlier. The end of the clause is slightly damaged and a few signs are missing. Joannès and Roth propose different restorations. Roth translates “Copied from the sealed agreement of day 25 [sic], month VIII, year 28 of Darius, king of Babylon, king of the lands”. Joannès understands the clause as follows: “The sealed tablet of the 26th day of month VIII of the 28th year of Darius, king of Babylon, king of the lands, has been broken”. As it would be unusual for a scribe to create a copy of a legal contract and give it a new date of its own, I consider the reading by Joannès more plausible. Hence, an earlier contract had been drawn up six weeks prior, but it was broken, rendered void and replaced by TuM 2/3 2. As that first contract is lost, its contents are unknown to us now.

The unfinished duplicate BM 94577+ is probably a copy of TuM 2/3 2, but it cannot be ruled out that it was a copy of the first contract. For the most part, the text of BM 94577+ runs parallel to that of TuM 2/3 2, except for the line divisions and some minor deviations. But right before the scribe of BM 94577+ gave up on his effort, he added a silver quality “with 1/8 alloy per shekel” that was not present on TuM 2/3 2. Perhaps he was distracted and wrote the phrase out of habit. In that case, he might have given up because he realized his mistake. But it is also possible that he had been copying correctly from the earlier contract; in that case, it is unclear why he aborted his work.

Curiously, the scribe left the remainder of the obverse and almost the entire reverse blank but he did add the name of king Darius with a short title (King of Babylon) at the bottom of the reverse. The break in the beginning of the next line seems too small to hold the second element of the standard title ‘King of Babylon and (King of) the Lands’.

The most likely explanation for this abortive duplicate is that it was an exercise by a scribe in training. Other private archives from the Neo-Babylonian period contain evidence of such writing exercises (Jursa 1999), but incidentally, the Ea-ilūtu-bāni archive is not one of these archives. It contains only four duplicates on a total of 335 tablets, including the present one.

The duplicate is not only unfinished but also broken in at least five pieces, two still missing. It is possible, albeit entirely speculative, that the tablet was broken in antiquity, perhaps in imitation of the first marriage contract that had been voided by breaking it.

BM 94577 + BM 94753 + BM 94924 (1901-10-12, 230 + 406 + 577)

obv.

1. [¹a-hu-šú]-nu dumu-šú šá ¹ag-mu-še-dib-ud.da
 2. [a ¹na-na]-hu a-na ¹an-di-^dsu-ti-ti
 3. [dumu.munus-su šá] ¹da-di-ía a ¹dingir-ba-ni
 4. ki-a-am iq-bi um-ma
 5. ¹lu-ri-in-du dumu.[munus]-ka
 6. nar-tu₄ dumu.munus-su šá ¹[kar-^den]
 7. a ¹be-dingir-ú-tu-dù [¹bi-in-nam-ma]
 8. lu-ú áš-šá-ta iš-[?][š-i]
 9. ¹an-di-^d[su-ti-ti a]-na ¹šeš-šú-nu
 10. ta-áš-me-e-ma [¹lu-ri]-in-du
 11. dumu.munus-ka nar-tu₄ a-na áš-šú-ú-tu
 12. ta-ad-da-áš-šú ¹an-di-^dsu-ti-ti
 13. i-na hu-ud lib-bi-šú 2 ma.na kù.babbar
 14. babbar-ú nu-uh-hu-tu šá ina 1 gín bit-qa
- remainder of obverse blank

rev.

reverse blank except for bottom line(s)

15. [¹da]-ri-ía-a-muš lugal e^{ki}
16. [kur.kur?]

Translation: (1) Ahūšunu son of Nabû-mušētiq-uddi of the Nanāhu family spoke as follows to ¹Amat-Sutīti, daughter of Dadia of the Ilī-bāni family: “¹Lurindu, your (text: m.) unmarried daughter, the daughter of [Mušēzib-Bēl] of the Ea-ilūtu-bāni family, [give her], let her be a wife”. (9) ¹Amat-Sutīti listened to Ahūšunu and gave him ¹Lurindu, her (text: your) unmarried daughter, as a wife. (12) ¹Amat-Sutīti, in joy, (gave) 2 minas of white scrap silver of 1/8 alloy. (remainder of the obverse and reverse blank) (15) Darius, king of Babylon.

Comments: (5, 11) in both lines the use of the suffix -ka is incorrect. (8) -iš- is probably a mistake. (13) In TuM 2/3 2 (l. 12) hu-ud is missing. (14) šá ina 1 gín bit-qa is not present in TuM 2/3 2. (16) It is questionable whether there is enough space in the break to accommodate these signs.

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