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NOEMI BORRELLI

**Three Unpublished Texts from Drēhem  
(from Private Collections in Helsinki and Rome)**

1. INTRODUCTION\*

This study developed from the chance Prof. Simo Parpola (University of Helsinki) gave me to work on two unpublished texts. Those texts are part of a private collection belonging to the Kress family in Helsinki. Thanks to the pictures sent me by the owners of the collection, I was able to transliterate and translate the tablets.

The third text is part of a private collection in Rome, and it was copied by Prof. Pietro Mander (Università di Napoli “L’Orientale”), who handed it over to me for publication.

1.1 *Drēhem (Puzriš-Dagān)*

The ancient Puzriš-Dagān ‘For the shelter of Dagān’ corresponds to the modern site of Drēhem and it is located about 10 km South-East of Nippur (Adams 1981: 269). A former name is known, Esağdana ‘House at the end of

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\* I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Simo Parpola, Prof. Pietro Mander, and to the owners of the tablets, for the opportunity they kindly gave me. I am also grateful to Dr. Paola Paoletti for revising this paper and sharing with me data from her forthcoming work on the Treasure Archive of Puzriš-Dagān. I would also like to thank Dr. Palmiro Notizia for his advice. Nonetheless the responsibility of what follows is mine.

For the research I used the BDTNS database (<http://bdts.filol.csic.es/>), developed at the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (C.S.I.C.) in Madrid under the supervision of Dr. Manuel Molina, that I would like to thank.

For the abbreviations of the texts see the website of Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative ([http://cdli.ucla.edu/wiki/doku.php/abbreviations\\_for\\_assyriology](http://cdli.ucla.edu/wiki/doku.php/abbreviations_for_assyriology)). Texts labeled as Bala see Sharlach (2004).

Other abbreviations used in this paper:

- o.: obverse
- r.: reverse
- Š: years of Šulgi’s reign (2094-2047 B.C.E.)
- AS: years of Amar-Suena’s reign (2046-2038 B.C.E.)
- ŠS: years of Šu-Sin’s reign (2037-2029 B.C.E.)

the mile', probably due to the role this city played in the final stage of the collecting process of economic surplus (Sallaberger 2006: 125 ).

The earliest mentions about Puzriš-Dagān are dated to Š 39:<sup>1</sup> its edification is part of a wider planning of administrative re-organization carried out under Šulgi's reign, when there were issued several reforms such as the *bala* service.<sup>2</sup> In the Ur III economic system, *bala* was a sort of cyclic contribution solved as duty days or goods, which were delivered periodically. These deliveries typically included livestock or secondary products, conveyed to specific places, like Puzriš-Dagān, and then forwarded to centres as Nippur, Uruk and Ur. The *bala* was therefore «the primary system for the transfer of commodities between the provinces and the central government» (Sharlach 2004: 17).

Cattle brought to Puzriš-Dagān was stocked in specific buildings, like the *nakabtum* (Brunke 2008: 111-26; Sigrist 1992: 39), and then a part of it was fattened in the *e<sub>2</sub>-kurušda*: once slaughtered, animals were cooked at the banquets during the temple festivals and eaten by the royal family and the officers dwelling in the local palace.

Puzriš-Dagān archive has revealed just administrative documents, but nonetheless its noteworthy feature is to deal with the needs of the entire State economy, unlike other archives, such as the ones in Umma or Ĝirsu, which indeed are merely provincial.

Besides *bala*, *gu<sub>2</sub>-un-ma-da* 'levy from countries' was also collected: the *gu<sub>2</sub>-un-ma-da* was a tax that peripheral areas were obliged to pay to the State and it was usually an annual delivery of livestock.<sup>3</sup> Such deposits ceased the second year of Ibbi-Sin (2027 B.C.E.), in connection with the closure of Puzriš-Dagān.

Texts found in Puzriš-Dagān were divided in five different archives (Sallaberger 1999: 239): the treasure archive, the shoes archive, the queen Šulgi-simti's archive, the state herds archive, and Narām-ilī's archive.

Transactions are grouped into two main categories: deliveries, *mu-ku<sub>x</sub>* (=DU)<sup>4</sup> (*ibid.*: 240; Maeda 1989: 70), and expenditures, *ba-zi* (Sallaberger 1999: 258 ff.); the first one provided raw materials or food, the latter one provided manufactured goods.

<sup>1</sup> mu <sup>d</sup>šul-gi lugal uri<sup>ki</sup>-ma-ke<sub>4</sub> lugal an-ub-da-limmu<sub>2</sub>-ba-ke<sub>4</sub> e<sub>2</sub> puzur<sub>4</sub>-iš- <sup>d</sup>da-gan<sup>ki</sup> mu-du<sub>3</sub> (Sigrist 1992: 13). About the administrative documents of Šulgi's reign from Drēhem see Hilgert (1998).

<sup>2</sup> Main studies about the *bala* service: Sharlach (2004); Sigrist (1992: 339 ff.); Kang (1972: 273); Hallo (1960).

<sup>3</sup> About the organization of the State see Steinkeller (1987).

<sup>4</sup> Fossil compound usually translated as 'delivery'.

## 2. TEXT 1 (48 × 37mm) (pl. I)

AS 7 / V /--

o.

- |  |                                   |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1) 2/3 ma-na la <sub>2</sub> -1 gin <sub>2</sub> ku <sub>3</sub> -babbar | 39 shekels of silver              |
| 2) bar udu mu bala-a-še <sub>3</sub>                                     | (for) sheep fleece as <i>bala</i> |
| 3) mu ša-aš-ru <sup>ki</sup>   | of the year 'Šašru' (AS 6)        |
| 4) ki šara <sub>2</sub> -kam-ta  | from Šara-kam                     |
| 5) lugal-ku <sub>3</sub> -zu   | Lugal-kuzu                        |
| 6) šu ba-ti  | has received                      |

r.

- |   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| 1) ša <sub>3</sub> puzur <sub>4</sub> -iš <sup>d</sup> -da-gan                              | in Puzriš-Dagān |
| 2) iti ezem <sup>d</sup> nin-a-zu <sup>5</sup>  | month name      |
| 3) mu bi <sub>2</sub> - <sup>r</sup> tum-ra <sup>1</sup> -bi <sub>2</sub> -um <sup>ki</sup> |                 |
| 4) i <sub>3</sub> -ab-ru <sup>ki<sup>1</sup></sup> ma-da-                                   | year name       |
| 5) -bi u <sub>3</sub> <sup>r</sup> hu-uh <sub>2</sub> <sup>1</sup> -nu-ri <sup>ki</sup>     |                 |
| 6) ba-hul   |                 |

The transaction can be interpreted as a disbursement made in order to clear the *bala* of the previous year.

Both officers involved in the transaction are attested in Puzriš-Dagān archives. Šara-kam is a common name in Neo-Sumerian period, therefore the identification, beyond any doubt, presents some difficulties. There are two persons bearing the same name, who might be identified with the Šara-kam of the present text: one of them was the Governor (*ensi<sub>2</sub>*) of Ĝirsu, attested from AS 1 to ŠS 6, while the other one was an official of the same city charged of the reminders of herdsmen.<sup>6</sup>

Šara-kam the official was on duty from AS 5 e AS 8. In this task he used to cooperate with Lugal-itida who was instead the conveyer (*ĝiri<sub>3</sub>*) charged of the delivery of livestock to the Treasury. Šara-kam also worked in relation to the building where livestock was fattened, the *e<sub>2</sub>-kurušda* (Paoletti 2008: 142).

Both these Šara-kam, who were on duty roughly in the same period, occur in texts dealing with the *bala*, a coincidence that makes more difficult to single out who is the one of the present text.

<sup>5</sup> Fifth month according the Drēhem Calendar (Sallaberger 1993: 195).

<sup>6</sup> A scribe named Šara-kam is also attested at Puzriš-Dagān, his seal was recovered on several tablets (MVN 15 119; BRM 3 72; PDT 1 391) and he refers to himself like a sa<sub>12</sub>-du<sub>5</sub>.

The Šara-kam, official of Puzriš-Dagān, is documented in several texts: according to three of those texts (Princeton 1 125;<sup>7</sup> SAT 2 1054;<sup>8</sup> MVN 18 135<sup>9</sup>), he gives amounts of silver to Lugal-kuzu to clear a deficit in the account of the deliveries, but in any of these records these amounts are marked as compensation for a *bala*. Respectively, Princeton 1 125 records 10 mine of silver, SAT 2 1054 records 5 mine of silver and MVN 18 135 records 11 and half mine of silver. All these payments are definitely bigger than the one recorded in the present text (39 shekels are equal to ca. 323 grams of silver).

Several tablets<sup>10</sup> released on AS 6 show transactions made by Šara-kam, two of them (Van de Mieroop - Longman RA 79, 27, 21 e MVN 15 99) deal with goods (ovine) classified as *bala*. In these tablets Šara-kam is unequivocally named *ensi*<sub>2</sub> of Ĝirsu and he features as the ‘holder’ of the *bala*, while the goods were actually delivered and received by third parties.<sup>11</sup>

Hence, when the name Šara-kam is associated to the holder and not just to the deliverer of the *bala*, it is usually related to Šara-kam the *ensi*<sub>2</sub>.<sup>12</sup>

Considering the presence of Lugal-kuzu who, as we shall see below, is responsible for the circulation of silver at the Treasure Archive, the delivery of silver to probably clear an arrear, the absence of third parties who act on behalf of the *ensi*<sub>2</sub> and most of all the lack of the usually added qualifying title *ensi*<sub>2</sub>, the identification of Šara-kam as the officer of Puzriš-Dagān is the most likely one.

<sup>7</sup> o. 1) 10 ma-na ku<sub>3</sub>-babbar, la<sub>2</sub>-NI su-ga sipa unu<sub>3</sub>-e-ne, ki d<sup>s</sup>šara<sub>2</sub>-kam-ta, lugal-ku<sub>3</sub>-zu šu ba-ti r. 1) ĝiri<sub>3</sub> lugal-ti-da dub-sar, ša<sub>3</sub> puzur<sub>4</sub>-i<sup>s</sup>-d<sup>d</sup>da-gan, iti maš-da<sub>3</sub>-ku<sub>3</sub>-gu<sub>7</sub>, mu en unu<sup>ki</sup>-ga ba-huĝ (AS 5 / I / --).

<sup>8</sup> o. 1) 5 ma-na ku<sub>3</sub>-babbar, la<sub>2</sub>- ni su-ga unu<sub>3</sub>-e-ne, e<sub>2</sub>-kurušda, ki d<sup>s</sup>šara<sub>2</sub>-kam, lugal-ku<sub>3</sub>-zu, šu-ba-an-ti (AS 7 / III / --).

<sup>9</sup> o. 1) 7 1/2 ma-na ku<sub>3</sub>-babbar, d<sup>s</sup>šara<sub>2</sub>-kam-e i<sub>3</sub>-su, 4 ma-na ku<sub>3</sub>-babbar, la<sub>2</sub>- NI su-ga sipa unu<sub>3</sub>-e-ne ki lugal-iti-da-ta r. 1) lugal-ku<sub>3</sub>-zu, šu-ba-ti, ša<sub>3</sub> puzur<sub>4</sub>-i<sup>s</sup>-d<sup>d</sup>da-gan, iti ezem d<sup>s</sup>šul-gi, mu en eridu<sup>ki</sup> ba-huĝ (AS 8 / VII / --).

<sup>10</sup> e.g. PDT 1 377 (AS 6 / V / --), BIN 3 613 (AS 6 / V / --), MVN 15 99 (AS 6 / VII / 29), Van de Mieroop - Longman RA 79, 27, 21 (AS 6 / VII / --), Gomi Orient 16 47 31 (AS 6 / IX / 01), MVN 3 234 (AS 6 / XII / --), PDT 1 552 (AS 6 / XII / --), BIN 3 331 (AS 6 / XII / --), MVN 18 127 (AS 6 / XII / --).

<sup>11</sup> In Van de Mieroop - Longman RA 79, 27, 21 the *bala* is delivered by In-ta-e<sub>3</sub>-a and received by Lu<sub>2</sub>-ša<sub>6</sub>-ga. In MVN 15 99 Ur-tur delivered the *bala* which was received by Lu<sub>2</sub>-ša<sub>6</sub>-ga.

<sup>12</sup> Bala 67 (AS 1 / I / --); Dhorme, RA 9, SA 134 (pl.4) (AS 5 / I / --); Rochester 53 (AS 5 / V / --); MVN 11 153 (AS 5 / VIII / 08); AUCT 2 263 (AS 5 / VIII / 22); RTC 298 (AS 5 / -- / --); MVN 15 99 (AS 6 / VII / 29); Van de Mieroop - Longman RA 79, 27, 21 (AS 6 / VII / --); Bala 140 (---- / VII / --); AUCT 2 353 (---- / -- / 29).



Lugal-kuzu was one of the leading official in the administrative bureau, his records spread for a span of time going from Š 44 to IS 3 (Paoletti 2008: 133; Sallaberger 1999: 246-47; Sigrist 1992: 289). He was a paymaster who dealt with the transactions of silver and movements of goods within the local administration. He worked on behalf of the Treasure Archive (Paoletti 2008; Sallaberger 1999: 240 ff.)<sup>13</sup> and his duties were to receive amounts of silver, resulting from the sale of livestock or secondary products, and forward them to the accounting department, so that they might be recorded as paid taxes. Many tablets document Lugal-kuzu collecting amounts of silver as payments of arrears, *la<sub>2</sub>-NI* (for the reading of NI see Steinkeller 1984) *su-ga*, against herds-men of small (*sipa*) and big (*umu<sub>3</sub>*) cattle.<sup>14</sup>

An interesting feature of this text is the expression at o. 2:

2/3 ma-na la<sub>2</sub>-1 gin<sub>2</sub> ku<sub>3</sub>-babbar bar udu mu bala-a-še<sub>3</sub> mu ša-aš-ru<sup>ki</sup>

Several texts mention the delivery of sheep fleeces,<sup>15</sup> in two of them at least (BIN 3 339 e PDT 2 1283) Šara-kam is mentioned as the one who delivers the *bar udu*. Generally, this product was a type of the so-called *mu-ku<sub>x</sub> lugal* (Meada 1989: 95 ff.) deliveries, or simply *mu-ku<sub>x</sub>*.

The expression *mu bala-a-še<sub>3</sub>* is usually translated «as *bala*», «for the *bala*». According to Sigrist (1992: 348) this expression could occur when the *bala*-payer provided an amount of goods to the central administration in anticipation of the expected *bala*. The final amount was therefore reduced by the sum already paid.

Sharlach translates the phrase as «on account of the *bala*», also suggesting that this expression could define transactions to be interpreted as «adjustments, either positive or negative, to the *bala* fund» (2004: 35).

Anyway in the administrative lexicon, the expression *mu ...-še<sub>3</sub>* was quite widespread as a periphrasis translated with ‘in name of / by’ if followed by a personal name, or with ‘as (a tribute)’ if followed by the name of the tax (Hilgert 2003: 422, s.v. mu I).

The expression *mu bala-a-še<sub>3</sub> + mu* (year name) instead is not as frequently attested.<sup>16</sup> It is used in ‘summary’ tablets, which were reports of deliveries expected on a given year but recorded during the following one.

In these texts two or more year names are always present. The first one (or ones) concerns the date of the tax itself, the second one is the year when the document was issued.

<sup>13</sup> Lugal-kuzu acted also as intermediary between the several archives of Puzriš-Dagān.

<sup>14</sup> SAT 2 302 (Š 42 / -- / --); Princeton 1 125 (AS 5/1/0); MVN 18 135 (AS 8 / VII / --); Text 1 (AS 7/ V / --).

<sup>15</sup> 30 texts according BDTNS.

<sup>16</sup> see TAD 50 e SAT 2 1173. Both were released on AS 9 / I / --.

Both TAD 50 and SAT 2 1173 distinguish the amount of goods between *mu bala-a-še<sub>3</sub>* and *mu-ku<sub>x</sub> lugal*: in the text here reported, fleece is clearly marked as *mu bala-a-še<sub>3</sub>*. Anyway, as said above, *bar-udu* is always labelled as *mu-ku<sub>x</sub> lugal* and not as *mu bala-a-še<sub>3</sub>*.

Thereby, thanks to comparisons with other texts with similar expressions, albeit not identical, and considering the role as tax collector carried out by Lugal-kuzu on the behalf of the Treasure Archive, it is suggested that o. 2 could be interpreted as an evidence of a compensation in silver for a failure to pay the *bala*, or at least part of it. The *bala*, in this specific case, involved the delivery of sheep fleece from Šara-kam.

## 3. TEXT 2 (21 × 22mm) (pl. I)

AS 8 / VI / 10

o.

- |                              |                     |
|------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1) 1 udu niga                | 1 fattened sheep    |
| 2) ba-ug <sub>7</sub>        | dead                |
| 3) u <sub>4</sub> 10-kam     | on 10 <sup>th</sup> |
| 4) ki na-lu <sub>2</sub> -ta | from Nalu           |

r.

- |   |              |
|---|--------------|
| 1) <sup>d</sup> šul-gi-iri-ĝu <sub>10</sub> | Šulgi-iriĝu  |
| 2) šu ba-ti                                 | has received |
| 3) iti a <sub>2</sub> -ki-ti <sup>17</sup>  | month name   |
| 4) mu en eridu <sup>ki</sup> / ba-huĝ       | year name    |

Nalu (Maeda 1989: 87 ff.) was an official of Puzriš-Dagān operating from Š 26 to ŠS 6; a tablets basket (*pisaĝ-dub-ba*), TRU 2 (Sigrist 1992: 257-59) contains a summary of his first sixteen years of activity, prior to the foundation of Puzriš-Dagān. In SAT 2 968 (Paoletti 2008: 143; Paoletti forthcoming) Nalu gives an amount of silver to pay back the overdraft of sheep related to this period of work in Tummal (Sallaberger 1993: 131 ff.). At the beginning of his career, Nalu was associated to Tummal and only afterwards, since Š 43, he was assigned to Nippur and Ur.

His duty was to receive, from other employees, ovine fattened on grains, which were probably intended for the kitchens. Texts mention either the receipt of dead animals or newborn ones.<sup>18</sup>

Nalu fulfilled also the duty of *kurušda*, which is the fattener of livestock

<sup>17</sup> Akitu was the sixth month of Puzriš-Dagān, named after the festival held for the moon god Nanna, to whom offers were addressed (Sallaberger 1993: 183 ff.; Sigrist 1992: 128 ff.).

<sup>18</sup> From Šu-Sin's reign onwards.

meant to be slaughtered. This meat was most likely used as ritual offerings during banquets and festivals, and not merely for the generic and daily production of food.

During the reign of Šulgi, Nalu sent un-fattened animals (*šu-gid<sub>2</sub>*), intended for the kitchens, to Ur-kununna and Naša; instead from the reign of Šu-Sin he features in the deliveries of carcasses to Ur-niġar and Šulgi-iriġu.

The death of an animal was usually recorded in a ‘death certificate’, and once the tablet was filed, the carcasses were delivered to the bureau supervised first by Ur-niġar, and then by Šulgi-iriġu. The last one succeeded to Ur-niġar, as receiving official of dead animals, from AS 3 until ŠS 4 (Sallaberger 1999: 262; Kang 1972: 242).

In the texts the transfer is always indicated by the expression *šu ba-ti* and often it is recorded the name of the one who will dispose of the flesh and skin of the animal.

## 4. TEXT 3 (MEASURES UNKNOWN) (pl. I)

ŠS 7 / III / 20

o.

- |   |                                   |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1) 2 udu-gukkal <sup>1</sup> -u <sub>2</sub>        | 2 fat-tailed sheep fed with grass |
| 2) 1 maš <sub>2</sub> -gal-u <sub>2</sub>           | 1 big goat fed with grass         |
| 3) ki puzur <sub>4</sub> - <sup>d</sup> šul-gi-/ta  | from Puzur-Šulgi                  |
| 4) ur-šu-ga-lam-ma i <sub>3</sub> -dab <sub>5</sub> | Ur-šugalama has taken             |

r.

- |  |                        |
|--|------------------------|
| 1) kišib lugal- <sup>d</sup> nin-/ġir <sub>2</sub> -su | seal of Lugal-Ningirsu |
| 2) u <sub>4</sub> 20-kam                               | on 20 <sup>th</sup>    |
| 3) iti šeš-da-gu <sub>7</sub> <sup>19</sup>            | month name             |
| 4) mu <sup>d</sup> šu- <sup>d</sup> EN.ZU              |                        |
| lugal uri <sub>2</sub> <sup>ki</sup> -m[a]             | year name              |
| ma-da za-ab-ša-  |                        |
| -li <sup>ki</sup> mu-hul                               |                        |

Ur-šugalama (Sigrist 1992: 335) was responsible for the deliveries of cattle in Ur from the year AS 3 to ŠS 9: he received deliveries from various official of Puzriš-Dagān (such as Abba-šaga, Ahu-wēr and Šulgi-ajjamu). The majority of expenditures were for the palace and their purpose was often not recorded, while the remaining supplies were *bala* sent by governors and temple officers.

<sup>19</sup> For the translation of this month see Sallaberger (1993: 195).

Ur-šugalama and Puzur-Šulgi appear together in another text (CST 441), dated back to the same year of the text above (ŠS 7 / X / --), in which Ur-šugalama delivered to Puzur-Šulgi a quantity of *duh-gen* ‘normal bran’.

On the basis of the collected evidences, unless the slight exception of the expression used in the first of the three tablets, the texts here analysed fall, by typology and contents, into those categories of documents which have already been studied for the archives of Puzriš-Dagān. Despite what seems a stereotyped pattern and although the mutual features that these tablets share with the numerous examples quoted above, they still provide new data now available for further comparisons and statistical analysis.

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SUMMARY

Translation and commentary of three texts from Drēhem, the ancient site of Puzriš-Dagān, concerning transactions of goods made by different officials in charge of the administrative districts.

*Keywords:* Sumerian, Ur III, Drēhem, bala.



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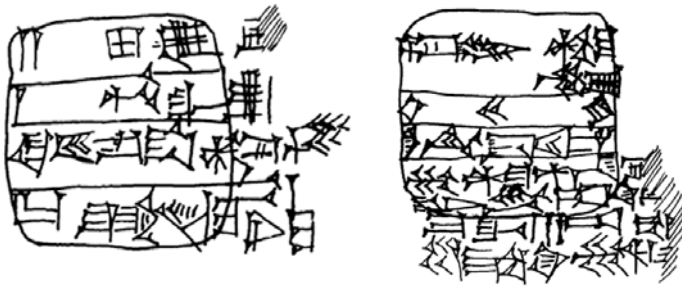
Tablet 1 (48mm × 37mm).  
Kress Collection (Helsinki).



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Tablet 2 (21mm × 22mm).  
Kress Collection (Helsinki).



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Tablet 3 (measures unknown).  
Private collection (Rome).