A New Expression for Adoption from Nuzi and Ekalte
Some Remarks on the Role of Adoption during the Late Bronze Age

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Summary: The practice of adoption is attested in various periods and areas of the Ancient Near East. This phenomenon is expressed in the documentary evidence by the use of concrete formulae. The author proposes the identification of a modified formula of adoption in a document from Nuzi and another one from Ekalte. Moreover, a brief survey on the special adoptions and their formulae from the Late Bronze Age is provided.

Adoption seems to have been a common practice in the Ancient Near East and is frequently attested in various periods and areas. As a consequence, there have been numerous studies on this topic on the basis of specific archives, although a general analysis is still needed. Given the profusion of instances of adoption, Paul devoted an exclusive analysis of the expressions used to describe this phenomenon throughout the Ancient Near East. Nevertheless, new documents are continuously being published which add new expressions to this list.

I. EN 10/2, 69 (Nuzi)

The tablet EN 10/2, 69, a legal text from Nuzi, was published in cuneiform copy in 1998. Its exact origin within the archives is not registered. The text

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2 See for example the contributions compiled by Westbrook 2003a, or the classical work of Donner 1969; David 1927, Stone/Owen 1991 (Old-Babylonian); Cassin 1938, Stoholm 1972, Lion 2004 (Nuzi); Bellotto 2008, 2009 (Emar); Radner 1997, pp. 137–143 (Neo-Assyrian); Wunsch 2003–2004 (Neo-Babylonian).

3 As stated by Niedorf 2008, p. 223 n. 1004.


should be dated to the first half of the 14th c. BC. The document is fragmentary but its central part can be identified.

(Beginning of obverse destroyed)

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{xx} \text{[...]} \text{lu? ū}
\end{array}
\]

2' \[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{f}\text{x}^3\text{zi-b[...-n]}
\end{array}
\]

4' \[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{f}\text{A-ka}_i\text{-am-mi-iš}
\end{array}
\]

4' \[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{i-n]a egr-ki [š]a 'A-ka}_i\text{-am-mi-iš-b[...]
\end{array}
\]

6' \[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{f}\text{i-ša-ras-si}
\end{array}
\]

8' \[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{a-na}\text{'}A-ka}_i\text{-am-mi-iš-bé-ma}
\end{array}
\]

8' \[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{um-ma} \text{šu at-ta-din-mi}
\end{array}
\]

10' \[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{i-na egr-ki ša}
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Wa-za-ri-ià duma.munus-ia}
\end{array}
\]

12' \[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{ma-an-nu um-me e 'i-na}
\end{array}
\]

12' \[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{be-ri-šu-šum ša}
\end{array}
\]

(Lower edge)

14' \[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Kibal-all-ka}_i\text{-lu}_i^3
\end{array}
\]

2 \[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{munu[m] ša kur}
\end{array}
\]

(Reverse)

16' \[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{nu-ú[lu-a]-r}^3
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{šu-[ma-al-la ]-r}^3
\end{array}
\]

18' \[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{[...-šu-ši]}
\end{array}
\]

20' \[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{[...-ši]}
\end{array}
\]

22' \[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{[...-šu-ši]}
\end{array}
\]

24' \[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{[...-šu-ši]}
\end{array}
\]

26' \[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{um-ma 'A-ka-am-mi-iš]bé-ma ū a-na-ku}
\end{array}
\]

26' \[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{a-na a-ha-ti-ia}
\end{array}
\]

28' \[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{a-t[a]-dim-mi}
\end{array}
\]

28' \[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{f}\text{x}^3\text{-ni-a}
\end{array}
\]

([Seal] impression)

(Left edge)

30' \[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{na-ti-šu-ši}^3
\end{array}
\]

(Seal impression)

\[
\begin{array}{c}
(1^2-2^2)[...]
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
(3^2-4^2) '\text{Akkamiš(he)} [.][.]. (5^2-6^2) \text{She/He shall raise [n]o claim against[...}
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
'\text{Akkamiš}[e].
\end{array}
\]
(7'–9') “I have given my daughter ʾWazariya to ʾAkkamišhe, her(!) mother.”
(10'–11') She/He shall raise no claim against ʾWazariya.
(12'–17') Whoever among them breaks (the contract) shall pay two women[en] from the land of Nu[lhu]e.
(18'–25') [...].
(26'–28') [Thus (has spoken) ʾAkkamišhe:] “And I have given [...] to my sister.”
(29') [...].
(30') Seal of Tišu[...].

Given the tablet’s condition, it is difficult to propose a reliable reconstruction. At any rate, it is a legal family document which in principle must have come from a private archive. Apparently, one person (probably the father or the mother) delivers his/her daughter ʾWazariya to ʾAkkamišhe, who thus becomes her mother (ll. 7'–9'). Penalties are included in case of claims (ll. 10'–17').

The personal name ʾWazariya also appears in HSS 13, 347: 47, a document from the palace, and in EN 10/3 232, 4' and 5', a very fragmentary legal text in which a boy and a certain ʾWazariya are delivered to another person.6 As for ʾAkkamišhe, this personal name is not attested in other documents from Nuzi. Only ʾAkmme is documented, although always in texts from the palace (HSS 13, 429: 2, HSS 16, 426: 23, HSS, 16 408: 8).7

The interesting feature here is the expression used in the document to denote the adoption (ll. 7'–9').8 The addition of this last part, regarding the new status of the adopting mother, is a novelty in the use of expressions of adoption.

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6 Partial transcription of the document: (1') ʾt a²?-ḫu₄-i₄-a₄-n[a... (2') [iṭ?] ʾs[ū-h]a₄-n sī-[... (3') [i-naʔ] ʾu₀₄-mi ʾr₅-zî-nič] [kî?] [... (4') [a-n] ʾW[a₄]-zâ-rî-ia-a₄-n[a... (5') [i] ʾW₃₄-za-rî-ia ʾr₅₃ [... (6') ʾr₅₃ ʾsî-[h]a₄-ru ʾi-sî[lu... (7') ʾuʔ? ʾi-sî ṣa-WA₄-ri (8') ʾk₅₄-arp₄-ʾ₄u₃-[a₄-n-a₄-maš] [te-pu-wa] (9') ʾu i-leg-qè-su₄-nu-[ti] (10') ma-an-nu-um-me-e ʾi-na [be-ri-šu-nu ša] (11') KÎ-BAL₄-[ṣ][e] 5 GEMÈ-MEŠ ...] (12') [a₄-[p]i ...] (rest destroyed). Another fragment of this document includes a few signs. See the suggestions by FINCKE 2002, p. 183.

7 The personal name ʾAkmme also appears in EN 9/1 14: 2, 6, 10, a document of unknown origin.

8 um-ma₄-ša should be um-mi₄-ša, but case endings and the gender of the pronouns in Nuzi are often used incorrectly, see GORDON 1934, pp. 4–5 (§23), 1938, p. 39 (§2.12), pp. 47–48 (§4.2) and WILHELM 1970, pp. 64–65.
II. WVDOG 102, 37 (Ekalte)

A recently published document also includes the formula of the text from Nuzi. WVDOG 102, 37, published in 2001, comes from Ekalte and was probably written in the late 15th c. The text belongs to a group of six documents (WVDOG 102, 35–40), all of them found at the same location (Haus AK), probably the house of Ḫuzāzu, son of Yaḥanni-il and grandson of Yaṣi-Baša, which is placed in the central part of the tell (Innenstadt). Four of these six documents are particularly interesting:

1) WVDOG 102, 37 itself, which is quoted below. Ḫuzāzu delivers his daughter ʿUmmī-Baša to ʿDagān-lāʾi, who thus becomes her mother.

2) WVDOG 102, 38. Aḥi-raḥaṣq, son of Yaṣi-Baša, establishes his mother ʿDagān-lāʾi as “father”. He grants the legal status of a male to a woman, a phenomenon which occurs mainly in the archives of the area of the Syrian Euphrates during the Late Bronze Age (see below, IV).

3) WVDOG 102, 39, whereby Itūr-Dagān releases his sister ʿUmmī-Baša. It is stated that a house and a vineyard are owned by ʿDagān-lāʾi (ll. 11–12). When she dies, “ʿUmmī-Baša’s shall pull the nail out of the wall” (ll. 16–18, ʿUm-mi-ba-ab-la / giš.kak ši(=si,)-ik-ka-tu, / i-na i-ga-ri ta-na-ša-ab).

4) WVDOG 102, 40, a register of divorce between Ir’ibu and ʿUmmī-Baša, daughter of Kubilla and ʿDagān-lāʾi.

Some facts about this documentary collection have yet to be clarified: for instance, what is exactly the role of ʿDagān-lāʾi, and do all references of this personal name actually correspond to the same person? In fact, in WVDOG 102, 38: 5 it is stated that ʿDagān-lāʾi is the daughter of a Zinn, whereas in WVDOG 102, 40: 10 it is stated that her father was Rašap-lāʾi. Nevertheless, given the coincidences between the characters that appear in these docu-

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9 The chronology of the Ekalte texts is subject to debate. Mayer (2001, pp. 14–19) places the date between 1530–1446. According to other authors, the texts should be dated to a later period, perhaps to the 13th c. BC (Wilcke 1992, pp. 120–125, Sallaberger 2003, pp. 277–278). The latest chronological contribution has been provided by Beckman (2008, p. 213), who believes that the texts should be dated to 1460–1440.

10 See Mayer 2001, p. 5.

11 On the spatial layout of the site see in particular the work of Machule 1990.

12 Démare-Lafont (2001–2002, p. 22) points out with regard to this document: “L’acte est motivé par le projet de remariage de Dagān-lāʾi (confirmé par d’autres textes de cette même archive). La dernière phrase de la tablette indique que l’enfant du second lit viendra à la succession de son propre père exclusivement. Il va de soi qu’il ne peut hériter du premier mari de Dagān-lāʾi. Par cette clause, il est aussi exclu de la succession aux biens maternels, qui resteront en indivision entre Aḥi-raḥaṣq et Dagān-lāʾi, même si celle-ci se remarie. La seule façon d’obtenir cette indivision perpétuelle était sans doute de recourir à la fiction de l’adoption.”
ments, it seems probable that it actually was the same woman; there may have been changes in the family structure which were not preserved in the documentation.

We are interested here in the document WVDOG 102, 37\textsuperscript{13} for which we provide a transcription and translation.

(Obverse)
iš-tu u₄-mi-an-ni-im
2 Ṭu-ra-(a)⁴ DUMU Ṣa-la-ṣi-en
1 Um-mi-ba-a₄-la
4 DUMUMUNUS-ia a-na Ṣa Da-gan-la-i
MU₄-MEŠ-GLA-ia
6 um-mi-ša ad-din
lu-₄ ta-am-tu-₄t
8 u lu-₄ TILLA
ṣa Da-gan-la-i-ma

(Lower edge)
10 ma-am-ma-a-an
i-na bi-it a-bi-ia

(Reverse)
12 i-na u₄-mi-ar-ki₄
a-na mu₄-bi-ṣa
14 ʿu-₄l i-ša-ni-iq
IGI I₄-di-ra-mu
16 IGI I₄-ma₄-aš-tar
DUMU MEŠ A-bi-ia-ni
18 IGI Ku-ur-ra
IGI Ṣa-ši-da
20 DUMUMES I₄-li-ia
IGI Ig-mu₄-lu DUMU Ba-i
22 IGI I₄-bi-₄-en

(Upper edge)
DUMU Aš-di-i

(Left edge)
24 IGI I₄-ka DUMU Da-gan-gal
IGI I₄-ku-un₄-da-gan DUB.SAR

(Scal)
26 NA₄-KIŠIB LUMEŠ aš-bi

(1–2) From this day Ḫuzāzu, son of Yaši-Ba'la, (thus has spoken):
(3–6) ‘I have given my daughter ʿUmmī-Ba'la to my kallātu ʿDāgān-lāʾi, her mother.
(7–9) Dead or alive, she belongs to ʿDāgān-lāʾi. (10–14) In the future, nobody from the house of my father shall claim against her.”
(18–20) Witness: ʿIṣṭa; witness: Yaši-Da, sons of Iliya.
(26) Seal of the Brothers.

Ḫuzāzu therefore delivers his daughter ʿUmmī-Ba'la to his kallātu ʿDāgān-lāʾi, who shall be her mother from then on (ll. 3–6). It is also established that nobody is to claim anything as a result (ll. 10–14). It should be noted that ʿDāgān-lāʾi is a kallātu, that is, a woman — usually young — who in principle would be destined for marriage with a member of the family, even with Ḫuzāzu himself (§ III).

The expression used in the document to denote the adoption is (ll. 3–6): ‘I have given my daughter ʿUmmī-Ba'la to my kallātu ʿDāgān-lāʾi, her mother.”

III. Common features of these documents

Both documents, EN 10/2, 69 from Nuzi and WVDOG 102, 37 from Ekalte, apparently have a series of common features. They are both legal documents; however, it is difficult to assign WVDOG 102, 37 to a specific type, since it is not a proper adoption contract as commonly used in Ekalte; 15 it is similarly difficult to identify the specific legal category of EN 10/2, 69, due to its poor state of preservation.

The situation of the family in WVDOG 102, 37 seems clear. Ḫuzāzu wishes his kallātu, called ʿDāgān-lāʾi, to become the mother of his daughter. In this manner, Ḫuzāzu delivers his daughter ʿUmmī-Ba'la to ʿDāgān-lāʾi, and the latter becomes her mother. EN 10/2, 69 is quite badly damaged but the situation may have been similar. A person would deliver his/her daughter ʿWazariya to a woman, ʾAkkamišle, who becomes her mother from then on. We do not know whether the person who delivers ʿWazariya is her father or her mother. FİNCKE opts for the latter, 15 but the other choice is also feasible, especially if we bear in mind the circumstances described in WVDOG

14 As it is the case of WVDOG 102, 36 and 66.
102, 37. In this case, the status of Akkamišhe is not specified, nor whether she belongs to the family of the person who delivers Wazariya.

The expression used is the defining element of this phenomenon. The formula is as follows: NP₁, mārūti/ma  ana NP₂ (kallātiya) unnīṣa/unnāsu ad-dirin/attadīn. This expression differs from most of the adoptions from these and other archives of the Late Bronze Age:

1) In Nuzi, the adoption is generally referred to by the formula: “NP₁ has adopted NP₂ as son”, NP₁ NP₂ ana mārūti i (t)e pus. The verb nādānu, “to give”, is only used in cases which LION described as “les enfants donnés en adoption par leur parents”, i.e. with underage children.

2) In the adoptions of Ekalte, the expression used also differs from that employed in WVDGR 102, 37. In WVDGR 102, 36: 5–6 and 75: 8–9 it is stated: “NP₁ has joined NP₂ (and NP₃) as son(s)”, NP₁ NP₂ (u NP₃) ana mārūti/ma ṭequ. In WVDGR 102, 66: 1–3: “NP₁ has established NP₂ as his son”, NP₁NP₂ a-na dumu-šu is-ku-un-šu.

3) In the remaining Syrian archives of the Late Bronze Age, the expressions of adoption use mainly the verbs epēšu (Emar, Alalah) and rakāsu (Ugarit). The verb nādānu is limited to a group of adoptions in Emar, whose expression is: “I have given NP₁ as son of NP₂”, NP₁ ana mārūti ša NP₂ attadīn. These documents all belong to the Syro-Hittite scribal school. They are also adoptions of the new spouse’s children (AUOR S 1, 21, ASJ 13, 29), of a slave (E6, 91, ANORS 1, 41), a nephew (ANORS 1, 77) or an underage person (HANE/M 2, 82).

4) In the adoption contract KAJ 1, from the Middle Assyrian period, a man delivers his son to another man. The expression used is (ll. 2–6): “Anīya, son of Šamaš-amišu, has voluntarily given his son Gimilu as son to Azukiya, son of Šamaš-ame[r̃] [m]A-ni-ia dumu dūtu-a-me-[rit] / i-na mi-ig-ra-at ra-mi-ni-šu / mGt-šil-la dumu-šu / a-na mA-zu-ki-ia dumu dūtu-a-me-[rit] / a-na mar-ú-ut-ti id-[d]-dīn-šu). It is the adoption of an underage nephew phrased by using the verb nādānu, “to give”, both circumstances are also found in the Emar document AUORS 1, 77 (see above).

In adoptions, the use of the expression ana NP nādānu, “to give to NP”, seems to have been limited in the Late Bronze Age to special cases: the adoption of underage children, of relatives, of the offspring of a new spouse, of

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16 See the bibliography in n. 1, especially STOHLMAN 1972, p. 38 and LION 2004, p. 543.
17 LION 2004, pp. 545–548. Ten documents: HSS 5, 7, 57, 67; HSS 19, 22+SMN 1687 (see WILHELM 1995); HSS 19, 43, 45, 51; JEN 571, 572; BM 80388.
18 A list of the expressions used can be found in JUSTEL 2008b, pp. 105, 108; for a list of expressions from Emar see now BELLITTO 2009, pp. 24–27.
slaves, etc. It is possible that the documents discussed above, EN 10/2, 69 from Nuzi and WVDOG 102, 37 from Ekalte, fit into one of the aforementioned categories.

It is also possible that, for some reason, in these cases this particular expression, ¹NP₁, mārtiya ana ¹NP₂, (kallātiya) ummiša/ummašu addin/atta- din, was chosen to emphasize the fact that it was a proper adoption. There are some cases, especially in Nuzi and in Late Bronze Age Syria, where a woman is nominally given for adoption (ana mārtūtī nadānu),¹⁰ but there is actually a marriage adoption behind this. In this type of transaction a person delivers a girl to another man or woman, who may then give her in marriage to a third person.¹¹ Perhaps EN 10/2, 69 and WVDOG 102, 37 were phrased precisely to avoid any confusion between a normal adoption and a marriage adoption ana mārtūtī.²² In this case, both documents would be the only occurrences from Nuzi and Ekalte dealing with a real adoption of women.²³

IV. Late Bronze Age special adoptions

The common situation in the case of an adoption in the Ancient Near East was to adopt a man as son and heir.²⁴ However, there are particular cases which completely or partially depart from this norm and come from peripheral zones during the Late Bronze Age (among them, Nuzi and Ekalte). We shall briefly mention some of them.

For instance, in Nuzi adoptiones in fratrem are attested whereby a man adopted another man as a brother. These adoptions seem to have had an economic nature as a result of some sort of commercial association.²⁵

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¹⁰ The only case that does not contain the verb nadānu is JEN 465: 9–10 (epēšu).
¹¹ On this legal phenomenon in Nuzi see specially Grosz 1987; in the Late Bronze Age Syria see Justel 2008a, 2008b, pp. 93–96.
²² In Nuzi also exist marriage adoptions ana kallūtī and ana mārtūtū u kallūtī (Grosz 1987).
²³ On other types of adoption see below, § IV. On the case of Nuzi, Breneman (1971, p. 27) points out: “Real adoption at Nuzi must therefore be redefined as consisting of two basic types: adoption of a son and adoption of a brother … (p. 28). Real adoption at Nuzi must further be distinguished from two other types of texts—female adoption texts and slavery texts.”
²⁴ See the bibliography set out in n. 1.
²⁵ See especially Dosscher 1986, 1993, pp. 92–114, 1995. Perhaps the document from Ugarit RS 21.230 (Ugaritic 5 nr. 81), whereby a woman adopts a man as her brother, was of this kind; another interpretation is that it might have actually been a marriage (Gordon 1988).
The so-called “purchase-adoptions” also originate in Nuzi.26 It seems that the conveyance of real estate was not allowed in the kingdom. For this reason, a legal fiction was devised whereby a man (the seller) adopted another man (the buyer) and bequeathed him a specific property. The adopted-buyer in exchange gave a present (qıstu) to the adopter-seller, which was the actual price of the property.27

On the other hand, both in Nuzi and in Emar and Ekalte the phenomenon of granting a male legal status to certain women is also known.28 Despite the fact that this is but a legal fiction, this transaction was sometimes carried out in the form of an adoption, for example: “I have adopted ıNP as my son” (NP ana mārūtiya ēpuš), typical of Emar and Nuzi,29 or “NP has established ıNP as father / ıNP is the father” (NP ıNP abi ʾikṣun / ıNP abu), typical of Ekalte.30

Another special case is the adoption of a man as a father or of a woman as a mother. The former, the adoptio patris loco, is a rare phenomenon, to date only attested with certainty in one document.31 It is ALT 16,32 which comes from archaeological level IV of Alalah, a locality of Hurrian cultural tradition, and dates to the 15th c. BC. It is stated: “Before the king Niqmepa, Ilim-ilimmma has adopted Tulpure as his father” (ll. 1–3, a-na pa-ni mNiq-me-pa LUGAL-ri / mTul-pu-re mI-lim-i-limm-ma / a-na a-bu-šu i-pu-šu)

26 See the summary offered by ZACCAGNINI 2003, pp. 604–605.
27 There is another explanation of this phenomenon unrelated to the prohibition of purchase or sale real estate. As GROSZ (1988, p. 26) points out: “... The social system of Nuzi did not permit a testator to bequeath any part of the property to persons outside the family. In other words, there was no possibility of giving a legacy or a benefice to a trusted servant, a friend, etc. In order to do this an adoption had to be instituted through which the adoptee (the prospective beneficiary) was given rights to the property in question” (see also GROSZ 1988, p. 39 n. 36).
28 Regarding this phenomenon in the Syrian archives see JUENTZ 2008b, pp. 156–167; regarding Nuzi see a recent study in LION 2009, where previous bibliography is included.
29 Emar: E6, 31: 8–9, AuOrS 1, 72: 3–4 (in E6 181: the verb epešu is not used, but only the copulative verb). Nuzi: YBC 5142: 7–8 ([tēpesu]?), EN 10/2, 172 + HSS 19, 60: 9–13 (3ms išepuš / išepuš, an indirect reference inside a tuppī iammurīti), Sumer 32, 2: 17 (ia mar-ta Dū-ūš).
31 HAASE (1965, p. 72 n. 379) and NIEDORF (2008, p. 413) propose that the Nuzi document Jank. 51, published by JANKOWSKA (1961, pp. 486, 560), concerns this phenomenon as well. Nevertheless, both HAYDEN’s interpretation (1962, p. 135) and the reading proposed by GROSZ (1988, pp. 131, 252–253) would indicate that the phenomenon which takes place in the text is the appointing of a woman as the guardian of the inheritance (NP ana abbīti ēpešu) (see also MALUL 1990, pp. 419–420).
The provisions indicate that if Ilim-ilmuna should support Tulpure, he could keep all his possessions when the latter died. The reference to the status of “father” appears twice more in the text (ll. 14, 19: a-bu-šu).

An adoption of a woman as a mother (adoptio matris loco) is attested in a document from Emar (AuOrS 1, 42). It belongs to a group of two texts (syro-hittite documents) collected from clandestine excavations which were published by Arnaud as “Le dossier d’Ikmu-Dagan et de son fils Ba’al-gamil”.

The first of the texts, AuOrS 1, 41, is the will of Imkù-Dagān, who appoints his wife ‘Na’mi-šadā as “father and mother” of the household and as the administrator of the inheritance (ll. 3–5). Besides, Ikmu-Dagān declares that his four sons (iškur-gāmil, Bēlu-kabar, Taḫḫu and ‘Alī-ḫāmis) must honour ‘Na’mi-šadā, who apparently is not their biological mother, if they want to receive their inheritance in future (ll. 6–11); if they do not do so, they lose any rights over the family property (ll. 13–18).

The second text from Emar, AuOrS 1, 42, is the will of iškur-gāmil, the eldest son of Ikmu-Dagān’s, and was probably written after the death of the latter. This document contains several stipulations:

1) iškur-gāmil adopts his father’s wife, ‘Na’mi-šadā, as his mother (ll. 2–3). It differs from the common adoptions because the adopted person does not acquire the status of son (ana mārūtī) but of mother (ana ummūtī).

2) iškur-gāmil adopts two of his brothers as sons (ll. 3–6). In this manner, these two adopted sons would be the brothers of iškur-gāmil’s biological son, called Hinna-Ba’l.

3) Some provisions are set forth regarding the obligation of the previously adopted children to honour (palāhā) their “father and mother” ‘Na’mi-šadā (ll. 6–12, 18–23).

4) The previously adopted children’s inheritance is set forth (ll. 13–15). In particular it is stated (l. 13) that iškur-gāmil’s biological son, Hinna-Ba’l, was the eldest and was to keep the main house.

5) It is stated that in the case of the death of Hinna-Ba’l, his sister (and the daughter of iškur-gāmil) ‘Aṣtar-simātī, would be the successor.

AuOrS 1, 42 was probably meant to keep the members of the family of Ikün-Dagān within the same household. By doing this, the family estate was not

33 Arnaud 1991: 77–81. The link between these two texts, AuOrS 1, 41 and 42, has been previously studied, specially by Bellotto 2009, pp. 86–89. Bellotto (2008, p. 189) points out: “The document says nothing about the reasons for all these adoptions; anyway, whatever they were, it is interesting to notice how a person could change completely the family structure through the practice of adoption.”

34 The god name found under the sign iškur is not certain in this case (Pruzstynszky 2003, p. 123).
divided. A legal guardian was perhaps provided for some of the members (in particular Taḫḫu and 'Aḫī-ḫāmīṣ), who were probably still underage.\textsuperscript{35}

Finally, the breaking of an adoption contract by the adoptee was only attested up to now by a document from Tell el-Fahhār (IM 70726).\textsuperscript{36} The editors said: “Die vorliegende Urkunde bezeugt unseres Wissens erstmalig für den Bereich der Keltischen recht die Auflösung einer Adoption durch den Adoptierten.”\textsuperscript{37} However, a similar case is now found in a syro-hittite document from Emir (CM 13, 2),\textsuperscript{38} which involves a legal decision carried out before the overseer of the region (lū̄ugula.kalam.ma) concerning the payment of the īlku-duty of the adoptee.\textsuperscript{39}

V. Conclusions

In general, the objectives of adoption in the Ancient Near East were\textsuperscript{40}:

From the point of view of the adopter, adoption brought two principal benefits. Firstly, it enabled a childless person to maintain the family line. Secondly, it ensured care and support in one’s old age, which was a fundamental filial duty. […] The principal benefit for the adoptee was the right to inherit the adopter’s state, since adoption gave the status of legitimate heir.

However, in peripheral areas of Mesopotamia during the Late Bronze Age, these characteristics are partially modified. In these areas and in this period we can find adoptions – or legal transactions in the form of adoptions – which serve other purposes: to grant women a male legal status, to set up commercial associations, to buy or sell properties, etc.

In this context of legal flexibility there are also some practices which completely change our perception of adoption, such as the adoption of fathers or mothers. Likewise, it can be noted that many of the documented adoptions

\textsuperscript{35} See JUSTEL 2008b, pp. 265–266. It remains to be clarified why if the wife of İkmū-Dağān had already been appointed as the manager of the family in AuOrS 1, 41, it was necessary for irtuq-gaml to conduct the transaction AuOrS 1, 42. The explanation could be found in the fact that Na’miš-sadā had never adopted İkmū-Dağān’s children as sons. The phenomenon of the adoption of the new spouse’s children is attested to in Emir, both by a man (E6, 30, AuOrS 1, 21, RAI 47, 1 – indirect reference in CM 13, 3) and by a woman (ASJ 13, 29). In the particular case of AuOrS 1, 41, this practice did not take place and perhaps the eldest son was forced, once the father died, to take further legal actions concerning his family (AuOrS 1, 42).


\textsuperscript{38} Published by WESTENHOLZ 2000, pp. 5–9, 122–125.

\textsuperscript{39} See now the remarks made by BELLOTTO 2009, pp. 153–155.

\textsuperscript{40} WESTBROOK 2003b, pp. 51.
are aimed at the adoption of underage persons, of relatives (nephews, nieces, stepchildren) or of slaves. These adoptions use expressions of delivery, that is, the guardian gives (nadānu) one person as son/daughter to another one.

Even within this category of delivery-adoptions there are certain innovations. The two documents presented in this paper, EN 10/2, 69 from Nuzi and WVDOG 102, 37 from Ekalte, show a special formula of adoption: 'NP₁ mārtiyi ana 'NP₂, ummṣā/ummaṣṭu addin/attadin, “I have given my daughter 'NP₁ to 'NP₂, her mother.” This last appendix, the inclusion of the status of the person who receives the adopted person, does not appear in other documents, where only the status of the adopted person is stated (in this case it would be ana mārtūti, “as daughter”).

All these elements contribute to the knowledge and the definition of the specific legal characteristics of some peripheral areas of the Ancient Near East in the Late Bronze Age.

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