

**62) BM 87642: an Old Babylonian oil omen fragment about marriage** — In the Old Babylonian omen corpus, oil omens are relatively few according to what has been recovered to date. Anor and Cohen 2018:195-200 note that so far eight tablets recording Old Babylonian oil omens are edited: BM 22446, IM 2967, YOS 10 58, YOS 10 57 (Pettinato 1966, Pientka-Hinz 2008:31-34), BM 22447, YOS 10 62 (Pettinato 1966), BM 87635 (Anor 2018), and the authors' new identification with edition of KUB 37.198 and KUB 34.5 as part of a single text. Khait 2018 additionally points to two unpublished fragments held at the British Museum: BM 87642 edited here with thanks to the Trustees of the British Museum, and BM 87655 (Ait Said-Ghanem, forthcoming).

BM 87642 is a small triangular shaped fragment that records predictions about marriage based on oil divination (see photos below). Only its obverse is inscribed and it preserves fifteen lines of text of which only the middle part remains. The reverse is flat and smooth, and the undamaged lower edge indicates that what we have here is the end of a tablet. BM 87642 is exciting on several counts. First, although the beginning and end of every sentence is missing, apodotic statements about husband and wife marrying or not (*mūtum u aššatum (la) innahhazū*) can be read. This topic is somewhat rare in the corpus overall. As discussed in Maul 2018:141 fn 81, and Anor 2017:72, the subject of marriage is treated once in BM 22447:14 (originally edited by Pettinato 1966:62). The present fragment shares other traits with BM 22447 including the use of *šmtum* to announce the apodosis' prediction.

BM 87642 is also noteworthy for its purchase history, one that links it to the OB oil omen fragments BM 87655, and BM 87635 (edited by Anor 2018). All three fragments were purchased by the British Museum in 1900 from the British shipping company F.C. Strick & Co, and seem to have been part of a large lot of fragmentary tablets brought from southern Iraq. Many date to the Third Dynasty of Ur, others to the Old Babylonian period generally, and some specifically to Hammurapi's reign (contracts). The BM's online catalogue indicates that just under 1,900 cuneiform tablets were bought from this company between 1895 to 1900, most unprovenienced, a few others marked as 'acquired/found' in Umma. From 1892, F. C. Strick & Co traded goods to and from the Persian Gulf and regularly anchored at Basra via the Shatt-el-Arab waterway. This southern access to Iraq could be a clue to the provenience of these three tablets.

The quality of BM 87642's clay (its colour and polished surface) and the handwriting style of the scribe are strikingly similar to BM 87655. Two textual features make me hesitate to identify them as indirect joins however. As will be seen below, BM 87642:2' opens with the observation of something separating into six parts using the verb *parāsum (iprus)*. Observations of the oil separating in 2, 3, and 4 parts are the very topic of BM 87655 (ll. 4', 6', and 7'), but in that text the verb used each time is *zuāzum (izuz)*. My second reservation is that BM 87642 uses the second person singular to describe the diviner's actions. Not enough of the beginning of BM 87642 remains to determine the full content of protases, and conversely the

end of protases in BM 87655 are missing, but from what is left, the protases of BM 87655 do not speak to or of a second person.

The clay, colour, shape, and handwriting style of BM 87642 are also the same as those of BM 87635 (Anor 2018), its reverse especially, but this third fragment seems to stand independently from the other two (the scribe's 'typesetting' of BM 87635 is different to BM 87655 for example, a text in which every DIŠ Ì are written on the left edge unlike BM 87635). These fragments are probably all independent texts but I would say that the quality of their clay and the handwriting traits they all share point to their having been written by the same hand and produced in the same place.

BM 87642 is presented here with brief notes\*. I am happy to share photographs with anyone interested in this tablet. I thank the British Academy who funded my research.

- 1§. 1'- [...m]a-an-za-az [...]  
 2§. 2'- [.....] a-na 6 ip-ru-us m[a<sup>2</sup>...]  
 3'- [.....] a-na ma-ka-{space}-[a<sup>2</sup>-lim<sup>2</sup>...]  
 3§. 4'- [...kima<sup>2</sup> ta<sup>2</sup>-k]a-al-tim i-na na-di-[ka<sup>2</sup>...]  
 4§. 5'- [...ta-ad]-di-ma la iṣ-ša-ab-{space}[tu<sup>2</sup>...]  
 6'- [...mu-tum ù aš-ša]-tum ú-ul in-na-ha-[zu-ma<sup>2</sup>...]  
 {separating line}  
 5§. 7'- [...ta-a]d-di-ma iṣ-ša-[ab-tu<sup>2</sup>...]  
 8'- [.....] ši-im-tum mu-tum ù aš-ša-tum i[n-na-ha-zu-ma<sup>2</sup>...]  
 6§. 9'- [.....ta]-[a]d-di-ma la iṣ-ša-ab-tu 1 na-wi-ir [...]  
 10'- [...mu-tum ù] aš-ša-tum in-na-ha-zu-ma 1 i-ma-[at<sup>2</sup>...]  
 7§. 11'- [...DI]<sup>2</sup> 1<sup>2</sup> ta-ad-di-ma iṣ-ša-ab-tu ki-bi-ir Ì.GIŠ ta-[...]  
 12'- [...m]u-tum [ù] aš-ša-tum in-na-ha-zu-ma ú-ul i-<sup>2</sup>ma<sup>1</sup>-[at<sup>2</sup>...]  
 8§. 13'- [...] <sup>2</sup>DI<sup>2</sup> 2 ta-ad-di-ma iṣ-ša-ab-tu a-na qá-ab-[...]  
 14'- [...] <sup>1</sup>i-na<sup>1</sup> na-di-ka a-na 2 um-ma-tum i-zu-[uz<sup>2</sup>...]  
 15'a- [...mu-tum] ù aš-ša-tum in-na-ha-zu-ma in-ni-<sup>1</sup>in<sup>1</sup>-[...]  
 15'b- ..... / n[e<sup>2</sup>] [...]

Translation

- 1§. 1'- ...[pr]esence of...  
 2§. 2'- ...separates into 6...  
 3'- ...for [food offering?]  
 3§. 4'- [if... like? ...a p]ouch in [your?] pouring out...  
 4§. 5'- [...you po]ur and [they?] do not connect (seize each other)...  
 6'- [...] should husband and wife] not be marri[ed then?]  
 {separating line}  
 5§. [If... you] pour... and [they?] connect (seize each other)...  
 8'- [...] the prediction is should husband and wife be [married then?]  
 6§. 9'- [If... you] po[ur...] and they do not connect (seize each other), one is bright...  
 10'- ...should [husband and] wife be married then one will [die?]  
 7§. 11'- [if...] you pour 'two bubbles'<sup>2</sup>... and they connect (seize each other), ...the edge of the oil...  
 12'- ...should husband [and] wife be married then [he/she] will not d[ie?]  
 8§. 13'- [if...] you pour 'two bubbles'<sup>2</sup> and they connect (seize each other), (and) in the middle part of...  
 14'- ...in your pouring out, (and) the main body (of the oil) div[ides?] in two...  
 15'a- [...] should [husband] and wife be married then [he/she/they] will be...  
 15'b- ....x...

Notes

\* I thank Andrew George and Netanel Anor who discussed this tablet with me, and the assistant curators of the BM who so kindly accommodated my multiple visits.

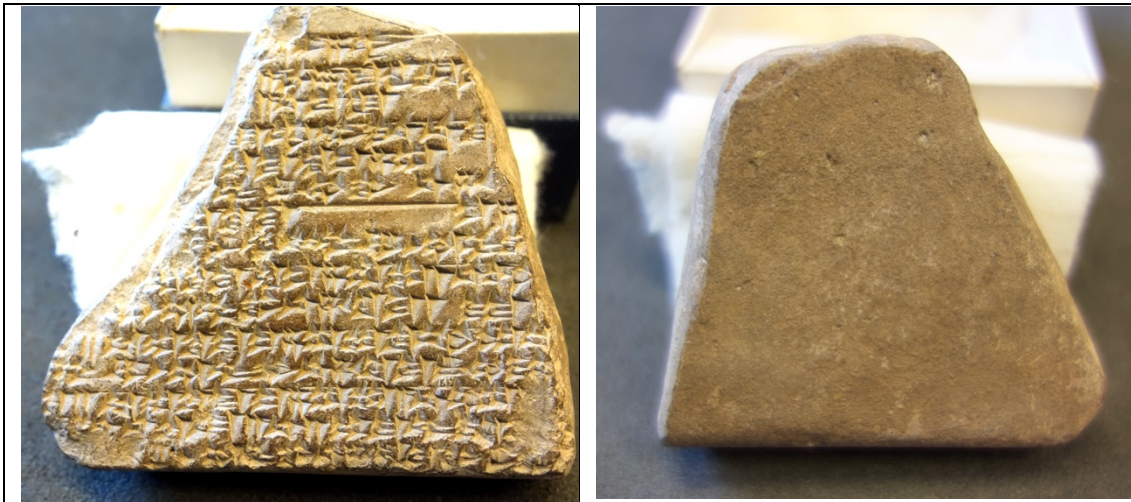
2§. Ll. 1', 2', and 3' seem different to those that follow, both in structure and theme. From what is left of the text, marriage between husband and wife is not yet visible in these early lines. L. 1' seems to represent the end of an apodosis about the presence, presumably of a deity or historical figure (*manzāz PN/DN*), with ll. 2'-3' forming an omen sentence made of two lines. I read number '6' in l. 2' but a deep scratch on the last horizontal wedges may hide another wedge so that this could be number 7. A possible parallel to l. 3' could be BM 22447:63 (Pettinato 1966:66) which reads *ma-za-az ku-bi a-na ma-ka-a-lim*, omen of Kubi for food-offering (see CAD M1:124, *mākālum* b).

3§. 4': I was tempted to restore *tākaltim* based on BM 22447:8 (Pettinato 1966:62): *Ī.GIŠ ki-ma ta-ka-al-tim ša im-me-ri ib-ši*, if the oil is formed like the pouch of a sheep.

5§. The word *šimtum*, fate, destiny, in l. 8' is found in several lines of BM 22447 to announce the prediction about to be given in the apodosis. See BM 22447:3, 4, 5, and especially l. 14 where the topic of marriage occurs and reads *ši-im-tum in-na-ha-zu* 'prediction: they will be married' (Pettinato 1966:61-62).

6§. L. 9': The mention of the oil's brightness *nawir* is also found in BM 22447:18 (Pettinato 1966:63; Anor 2017:72) and BM 22447:53 (Pettinato 1966:65).

8§. BM 22447 uses the sign DI to express the *šulumum*-bubble when it is plural (see BM 22447:37 to 41, the text seems to write it syllabically when the word is singular), hence I propose reading DI 2 for *šulmī šina* in 13' (followed by number 2) for two bubbles or drops of oil (though as pointed out by Andrew George, the signs look like KI.MIN). This accusative to *taddi* could give us a clue as to what is being observed as 'connecting', especially in light of BM 22447:14, the very line that speaks about marriage. There, two oil bubbles or drops are observed, one that represents the future wife and the other the husband (Maul 2018:141 fn 81, Anor 2017:72). Note that *ummatum* is l. 14' is also found in BM 22447:1 [*šumma... šamnam*] *a-na me-e i-na na-di-ia um-ma-tum ki-bi-ir ka-sī-im* (see CAD U:117 *ummatum* c). The sign n[e<sup>2</sup>] in l. 15'b is inscribed on the bottom edge of the fragment. It is indented and written to the very right just below the broken sign that follows the sign IN on the line above.



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