

## Two Ur III Tablets from the Tulare County Library

Cale Johnson  
 University of California, Los Angeles

§1 Two Ur III tablets were recently rediscovered at the Tulare County Library (located in Visalia, California, in the San Joaquin Valley, approximately 180 miles north of Los Angeles) and were, through the good offices of Ms. Tammy Jordan, brought to the CDLI offices at UCLA for documentation and interpretation. They were sold for six dollars each by Edgar Banks to a Miss Gretchen Flower, acting on behalf of the library, in March of 1928. Banks claims that the first of the two, Tulare 1, is from Puzriš-Dagan, the second, Tulare 2, from Umma. Though month names, tablet format and sealing practice do point toward Puzriš-Dagan and Umma as respective points of origin, the archaeological provenience of the two tablets and their ultimate archival context remain unclear (see below for discussion).

§2 Both tablets derive from the Ur III period, conventionally dated to 2112-2004 B.C., and more specifically from the first and second years, respectively, of the reign of Šu-Suen, the fourth ruler of the Ur III dynasty. This would date the two tablets to approximately 2035 B.C. (research related to the tablets that Banks sold to small libraries throughout America is being conducted by E. Wasilewska and should appear forthcoming).

### §3 Tulare 1 (figure 1)

Šu-Suen 1 / (month) 1 / (day) 4, from Puzriš-Dagan  
 37x32x16mm

#### Transliteration

obv.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1) 2(diš) amar maš-da <sub>3</sub> nita <sub>2</sub> | 2 young male gazelles                        |
| 2) 2(diš) amar maš-da <sub>3</sub> munus             | 2 young female gazelles                      |
| 3) e <sub>2</sub> uz-ga                              | to the E'uzga                                |
| 4) ur-šu mu <sub>1</sub> aldim maškim                | Uršu, the cook, is the responsible official; |
| 5) ša <sub>3</sub> mu-ku <sub>x</sub> (DU)-ra-ta     | from among the deliveries                    |
| 6) u <sub>4</sub> 4(diš)-kam                         | on the 4 <sup>th</sup> day                   |

#### Translation

rev.

- 1) ki in-ta-e<sub>3</sub>-a-ta ba-zi
- 2) giri<sub>3</sub> nu-ur<sub>2</sub>-<sup>d</sup>suen dub-sar
- 3) iti maš-da<sub>3</sub>-gu<sub>7</sub>
- 4) mu <sup>d</sup>šu-<sup>d</sup>suen lugal

they were booked out (of the account) of Intaea through the office of Nur-Suen, the scribe.  
 Month: "Eating-gazelles" (month 1),  
 year: "Šu-Suen is king" (ŠŠ1).

left edge

- 1) 4(diš)

(total): 4

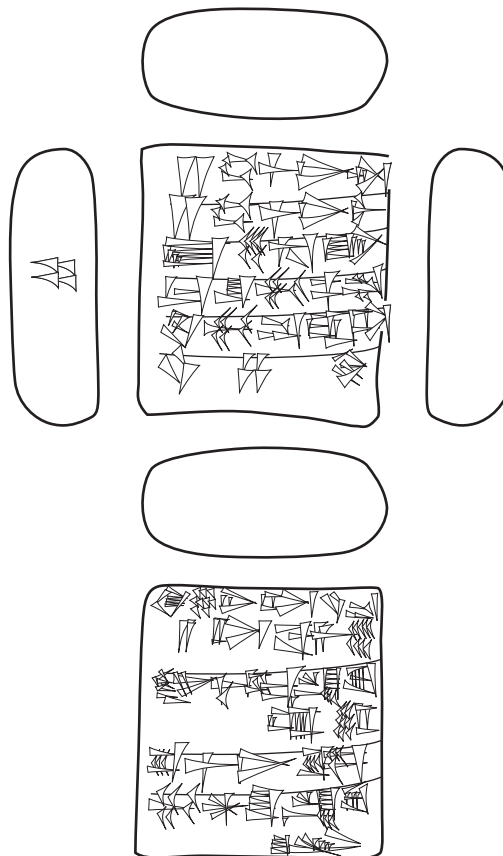


Figure 1: Tulare 1

§3.1 This is a receipt from Puzriš-Dagan, modern-day Drehem (type 2 [ki PN-ta ba-zi] in the classification of disbursements proposed by Sigrist (1995, 36-48); Sallaberger's type 4 (1999, 263)) and records a disbursement from Intaea, the head of the accounting office in Puzriš-Dagan, to a cook named Uršu.

§3.2 In Ur III administrative documents, the E'uzga (e<sub>2</sub> uz-ga) is primarily associated with, on the one hand, reeds, mats and laborers (presumably involved in building or embellishing the E'uzga), and on the other, juvenile caprids, primarily gazelles (maš-da<sub>3</sub>), but also lambs (sila<sub>4</sub>) and female kids (<sup>munus</sup>aš<sub>2</sub>-gar<sub>3</sub>), bear cubs (amar az), as well as occasionally mature members of these same species. The prominence of the consumption of gazelles and other non-domesticated animals can be associated with both the E'uzga and the first three month names in the calendar at Puzriš-Dagan (maš-da<sub>3</sub>-gu<sub>7</sub>, zah<sub>x</sub>(šEš)-da-gu<sub>7</sub>, u<sub>5</sub>-bi<sub>2</sub>-gu<sub>7</sub> [Englund *CDLJ*2002:1 §2, cf. Sallaberger 1999, 235, fn. 319]), but I cannot take up, in this short note, the question of whether this involved a sacrificial ritual, an elite culinary practice or both (see Sigrist 1992, 158-162; 1995, 37; Sallaberger 1999, 234-237; Enmerkar and Ensuhgirana 113 [Vanstiphout 2003, 34-35; *ETCSL* 1.8.2.4, 113] may be an oblique reference to the E'uzga).

§3.3 The most interesting thing about this particular text, however, is that *AUCT* 3, 94, is a nearly exact copy, bearing the same number and type of commodities, the same date, and involving most of the same participants. Given the fact that all of the texts in which gazelles (maš-da<sub>3</sub>) are delivered to the E'uzga are very similar and necessarily involve the same participants in the highly centralized economy of Puzriš-Dagan, we cannot be sure whether or not this text is really a copy of *AUCT* 3, 94. The sole difference between the two is, however, tantalizing. Whereas Tulare 1 has a giri<sub>3</sub> line (a line that indicates who acted as intermediary in the transaction), *AUCT* 3, 94, lacks the giri<sub>3</sub> line but does bear a sealing in its place, the seal of ur-<sup>d</sup>šul-pa-e<sub>3</sub> dub-sar. Side by side, the two texts read as follows:

### §3.4

<i>AUCT</i> 3, 94	Tulare 1
obv.	obv.
1) 2(diš) amar maš-da <sub>3</sub> [nita <sub>2</sub> ]	1) 2(diš) amar maš-da <sub>3</sub> nita <sub>2</sub>
2) 2(diš) amar maš-[da <sub>3</sub> munus]	2) 2(diš) amar maš-da <sub>3</sub> munus
3) e <sub>2</sub> uz-[ga]	3) e <sub>2</sub> uz-ga
4) ur- <sup>r</sup> šu muḫaldim	4) ur-šu muḫaldim

maškim<sup>1</sup>

5) u<sub>4</sub> 4(diš)-kam  
rev.  
1) ki in-ta-e<sub>3</sub>-a-ta ba-zi

2) iti maš-da<sub>3</sub>-gu<sub>7</sub>  
3) mu <sup>d</sup>šu-<sup>d</sup>suen lugal

seal

1) <sup>d</sup>[šu]-<sup>d</sup>suen  
2) lugal kal-ga  
3) lugal uri<sub>5</sub><sup>ki</sup>-ma  
4) lugal an-ub-da limmu<sub>2</sub>-ba  
5) ur-<sup>d</sup>šul-pa-e<sub>3</sub>  
6) dub-sar  
7) dumu ur-<sup>d</sup>ḫa-ia<sub>3</sub>  
8) ir<sub>11</sub>-zu

maškim

5) ša<sub>3</sub> mu-ku<sub>x</sub>(DU)-ra-ta  
6) u<sub>4</sub> 4(diš)-kam  
rev.

1) ki in-ta-e<sub>3</sub>-a-ta ba-zi  
2) giri<sub>3</sub> nu-ur<sub>2</sub>-<sup>d</sup>suen  
dub-sar  
3) iti maš-da<sub>3</sub>-gu<sub>7</sub>  
4) mu <sup>d</sup>šu-<sup>d</sup>suen lugal  
left edge  
1) 4(diš)

§3.5 The complementary distribution of the seal in *AUCT* 3, 94, and the giri<sub>3</sub> line in Tulare 1 is supported generally throughout the CDLI corpus: only two texts sealed by ur-<sup>d</sup>šul-pa-e<sub>3</sub> dumu ur-<sup>d</sup>ḫa-ia<sub>3</sub>, namely, *PDT* 1, 269 and *SAT* 3, 1871, include a giri<sub>3</sub> line (out of 88 occurrences), but in both cases the giri<sub>3</sub> line seems to be part of an earlier, distinct transaction in the account. At least 57 of the tablets sealed by ur-<sup>d</sup>šul-pa-e<sub>3</sub> dumu ur-<sup>d</sup>ḫa-ia<sub>3</sub> are type 2 [ki PN-ta ba-zi] disbursements, so some degree of plausibility must be granted to the idea that Tulare 1 either refers to the same transaction as, or is a copy of *AUCT* 3, 94 (on sealing practices in the Puzriš-Dagan administration, see Sallaberger 1999, 231 and fn. 308). It may be useful, at this point, to draw out a comparison with a pair of tablets in which one of them is explicitly identified as a copy: *MCS* 8, 97 and its copy BM 108081 (identified by Jacob Dahl [*CDLB* 2003:5]):

### §3.6

<i>MCS</i> 8, 97 (BM 113102)	BM 108081
obv.	obv.
1) 1(aš) gu <sub>2</sub> 2(u) 3(diš) ma-na siki gir <sub>2</sub> -gal	1') 1(aš) gu <sub>2</sub> 2(u) 3(diš) ma-na siki gir <sub>2</sub> -gal
2) udu-bi 4(u) 6(diš)	2') udu-bi 4(u) 6(diš)
3) udu ba-ur <sub>4</sub>	
4) ki an-na-ḫi-li-bi-ta rev.	3') ki an-na-ḫi-li-bi-ta
1) kišib <sub>3</sub> ensi <sub>2</sub> (blank space)	4') gaba-ri kišib <sub>3</sub> ensi <sub>2</sub> (blank space)
2) iti še-kar-ra-gal <sub>2</sub> -la*	5') iti še-kar-ra-gal <sub>2</sub> -la
3) mu en <sup>d</sup> nanna kar-zi-da	6') mu en <sup>d</sup> nanna kar-zi-da

- seal  
i  
1) <sup>d</sup>amar-<sup>d</sup>suen  
2) lugal kal-ga  
3) lugal uri<sup>ki</sup>-ma  
4) lugal an-ub-da limmu<sub>2</sub>-ba  
ii  
1) a-kal-la  
2) ensi<sub>2</sub>  
3) umma<sup>ki</sup>  
4) ir<sub>11</sub>-zu

§3.7 In this pair of texts, the relation between original and copy is fully explicit: the sealed document includes a written line that mentions the seal *kišib<sub>3</sub> ensi<sub>2</sub>* (*MCS* 8, 97, rev. 1), whereas the copy lacks the sealing, but includes the word *gaba-ri* “copy” before *kišib<sub>3</sub> ensi<sub>2</sub>* “sealed tablet of the governor” (BM 108081, 4'). Based on the number of lines and their placement with respect to the blank line indicated in the transliteration published by Dahl, I would presume that lines 1'-3' of BM 108081 occur on the obverse of the tablet and lines 4'-6' on the reverse: if so, it seems fairly clear that a copy such as BM 108081 preserves the demarcation into obverse and reverse of the original tablet, which might be another argument in favor of interpreting Tulare 1 as a copy of *AUCT* 3, 94. But the absence of any explicit mention of *gaba-ri* “copy” speaks against any interpretation of it as a copy, and in favor of interpreting Tulare 1 and *AUCT* 3, 94, as two documents that refer to the same transaction (see Hilgert 2003, 31–42 for an extended discussion on pairs of texts from Puzriš-Dagan that refer to the same transaction—Hilgert informs me [personal communication, April 2004] that the particular type of duplication between Tulare 1 and *AUCT* 3, 94 is unique). Before attempting to reconstruct the transaction underlying Tulare 1, I turn briefly to Tulare 2, which may indirectly shed some light on what is happening in Tulare 1.

#### §4 Tulare 2 (figure 2)

Šu-Suen 2 / (month) 9 from Umma  
43x40x17mm

- obv.  
1) 4(ban<sub>2</sub>) 6(diš) sila<sub>3</sub> dabin      4 ban 6 sila of flour  
2) u<sub>4</sub> 1(u) 4(diš)-kam                on the 14<sup>th</sup> day;  
3) 3(ban<sub>2</sub>) 3(diš) sila<sub>3</sub> dabin        3 ban 3 sila of flour  
4) u<sub>4</sub> 1(u) 5(diš)-kam                on the 15<sup>th</sup> day;  
5) 1(barig) dabin                        1 barig of flour  
rev.  
1) ur-<sup>d</sup>da-mu                              (from) Ur-Damu;  
2) kišib<sub>3</sub> ensi<sub>2</sub>-ka                        sealed tablet of the ensi;

- 3) iti <sup>d</sup>li<sub>9</sub>-si<sub>4</sub>                              the month: “Lisi” (month 9)  
(blank space)  
4) mu ma<sub>2</sub> <sup>d</sup>en-ki ba-ab-du<sub>8</sub>        the year: “Enki’s boat was  
caulked” (§S2)  
seal  
i  
1) [<sup>d</sup>šu]-<sup>d</sup>suen                              Šu-Suen  
2) [lugal] kal-ga                            the strong king  
3) [lugal] [uri<sup>ki</sup>-ma]                        the king of Ur  
4) [lugal] an-ub-[da  
limmu<sub>2</sub>]-ba                                  the king of the four  
regions  
ii  
1) [a-a-kal-la]                                Ayakala  
2) [ensi<sub>2</sub>]                                        the governor  
3) umma<sup>ki</sup>                                        of Umma  
4) ir<sub>11</sub>-zu                                        (is) your servant

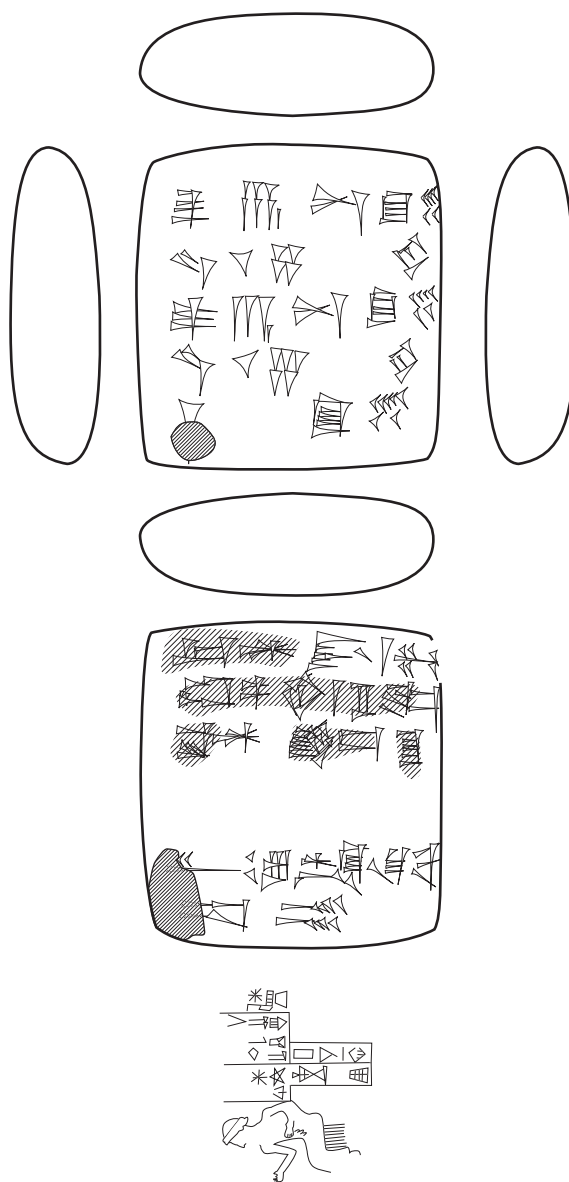


Figure 2: Tulare 2

§4.1 Although the entirety of Tulare 2 is covered with a seal that must be attributed to Ayakala (the mention of [ensi<sub>2</sub>] umma<sup>ki</sup> “[the governor of] Umma” in the sealing in combination with the year-name, which dates the tablet to the second year of Šu-Suen’s reign, limits the field of possibilities to this individual), at first glance it is unclear which of his seals occurs on this text—not a trivial matter given that high officials had new seals made upon the accession of a new king, and that Ayakala’s alternation in using a seal naming Amar-Suen and another naming Šu-Suen has played an important role in reconstructing the uneasy transition between the reigns of the two brothers (on the kinship relations between the Ur III kings and the general policy of fraternal succession among Sumerian rulers, see Dahl 2003). Two pieces of evidence favor an interpretation of this seal as Ayakala’s Šu-Suen seal: (a) glyptic features such as the vertically striped seat and fringed garment are present in the impressions of Tulare 2 and only found in the Šu-Suen seal, (b) in Ayakala’s Amar-Suen seal, the sign DA of the expression lugal an-ub-da limmu<sub>2</sub>-ba is squeezed into the end of the upper half of the third line in column one—in conformity with the syntax of the phrase—but in his Šu-Suen seal, the DA has been moved to the beginning of the bottom half of the third line: in all the impressions on Tulare 2, the final sign in the upper half of the third line is UB in conformity with other exemplars of the Šu-Suen seal:

Ayakala’s AS seal:	lugal an-ub-da / limmu <sub>2</sub> -ba
Ayakala’s ŠS seal:	lugal an-ub / -da limmu <sub>2</sub> -ba
Tulare 2:	[...] an-ub / [ ]-ba

§4.2 Although the use of Ayakala’s Šu-Suen seal conforms to the date of the text, viz., the second year of the reign of Šu-Suen, this does not go without saying. Dahl has argued that there is no clear correlation between Ayakala’s use of seals dedicated to a particular ruler and the date of the tablet on which the seal is impressed (Dahl 2003, 165-166), but this tablet conforms to expectations and adds nothing to the debate. Ayakala is thought by some to have had two distinct seals dedicated to Šu-Suen (Mayr 1997 catalogues these as 4.2 (p. 181) and 5 (p. 185)), but it is unclear to me whether or not two distinct seals can be distinguished; if so, the seal in Tulare 2 more closely resembles entry 5 (p. 185), for which Mayr only cites one text: *BIN* 3, 554 (on the question generally, see Sallaberger 1999, 166, fn. 155; Dahl 2003, 165-166).

§4.3 The most troubling line in Tulare 2 is the fifth line on the obverse, 1(barig) dabin. Although none of

the usual termini indicating a total appear in the line, one might be tempted to imagine that it represents a total of the quantities in lines 1 and 3. But, simply put, the numbers do not add up: admittedly, the numbers recorded in lines 1 and 3 are quite deformed by heavy sealing, but nonetheless I can make no sense of line 5.

§4.4 There are a number of individuals named Ur-Damu to be found in the Ur III materials, so one of the most difficult issues is to identify which individual is being mentioned in Tulare 2. An Ur-Damu appears in a number of larger texts in which sukkals play a major role, for instance in *AAICAB* 1/1, pl. 67-68, Ashm. 1924-667; BM 13873 (unpublished); BM 13784 (unpublished); *Ontario* 2, 652. In one case he appears alongside an Ur-Šulpae, *AAICAB* 1, 1, Ashm. 1924-667, and the section dealing with Ur-Šulpae immediately precedes the section dealing with Ur-Damu, which might be an indication of a familial connection. He also appears in smaller texts such as *SET* 210, which is quite similar to Tulare 2 in content, and includes an explicit mention of an ur-<sup>d</sup>da-mu sukkal and *PDT* 1, 163, in which ur-<sup>d</sup>da-mu sukkal delivers a lamb (sila<sub>4</sub>) to Intaea on behalf of the king. I suspect that the Ur-Damu mentioned in Tulare 2 is the son of the ur-<sup>d</sup>šul-pa-e<sub>3</sub> dumu ur-<sup>d</sup>ha-ia<sub>3</sub> mentioned in the sealing of *AUCT* 3, 94. The two, ur-<sup>d</sup>da-mu and ur-<sup>d</sup>šul-pa-e<sub>3</sub> dumu ur-<sup>d</sup>ha-ia<sub>3</sub>, are contemporary and engaged in the same sector of the economy: the transfer of livestock to palace and military officials of one kind or another (see Hilgert’s forthcoming publication of the Šu-Suen materials in the Oriental Institute, where ur-<sup>d</sup>šul-pa-e<sub>3</sub> dumu ur-<sup>d</sup>ha-ia<sub>3</sub> plays a central role). At the same time, the Ur-Damu of Tulare 2 must be kept separate from, for example, Ur-Damu, the father (rather than the son) of a different Ur-Šulpae as in *MVN* 2, 175, *Nebraska* 8 and many other texts dating from the end of the reign of Šulgi into that of Amar-Suen. If these suppositions hold, these two tablets may preserve some secondary archaeological context in the Tulare County Library, both tablets originating from a set of records concerning ur-<sup>d</sup>šul-pa-e<sub>3</sub> dumu ur-<sup>d</sup>ha-ia<sub>3</sub> and his son Ur-Damu.

§5 Given the fact that the provenience of these two tablets would conventionally be assigned to two different cities, Puzriš-Dagan and Umma, respectively, one might reasonably ask how they could possibly preserve a secondary archival context from two distinct archives. Even though much of the archive remains unpublished, I would like to briefly outline one possible reconstruction of the transaction underlying Tulare 1 and *AUCT* 3, 94. I would imagine that what we have here is a meet-

ing of intermediaries, Nur-Suen and Ur-Šulpae, both of whom are responsible to higher authorities: Nur-Suen acting on behalf of Intaea and Ur-Šulpae acting on behalf of Uršu, the cook in charge of the E'uzga. The conventional wisdom, with regard to sealing practice, is that a piece of property would only be exchanged for a sealed document, bearing the seal of the person or office which received the property. If we apply this to Tulare 1 and *AUCT* 3, 94, the results are somewhat surprising, but in accord with the convention: Ur-Šulpae received four gazelles that were booked out of Intaea's account at Puzriš-Dagan. Nur-Suen, the scribe who actually carried out the transaction on Intaea's behalf, drew up two documents: Tulare 1 and *AUCT* 3, 94. Ur-Šulpae sealed one (*AUCT* 3, 94) and it remained with Nur-Suen, but the other document (Tulare 1), in which Nur-Suen had included his own name as administrative intermediary between Ur-Šulpae and Intaea, namely, giri<sub>3</sub> nu-ur<sub>2</sub>-<sup>d</sup>suen dub-sar, was given to Ur-Šulpae to take back to Uršu, the person in charge of the E'uzga. The document sealed by Ur-Šulpae (*AUCT* 3, 94) provided evidence of

his role as intermediary between Nur-Suen and Uršu, whereas Tulare 1, the document that includes the line giri<sub>3</sub> nu-ur<sub>2</sub>-<sup>d</sup>suen dub-sar (and would, if it were sealed at all, regularly bear the seal of the scribe mentioned in the giri<sub>3</sub> line [Sallaberger 1993, 30-31; Hilgert 2003, 24-25; personal communication, April 2004]) served as evidence of Nur-Suen's role as intermediary between Intaea and Ur-Šulpae. Note that the document sealed by Ur-Šulpae is the primary document in conformity with the convention of exchanging a sealed document for a piece of property, whereas the document that includes the giri<sub>3</sub> line is a secondary document that may or may not bear a sealing.

(I would like to thank M. Hilgert for a lengthy email in response to the first draft of this note. He raised a number of concerns, some of which I have failed to heed but appreciated nonetheless, and I look forward to his publication of the <sup>d</sup>šul-pa-e<sub>3</sub> dumu ur-<sup>d</sup>ha-ia<sub>3</sub> archive in the near future.)

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