

An Iranian Name in Duplicate

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The archive of Bēl-rēmāni contains various duplicates,¹ among which are the tablets *CTMMA* 3 89 and *VAS* 4 113.² The text is a receipt for silver, which Bēl-rēmāni, son of Mušibši-Marduk, descendant of Šangû-Šamaš paid to Nabû-balāssu-iqbi, son of Nabû-šumakūn, descendant of Ša-nāšišu. The text is dated 4 March 514 B.C. One of the parties in the receipt is Balātu, on whose behalf Nabû-balāssu-iqbi most probably acts.³ Consequently Balātu is the creditor.

It is this person's father on whom this discussion focuses. Unexpectedly his name is spelled differently in the two tablets: ^m*Mi-it-ra-a-a* in *CTMMA* 3 89:4 and ^m*Mi-ḫi-ra-a-a* in *VAS* 4 113:3. ^m*Mi-it-ra-a-a* is clearly the Babylonian rendering of a Median name *Miθraya-,⁴ a hypocoristic form of a short name containing the theophoric element Miθra-. ^m*Mi-ḫi-ra-a-a*, however, cannot render such an Iranian form.⁵ As all signs are clear, one cannot emend the spelling.⁶ Consequently these two names contradict each other from an

1. See M. Jursa, *Das Archiv des Bēl-Rēmāni* (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-archaeologisch instituut te Istanbul, 1999), 13–19, for a detailed study of the duplicates in this archive.

2. M. Jursa, *Das Archiv*, 261, lists some of the differences between the two tablets. Below follows a complete list.

		VAS 4 113		CTMMA 3 89
	Line	Text	Line	Text
1	2	<i>nu-uḫ-ḫu-tú</i>	2	<i>nu-uḫ-ḫu-tu</i>
2	3	A-šú šá	3	DUMU šá
3	3	^m <i>Mi-ḫi-ra-a-a</i>	4	^m <i>Mi-it-ra-a-a</i>
4	4	ina muḫ-ḫi	4	šá ina muḫ-ḫi
5	5, 9	^{lú} SANGA- ^d UTU	6, 11	^{m.lú} SANGA- ^d UTU
6	8	^m šá-na-ši-šú	7	^m šá- ^{kaš} na-ši-šú
7	9	^{md} EN-re-man ^{an} -ni	7	^{md} EN-re-man-n[<i>i</i>]
8	14	^m Re-mut- ^d EN A-šú šá ^{<m>} <i>Kur-ban'-ni-</i> ^d AMAR.UTU	12	^m Re-mut A-šú šá ^m <i>Kur-ban-ni</i>

3. E. von Dassow, "Archive F," in I. Spar and E. von Dassow, *Private Archive Texts from the First Millennium B.C.* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2000), 183.

4. The Old Persian form of this name would be *Miçaya-.

5. Attested in an Elamite context as *Mi-¹tar¹-ra-¹ia¹*; see M. Mayrhofer, *Onomastica Persepolitana: das altiranische Namengut der Persepolis-Tafelchen* (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1973), 206, no. 8.1160; W. Hinz, *Altiranisches Sprachgut der Nebenüberlieferungen* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1975), 168; J. Tavernier, "Iranica in de Achaemenidische periode (ca. 550–330 v. Chr.). Taalkundige studie van Oud-Iraanse eigennamen en leenwoorden, die geattesteerd zijn in niet-Iraanse teksten" (Ph.D. diss. Leuven, 2002), 525, no. 8.2.1087. The Greek equivalents are Μιτράιος and Μιθραϊος; see F. Justi, *Iranisches Namenbuch* (Marburg: Elwert, 1895), 213–14. On Mithra-names generally, see R. Schmitt, "Die theophoren Eigennamen mit altiranisch *Miθra-," *Études Mithriaques: Acts du 2^e Congrès International, Téhéran, du 1^{er} au 8 septembre 1975* (Tehran and Liège: Bibliothèque Pahlavi, 1978), 395–455.

6. Collation Dr. J. Marzahn (May 27, 2004).

onomastic point of view, although the same individual is certainly meant by them. With regard to this problem two solutions have been put forward.

First, it might be that the reading of the Iranian patronymic is correct in *CTMMA* 3 89 and wrong in the other text. Damage to the original text, from which both texts have been copied, could be responsible for the spelling ^m*Mi-ḫi-ra-a-a*. It would have to be postulated that the result of the damage was that only the ḫi-part of the sign IT was visible, so that the scribe of *VAS* 4 113 wrote ^m*Mi-ḫi-ra-a-a* instead of ^m*Mi-it-ra-a-a*,⁷ a spelling which theoretically could reflect *Miθraya-. The second possibility is to invoke the reading of the sign ḫi as ṭa, which would bring one to a spelling ^m*Mi-ṭa-ra-a-a*.⁸ Although both solutions seem acceptable at first sight, objections can be made against them.

In order to be able to comment on Jursa's assumption one must reconstruct what happened at that particular moment when *CTMMA* 3 89 and *VAS* 4 113 were drafted. Both tablets were written by the same scribe, Bēl-ētir, son of Bēl-uballit, descendant of Amīl-Ea. Two possibilities come to mind. The scribe may have damaged the original text after he copied *CTMMA* 3 89 and before he copied *VAS* 4 113, which seems quite unlikely but of course not entirely impossible. Alternatively he may first have written *VAS* 4 113 (duly copying the visible ḫi-part of IT; the original text was already damaged at that time). Suddenly the idea may have come to him that the name could not be ^mMiḫraya, but had to be ^mMitraya, and as a result he wrote ^m*Mi-it-ra-a-a* in *CTMMA* 3 89. The latter proposal is more plausible than the former, but yet not plausible enough. The main objection is that the scribe would either have to have known the Iranian language to some extent, which is not very likely, or have been a specialist in onomastics, which again is not credible.

The solution of von Dassow is less plausible than that of Jursa for two reasons. First of all, signs containing -ṭ- are used only very rarely to render Iranian sounds. In fact there are only two such spellings attested: ^m*Si-tu-nu* and ^m*Si-tu-ú-nu*, both rendering Ir. *Stūnā-, "column."⁹ Secondly, the reading ṭa for ḫi is only attested in the Old Babylonian period.¹⁰ It is thus impossible to read ^m*Mi-ṭa-ra-a-a*.

One solution should be ruled out, while the other is rather implausible. There is, however, also a third possibility for dealing with this problem. Old Iranian Miθra- evolved in Middle Iranian to Mihr- (Parthian *myhr*, Persian *mīhr*),¹¹ and precisely this historically more recent form is also attested in Achaemenid Babylonia, next to Miθra-. There are two examples:

*Arbamihra-, spelled ^m*Ar-ba-mi-ri* (*OECT* 12 A 124:1, 4) in Babylonian.¹² The older form *Arbamiθra- is also attested in Achaemenid Babylonia and is spelled ^m*Ar-ba-(d)mit-ri*

7. M. Jursa, *Das Archiv*, 261.

8. von Dassow, "Archive F," 183.

9. ^m*Si-tu-nu*: *BE* 10 117:R, 129:16; *TuM* 2/3 148:15, U.E. ^m*Si-tu-ú-nu*: *BE* 10 117:3, 4, 11. See R. Zadok, "Iranians and Individuals Bearing Iranian Names in Achaemenian Babylonia," *IOS* 7 (1977): 109 and n. 223; M. A. Dandamayev, *Iranians in Achaemenid Babylonia* (Costa Mesa, Cal.: Mazda, 1992), 119; Tavernier "Iranica," 367, no. 6.2.49.

10. W. Röllig and W. von Soden, *Das akkadische Syllabar* (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1991), 45.

11. On the shift /θr/ > /hr/, see C. Salemann, "Mittelpersisch," in *Grundriss der iranischen Philologie*, ed. Chr. Bartholomae, W. Geiger, and E. Kuhn (Strasbourg: Trübner, 1895–1901), 261; P. Tedesco, "Dialektologie der westiranischen Turfantexte," *Le Monde Oriental* 15 (1921): 198–99; W. Lentz, "Die nordiranischen Elemente in der neupersischen Literatursprache bei Firdosi," *Zeitschrift für Indologie und Iranistik* 4 (1926): 258–59; W. Sundermann, "Westmitteliranische Sprachen," in *Compendium Linguarum Iranicarum*, ed. R. Schmitt (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1989), 108; Tavernier, "Iranica," 294.

12. W. Eilser, "Eine mittelpersische Wortform aus frühachämenidischer Zeit?" *ZDMG* 91 (1936): 173 n. 1; Hinz, *Sprachgut*, 35; Zadok, "Iranians," 95 and n. 41; Dandamayev, *Iranians*, 30; Tavernier, "Iranica," 402, no. 8.2.81.

(*FuB* 14 17–18, no. 7:3, U.E. 2).¹³ This clearly indicates that both the original and the evolved form of an anthroponym could exist next to each other. It is interesting to see that the recent form is attested in a text predating the attestation of the older form.

*Bagamihra-, spelled ^m*Ba-ga-mi-ḥa-* (BE 9 50:8, R.), ^m*Ba-ga-miḥ-* (BE 9 23:22) and ^m*Ba-ga-mi-ḥi-* (BE 9 50:1, 10) in Babylonian.¹⁴

With this in mind, it is logical to retain the original reading of the name and to propose a reading *Mihraya- for the Babylonian spelling ^m*Mi-ḥi-ra-a*. *Mihraya- is nothing more than the evolved form of *Miṭraya-. In this way both spellings render the same name and person. Both names could very well exist next to each other, as proven by *Arbamiṭra- and *Arbamihra-. The scribe simply used both forms, as he heard the name pronounced in both ways.

An objection to this hypothesis is the date of the text, 514 B.C. This seems extremely early to find an attestation of the shift /θr/ > /h/, which is typical for Middle Iranian. Yet the other Achaemenid attestations of *mihra- date from the time of Xerxes onwards and prove that the Achaemenid period was to some extent transitional between the Old Iranian and the Middle Iranian stages of the Iranian languages. The occurrence of contractions (e.g., /aya/ > /ē/ or /iya/ > /i/) and monophthongizations (e.g., /ai/ > /ē/ or /au/ > /ō/) in Babylonian and Elamite renderings of Iranian words and proper names only supports this theory.¹⁵

The anthroponym *Mihraya- is no isolate. It is attested in Ptolemaic Egypt. A certain *Mihraya- (demotic *Mhry*) appears as the father of the bridegroom in a marriage contract from 287 B.C.¹⁶

This example of an Iranian name occurring in both its Old Iranian and Middle Iranian forms and belonging to a single individual is hitherto unique for the Achaemenid period, but it throws an interesting light on the linguistic development and the status of the Iranian languages during that time.

13. Zadok, "Iranians," 98; Tavernier, "More Iranian Names in Late Babylonian Sources," *NABU* 2001/25, no. 1, and "Iranica," 402, no. 8.2.82.

14. Eilers, "Eine mittelpersische Wortform," 175n.; Hinz, *Sprachgut*, 57; Zadok, "Iranians," 101; Dandamayev, *Iranians*, 55; Tavernier, "Iranica," 423, no. 8.2.251.

15. The contraction /iya/ > /i/ is also attested in inscriptions of Darius and Xerxes:

(1) *abijāvayam* (XPf 40) / *abiyajāvayam* (XPg 9)

(2) *marikā* (DNb 50, 55, 59) / **mariyakā*

(3) *nišādayam* (XPh 34–35) / *niyašādayam* (DNa 36)

(4) *ništāya* (XPh 52–53) / *niyaštāya* (XPh 50).

16. Text edited by S. Allam, "Un contrat de mariage (Pap. démotique Caire J. 68567)," *Revue d'Égyptologie* 35 (1984): 3–21. For the name itself, see G. Vittmann, "Fremde im späten Theben," *WZKM* 89 (1999): 262.