

An Ur-III Business Document From Kharayeb

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The cuneiform tablet published below forms part of what was a large archive of business documents from Drēhim, a town near Nippur in Southern Mesopotamia. It is dated to approximatively 2033 BC and deals with the registration of accounts of livestock.

From 3000 BC, when writing was 'invented' in Southern Mesopotamia, business documents represent a basic part of the cultural legacy of the Ancient Near East. In terms of quantity, these documents represent the largest category of texts written in cuneiform, although the documents themselves vary in time and place over the 3000 years when cuneiform script was used throughout all of the Ancient Near East. From the time when writing began, business documents give us a general insight into economic and social conditions; but they also show societies against the background of highly complex organizations.

Business documents are basically different from literary texts. In the case of the latter, a single clay tablet may give us all or at least parts of a complete story, and thus a single text can illuminate important aspects of the cultural history of the Ancient Near East. But in the case of business documents a single text is not sufficient for the illumination of economic life. Compare a single business document to a piece in a jig-saw puzzle. One piece is not sufficient for

understanding what it means, because it lacks the context that only insertion into the totality can give. A single business document can be understood only if it is placed into its stratigraphic level. Thus the isolated data of a single text show their meaning because they are placed into the proper context.

All of this is true about the text published here below. If it was the only example of its kind, we could do no more than give a transliteration and translation. But the text can be placed into the context of an archive; in addition, a study of its paleography and prosopography reveals the time, circumstances, and personages of the text by placing them into the context of an environment that is already known.

The cuneiform business document that we are treating belongs to the Lebanese Directorate General of Antiquities Collection. It is labelled No. 25456 in the collection and is reported to come from Kharayeb near Sidon¹. The text forms part of what was a large archive of business documents

from Drēhim', a town near Nippur in Southern Mesopotamia, during the Ur III-period.

Drēhim was above all the center for the registration of accounts of livestock trade during the Ur-III period, specifically, from the 27th year of king Šulgi through the 2nd year of king Ibbisîn (Sigrist 1992: 15). It became increasingly important during the building activities that took place during Šulgi's 38th year of rule (Sigrist 1992: 18). Proof of Drēhim's efficiency may be seen from the fact that its administrative bureaucracy could handle the processing of 60.000 animals each year (Calvot 1969: 101-114, Sallaberger 1999: 261).

Our tablet is rather well-preserved and gives us all the information necessary for placing it within its historical context. The end of the tablet contains the date formula "*Year that follows (the year called) Šusîn, king of Ur, built the wall, Keeping away the nomads against the Amorites*"³. This fact permits us to date the text not only to the Ur-III period, but precisely to the 5th year of king Šusîn of Ur, approximately 2033 BC. This was a time, when the conflict with the Amorites was becoming more serious, and so the king was obliged to build a wall against the massive inroads of these nomads in the north-west. This event was so important that it gave its name for a year and is also mentioned in literary letters⁴. But the text can be dated with exact precision since it gives both day and month. Rev. 9 gives the number of the day, and rev. 13 gives the month, typical for the Drēhim calendar. Thus the text can be dated to the 4th day of 4th month⁵ of the 5th year of king Šusîn's reign⁶.

The main text reports the delivery of livestock for the king. Seven lambs and one goat are summarized on the left edge as "8 sheep". The individuals who place their livestock at the king's disposition are all known from other contemporary [Drēhim] sources. Some are even mentioned together in texts from the 5th year of Šusîn reign⁶.

Two further elements in the text deserve to be mentioned, since they are of additional importance for the dating. Intaea, the animal fattener and well-known functionary at Drēhim, served as delivering official in the Drēhim administration from the time of the 3rd year of Amarsu'en's reign (1 ix AS 3). Although Intaea's career during the 8th and 9th years of Amarsu'en is still somewhat obscure, we do know

that he later was not only a receiving official, but seems to have been in charge of the whole administrative organisation at Drēhim (Maeda 1989:79-80). Intaea rose to this position during the reorganization of the Drēhim administrative system. (Sigrist 1992: 293ff., 299-301; Sallaberger 1999: 270-271) that took place with the accession of the new king'. Moreover, Nannamaba the scribe is described as controlling official of the whole transaction. It is characteristic of Intaea's bureaucratic procedure that scribes such as Nannamaba had to serve the additional function of 'controlling'.

Although Ur-III business documents are rather abundant (to date about 10.000 have been published from Drēhim)⁸, the documentation for the reign of king Šusîn is still rather scanty. Therefore our tablet from Kharayeb is a welcome addition to our knowledge of the Ur-III bureaucracy at Drēhim.

The text (**Figs 1 and 2**) is very carefully written and reads as follows⁹:

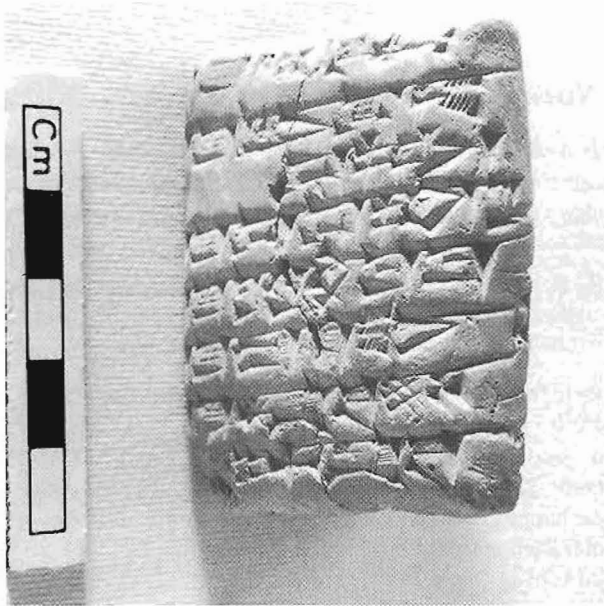


Fig. 1 - Obverse

Obverse:

- 1 1 sila₄ a-ab-ba-ġu₁₀
- 2 1 sila₄ lugal-á-zi-da šabra
- 3 1 sila₄ da-da énsi
- 4 1 sila₄ ku-ru-ub-ma-ma
- 5 1 sila₄ SUĤUŠ-ki-in
- 6 1 sila₄ ^oEN.ZU-KASKAL.KUR
- 7 ^r1 máš^r i-di-^oEN.ZU

Reverse

- 8 1 sila₄ [...] ^rx^r
- 9 u₄ ^r4^r-kam
- 10 mu-ku_x(DU) lugal
- 11 in-ta-è-a ì-dab₅
- 12 ġìri ^onanna-ma-ba dub-sar.
- 13 iti u₅-bí gu₇
- 14 mu ús-sa ^ošu-^oEN.ZU
- 15 lugal úri^k-ma-ke₄
- 16 bàd mar-t[u] mu-ri-ia
- lower edge
- 17 ^rti-id^r-n[i-ġ]m mu-^rû
- left edge: 8 udu



Fig. 2 - Reverse

- 1 lamb from A'abbaġu.
- 1 lamb from Lugalazida the steward,
- 1 lamb from Dada, the Governor,
- 1 lamb from Kurubmama.
- 1 lamb from Išdumkīn,
- 1 lamb from Sīnillat,
- 1 goat from Iddinsīn,

- 1 lamb from...,
- (on) the 4 fourth day
- (as) a delivery for the king
- Intaea received.
- 'Controller': Nannamaba the scribe.
- Month: 'Eating (of) the Ubi (- bird)'
- Year following (the year) Šu-sin
- King of Ur
- built the Amorite wall "'Keeping away
- the Nomads''.
- (Summary:) eight sheep.

Commentary:

Rev.

8: At the present time it is impossible to restore this line with even reasonable certainty.

9: The term *mu-ku*_x (DU) *lugal* 'delivery for the king' in this position is characteristic of business documents from Drēhim since Šusīn's 3rd regnal year¹¹. The expression therefore is of additional importance for dating the text.

Notes

1- I wish to thank Prof. H el ene Sader, Beirut, who first called this cuneiform tablet to my attention. She also gave me excellent photographs of the tablet, some of which are published in this edition.

2- For the relationship of Duraihim / Dr ehim and the ancient place name Puzri  - Dagan see M. Sigris, *Drehem, Bethesda, MD, 1992, 14-18.*

3- For these lines see below rev. 14-16; i.e. 17 of the text.

4- See P. Michalowski, *The Royal Correspondance of Ur*, Diss. Yale, 1976, 46; for editions of the two letters exchanged between king Šus n and  arrumbani, who was entrusted with the building of the wall, see pp. 224-233; 234-242.

5- For the meaning and the different orthographies of the monthname *u*₅ - *b  gu*₇, found in rev. 13 of our text, see M. Cohen, *The Cultic Calendars of the Ancient Near East*, Bethesda, MD, 1993, 147-148. It should be pointed out, that of the Calender used at Drehim depended on that of the capital, Ur. Furthermore, due to a calendar reform during Šus n's third year, the month *u*₅ - *b  gu*₇ was considered the 4th month, rather than the 3rd, as it had been in previous years (see M. Cohen, *Calendars*, 133-135).

6- See for example *Lugal- -zi-da  abra* beside *Da-da  nsi* in M. Sigris, *Neo Sumerian Texts from the Royal Ontario Museum I*, Bethesda, MD, 1995, No. 128 obv. 1-2 (Šus n 5 vii 13). Both deliver lambs for the king.

7- Note, as one of the procedural innovations of this time, the habit of systematically sealing tablets sent to the various bureaus at Drehim (see M. Sigris, *Drehem*, 293).

8- See M. Sigris, *NSTROM*, 14. Add M. Hilgert's important contribution, *Drehem Administrative Documents from the Reign of  ulgi*, Oriental Institute Publications 115, Chicago 1998. Note that all these tablets come from clandestine excavations.

9- Line by line transliteration/translation of the cuneiform text.

10- see T. Maeda, *Acta Sumerologica Japonica* 11, 1989, 101; W. Sallaberger, *Ur III-Zeit*, 1999, 265.

Bibliography

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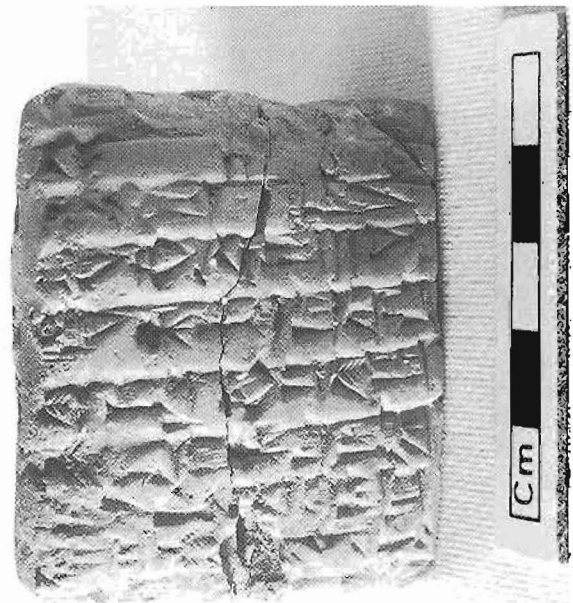
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————— **1995.** *Neo Sumerian Texts from the Royal Ontario Museum I*, Bethesda, MD.

مستند تجاري من موقع الخرايب عائد لفترة « سلالة أور الثالثة »

كونراد فوك (جامعة توينغن)

الأجرّة المسمارية موضوع المقال هذا هي واحدة من الأجرّات التي كانت تشكل المحفوظات التجارية لـ «دريهيم»، قرب نيبور في المنطقة الجنوبية لبلاد ما بين النهرين. وهي تعود لحوالي ٢٠٣٣ ق.م. و التدوين المسماري يتعلق بتسجيل حساب يختص بالماشية.



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