

Miscellanea Neo-Sumerica, I: New sources for the history of the Ur III period

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[This article focuses on ten hitherto unpublished Ur III administrative and legal tablets belonging to the collections of the British Museum, London. The documents originate from the cities of Ĝirsu, Ur, and Nippur, and contain new information on key military operations, major religious festivals, and hydraulic works undertaken by the kings of the Third Dynasty of Ur (2110–2003 BC). The texts also give insight into the economic enterprises of royal women, high priestesses, and middle-ranking officials in late third-millennium BC Mesopotamia.]

Keywords: Ur III, Elam, warfare, Akiti festival, infrastructure projects, sale/lease of fields.

The following is a long-delayed article on a group of ten cuneiform tablets currently housed in the collections of the British Museum and dating from the Third Dynasty of Ur (2110–2003 BC).¹ The miscellaneous administrative and legal documents published here originate from the institutional and private archives of major provinces of the Ur III kingdom (Ĝirsu/Lagaš, Ur, and Nippur). They provide new data for the historical reconstruction of significant military and religious events, and improve our understanding of important aspects of the Babylonian economy in the late third millennium—including the participation of elite women in animal husbandry and textile production, the involvement of the central government in the excavation of new canals, and the investment strategies private individuals adopted to increase their landed wealth.

Most of the texts (nos. 4–6, 8, 9–10) were identified, photographed, and transliterated for the first time by Pietro Mander and myself in 2005 and 2006, on two consecutive research visits to the British Museum Department of the Middle East in the framework of the Research Project of National Interest (PRIN 2004) “Catalogazione, pubblicazione e studio delle tavolette amministrative neo-sumeriche da Girsu e Umma, appartenenti alle collezioni del British Museum.” Texts nos. 3 and 7 were selected and studied in the same years on the basis of information from the *Catalogue of the Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum*, volume 2 (Figulla/ Sigrist/Walker 1996), and were originally meant to be included in my PhD dissertation on the messenger texts

1. The cuneiform tablets from the British Museum are published or cited by the kind permission of the Trustees of the British Museum. Text abbreviations follow those of the Database of Neo-Sumerian Texts project (bdtns.filol.csic.es). Digital images of tablets nos. 3–10 will be available via the BDTNS website. I am indebted to Manuel Molina and Franco Pomponio for their feedback on an early draft of this paper. Thanks are due to the two anonymous reviewers for providing critical comments and useful suggestions. Needless to say, any remaining errors are my own responsibility.

from Ġirsu/Lagaš. In 2012, Janet Politi, who had been working on the Ur material catalogued in Nisaba 5 (D'Agostino/Pomponio/Laurito 2004), generously shared a preliminary transliteration of tablet U.30591 (text no. 1), which was photographed and collated by me later that same year. U.11044 (text no. 2) was kindly brought to my attention by Manuel Molina in 2019. Excellent photos of both tablets are now available at the Ur Online website (www.ur-online.org).

| <i>Text</i> | <i>Museum no.</i> | <i>Date</i> | <i>Provenience</i> | <i>Content</i> |
|-------------|-------------------|-------------|--------------------|---|
| 1 | U.30591 | IS.05.07.00 | Ur | Expenditure of beer and bread for soldiers, Elamites, and other participants in the Akiti festival at Gaeš. |
| 2 | U.11044 | IS.05.06.00 | Ur | Expenditure of garments for men of Agar. |
| 3 | BM 23446 | IS.05.06.00 | Ġirsu/Lagaš | Expenditure of beer and flour for Elamites and soldiers of Susa (messenger text). |
| 4 | BM 109604 | ŠS.03.07.00 | Ġirsu/Lagaš | Allocation of oil for Subarean prisoners of war. |
| 5 | BM 109752 | 00.03.00 | Ġirsu/Lagaš | Allocation of beer, bread, and sesame oil for highlanders of Yabrat and prisoners of war (messenger text). |
| 6 | BM 108952 | Š.44.00.00 | Ġirsu/Lagaš | Account of wool from the herds of Šulgi-simtī. |
| 7 | BM 15340 | 00.11.00 | Ġirsu/Lagaš | Messenger text mentioning the toponym ^d utu-nu-zu. |
| 8 | BM 98109 | 00.11.00 | Ġirsu/Lagaš | Messenger text mentioning the toponym ^d utu-nu-zu. |
| 9 | BM 103696A | IS.02.00.00 | Nippur | Legal document regarding the sale of a house, |
| 10 | BM 103696B | IS.01.12.00 | Nippur | Legal document regarding the leasing of a <i>šuku</i> plot. |

Table 1. Catalogue of the cuneiform tablets from the British Museum

The Ur III tablets presented here are discussed in the following subsections of the article:

- §1. The Akiti festival of the sowing season at Gaeš in the year Ibbi-Suen 5 (nos. 1–2)
- §2. The last messenger text from Ġirsu/Lagaš and the fall of Susa (no. 3)
- §3. Subarean and Šimaškian prisoners of war at Ġirsu/Lagaš (nos. 4–5)
- §4. Highland sheep, royal sons, and the herds of Šulgi-simtī (no. 6)
- §5. Two anomalous messenger texts and the toponym ^dutu-nu-zu (nos. 7–8)
- §6. The field “princely shrine” and the *ereš-diġir* priestess of Ninšubur at Nippur (nos. 9–10)

1. *The Akiti festival of the sowing season at Gaeš in the year Ibbi-Suen 5*

Text 1 (U.30591)

Date: IS.05.07.00

Provenience: Ur

Measurements: 31* × 43 × 18 mm

Photo: www.ur-online.org/subject/52848/

Bibliography: Nisaba 5-1, no. 573 (catalogue description);

Pruzinszky 2010: 37 (reference)

obv.

1 ʾ2¹ nu-banda₃ 0.0.1 kaš ʾninda¹-ʾta¹
 2 5 ugula ġeš₂-da 4 sila₃ kaš ninda-ʾta¹
 3 [(60×4³)]+ʾ60¹+10×2 aga₃-us₂ lu₂ a-gar₅
 4 [kaš] ʾninda¹ 2 sila₃-ta
 5 [...] ʾkaš¹ 0.0.1 5 sila₃ ninda
 [...] (ca. half of the tablet lost)

rev.

[...] (ca. half of the tablet lost)
 1ʾ [...] ʾkaš¹ 0.0.ʾ2¹ ʾ2¹ [sila₃ ninda]
 2ʾ [lu₂] ʾa¹-gar₅ u₃ NIM
 3ʾ 0.0.ʾ2¹ kaš ninda nar gala uri₅^{ki}-ma
 4ʾ šu+niġin₂ 0.2.5 8 sila₃ kaš DU
 5ʾ šu+niġin₂ 0.3.0 9 sila₃ ninda
 6ʾ zi-ga ša₃ ga-eš₅^[ki]
 7ʾ iti a₂-ki-ti šu-ʾnumun¹
 8ʾ mu dumu-munus lugal ensi₂ /
 za-ab-ša-li^{ki}-ke₄ ba-an-tuku

o.¹ Two colonels at ten *sila* of beer (and) ten *sila* of bread each.

o.² Five officers in charge of sixty men (each) at four *sila* of beer (and) four *sila* of bread each.

o.³⁻⁴ [(Two hundred and forty²)]+eighty elite soldiers, men of Agar, at two *sila* of [beer] (and) two *sila* of bread each.

o.⁵ [x *sila*] of beer (and) fifteen *sila* of bread [...]

r.^{1'-2'} [x] *sila* of beer (and) twenty-two [*sila* of bread]: (for) [the men] of Agar and the highlanders.

r.^{3'} Twenty *sila* of beer (and) twenty *sila* of bread: (for) the singers (and) the lamentation priests of Ur.

r.^{4'} Total: 178 *sila* of ordinary beer.

r.^{5'} Total: 189 *sila* of bread.

r.^{6'} Expenditure, in Gaeš.

r.^{7'} Month: Akiti (festival) of the sowing (season).

r.^{8'} Year: The ruler of Zabšali married (Tukīn-ħaṭṭi-migrīša,) the king's daughter.

Under the Third Dynasty of Ur, three major festivals dedicated to Nanna, the city god of Ur, were celebrated in the capital and in the cultic center of Karzida/Gaeš: the Akiti of the harvest and that of the sowing season, in the first and seventh months of the year, and the “sublime festival” (ezem-maḥ) in the tenth month (Sallaberger 1993: I 170–194). The most important of these was the autumn festival, the “Akiti of the seeding” (a₂-ki-ti šu-numun-na), which lasted between ten and twelve days. Ceremonies took place both at the main temple of Nanna at Ur and at the Akiti house of Karzida (“the true quay”) in Gaeš, a site located on a canal at some distance from the city.² Twice a year, in spring and autumn, the king participated in the Akiti festivals and accompanied the statue of the moon god Nanna on his journey by boat from Ur to his sanctuary in Gaeš. Banquets, musical performances, and athletic contests were held to entertain the king's guests. Members of the royal family also attended the festivals and contributed livestock from their

2. For the possible identification of Gaeš/Karzida with Tell Sakhariya, see Zimansky and Stone 2016: 57–66. A different view has been recently expressed by D'Agostino and Greco (2019: 472), who suggest to identifying Gaeš/Karzida with Tell Abu Tbeirah.

herds. Large amounts of foodstuffs and animals were collected from every province in the kingdom; these were used to make sacrifices and to feed the courtiers, dignitaries, high-ranking administrators, foreign emissaries, and military officers who took part in the state festivals. During the celebrations, the elite soldiers (aga₃-us₂) who towed the processional boat between Ur and Gaeš were provided with meat by the local branch of the royal redistribution center of Puzriš-Dagān (Sallaberger 1993: I 175–176, 187). The Ur text published here (U.30591), which dates to the month of the Akiti of the seeding (i.e., the seventh month) of Ibbi-Suen’s fifth regnal year, provides further evidence on the provisioning of the people involved in the celebrations. It records the distribution of beer and bread in Gaeš to singers and lamenters of the city of Ur, and, more importantly, to military officers, Elamite mercenaries, and dozens (if not hundreds)³ of elite soldiers. The soldiers and their superiors were certainly part of the royal guard that protected the king on his journeys or when he attended communal cultic events (Lafont 2009: 17 §7.5).

The fact that the aga₃-us₂-soldiers are designated here as lu₂ a-gar₅ deserves more attention. Although the meaning of the Sumerian word a-gar₅ (variant spellings: a-gar₃/a-bar₂),⁴ Akkadian *abāru*, is “lead,” literal translations such as “elite soldiers (who are) men of lead” or “elite soldiers (and) men of lead” seem most unlikely to us. First, a-gar₅ cannot refer to any metal objects carried by the soldiers as part of their equipment; because of its characteristics, lead is not a suitable material for any type of effective weapon or armor.⁵ Second, translating lu₂ a-gar₅ as a professional designation (a kind of metalworker or miner?) in conjunction with aga₃-us₂ makes little sense. Furthermore, it seems clear from the context that the label lu₂ a-gar₅ applies to the entire military unit here (i.e., the soldiers and their officers).⁶ On the basis of similar constructions expressing either the origin of elite soldiers (aga₃-us₂ lu₂ GN)⁷ or their subordination to a general

3. It would be reasonable to propose the restoration “[60×4]+60+10×2” (= 320 soldiers) at the beginning of obv. 3, based on the presence of two colonels, who usually led units of one hundred and fifty men each (Steinkeller 2017: 540 n. 14), and five captains, who, in this particular case, may have been in charge of sixty-four men each. Note, however, that the total amount of beer and bread expended on food provisions should have been much higher than 178 *sila* of ordinary beer and 189 *sila* of bread (rev. 4’–5’). Assuming that there were only eighty soldiers, the resulting totals would be too high (220+[x] *sila* of beer and 257 *sila* of bread) with respect to the individual totals preserved on the tablet. This fact may point to a computational error made by the scribe of the tablet. A possible alternative, which also takes into account the missing amounts recorded in the broken lines, is to propose that each entry recorded as *n kaš ninda-ta* refers to “(a total of) *n sila* of (both) beer (and) bread to each (of the recipients).” This may imply that an individual disbursement included equal parts of bread and beer. Such an interpretation of the scribal notation would result in 112+[x] *sila* of beer and 149 *sila* of bread, an overall quantity lower than the recorded grand totals.

4. See de Maaijer/Jagersma 1997–1998: 280–281 s.v. a-gar₅; Attinger 2021: 109 s.v. a-gar₅, ^aagar_x, ^aabar_x, “plomb.”

5. For ceremonial weapons made of lead used in ritual contexts, see CAD A/I, 36 s.v. *abāru* A; Reiter 1997: 144–145.

6. We exclude the possibility that lu₂ a-gar₅ should be equated with lu₂-lirum₍₃₎, “strong person, wrestler,” as a result of the confusion between *abāru*, “lead,” and *abāru*, “strength” (cf. Attinger 2021: 109 s.v. a-gar₅, ^aagar_x, ^aabar_x, “épreuve de force”; CAD A/I, 38 s.v. *abāru* B.). While the hypothesis of royal soldiers taking part in athletic games and wrestling competitions held during the Akiti festival(s) is attractive, it would fail to explain the mentions of lu₂ a-gar₅ in other, noncultic contexts. Likewise, although not impossible, it seems unlikely that (aga₃-us₂) lu₂ a-gar₅ may designate a new class of elite soldiers/bodyguards (“the strong men”), comparable, for instance, to the royal corps of the gar₃-du attested in the latter half of Amar-Suena’s reign almost exclusively in texts from Puzriš-Dagān (Patterson 2018: 345–353).

7. Cf. aga₃-us₂ lu₂ BAD₃.AN^{ki} (Mesopotamia 12, p. 94 D obv. 4; AUCT 2, 285 obv. 3); ¹aga₃-us₂ lu₂ li-ig-ri₂^{ki} (ZA 91, p. 209 obv. 2; also attested in an unpublished YBC text [museum number unknown], on which see Hallo 1978: 72 n. 16); aga₃-us₂ lu₂ mar-ḥa-šī^{ki} (Nik. 2, 484 obv. 5); aga₃-us₂ lu₂ sa-bu-um (TCTI 1, 682 rev. 7); aga₃-us₂ lu₂ šušin^{ki} (SAT 3, 2183 obv. 17); aga₃-us₃ lu₂ šu-ur₂-bu^{ki}-me (AUCT 3, 198 obv. ii 8); PN aga₃-us₂ lu₂ zi-mu-dar^{ki} (Ontario 1, 25 obv. 5).

(aga₃-us₂ lu₂ PN),⁸ we propose to understand lu₂ a-gar₅ in U.30591 as appositional to aga₃-us₂. However, rather than the name of a high-ranking military officer, a-gar₅ here might indicate a toponym lacking the geographical determinative.

The term lu₂ a-gar₅, invariably written without the semantic classifier ^{ki}, is rarely attested in the Ur III corpus. It occurs in the Umma document RIAA 86 (date not preserved), a large, fragmentary multicolumn account that records the disbursement of a wide array of foodstuffs, raw materials, and other goods. One of the entries in the text concerns an enormous amount of beer and bread (more than four hundred *gur*!) expended for “men of Ligri, men of Marḥaši, and men of Agar” (obv. iv 14': lu₂ li₂-ig-ri₂ lu₂ mar-ḥa-ši^{ki} u₃ lu₂ a-gar₅-me). Given the large volumes involved in the transaction, these individuals can hardly be identified as members of small delegations of foreign envoys and ambassadors who had been receiving food provisions during one of their (usually short) stays in southern Babylonia. Since units of aga₃-us₂ associated with all these places are known (see note 7), we suggest that the men recorded in RIAA 86, who were stationed at Umma and fed by the provincial economy, were either Babylonian soldiers from peripheral garrisons located at Ligri, Marḥaši, and Agar, or native troops from these polities, allied with the Ur III state, who were absorbed into the Babylonian army.⁹ One other text mentioning a lu₂ a-gar₅ confirms the strong association between this term and the military sector. The Cornell tablet CUNES 58-01-033 (ŠS.09.01.23), recently published by David Owen (Studies Sasson, p. 257 no. 3), originates from the GARšana archives. It records a “delivery of/for Simat-Ištarān” (mu-ku_x ME-^dištaran), which included turtles, baskets of fish, and animals collected by her own administrators and redirected to Nippur, the city where the princess and her husband, the general Šu-Kabta, had one of their residences (Heimpel 2009: 3).¹⁰ The three providers of the commodities were colonels Abu-tāb and Imid-aḥi,¹¹ along with Šu-Erra, the “man of Agar,”¹² who contributed numerous fattened sheep and goats. While the correlation between the colonels and the rank of Šu-Kabta seems evident, the reason for the presence of a “man of Agar,” bearing an Akkadian personal name, at GARšana is less clear. Perhaps Šu-Erra was the representative of a foreign contingent from Agar temporarily stationed at the military camp of GARšana (Heimpel 2009: 2–5), or else Šu-Kabta, in his capacity as a general, had direct relations with people coming from that locality, probably military colonists settled at Agar. If we are correct that Agar is a toponym, as here supposed, it would be tempting to seek its location in the vicinity of Ligri and, more importantly, the land of Marḥaši, in southeastern Iran. However, the fact that the three toponyms are listed

8. Cf., e.g., PN aga₃-us₂ lu₂ ḥu-ba-a (JCS 11, p. 77 obv. 4). See also the analogous expressions (PN) aga₃-us₂ lu₂ DUN-a PN, “(PN), elite soldier, subordinate of PN,” or (PN) aga₃-us₂ PN, “(PN), elite soldier of PN,” always referring to well-known generals.

9. Note that, in the same text, distinct groups of soldiers and military officers, including Amorite *ugula ḡeš₂-da* (obv. ii 15') and aga₃-us₂ (obv. iii 22'), are mentioned.

10. Other GARšana tablets recording goods delivered to Simat-Ištarān and documenting transactions connected with other units of her household, located in Ur and Uruk, are the following: Studies Sasson, p. 253, no. 2 (mu-ku_x ME-^dištaran; ša₃ uri^{ki}-ma; ŠS.09.07.07); Studies Sasson, p. 261, no. 4 (mu-ku_x ME-^dištaran; ša₃ unu^{ki}-ga; ŠS.09.11.00). Cf. also BPOA 8, p. 185 no. 4 (mu-[ku_x ME-^dištaran]; ša₃ [...] ŠS.09.XX.00).

11. For Abu-tāb (and his wife Abī-nurī), see the texts Babyl. 7, pl. 21 no. 13 (obv. 1; Puzriš-Dagān); Trouville 25 (rev. ii' 2; Puzriš-Dagān); CUSAS 3, 188 (obv. 8'; GARšana); CUSAS 3, 189 (obv. 15; GARšana); CUSAS 3, 193 (obv. 18; GARšana); CUSAS 3, 507 (obv. 10; GARšana); CUSAS 40-2, 841 (obv. 5–6; GARšana); Studies Pomponio, p. 215 no. 9 (obv. 2; GARšana); TCTI 2, 4186 (obv. 16, rev. 1; Ġirsu/Lagaš). The colonel Imid-aḥi is attested in AAICAB 1/1, Ashm. 1932-529 (rev. iii 22', spelled as im-da-ḥi; Puzriš-Dagān); MVN 8, 115 (obv. 9, spelled as im-da-ḥi; Puzriš-Dagān); JCS 57, p. 31 (obv. ii 15; GARšana?); CUSAS 40-2, 1545 (rev. 1; GARšana?).

12. Erroneously read as lu₂ i7(A.AMBAR) by Owen. The sign after A is a clear GUG₂.

together in RIAA 86 is not by itself indicative of their geographical proximity, and their grouping in the same line does not necessarily prove that they were situated in neighbouring regions.¹³ What is important to note here is that, further down in U.30591, a clear distinction is made between a second group of men from Agar and some “highlanders, Elamite mercenaries” (rev. 2': [lu₂] ṛa¹-gar₅ u₃ NIM), a designation that, at times, was even applied to people coming from Marḥašian territory, which was probably considered to be part of the Greater Elam (Zadok 2019: 84). Thus, from a Babylonian viewpoint, the men of Agar were not “Elamites.” Although the problem of its location cannot be solved with the data currently available, Agar must have been situated in an area that was still under Babylonian control in the year Ibbi-Suen 5, at a time when the peripheral territories had already been lost, strategic cities had declared their independence (Ešnuna) or had been conquered by the Šimaškians (Susa), and some of the most important provinces (Umma and Ġirsu/Lagaš) were about to break away from the Ur III kingdom. Similar considerations can be made about the NIM mentioned in our text, who, as guests of the king of Ur, must have come from an allied Iranian polity (Zabšali?).¹⁴

Text 2 (U.11044)

Date: IS.05.06.00

Provenience: Ur

Measurements: 35 × 30 mm

Photo: www.ur-online.org/subject/10963/

obv.

1 10 ^ug²ṛša₃¹-ga-du₃ / NIM DU ḡi₆

2 mu lu₂ a-gar₅-ke₄-ne-še₃

3 zi-ga

rev.

1 [iti] ṛezem¹-ṛ^dnin¹-ṛa¹-ṛzu¹

2 ṛmu¹ ṛdumu¹-munus ṛlugal¹ /

ṛensi₂¹ za-ab-/[ša]-ṛli¹-ke₄ /

[ba-an]-ṛtuku¹

o. 1-2 Ten Elamite-style(?) black loin-bands of ordinary quality, on behalf of the men of Agar.

o. 3 Expenditure.

r. 1 [Month]: Festival of Ninazu.

r. 2 Year: The ruler of Zab[ša]li [marr]ied (Tukīn-ḥaṭṭi-migrīša,) the king's daughter.

Another text, U.11044, shows that a delegation from Agar was already present at Ur one month before the beginning of the celebrations of the Akiti of the sowing season in the year Ibbi-Suen 5. A particular type of loin-band made of black wool, otherwise undocumented, was provided to what may have been a group of ten lu₂ a-gar₅. As demonstrated by MVN 3, 331, dated to the first month of Ibbi-Suen 5, garments were regularly issued at Ur for activities related to the Akiti festivals. In that text, first-quality garments were allotted to boxers and wrestlers in the courtyard of the Akiti house (obv. 2-3: ḡešba₂^{ba} lirum₃ kisal ša₃ a₂-ki-ti uri₅^{ki}-ma), where athletic competitions were held.

13. Almost nothing can be said about the precise location of Ligri, another poorly documented toponym, except that, in tablets dating between Šu-Suen 1 and Šu-Suen 2, it is associated with Ḥuḥnuri (Tappēh Bormi, near Ramhormoz) and Marḥaši, two places situated at a considerable distance from one another (Lafont 2002).

14. Note that, before Ibbi-Suen 5, the last “Elamites” mentioned in the Ur III records are the NIM of Susa and AdamDUN, attested in three texts from Umma and Ġirsu/Lagaš dated to Ibbi-Suen 3 (BPOA 1, 126; Nik. 2, 340; SNAT 200).

2. The last messenger text from Ġirsu/Lagaš and the fall of Susa

Text 3 (BM 23446)

Date: IS.05.06.00

Provenience: Ġirsu/Lagaš

Measurements: 40 × 36 × 15 mm

Photo: BDTNS no. 043235

obv.

1 ʾ0.1.3ʾ kaš ʾDUʾ

2 0.1.3 6 sila₃ dabin3 ʾNIMʾ dab₅-ba-me

4 ʾ0.1.0ʾ kaš 0.1.0 ninda

5 ʾaga₃¹-us₂ dumu šušin^{ki}-ʾme¹

rev.

1 [...]-ʾx¹-me2 [...]+3 sila₃ ninda

(ca. three lines erased)

3ʾ ʾzi¹-ga4ʾ iti ʾezem¹-^ddumu-ʾzi¹

5ʾ [mu] dumu-munus [lugal] /

[ensi₂ za-ab]-ša-li^{ki} [ba]-/an-ʾtuku¹o. 1-3 Ninety *silā* of ordinary beer (and) ninety-six *silā* of semolina: (for) the conscripted highlanders.o. 4-5 Sixty *silā* of beer (and) sixty *silā* of bread: (for) the elite soldiers, citizens of Susa.

r. 1 [...]: (for) the [...]

r. 2 [... of beer] (and) [x]+3 *silā* of bread [...]

r. 3ʾ Expenditure.

r. 4ʾ Month: Festival of Dumuzi.

r. 5ʾ [Year]: The [ruler of Zab]šali married (Tukīn-ḥaṭṭi-migrīša), the [king's] daughter.

BM 23446 can be considered the last messenger text from Ġirsu/Lagaš recovered so far.¹⁵ The tablet dates to the sixth month of Ibbi-Suen's fifth regnal year, that is, only one month before the latest known text stemming from the local institutional archives (PPAC 5, 1376; IS.05.07.00) and, more importantly, five years after the network of road stations used by military personnel and couriers had essentially ceased to operate (Notizia 2009: 22).¹⁶ The text records the disbursement of beer, bread, and semolina for two groups of recipients: (1) a contingent of conscripted "Elamites" of unknown provenience, who were most likely employed as mercenary troops; and (2) a group of elite soldiers native to Susa.¹⁷ The latter information is extremely important for the historical reconstruction of the last years of the Ur III kingdom. Recent studies have speculated that Yabrat of Šimaški had probably occupied the entire Susiana around the third or fourth year of Ibbi-Suen's reign (Steinkeller 2007: 222–223; De Graef 2015: 296). In the light of these events, the date of our text seems to suggest that military troops stationed at Ġirsu/Lagaš, which comprised exiled citizens

15. Although BM 23446 appears as text no. 76 in the catalogue of the cuneiform tablets published in Nisaba 22, its transliteration was mistakenly omitted and no. 76 instead assigned to SM 1895.01.038, a tablet kept at the Harvard Museum of the Ancient Near East (Notizia 2009: 193, 196). According to the information provided in the CBT 3 catalogue (Sigrist/Zadok/Walker 2006), the unpublished tablet BM 27892, a messenger text from Ġirsu/Lagaš mentioning the highlander Tan-Upe, dates to two years later (IS.07.06.00). So far we have been unable to verify this information.

16. At Umma, the most recent tablet from the local institutional archives is a messenger text (CUSAS 40-2, 1136; IS.05.08.00). Here, the provisioning of traveling officials by the provincial economy is documented uninterruptedly from Šulgi 46 to the end of Ibbi-Suen 2 (Pomponio 2018: 7), with a gap of three years between Nisaba 27, 26 (IS.02.12.00) and CUSAS 40-2, 1136 (IS.05.08.00).

17. For the meaning of NIM in the Ur III sources, see Michalowski 2008; Notizia 2009: 37–45; Patterson 2018: 426–444. Soldiers of Susa (aga₃-us₂ lu₂ šušin^{ki}) are also attested in SAT 3, 2183 (date not preserved) obv. 17, a text of unknown provenience.

of Susa and foreigners incorporated into what was left of the Babylonian army, were mustered in order to retake the city from Yabrat. This operation may have been part of the broader strategy Ibbi-Suen designed to respond to the attack, which also included a dynastic marriage between his daughter, Tukīn-ḫaṭṭi-migrīša, and the ruler of Zabšali (commemorated in the year formula Ibbi-Suen 5), aimed at forging a military alliance against their common enemy. The last king of Ur may have eventually succeeded in recapturing Susa. Only a few years later, he was able to launch a military operation against Ḫuḫnuri, an action that would not have been logistically possible without full control of the main center of the Susiana plain (Steinkeller 2007: 223 n. 31). Evidence from administrative texts also reveals that part of the local population sided with Yabrat in the early phases of the Šimaškian invasion. According to SNAT 200 and BPOA 1, 126, dated to months six and seven of Ibbi-Suen 3, some of the rebels were mutilated (si₁₂-a, “blinded”) and brought to Ĝirsu/Lagaš as prisoners of war.

SNAT 200 (IS.03.06.00)

obv.

1 [x.x.x] zu₂-lum

2 NIM si₁₂-a / dumu šušin^{ki}-ke₄

3 šu ba-ab-ti

rev.

1 zi-ga

2 ki ur-ab-^rba¹-ta

BLANK SPACE

3 [iti ezem]-^ddumu-zi

4 [mu si-mu]-^rru¹-um^{ki} ba-ḫulu

BPOA 1, 126 (IS.03.07.00)

obv.

1 0.1.0 zu₂-lum

2 NIM si₁₂-a šušin^{ki}-ta ḡen-na

3 šu ba-ab-ti

4 ḡiri₃ lu₂-^dnin-šubur

rev.

1 zi-ga

2 iti ezem-^dšul-gi

3 mu si-mu-ru-um^{ki} ba-ḫulu

Interestingly, although Susa had been part of the kingdom since the reign of Ur-Namma, the local rebels were designated as “blinded highlanders” by the scribe(s) of the two texts, who used a term (NIM) that was normally reserved for the inhabitants of vassal states and allied polities located in or east of the Zagros mountains and only exceptionally in the Susiana region (Michalowski 2008: 121; Zadok 2019). In this context, the choice of the ethnonym NIM to describe the citizens of Susa might have been intentional and may reflect the change of status of former subjects of the kingdom.

Assuming a daily food allowance of 1 to 2 *sila* of beer, bread, and semolina per person for the Elamite auxiliary troops (Patterson 2018: 433–434), and 1 to 5 *sila* for the elite soldiers (ibid.: 617–624; cf. Brunke 2013: 298–300), the provisions recorded in BM 23446 would have sufficed to feed 48 to 96 highlanders and 12 to 60 aḡa₃-us₂-soldiers.

3. Subarean and Šimaškian prisoners of war at Ĝirsu/Lagaš

Text 4 (BM 109604)

Date: ŠS.03.07.00

Provenience: Ĝirsu/Lagaš

Measurements: 28 × 25 × 14 mm

Photo: BDTNS no. 068825

Bibliography: Garfinkle 2014: 362 (reference)

obv.

1 10×2 la₂ 1 ġuruš 10 gin₂ / i₃-ta2 i₃-bi 3 sila₃ 10 gin₂3 i₃-ba su-bir_x¹(BI)-a

4 nam-ra-ak-me

rev.

BLANK SPACE

1 zi-ga

2 iti ezem-^d[šul]-/gi3 mu us₂-sa ma₂-^rdara₃¹/abzu ba-ab-^rdu₈¹o. 1-2 Nineteen men at ten shekels of oil each; the oil (amounts to) three *sila* and ten shekels.

o. 3-4 Oil distribution (for) the “Subareans,” prisoners of war.

r. 1 Expenditure.

r. 2 Month: Festival of [Šul]gi.

r. 3 Year following (the year): (Enki’s) boat, (called) “the Ibex of the Abzu,” was caulked.

This text records a monthly allocation of anointing oil to a group of prisoners of war (nam-ra-ak-me),¹⁸ who are further qualified as SU.BIA. We interpret BI as a graphic error for ŠIM and the sign sequence SU.BIA as su-bir_x¹(BI)-a, “Subareans,” a general designation for “northerners.” In Ur III texts, the term referring to the land of Subir/Subartu and to its inhabitants appears under different writings, almost exclusively in personal names.¹⁹ When copies and/or photos of the relevant tablets are available, the sign bir_x tends to appear as ŠIM (KWU 752) or, less frequently, as ŠIM×ĜAR (KWU 758).²⁰ To the best of our knowledge, the spelling su-bir₄-a (bir₄ = EDIN = KWU 753) is attested only in the following personal names: (1) su-bir₄-a (MVN 7, 206 obv. 3, no copy/photo available; UET 3, 336 obv. 4); (2) su-bir₄-ki-aġ₂ (SET 322/323 obv. 3, no copy/photo available).

Who were these prisoners of war from the northern territories? Since our text is dated to the third year of Šu-Suen’s reign, i.e., the year following the Šimanum revolt, it is safe to assume that the nineteen men mentioned in BM 109604 had been captured during the military expedition led by the king of Ur in the upper reaches of the Tigris, where Šimanum was most likely located, and were forcibly brought to Babylonia to be employed as laborers. The ethnic label su-bir_x¹(BI)-a, “Subareans, northerners,” does not necessarily refer only to men of Šimanum here;²¹ it may also designate people from Ḥabura, Mardaman, and other locales targeted by the Babylonian army during Šu-Suen’s campaign in northern Mesopotamia.²² According to royal inscriptions and archival documentation, the prisoners of war from the Šimanum campaign were relocated to newly established settlements in the vicinity of Nippur and elsewhere in the country, including Ĝirsu/Lagaš, while others were deported to the Šimašġian territories (Sallaberger 2007: 442–443).²³

18. For oil allotments in third-millennium Babylonia, see Gelb 1965: 233–235; Waetzoldt 1987: 127.

19. Cf. the spelling šu-bir_x-a in Nisaba 32, 176, a tablet belonging to the “Aradġu archive,” and su₄-bir₉-a in NATN 265, a sale document from Nippur.

20. For the writing su-bir_x(ŠIM×ĜAR)-a see, e.g., AAICAB 1/1, Ashm. 1911-482 obv. 8 (personal name), as well as two post-Ur III year formulae ascribed to the reign of Nur-aġum of Ešnuna (Jacobsen in Frankfort/Lloyd/Jacobsen 1940, 140–141 nos. 42–43) that document the defeat of Subir/Subareans (su-bir_x-a, without geographical determinative ^{ki}) by the god Tišpak. For the various writings of Subir/Subarean in Sargonic and pre-Sargonic texts, see Bartash 2018: 266–267.

21. As an ethnic designation, su-bir_x-a appears again in the following sale documents: UET 3, 41 (IS.19.06.00; Ur) obv. 3 (a₂-ar-bu-uk-ša¹[GAR₃] su-bir_x-<a>; name of one of the sellers); NATN 265 (IS.03.04.00; Nippur) obv. 1-3 (1 saġ-munus su₄-bir₉-a e-li₂-ša-šar-ru-um mu-ne-im; name of a slave woman). Cf. also MVN 12, 203 (Š.47.01.00; Ĝirsu/Lagaš) obv. 5 (šeš-kal-la ŠUBUR; cited by Huber 2001: 204 n. 154).

22. For the distinction between a “Greater Subartu,” extending from the Amanus range to the Zagros mountains, and “Subartu proper,” located to the north of the Diyala region and east of the Tigris, see Steinkeller 1998: 77.

23. It has been suggested that the so-called Aradġu archive, which contains many references to “men of Šimanum,” may stem from a site in the Nippur region closely related to one of these settlements (Studevent-Hickman 2018: 47–48).

Text 5 (BM 109752)

Date: 00.03.00

Provenience: Ġirsu/Lagaš

Measurements: 39 × 30 × 18 mm

Photo: BDTNS no. 068947

Bibliography: Garfinkle 2014: 362 (reference);

Steinkeller 2014: 293 n. 49 (transliteration; translation)

obv.

1 ʾ0.1.0¹ kaš 0.1.0 ninda

2 1 sila₃ i₃-ġiš

3 NIM ia₃-ab-ra-/at^{ki}-me

4 10×3+2 ġuruš / kaš ninda 4 sila₃-ta

rev.

1 2 gin₂ i₃-ta

2 lu₂ ma₂-gal-gal / nam-ra-ak-me

3 ši-ma-aš-ki-ta / du-ne-ne

4 ġiri₃ ku-u₃ ra-gaba / u₃-ba-a

up.e. ʾiti¹ ezem-^dli₉-si₄

^{o. 1} Sixty *сила* of beer, sixty *сила* of bread, ^{o. 2} (and) one *сила* of sesame oil: ^{o. 3} (for) the highlanders (of the land of) Yabrat.

^{o. 4} Thirty-two men at four *сила* of beer, four *сила* of bread, (and) ^{r. 1} two shekels of (sesame) oil each: ^{r. 2} (for) the men of big ships (of) prisoners of war. ^{r. 3} (When) they came from Šimaški, ^{r. 4} via Ku'u, courier²⁴ of Uba'a.

^{up.e} Month: Festival of Lisi.

A group of Elamite mercenaries²⁵ from the land of the Šimaškian ruler Yabrat is recorded in this text. Although the precise location of Yabrat's kingdom is unknown, it probably constituted the original core area of the Šimaškian lands (Steinkeller 2014: 293). As in the case of the text discussed here, Babylonian scribes often used his personal name followed by the geographical classifier ^{ki} to designate Yabrat's territorial possessions.²⁶ Yabrat is also known to have been one of the main allies of the kings of Ur and the major provider of Elamite soldiers to the Ur III state, followed by the polities of Anšan and Kimaš.²⁷

In BM 109752, the highlander mercenaries of Yabrat traveled from Šimaški to Ġirsu/Lagaš together with the personnel of seafaring ships (lit. "men of large boats") in charge of prisoners of war of unspecified origin and number. Since the conveyor of the food provisions was a courier of Uba'a, the governor of AdamDUN,²⁸ the following reconstruction of the journey can be proposed. After the mercenaries arrived in the Susiana region from Šimaškian territory with the prisoners of war, the party sailed down the Karun river to the Persian Gulf. From there, they followed the sea

24. For the interpretation of ra(2)-gaba as a courier traveling by boat, see Such-Gutiérrez 2015.

25. Between 30 and 60 individuals at 1 to 2 *сила* of beer and bread and 3 to 6 shekels of sesame oil per person per day (see the commentary on the text BM 23446 above).

26. Steinkeller 2007, 218 n. 15. This practice is also attested for Ĥulibar of Duḥduḥ(u)NI and Ziringu of Zabšali (Notizia 2010: 276 n. 40).

27. Notizia 2009: 40; Patterson 2018: 427–428. Note that Anšan had probably been under Yabrat's control since late in the reign of Šulgi (Steinkeller 2007: 223–227). We assume that the toponym Šimaški, when associated with highlander troops (NIM) in the Ġirsu/Lagaš messenger texts, refers to the kingdom of Yabrat and not to the entire confederation of Šimaškian principalities. In this regard, it is noteworthy that, on some occasions, groups of Elamites of Šimaški appear together with Elamites of Anšan in the same entry (e.g., NIM ši-ma-aš-ki u₃ NIM an-ša-an^{ki}-me), thus implying a connection between the two political entities (Notizia 2009: 41 n. 108).

28. Steinkeller 2014: 293 n. 49. For Uba'a, see Michalowski 2008: 114–121. For the possible reading of the toponym a-dam-DUN^{ki}, see Schrakamp 2014.

route that ran along the coast to Guabba, the main port of the Ur III kingdom.²⁹ Although the text lacks a year date, the trip described in BM 109752 may be related to the Šimaškian campaign of king Šu-Suen, against the anti-Babylonian coalition led by the ruler of Zabšali, which took place in Šu-Suen's sixth regnal year and was celebrated in the year formula Šu-Suen 7. The involvement of his men in the transportation of Šimaškian prisoners would also provide further confirmation of Yabrat's active participation in the military operations on Šu-Suen's side, as already suggested by Piotr Steinkeller (2007: 227).

4. Highland sheep, royal sons, and the herds of Šulgi-simī

Text 6 (BM 108952)

Date: Š.44.00.00

Provenience: Ġirsu/Lagaš

Measurements: 91 × 44 × 23 mm

Photo: BDTNS no. 169389

Bibliography: Molina 2013: 133 n. 89 (reference)

obv.

- 1 7 ma-na siki tug₂ lugal
- 2 10+3 ²/₃ ma-na siki tug₂ / us₂ lugal
- 3 3 gu₂ 10×3+5 ma-na siki tug₂ 3-kam us₂
- 4 7 gu₂ siki tug₂ 4-kam us₂
- 5 8 gu₂ siki tug₂ 5-kam / us₂
- 6 2 gu₂ 10+3 ma-na / siki ur₃

rev.

- 1 šu+niġin₂ 10×2+1 gu₂ 8 ²/₃ /
ma-na siki ħi-a
- 2 siki udu ħi.ħi igi-nim-ma
- 3 siki udu ^dšul-gi-si₂-im-ti
- 4 ugula nu-i-da šuš₃
- 5 ġiri₃ an-na-bi₂-kuš₂
- 6 ša-lim-a-ħu-um
- 7 šu-^dsuen di-ku₅
- 8 u₃ ur-^dnanna dumu lugal-ka
- 9 mu a-ra₂ 10 la₂ 1-kam-aš /
si-mu-ru-um^{ki} / u₃ lu-lu-bu-um^{ki} /
ba-ħulu

o. ¹ Seven minas of wool (for) first-quality textiles, o. ² thirteen and two-thirds minas of wool (for) second-quality textiles, o. ³ three talents and thirty-five minas of wool (for) third-quality textiles, o. ⁴ seven talents of wool (for) fourth-quality textiles, o. ⁵ eight talents of wool (for) fifth-quality textiles, o. ⁶ two talents and thirty minas of coarse wool.³⁰

r. ¹ Total: twenty-one talents, eight and two-thirds minas of assorted wool.

r. ² Wool of ... highland sheep.

r. ³⁻⁴ Wool of the sheep (belonging to) Šulgi-simī; the overseer (is) Nuida, livestock administrator.

r. ⁵⁻⁸ The conveyors (are): Anabikuš, Šalim-ahum, the judge Šu-Suen, and the king's son Ur-Nanna.

r. ⁹ Year: Simurum and Lullubum were defeated for the ninth time.

BM 108952 belongs to a lot of 125 cuneiform tablets from various periods that were sold to the British Museum in 1914 by Albert Amor on behalf of the previous owner, antiquities dealer Bernard Maimon (Verderame 2010: 397; Garrison/Jones/Stolper 2018: 2).³¹ Jean-Vincent Scheil, who had prepared a catalogue of the Maimon collection in 1911, published a brief description of

29. On the riverine traffic between the Susiana region and southern Babylonia, see Steinkeller 2013: 297 with previous literature.

30. There are only a few attestations of this type of wool, in texts from Ġirsu/Lagaš and Ur (Waetzoldt 1972: 60).

31. Garrison, Jones, and Stolper (2018: 2) speak of "166 or more items, including Ur III, Old Babylonian, Old Assyrian, Standard Babylonian, and Late Babylonian documents stemming from Sippar, Kish, Assur, and other sites."

the text (labeled as A.11) in 1915 while discussing some documents related to the “dame Dungi-zimti” (Scheil 1915: 129).³² Of BM 108952/A.11, Scheil says that “En la même année [= Šulgi 44], Dungi-zimti dépose une riche liste de lainages pour étoffes, de diverses qualités, par les mains de Sin-daïan [= šu-^dsuen di-ku₅] et de Ur-Nannar, fils du roi (collection Maimon, A.11).”

As correctly stated by Scheil, the text deals with a quantity of roughly 634.3 kg of wool from the herds of Šulgi-simtī, which was destined for manufacture into textiles of different qualities. The wool must have been collected from ca. 845 sheep, assuming an average production of 1.5 minas/0.75 kg of wool per sheep (Sallaberger 2014: 106 n. 54). The most interesting feature of BM 108952 is the description of the type of sheep that provided the wool: siki udu 𒄩.𒄩 igi-nim-ma. A similar designation, siki udu GUKKAL igi-nim-ma, “wool of fat-tailed, highland sheep,” occurs only in a handful of Ur III documents from Ur.³³ The reading and meaning of 𒄩.𒄩 are admittedly difficult to establish. One could certainly propose that, in this context, the reduplicated 𒄩 sign represents a cryptic writing of GUKKAL.³⁴ Another possibility, though highly speculative, would be to understand udu 𒄩.𒄩 as a learned spelling for udu lu₂-ulu₃-um/lu-lu-bu(-um), “Lullubean sheep,” a foreign breed native to the Zagros country of Lullubum, attested predominantly at Puzriš-Dagān (Steinkeller 1995: 53). The basis for this suggestion is found in three Ur III texts, two from Nippur and the other of unknown provenience, in which the toponym Lullubum, mentioned in the year formula of Šulgi 44, is spelled 𒄩.𒄩^{ki}/𒄩.𒄩-bu-um^(ki).³⁵ According to Finkel (2009: 19), the scribes of these texts, having in mind the correspondence between the Sumerian modal prefix /ḫē/ and the Akkadian particle *lū*, reduplicated the homophone sign 𒄩(𒄩) in place of the expected 𒄩₂(GAN). Nevertheless, this hypothesis also presents difficulties. First, the standard spelling of the geographical name lu-lu-bu-um^{ki} appears in the date formula at the end of our tablet. Second, no Lullubean sheep occur in Ur III texts before Šulgi 45, the year when Lullubum and Simurum were finally subdued by the king of Ur.³⁶ In view of the above considerations, one should remain cautious in assuming that the reduplicated 𒄩 in the sheep designation udu 𒄩.𒄩 igi-nim-ma corresponds to the nonstandard writing of the toponym Lullubum. Moreover, whatever the correct interpretation of udu 𒄩.𒄩 igi-nim-ma may be, it should be noted that the flock of highland sheep recorded in BM 108952 did not produce wool of the highest quality; in fact, more than seventy percent of its output belonged to the fourth and fifth classes. Such a high proportion speaks against the identification of udu 𒄩.𒄩 igi-nim-ma with udu GUKKAL igi-nim-ma, a breed that, in Ur III times, is known to have provided the best wool by far (Waetzoldt 1972: 62–66). Comparable percentages of low-grade product are also attested in AAICAB 1/2, Ashm. 1937-635 (date not preserved), a fragmentary Puzriš-Dagān account dealing with wool sourced from Šulgi-simtī’s herds. Here, however, the type of sheep is not specified.

Like all of Šulgi’s wives and other Ur III elite women, Šulgi-simtī was involved in herding and textile manufacture (Weiershäuser 200: 103–105; Sharlach 2017). She supervised a weaving establishment located in the city of Ur, which was run by a certain Qudāšum and his son Iddin-

32. Cf. Weiershäuser 2008: 104 n. 382.

33. UET 3, 1504 obv. iii 5; UET 3, 1505 obv. iii 16; UET 3, 1537 obv. 2. UET 3, 1538 obv. 2 reads instead siki udu igi-nim-ma, while U.16563 (BDTNS no. 071115) obv. 4 has siki ma-da igi-nim-ma, “wool (from the sheep) of the Upper Land.”

34. The reading of this word is unknown in Ur III times; see Sallaberger 2014: 104 n. 46 and Attinger 2021: 648 s.v. kuḡgala-n(?).

35. JCS 54, p. 3 no. 16 rev. 2–4; Idea of Writing, p. 18 (BDTNS no. 174601) rev. 2; NATN 697 rev. 2.

36. The earliest references to Lullubean sheep are the following: PPAC 5, 557 (Š.45.04.00; Ġirsu/Lagaš) obv. 5; BIN 3, 368 (Š.46.05.23; Puzriš-Dagān) obv. 3.

Erra, while part of her herds was kept within the territory of the Ĝirsu/Lagaš province (PPAC 5, 290 rev. ii 12–17). The closing lines of BM 108952 give the name of the livestock administrator who took care of the herds of Šulgi-simtī, Nuida, who is otherwise unattested in Ur III records. Four ĝiri₃ officials are mentioned in the text, including two individuals of high status: Anabikuš, Šalim-aḥum, Šu-Suen (identified as a judge),³⁷ and Ur-Nanna, one of Šulgi's sons. While Anabikuš is perhaps identical with a shepherd (na-gada) active in the Ĝirsu district in the second year of Amar-Suena's reign (TUT 36 rev. 9), Šalim-aḥum can be tentatively identified with the colonel (nu-banda₃) mentioned in the Puzuriš-Dagān tablet OIP 115, 159 (rev. 1), dated to Šulgi 43. Military officers, elite soldiers, couriers, judges, and princes routinely appear in texts related to the management of herds and, more specifically, to the plucking of wool (Molina 2013: 130–131; Notizia 2013: 215; Sallaberger 2014: 110–111). These officials attended the annual count of the animals, supervised inspection and sorting operations, and controlled the transport of the wool to its final destination. In the Ĝirsu/Lagaš institutional archives, this pattern is particularly evident in those texts concerning either the plucking of royal herds stationed within the province or the weighing of finished textiles produced in the Guabba royal workshop (see Table 4). On these occasions, the presence of royal and provincial representatives (princes, provincial governors, local and itinerant judges) certifying the correctness of the accounting procedures seems to have been mandatory. Based on the general structure of these Ĝirsu/Lagaš records, we suggest that BM 108952 originates from the same provincial archives.

| Qualitative classes | Quantity (kg) | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------|---------------|----------------|
| first-quality wool | 3.5 | < 1 |
| second-quality wool | 6.8 | ≅ 1 |
| third-quality wool | 107.5 | 16.9 |
| fourth-quality wool | 210 | 33.1 |
| fifth-quality wool | 240 | 37.8 |
| coarse wool | 66.5 | 10.4 |
| | 634.3 kg | 100% |

Table 2. Wool quality of the udu 𒂗.𒂗 igi-nim-ma flock attested in BM 108952

| Qualitative classes | Quantity (kg) | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------|---------------|----------------|
| first-quality wool | 14 | 2.2 |
| second-quality wool | 15.1 | 2.4 |
| third-quality wool | 89.5 | 14.3 |
| fourth-quality wool | 192 | 30.7 |
| fifth-quality wool | 315 | 50.3 |
| | 625.6 kg | 100% |

Table 3. Wool quality attested in AAICAB 1/2, Ashm. 1937-635

37. This person, who is not to be confused with the future king Šu-Suen, was probably a grandson of Šulgi (Molina 2013: 133 n. 89).

| <i>Text</i> | <i>Date</i> | <i>ġiri₃ official(s)</i> | <i>Subscript</i> |
|---------------|---------------------------------|--|---|
| BM 108952 | Š.44 | an-na-bi ₂ -kuš ₂ ša-lim-a-ĥu-um šu- ^d suen di-ku₅ ur- ^d nanna dumu lugal | siki udu 𒄩.𒄩 igi-nim-ma siki udu ^d šul-gi-si ₂ -im-ti ugula nu-i-da šuš₃ |
| BM 24954 | AS.04 | id-ni-in- ^d suen dumu lugal | udu GUKKAL gub-ba a-bi ₂ -si ₂ -im-ti ereš u ₃ ta ₂ -di ₃ -eš ₄ -tar ₂ dumu lugal ugula lugal-nir-ġal ₂ šuš₃ |
| HLC 2, 82 | AS.06 | IGI.A-a ra-gaba lu ₂ -di-ġir-ra di-ku₅ | siki udu a-bi ₂ -si ₂ -im-ti ugula ^d šara ₂ -kam ens₂ |
| TCTI 1, 729 | AS.07 | lugal-ĥe ₂ -ġal ₂ di-ku₅ | udu GUKKAL [e ₂ -gal] ugula ur- ^d nin-zu šuš₃ |
| DAS 51 | AS.08 | lugal-ĥe ₂ -ġal ₂ di-ku₅ | siki udu a-bi ₂ -si ₂ -im-ti ugula SI.A-a šuš₃ siki udu e ₂ -<<udu>>-gal ugula ur- ^d nin-zu (šuš₃) siki ta ₂ -din-eš ₄ -tar ₂ (dumu lugal) siki ur- ^d ištaran (dumu lugal) ugula ur- ^d ba-u ₂ (šuš₃) |
| DAS 53 | AS.08 | lugal-ĥe ₂ -ġal ₂ di-ku₅ | [udu] 𒄩 GUKKAL ¹ gub-ba 𒄩 ta ₂ ¹ -din-eš ₄ -tar ₂ dumu lugal u ₃ ur- ^d ištaran (dumu lugal) ugula ur- ^d ba-u ₂ šuš₃ |
| PPAC 5, 1697 | ŠS.06.03.16 | ur- ^d nanše dumu ur- ^d ig-alim ur- ^d ba-u ₂ di-ku₅ | tug ₂ ki-la ₂ tag-ga ša ₃ gu ₂ -ab-ba ^{ki} -ka nu-banda₃ lu ₂ -uš-ge-na |
| Nisaba 18, 34 | ŠS.09.09.00 | ur-[^d nanše dumu ur- ^d ig-alim] ur- ^d ba-[u ₂ di-ku₅] ur- ^d nin-mug 𒄩 dub-sar ¹ | 𒄩 tug ₂ ¹ ki-la ₂ 𒄩 tag ¹ -ga ša ₃ [gu ₂ -ab-ba ^{ki} -ka] nu-banda₃ [lu ₂ -uš-ge-na] |
| MVN 13, 19 | ŠS.08.07.22 – ŠS.09.10.25 | ur- ^d nanše dumu ur- ^d ig-alim ur- ^d ba-u ₂ di-ku₅ ur- ^d nin-mug dub-sar | tug ₂ ki-la ₂ tag-ga e ₂ uš-bar ^d lamma ^d šu- ^d suen ugula ur-e ₂ -an-na dumu lugal-dam nu-banda₃ lu ₂ -uš-ge-na |
| BPOA 1, 61 | ŠS.?.12.09 | ur- ^d ba-u ₂ di-ku₅ ur- ^d nin-mug dub-sar | tug ₂ ki-<la ₂ > tag-ga e ₂ uš-bar ^d šu- ^d suen ša ₃ gu ₂ -ab-ba ^{ki} -ka nu-banda₃ lu ₂ -uš-ge-na |

Table 4. Royal and provincial representatives involved in sheep plucking and textile weighing at Ġirsu/Lagaš

5. Two anomalous messenger texts and the toponym ^dutu-nu-zu

Text 7 (BM 15340)

Date: 00.11.00

Provenience: Ġirsu/Lagaš

Measurements: 89 × 50 × 24 mm

Photo: BDTNS no. 038889

Bibliography: Buccellati 1966: 35 (reference; partial transliteration)

obv.

- 1 0.2.0 dabin lugal 4 dug dida
 2 u₄ 1-kam u₄ 3-še₃
 3 lu₂-kiĝ₂-gi₄-a lugal
 4 u₃ lu₂-kas₄ ^dutu-nu-zu
 5 1 udu 0.0.2 zi₃-dub-dub
 6 0.0.1 niĝ₂-ar₃-ra imĝaĝa₃
 7 2 dug dida sig₅
 8 i₇ ^dutu-nu-zu
 9 0.2.0 dabin 5 dug dida DU
 10 sa₂-du₁₁ SIPA-si-in u₃ aga₃-us₂ lugal
 11 e₂ gul-de₃ du-ni
 12 10 lu₂-kas₄ 1 dug dida 0.0.2 zi₃-ta
 13 8 MAR.TU 1 dug dida 0.0.2 ^rzi₃¹-ta
 14 1 dug dida 0.0.2 dabin
 15 nam-ĥa-ni
 16 2 dug dida 0.0.4 ^rdabin¹
 17 i-di₃-li₂ sukkal
 18 ša₃-gal u₄ 10-kam
 19 2 dug dida 0.0.2 zi₃
 20 ur-DUN sukkal
 rev.
 1 a-ab-ba-še₃ du-ni
 2 1 dug dida 0.0.2 zi₃
 3 dumu lu₂-du₁₀-ga saĝĝa
 4 1 dug dida 0.0.2 zi₃
 5 šum-šum-mu
 6 1 dug dida 0.0.3 zi₃
 7 ur-^dbil₃-ga-mes lu₂-kas₄
 8 3 dug dida 0.0.3 zi₃ ša₃-gal u₄ 10-kam
 9 aga₃-us₂ lugal u₃ lu₂-la-ga šum₂-me
 10 3 dug dida 0.1.0 dabin
 11 DIĜIR^{li}-ta₂-kal₂ sukkal
 12 3 dug dida 0.1.0 dabin ša₃-gal u₄ 10-kam
 13 lu₂ i^l-pa₂-li₂-<is> lu₂-kas₄
 14 3 dug dida 0.1.0 zi₃ ša₃-gal u₄ 10-kam
 15 a-ab-ba-še₃ ku₆-še₃ du-ni
 16 2 sukkal 3 ^{dug}dida 0.1.0 zi₃-ta
 17 KA-saĥar-še₃ du-ne-ne
 18 10+5 NIM sa-bu-um^{ki}
 19 1 dug dida 0.0.1 zi₃-ta
 20 šu+niĝin₂ 5.0.1 dabin gur lugal
 21 šu+niĝin₂ 60+10+8 dug dida 0.0.2
 22 šu+niĝin₂ 1 (written over an erased še) udu u₂
 le.e. zi-ga
 iti še-KIN-ku₅

o. 1-4 One hundred and twenty *sila* of semolina (measured according to the) royal (standard) (and) four jugs of dry beer extract: the first day, for three days, (for) the royal envoy(s) and the messenger(s), (when they went to) Utu-nuzu.

o. 5-8 One sheep, twenty *sila* of flour for (ritual) sprinkling, ten *sila* of *imaĝaĝa*-groats, (and) two jugs of good dry beer extract: (offerings for) the Utu-nuzu canal.

o. 9-11 One hundred and twenty *sila* of semolina (and) five jugs of ordinary dry beer extract: food consignment (for) Rē'išin and the royal soldiers, (when) they went to demolish a house.

o. 12-13 (For) ten messengers, one jug of dry beer extract (and) twenty *sila* of flour each; (for) eight Amorites, one jug of dry beer extract (and) twenty *sila* of flour each;

o. 14-15 One jug of dry beer extract (and) twenty *sila* of flour: (for) Namḥani;

o. 16-17 Two jugs of dry beer extract (and) forty *sila* of flour: (for) Iddin-ilī, secretary;

o. 18 Provisions for ten days.

o. 19-r. 1 Two jugs of dry beer extract (and) twenty *sila* of flour: (for) Ur-DUN, secretary, (when) he went to the sea.

r. 2-3 One jug of dry beer extract (and) twenty *sila* of flour: (for) the son of Lu-duga, chief administrator.

r. 4-5 One jug of dry beer extract (and) twenty *sila* of flour: (for) Šumšumu.

r. 6-7 One jug of dry beer extract (and) thirty *sila* of flour: (for) Ur-Bilgames, messenger.

r. 8-9 Three jugs of dry beer extract (and) thirty *sila* of flour: provisions for ten days, (for) the royal soldiers and the onion thieves.

r. 10-11 Three jugs of dry beer extract (and) sixty *sila* of flour: (for) Iliš-takal, secretary.

r. 12-13 Three jugs of dry beer extract (and) sixty *sila* of semolina: provisions for ten days, (for) the man of Ippalis, messenger.

r. 14-15 Three jugs of dry beer extract (and) sixty *sila* of flour: provisions for ten days, (for) (*recipient not specified*), (when) he went to the sea for fish.

r. 16-17 (For) two secretaries: three jugs of dry beer extract (and) sixty *sila* of flour each, (when) they went to Kasaĥar.

r. 18-19 (For) fifteen highlanders (of) Sabum: one jug of dry beer extract (and) ten *sila* of flour each.

Text 8 (BM 98109)

Date: 00.11.00

Provenience: Ġirsu/Lagaš

Measurements: 84 × 49 × 23 mm

Photo: BDTNS no. 169239

obv.

- 1 1 dug dida DU
- 2 0.0.2 zi₃-gu lugal
- 3 šum-šum-mu sukkal
- 4 10 lu₂-kas₄ 0.0.3 zi₃ 1 dug dida-/ta
- 5 2 gala 0.0.3 zi₃ 1 dug dida-/ta
- 6 ġiri₃ nam-ħa-ni šeš lugal-/ma₂-gur₈-re
- 7 0.0.2 zi₃ DIĠIR-dan sukkal
- 8 ^dutu-nu-zu du-ni
- 9 0.0.1 zi₃-sig₁₅ 5 sila₃ dabin
- 10 5 sila₃ niġ₂-ar₃-ra imġaġa₃
- 11 1 udu niġ₂-sizkur₂-ra ^dutu-nu-zu
- 12 ġiri₃ lu₂-^dutu ra₂-gaba
- 13 3 sila₃ zi₃ 2 sila₃ imġaġa₃
- 14 a-ra₂ 1-kam

rev.

- 1 3 sila₃ zi₃ 2 sila₃ imġaġa₃
 - 2 a-ra₂ ʾ2¹-kam
 - 3 kun-zi-da ^dutu-nu-zu
 - 4 ġiri₃ ur-^dlugal-banda₃^{da}
 - 5 0.0.1 5 sila₃ zi₃ šu-i₃-li₂ sukkal
 - 6 0.0.1 5 sila₃ zi₃ DIĠIR.GAR₃ lu₂-kas₄
 - 7 ^dutu-nu-zu du-ne-ne
 - 8 0.1.2 zi₃ 2 dug dida a-ra₂ 1-kam
 - 9 0.1.2 zi₃ 2 dug dida a-ra₂ 2-kam
 - 10 0.1.2 ʾzi₃¹ 2 dug dida a-ra₂ 3-kam
 - 11 0.1.2 zi₃ 2 dug dida a-ra₂ 4-kam
 - 12 lu₂-kas₄-me
 - 13 ġiri₃ lu₂-^dutu ra₂-gaba
 - 14 ša₃ ^dutu-nu-zu
 - 15 0.1.0 še sipa anše sukkal-maħ
 - 16 ġiri₃ kas₄ dumu ur-^dištaran
-
- 17 šu+niġin₂ 2.4.1 9 sila₃ dabin
 - 18 šu+niġin₂ 10×2+1 dug dida DU
 - 19 šu+niġin₂ 1 udu

r. 20 Total: five *gur* and ten *sila* of semolina (measured according to the) royal (standard).

r. 21 Total: seventy-eight jugs of dry beer extract of twenty-*sila* capacity each.

r. 22 Total: one grass-fed sheep.

le.e. 1 Expenditure.

le.e. 2 Month: Reaping.

o. 1-3 One jug of ordinary dry beer extract (and) twenty *sila* of fine (barley) flour (measured according to the) royal (standard): (for) Šumšumu, secretary.

o. 4-6 (For) ten messengers: thirty *sila* of flour (and) one jug of dry beer extract each; (for) two lamentation priests: thirty *sila* of flour (and) one jug of dry beer extract each, via Namħani, brother of Lu-magure.

o. 7-8 Twenty *sila* of flour: (for) Ilum-dān, secretary, (when) he went to Utu-nuzu.

o. 9-12 Ten *sila* of emmer flour, five *sila* of semolina, five *sila* of *imaġaġa* groats, (and) one sheep: offerings (for) the Utu-nuzu (canal), via Lu-Utu, courier.

o. 13-r. 4 Three *sila* of flour (and) two *sila* of *imaġaġa* groats, the first time, three *sila* of flour (and) three *sila* of *imaġaġa* groats, the second time: offerings (for) the weir of the Utu-nuzu (canal), via Ur-Lugal-banda.

r. 5-7 Fifteen *sila* of flour: (for) Šu-ilī, secretary; fifteen *sila* of flour: (for) DIĠIR.GAR₃, messenger, (when) they went to Utu-nuzu.

r. 8-14 Twelve *sila* of flour (and) two jugs of dry beer extract the first time; twelve *sila* of flour (and) two jugs of dry beer extract the second time; twelve *sila* of flour (and) two jugs of dry beer extract the third time; twelve *sila* of flour (and) two jugs of dry beer extract the fourth time: (for) the messengers, via Lu-Utu, courier, at Utu-nuzu.

r. 15-16 Sixty *sila* of barley: (for) the donkey herder of the chancellor, via (En)kas, son of Ur-Ištaran.

r. 17 Total: two *gur* and 259 *sila* of semolina.

le.e. zi-ga

iti še-KIN-ku₅

r. 18 Total: twenty-one jugs of ordinary dry beer extract.

r. 19 Total: one sheep.

le.e. 1 Expenditure.

le.e. 2 Month: Reaping.

The messenger texts from Ĝirsu/Lagaš are usually of very small size (Notizia 2009: 20). BM 15340 and BM 98109 are instead large, oblong tablets containing forty-four and thirty-five lines of text, respectively. Their measurements range from 84 to 89 mm in length and 49 to 50 mm in width, with a thickness of 23 to 24 mm. For this reason, they can be considered as the largest messenger texts from Ĝirsu/Lagaš known so far.³⁸ Both documents have the administrative term zi-ga, “expenditure,” and the month name iti še-KIN-ku₅ written on the left edge, arranged in two lines at the uppermost part of the edge, most likely for filing and referencing purposes.³⁹ Another unique feature of these tablets is the presence of totals (šu+niĝin₂) at the end of the text, a distinctive characteristic of the Umma messenger texts, otherwise undocumented at Ĝirsu/Lagaš. The atypical size and shape of BM 15340 and BM 98109 and the unusual choice of terminology indicate that these tablets were prepared by scribes who did not follow the traditional format or vocabulary of the texts produced at other road stations of the Ĝirsu/Lagaš province. They are the only preserved examples of a previously unknown sub-type of messenger tablets that resembles the large errand records of Irisaĝrig (Owen 2013: 128).⁴⁰

The tablets register daily disbursements of various foodstuffs to messengers, royal envoys, priests, elite soldiers, and the thieves in their custody, as well as to Amorites and Elamite mercenaries. Most of the recipients (and their missions and destinations) are mentioned multiple times in other messenger texts from Ĝirsu/Lagaš. This is the case, for instance, of the courier Rē’išin and a group of royal soldiers who were assigned the task of demolishing a house at Lagaš. They are also attested in the undated text BPOA 2, 1921.

BM 15340 (00.11.00)

obv.

9 0.2.0 dabin 5 dug dida DU

10 sa₂-du₁₁ SIPA-si-in u₃ aga₃-us₂ lugal11 e₂ gul-de₃ du-ni

BPOA 2, 1921 (undated)

obv.

1 7 aga₃-us₂ lugal2 2 sila₃ kaš 2 sila₃ ninda-ta3 u₄ 3-kam4 aga₃-us₂ lugal5 e₂ gul-de₃ ĝen-na6 ša₃ lagaš^{ki}

rev.

1 1 [dug] dida sig₅

2 1 dug dida DU

3 0.0.5 dabin lugal

4 sa₂-du₁₁ ri-ši-in ra₂-gaba

38. Another such nonstandard messenger tablet is, e.g., Nisaba 22, 104 (82 × 35 × 21 mm; forty-two lines of text).

39. For left-edge inscriptions in texts from Puzriš-Dagān and their possible use as an aids for archiving tablets, see Tsouparopoulou 2015: 50–52.

40. See, e.g., Nisaba 15/2, 1018 (80 × 41 mm; thirty-eight lines of text). Unfortunately, the measurements of published messenger texts from Irisaĝrig are often lacking.

Only the secretary named Šumšumu, who appears in both texts, is otherwise unattested in the entire corpus of Ur III archival documents. Oddly enough, an official of the Umma administration, Enkas, son of Ur-Ištarān, who was mainly involved in the management of sheep and goats within his province, appears as a conveyor of barley for the donkey herder of the state chancellor.⁴¹ Unless we are dealing with a case of homonymy here, the reason behind his presence in one of our texts remains obscure—unless we assume that the road station where BM 15340 and BM 98109 were drafted was situated in the border area between the two provinces, thus serving both administrations and employing scribes influenced by the accounting conventions of their respective provinces of origin. This could explain both the presence of an Ummaite official in a Ĝirsu/Lagaš messenger text and the use of totals at the end of the documents, a distinguishing feature of the Umma messenger tablets.

Aside from traveling officials and their provisions, both texts deal with food expenses for cultic offerings. More specifically, they record the issuing of different kinds of flour, beer, and sheep at a canal named ^dutu-nu-zu, which does not appear elsewhere in the Ur III documentation. In BM 98109, flour is provided for rites at a weir of the Utu-nuzu canal.⁴² The toponym ^dutu-nu-zu, not followed by the determinative ^{ki}, also appears as the destination of messengers departing from the road station where our texts were written and as a place where they could receive food provisions (ša₃ ^dutu-nu-zu). All this suggests that, though not preceded by terms like e₂-duru₅, “village,” or a-ša₃, “field,” ^dutu-nu-zu designated a rural area. We may propose that, at the place called Utu-nuzu, offerings were made and rites performed to celebrate the opening of a new canal serving the entire agricultural district, a major undertaking that was completed in the eleventh month of the year, shortly before the arrival of the spring flood season. The fact that royal envoys were among the personnel present at Utu-nuzu at that time suggests that the crown was involved in this hydrological project. Unfortunately, due to the lack of year formula and other internal clues, it is impossible to establish the work’s precise date of execution.

A final word on the toponym ^dutu-nu-zu, which is almost certainly an abbreviation for a-^dutu-nu-zu, “water that does not know Utu/water that knows no daylight.” This expression is attested lexically in the “A” section of a late Old Babylonian manuscript of the Kagal acrographic list⁴³ and, as i₇ a-^dutu-nu-zu, in the section concerning river/canal names in an Emar exemplar of the Middle Babylonian Ura thematic list, where it probably designated a subterranean canal.⁴⁴ In the context of our documents, it is tempting to connect the term (a-)^dutu-nu-zu with peculiar hydrological features of the territory, such as the presence of seeps or springs—that is, water reaching the land surface from underground sources, after which the rural area was named.

6. The field “princely shrine” and the ereš-diĝir priestess of Ninšubur at Nippur

Text 9 (BM 103696A)

Date: IS.02.00.00

Provenience: Nippur

41. On Enkas (written ka₄ in texts and en-ka₄ on his seal), livestock administrator of the household of Šara of Umma, see Dahl 2007: 87, 96.

42. For rites and offerings related to canals and rivers in Ur III Ĝirsu/Lagaš, see Sallaberger 1993: I 301–302, II 178–181 Tabelle 107.

43. Veldhuis 1998: 215–216 BM 54712 rev. i 11', following the entry a-an-za₃-nu-zu, “water that knows no horizon” (Akk. *anzanunzû*), a word used as a synonym for “deep waters” and thus equated with the Abzu.

44. Emar 6/2, 484–485 Msk 74198b obv. iv 11'.

Measurements: 58* × 50 × 21 mm
Photo: BDTNS no. 169369

obv.

- 1 [x x (x)] e₂ ʽxʽ ʽxʽ [(x)]
2 [a]-ša₃ aš₂-nun-ka
3 ʽe₂ʽ ur-^den-lil₂-la₂-ʽkaʽ / us₂-ʽsaʽ
4 [niĝ₂]-sam₂-bi 1 gin₂ igi-ʽ4ʽ-[ĝal₂] /
ʽku₃ʽ-[babbar] /
1.0.0 še gur-še₃
5 ur-^den-lil₂-la₂ dumu lugal-ʽĥe₂ʽ-ʽĝal₂ʽ-/ke₄
6 ur-du₆ dumu lugal-iti-da-ra
7 in-ši-sa₁₀
8 nu-gi₄::gi₄-da mu lugal-bi ʽinʽ-ʽpa₃ʽ
[...] (ca. half of the tablet lost)

rev.

- [...] (ca. half of the tablet lost)
BLANK SPACE
1ʽ mu en ^dʽinannaʽ /
unu^{ki} maš₂-e [i₃]-ʽpa₃ʽ

Seal

- 1 ur-du₆-ku₃-ga
2 dumu lugal-ti-/da

Text 10 (BM 103696B)

Date: IS.01.12.00

Provenience: Nippur

Measurements: 43* × 50 × 21 mm

Photo: BDTNS no. 169680

obv.

- 1 1(eše₃) 3(iku) GAN₂ kun u₃-/sur-ra
2 a-ʽša₃ʽ eš₃-nun-na
3 šuku nin-ur₂-ra-ni
4 ereš-ʽdiĝirʽ ^dnin-šubur-ʽkaʽ
5 in-na-an-šum₂
6 ʽšeʽ-bi 3.0.0 gur-ta
[...] (ca. half of the tablet lost)

rev.

- [...] (ca. half of the tablet lost)
BLANK SPACE
1ʽ lu₂-inim-ma-bi-me
2ʽ iti še-KIN-ku₅
3ʽ mu us₂-sa
4ʽ ^di-bi₂-^dEN.ZU lugal
Seal
1 nin-ur₂-ra-ni
2 dumu ur-DUN
3 ereš-diĝir ^dnin-šubur

^{o. 1} [x sar] of a house lot [...], ^{o. 2} in the field “princely shrine,” ^{o. 3} next to the house of Ur-Enlila, ^{o. 4} for its price, one and one-fourth shekels of silver (and) one gur of barley, ^{o. 5} Ur-Enlila, son of Lugal-ĥeĝal, ^{o. 7} bought ^{o. 6} from Ur-du(kuga), son of Lugal-itida.
^{o. 8} He (= Ur-dukuga) swore by the king’s name not to contest. [...]

r. 1ʽ Year: The en priest of Inanna of Uruk was chosen by means of extispicy.
(Seal) Ur-dukuga, son of Lugal-itida.

^{o. 1} Nine iku of land (located close to) the outlet of the Usur (canal), ^{o. 2} (in) the field “princely shrine,” ^{o. 3-4} the subsistence plot of Nin-urani, ereš-diĝir priestess of the goddess Ninšubur—she (= Nin-urani) gave it to him/her (= the lessee) (for tenancy). ^{o. 6} Its barley (is) three gur (per bur). [...]

r. 1ʽ They are its (= the rental agreement’s) witnesses.
r. 2ʽ Month: Reaping.
r. 3ʽ-4ʽ Year: Ibbi-Suen (is) king.
(Seal) Nin-urani, daughter of Ur-DUN, ereš-diĝir-priestess of the goddess Ninšubur.

The glass-topped cardboard box bearing the label BM 103696A+B contains two fragmentary Ur III tablets acquired by the British Museum from antiquities dealer I. Élias Géjou in 1911. The tablet fragments, which might have been stuck together when they entered the collections, were probably thought to be part of the same document before receiving cleaning and conservation treatments, and were consequently assigned the same museum number followed by the suffixes “A” and “B.”⁴⁵ Were they also found together, as their content seems to suggest? The Nippur provenience of the sale document BM 103696A seems assured by the usage of the superimposed $gi_4::gi_4$ (KWU 300) in the no-contest clause (Steinkeller 1989: 46 n. 107) and by the name and patronymic of the buyer, Ur-Enlila, son of Lugal- $\mathit{he}\mathit{\check{g}}\mathit{al}$. If our identification is correct, Ur-Enlila’s seal appears on NRVN 1, 266 (ŠS.08.04.15), a triangular label from Nippur dated to Šu-Suen 8 and dealing with the transfer of fourteen skilled masons provided by Amar-šube, the master mason of the god Enlil.⁴⁶ Although Ur-Enlila carries the generic title of “scribe” (dub-sar) in his seal’s legend, the fact that Amar-šube’s masons were placed under his authority may suggest that they were both affiliated with the same organization, that is, the temple household of Enlil.⁴⁷ The most remarkable feature of BM 103696A and BM 103696B, however, is that the legal transactions recorded in these texts are both related to the field “princely shrine” ($a\text{-}\mathit{\check{s}}a_3\ e\mathit{\check{s}}_3/a\mathit{\check{s}}_2\text{-}n\mathit{u}n\text{-}na$), a fact that demonstrates their common Nippur origin. The toponym is otherwise attested only in a text from the administrative archives of the Inanna temple (NATN 978 rev. i 13’: $a\text{-}\mathit{\check{s}}a_3\ a\mathit{\check{s}}_2\text{-}n\mathit{u}n\text{-}na$), which reveals that the temple organization held tracts of land in that specific field (Zettler 1992: 115–116 n. 1). Nevertheless, other institutions may have cultivated parcels of land in the same agricultural area. The contract BM 103696A documents the sale of a house lot located in the field “princely shrine” by one Ur-dukuga, son of Lugal-itida (spelled lugal-ti-da in Ur-dukuga’s seal), to his neighbor Ur-Enlila, son of Lugal- $\mathit{he}\mathit{\check{g}}\mathit{al}$, who owned a house adjoining the one sold. The purchase price Ur-Enlila paid to expand his rural property was one and one-fourth shekels of silver and one *gur* of barley.⁴⁸ BM 103696B, meanwhile, records a rental agreement between Ninurani, the *ereš-diġir* priestess of the goddess Ninšubur,⁴⁹ and a tenant whose name is unfortunately not preserved on the tablet.⁵⁰ If we understand the text correctly, the unknown lessee agreed to deliver to the lessor four hundred and fifty *sila* of barley for cultivating a subsistence plot of nine

45. Information on the labeling procedures and the use of the “A” and “B” suffixes courtesy of Dr. Jonathan Taylor, assistant keeper (curator) of the cuneiform collections at the Department of the Middle East.

46. Amar-šube’s seal appears on tablet BE 3-1, 48 (ŠS.03.10.00).

47. Cf. NATN 859 (ŠS.07.04.30), in which one Ur-Enlila supplies flour to the masons employed in the construction works at the house of princess Geme-Enlila.

48. To the best of our knowledge, this is the only example of mixed payment attested in the corpus of Ur III sale documents. In the expression $[ni\mathit{\check{g}}_2]\text{-}sam_2\text{-}bi\ 1\ gin_2\ igi\text{-}r_4^1\text{-}[g\mathit{\check{a}}l_2]\ r_4^1\text{-}[babbar]\ 1.0.0\ \mathit{\check{s}}e\ gur\text{-}\mathit{\check{s}}e_3$, the amount of one *gur* of barley can hardly be interpreted as equivalent in value to the purchase price paid in silver (i.e., “for its price, one and one-fourth shekels of silver [in lieu of] one *gur* of barley”). Equivalences specifying the barley-to-silver exchange ratio that applied to the contract are nevertheless attested in other sale documents: cf. Sale Documents nos. 117 and 122.

49. Although Ninšubur belonged to Inanna’s circle, it appears that, at Ur III Nippur, she was venerated in the temple of the healing goddess Nintinuga (Huber 2019: 139–144). Little is known about her cultic personnel. BM 103696B is the only document that provides the name of an *ereš-diġir* priestess of Ninšubur.

50. Note that in the operative section of Ur III rental contracts, the elements $(nam\text{-})apin\text{-}l_2\text{-}\mathit{\check{s}}e_3/uru_4^{(ru)}\text{-}de_3$, “for tenancy/for cultivation,” and the name of the lessee (followed by the dative case marker $\{ra\}$) normally precede the verb “to give” ($\mathit{\check{s}}um_2$).

iku of land (= 3.24 ha) situated near the outlet of the Usur (canal).⁵¹ The rental fee, calculated at a rate of three *gur* per *bur*, fell between one-third and one-half of the expected yield, and did not include the irrigation tax, which was normally paid by the owner of the field.⁵² When the transaction was completed, the *ereš-diġir* priestess rolled her seal on the tablet, which was then handed over to the unnamed tenant, who kept it in his or her private archive.⁵³ Given the noninstitutional nature of the two documents, it seems reasonable to assume that BM 103696A and BM 103696B were both stored at a private residence in Nippur. If they were indeed discovered together during illegal excavations, as we cautiously suggest based on the occurrence of the rather rare field name a-ša₃ eš₃/aš₂-nun-na in both texts, then the residence in question must have belonged to Ur-Enlila, son of Lugal-ḫeġal. Between the years Ibbi-Suen 1 and Ibbi-Suen 2, he first rented a *šuku* plot from the *ereš-diġir* priestess of the goddess Ninšubur, and then bought a house lot close to the rural house he already owned, with the aim of expanding his property portfolio and increasing his income. Both resources were situated in the same agricultural district (the field “princely shrine”) where Ur-Enlila most likely held more arable land. In light of the proposed reconstruction, we can identify Ur-Enlila in yet another sale document from Nippur: Sale Documents no. 37 (IS.01.07.00). In this text, he is recorded as the buyer of one yoked ox, an asset clearly to be used in agricultural activities.⁵⁴

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51. A canal by this name is otherwise unattested in the Nippur sources; cf. NATN 533 (IS.08.03.00) obv. 3–4 (5 *gi-dur* u₃-sur-lam-ka-še₃, “five reed ropes to the Usur of the *lam*[-tree canal]). According to Steinkeller (2011: 28), the term u₃-sur refers to a part of the canal system or to an irrigation device.

52. For the renting of fields in Ur III times, see Neumann 2003–2005 with previous literature.

53. Cf., for instance, the composition of the private dossier of Ur-Meme, an administrator of royal households, which comprised, among other documents, several contracts dealing with leases of *šuku* plots, all located within the field a-ša₃ dšul-pa-e₃ (Steinkeller 2002: 122–123).

54. It is worth noticing that a mason named Bu’ula (rev. 5) appears among the witnesses to this transaction. One Ur-Enlila is also listed as a witness in another sale document concerning the purchase of a two-year-old ox by a servant of the master mason Amar-šube (Sale Documents no. 52; IS.XX.12.00). If Ur-Enlila is indeed the same individual as the one mentioned in the other texts discussed here, this identification would confirm his close cooperation with the professional group of the masons and with their representative Amar-šube.

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