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# A New Ur III Letter-Order from the Semitic Museum at Harvard University

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gaba a-ša<sub>3</sub> ulu<sub>3</sub>-di geš-

§1. The tablet published here for the first time (SM 1899.2.135) is an Ur III letter-order housed in the Semitic Museum at Harvard University that records the assignment of a subsistence field to the official Ayakala. It was identified and photographed by Palmiro Notizia on June 2008. The tablet is well preserved, it measures 50×40×18 mm, and it is not ruled. The provenance from Girsu-Lagaš can be determined on the basis of onomastics.

# §2. Text edition (Palmiro Notizia)<sup>2</sup>

Transliteration obv.		Translation
1.	ba-zi	To Bazi
2.	u <sub>3</sub> -na-a-du <sub>11</sub>	say:
3.	4(iku) GAN <sub>2</sub> MUR <sub>7</sub>	4 iku of land, the rear part
	ti-ra-aš <sub>2</sub>	of (the domain unit in the
	_	field of) Tira'aš,

Abbreviations follow CDLI's convenient list <a href="http://">http:// cdli.ox.ac.uk/wiki/abbreviations\_for\_assyriology>. SM 1899.2.135 is published with the kind permission of Piotr Steinkeller, Curator of Cuneiform Collections, and Lawrence E. Stager, Director and Curator. A good quality photo of the tablet is available on the website of the CDLI project (CDLI no. P405912). The copy of the seal impression was prepared by Alessandro Di Ludovico. For recent treatments of Ur III letter-orders, see Urciuoli 2009 and Allred 2010. A comprehensive analysis of the Ur III letter-orders is in preparation by Daniele Umberto Lampasona (Università di Napoli "l'Orientale"), while an edition of all Ur III letter-orders appearing since Sollberger 1966 was announced by Lance Allred (Allred 2010: 9 note 2). An edition of four unpublished letter-orders in the British Museum (BM 93653, BM 94080, BM 94502, BM 94972) is in preparation by P. Notizia and L. Verderame.

	$\int bi! \int (=GU_2!)$	of Uludi/the lamentation
5.	a-kal-la PAD-ra-ni-im	singer, and its trees, are the subsistence field of Ayakala.
rev.		
1.	im-ma ḫa-bi <sub>2</sub> -ib <sub>2</sub> -ge-ne <sub>2</sub>	May he (= Bazi) confirm it on a tablet.
	(seal impression)	on a tuotet.

on the border of the field

#### Seal

1.	ur-[]	<i>Ur</i> ,
2.	dub-[sar]	the scribe,
3.	dumu ur-x-[]	son of Ur

# §2.1. Commentary

obv. 1: Bazi is attested as the addressee of four letter-orders,<sup>3</sup> but only two, *TCS* 1, 49 (= Michalowski 1993: no. 163), and BM 94502, have a content analogous to our text. In the case of *TCS* 1, 49, Bazi is requested to take away (kar) a 3 bur<sub>3</sub> field plot (=54 iku = 19.44 ha) from Lugaluruda and to give it (šum<sub>2</sub>) to Ludingira, who was likely the rightful grantee. However, any reference to the nature of the field plot or to the term PAD is missing in the text. In BM 94502, he is ordered to "release" (šu–bar) two large allotment plots situated in two different fields.<sup>4</sup>

obv. 3: In the Ur III period the average size of a land

We are grateful to Manuel Molina and Piotr Steinkeller who read a draft of this paper and offered helpful com-

ments and suggestions. Needless to say, we alone are responsible for any and all errors.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> TCS 1, 48, 49; Molina, AuOr 17-18 (1999-2000) 226 no. 32; BM 94502 (see note 1).

For others letter-orders from Girsu dealing with field assignments, see e.g. TCS 1, 50 (= Michalowski 1993: no. 95), 153 (= Michalowski 1993: no. 177; see also Maekawa 1992: 216 n. 11), 161, 225 (Michalowski 1993, no. 198), 230 (Michalowski 1993, no. 86), 365.

allotment distributed by the crown (PAD) was 6 iku (= 14,400 m²),<sup>5</sup> however it varied depending on the dependent worker's (erin²) social position and profession.<sup>6</sup> A lower-ranking state dependent would normally receive 4 iku (= 1.44 ha) of land, that is the same extension assigned to Ayakala.<sup>7</sup> If we accept the standard yield ratio of 20 to 30 gur of barley for one bur³ (= 18 iku) of soil,<sup>8</sup> then a 4 iku field plot could provide up to 6 gur (= 2,000 sila³) of barley per year. It is worth noting, however, that the same dependent could hold more than one PAD-plot within different fields and that the location of a single plot might change from one year to the other due to the unstable topographical conditions in the southern part of the Mesopotamian alluvium.<sup>9</sup>

For the reading of the sign MUR<sub>7</sub> (LAK 193, KWU 354, ABZ 242), see Civil 2011: 232-233. I assume that in our text MUR<sub>7</sub> does not have a simple prepositional use ("behind [the temple of] Tira'as"), but rather it refers to a specific part of the domain unit of the field of Tira'as (see below). In the land survey texts from Girsu, plots of each field are classified according to the differences in either the quality of the soil, or in the use of the land. The sign MUR<sub>7</sub> indicates in those texts the "rear part" (Akk. *arkatu*) of a domain unit, with no direct relationship to the quality of the soil as proposed by Pettinato. <sup>10</sup> However, I am uncertain about the reading of the sign MUR<sub>7</sub> in these cases, whether mur<sub>7</sub> or murgu<sub>2</sub>.

Tira'aš was the name of one of the four secondary shrines of Ningirsu mentioned in Cylinder A of Gudea. 11 The site of the homonymous settlement is unknown, but it

is probably to be located in the environs of Girsu, close to its borders with the province of Umma. A palace/ fortress (e<sub>2</sub>-gal) seems to have existed, both in Tira'aš and in Antasura, built by Eannatum and Urukagina to protect the northern boundary of Lagaš. <sup>12</sup> For the Ur III period the following attestations of the toponym are documented <sup>13</sup>:

A. e<sub>2</sub> ti-ra-aš<sub>2</sub> ("temple of Tira'aš")

*MVN* 6, 301 rev ii 1; *ITT* 5, 6970 obv. 5 (e<sub>2</sub> ti-ra-aš<sub>2</sub><sup>ki</sup>); *TLB* 3, 167 obv. i 18; *HLC* 2 rev. i 4; *SAT* 1, 418 obv. i 18-20 (lu<sub>2</sub> e<sub>2</sub> ti<sup>!</sup>-ra-aš<sub>2</sub>).

B. a-ša<sub>3</sub> ti-ra-aš<sub>2</sub> ("field of Tira'aš")

*BPOA* 1, 39 obv. 3; *MVN* 22, 177 rev. 4 (0.0.1 še PI.RI a-ša<sub>3</sub> ti-ra-aš<sub>2</sub>); Maekawa, *ASJ* 19 (1997) 290 no. 14 obv. 12 (3.0.0 GAN<sub>2</sub> a-ša<sub>3</sub> ti-ra-aš<sub>2</sub>); Maekawa, *ASJ* 2 (1980) 12 no. 30 rev. 1 (še a-ša<sub>3</sub> ti-ra-aš<sub>2</sub>).  $^{14}$ 

C. geškiri6 ti-ra-aš2 ("orchard of Tira'aš")

*MVN* 17, 18 obv. 3; *HLC* 102 obv. 10; *HLC* 267 obv. 7'; *Amherst* 54 obv. 13; *MVN* 7, 299 rev. 1; *HSS* 4, 10 rev. i 31; *ITT* 5, 6994 obv. 3; *MVN* 17, 55 rev. ii 5' ( $g^{e\bar{s}}$ kiri<sub>6</sub> ti-ra-aš<sub>2</sub> $^{\lceil ki \rceil}$ ); *MVN* 6, 139 rev. 6 ( $g^{e\bar{s}}$ kiri<sub>6</sub> ti-[ra-aš<sub>2</sub>]). <sup>15</sup>

D. kun-zi-da ti-ra-aš<sub>2</sub> ("weir of Tira'aš")

*TCTI* 1, 766 obv. 4; *TCTI* 1, 851 obv. 7, 11 (kun-zi-da ti-ra-aš dugud!<sup>?</sup>[= MI.AŠ.AŠ] sur-ra).

Besides, several texts record offers to the sanctuary of Tira'a's or religious events connected with Tira'a's:

E. MVN 9, 87 rev. vi 33; CT 7, pl. 16, BM 17765, rev. i 5 (nig<sub>2</sub>-sizkur<sub>2</sub>-ra <sup>d</sup>ti-ra-aš<sub>2</sub>); ITT 2, 833 obv. 7; HSS 4, 54 rev. 6; MVN 11, 131 obv. 4 (sizkur<sub>2</sub> ti-ra-aš<sub>2</sub>-še<sub>3</sub>); BPOA 6, 37 obv. 14 (1 ma<sub>2</sub> 40.0.0 gur ti-ra-

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Dahl 2002: 334. According to Maekawa (1991: 213) in the Ur III period the area of each allotment parcel was a multiple of 3 iku.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Steinkeller 2004: 93.

A letter-order, from Umma, mentioning a 4 iku subsistence field is *TCS* 1, 148 (= Michalowski 1993: no. 76; Koslova 2003: 243 no. 3).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Dahl 2002: 334 with previous bibliography.

Maekawa 1992: 198. Steinkeller 1999: 303 and note
51. For the arrangement of the allotment plots within a field, see Maekawa 1992: 188-196.

Maekawa 1992: 180 and note 2; Maekawa 1995: 197; Maekawa1999: 66 and note 10.

See Falkenstein 1966: 169; Suter 2000: 87. For the reading and etymology of Tira'aš, see Selz 1993: 719; Edzard 1997a: 75 (RIME 3/1.1.7.Cyl A [Gudea]) ad x 15; Edzard 1997b: 163; Edzard, *RlA* 9 s.v. Name, Namengebung. A, p. 102 § 11. See also the forthcoming entry "Tiraš, Tira'aš" in the *RlA* by Gebhard Selz.

See Frayne 1997: 112 (*RIME* 1.9.1.26 [Ur-Nanše]), 152 (*RIME* 1.9.3.7a [Eannatum]), 266 (*RIME* 1.9.9.2 [URUKAgina]). See also George 1993: 150 no. 1097; Edzard, *RIA* 10 s.v. Palast. A. III, p. 208 § 7. A location at modern Šaṭrah was proposed by Frayne (1997: 112), but his announced article on the geography of Lagaš province has never been published. For other attestations of Tira'aš in pre-Ur III period, see Selz 1995: 383-416 "Index B" s.v. e<sub>2</sub>-ti-ra-aš<sub>2</sub>, e<sub>2</sub>-gal-ti-ra-aš<sub>2</sub> GAN<sub>2</sub>-nigin<sub>8</sub>-ti-ra-aš<sub>2</sub>-du<sub>3</sub>-a, i<sub>3</sub>-du<sub>8</sub>-ti-ra-aš<sub>2</sub><sup>ki</sup>.

Our list updates the entry "Tiraš" by Edzard & Farber 1974: 197-198.

Maekawa, ASJ 17 (1995), p. 205 no. 100 rev. i 12, 19, ii 15 (a-ša<sub>3</sub> ti-ra-aš<sub>2</sub>-ta-ma-ag<sub>2</sub>) possibly refers to another field.

For this integration, see Civil 1994: 126.

aš<sub>2</sub>); HSS 4, 52 rev. 10 (skins for the ma<sub>2</sub> ti-ra-aš<sub>2</sub>); ITT 2, 695 rev. 8.

Both *TLB* 3, 167 (A) and *BPOA* 6, 37 (E) confirm that Tira'aš was in the Girsu district. More precisely, according to *HLC* 102 (C) and *HLC* 267 (C), it was located in the area of Kisura, literally "the border." <sup>16</sup>

obv. 4: For date palms growing in a field, possibly on the levee that surrounded it, see Heimpel 2011: 80. For the expression gaba a-ša<sub>3</sub>, see *PSD* A/I, p. 171 (1.9 "features of a field").

Ulu<sub>3</sub>-di in a-ša<sub>3</sub> ulu<sub>3</sub>-di might be either a personal name or a cultic profession.<sup>17</sup> Be that as it may, this field name is not attested in any other text, while an i<sub>3</sub>-dub ulu<sub>3</sub>-di "granary (of the field) of Uludi/the lamentation singer" is known from *MVN* 9, 66 (tablet obv. 4, envelope obv. 4).

As to the personal name Uludi, at Girsu-Lagaš the most important officials bearing that name were an estate manager (nu-banda<sub>3</sub>-gu<sub>4</sub>) and a foreman of the female millers (ugula kikken<sub>2</sub>).<sup>18</sup>

obv. 5: For the word PAD and its reading, see Steinkeller - Postgate 1992: 69.

rev. 6: The expression im-a ge.n "to confirm on a tablet" suggests the redaction of a new document by Bazi – or on behalf of Bazi – as a response to the request of the central administration to assign a PAD-plot to Ayakala.<sup>19</sup> However, it is virtually impossible to identify

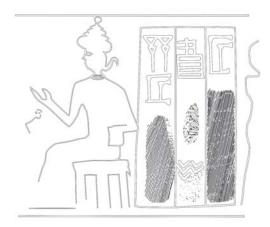


Figure 1: The seal impression

the aforementioned document—or a single entry mentioning the assignment operation in a larger account—among the thousands of texts of the Ur III corpus, given also the lack of any title or patronymic accompanying Ayakala.

## **§3.** Seal impression (Alessandro Di Ludovico)

§3.1. The tablet shows traces of multiple seal impressions on both faces, but no sealings on the rounded minor sides. In general, all seal impressions look quite feeble and wellworn. Very probably sealings were made before the document's drafting, since its incised signs still appear quite wide and deep. As one can often observe in Ur III administrative texts, the last line of the tablet's text, located on the reverse, is followed by a single partial but uninterrupted sealing which begins with the legend and reaches the end of the document's surface. Spatial relations between lines of text and legend frame of seal impressions had to follow very precise correspondences, according to what is still visible of the legend's impressions which follow one another.

**§3.2.** The cylinder that was used to seal this tablet bore a presentation scene before a seated goddess. In these impres-

ge-na "confirmed tablet", see *Nisaba* 11, 26 rev. ii 3-4 (im ge-na e<sub>2</sub> dnin-ur<sub>4</sub>- ra¬, translated by al-Rawi and Verderame: "tavoletta di conferma"); *Ontario* 2, 424 (pisan dub-ba im ge-na še geš-e<sub>3</sub>-a giri<sub>3</sub> bu<sub>3</sub>-bu<sub>3</sub> mu en dnanna maš-e i<sub>3</sub>-pa<sub>3</sub> i<sub>3</sub>-gal<sub>2</sub>, translated by Sigrist: "tablet basket <containing> the verified tablets [accounting for] the threshed barley, responsible: Bubu Š 43"). For other examples of "confirmation" of tablets, see *BIN* 3, 317 rev. 3 (im gu-la ge-ne<sub>2</sub>-dam); *SANTAG* 7, 129 (see also Sallaberger 2006: 270) rev. 3 (im rug<sub>2</sub> -ba- bi² / ge-ne<sub>2</sub>-dam); *MVN* 22, 178 rev. ii 3' (im e<sub>3</sub>-gal ib<sub>2</sub>-ge-na); *SNAT* 506 rev. 4 (im-bi nu-ba-la nu-ge-en<sub>6</sub>). On the use of the verb ge.n in a peculiar typology of labels from Umma, see Laurito, Mezzasalma & Verderame 2006; Laurito, Mezzasalma & Verderame 2008.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> For Kisura, see Heimpel 1994: 27; Heimpel 1996: 20.

For fields names typology, see Edzard, *RlA* 9 s.v. Name, Namengebung. A, p. 103 § 12.4. For ulu<sub>3</sub>-di "lamentation singer", see Attinger 1993: 737 and Selz 1995: 205 note 955.

For ulu<sub>3</sub>-di nu-banda<sub>3</sub>-gu<sub>4</sub>, see *CT* 5, pl. 27, BM 18933, obv. i 11; *HSS* 4, 32 obv. 9. For ulu<sub>3</sub>-di ugula kikken<sub>2</sub>, see *CT* 3, pl. 35, BM 21335, obv. iv 16.

The expression im-a ge.n appears also in the letter-orders *TCS* 1, 335 (=*MVN* 7, 406; see also Wilcke 1998: 32-34) rev. 4 (en-na im še-ba-a i<sub>3</sub>-ib<sub>2</sub>-ge-ne<sub>2</sub>); Hallo, *BiOr* 26 (1969), p. 174 BM 18568 (= Michalowski 1993: no. 134) obv. 5-6 (im še-ba siki-ba ga-bi<sub>2</sub>-ge); *TCS* 1, 276 obv. 6-7 (im še-ba-ka he<sub>2</sub>-bi-ib-ge-ne<sub>2</sub>). The same expression is attested in several administrative texts: *MVN* 13, 172 rev. 2 (im-ma i<sub>3</sub>-ib<sub>2</sub>-ge-en<sub>6</sub>); *SANTAG* 6, 115 rev. 6 (im tug<sub>2</sub>-ba e<sub>2</sub>-gal-ka nu-ub-ge-en<sub>6</sub>); *NSGU* 209 rev. ii 17 (im-ma bi<sub>2</sub>-in-ge); BM 25455 (courtesy M. Molina) left edge (im lu<sub>2</sub> didli-ka ge-ne<sub>2</sub>-dam). For imma ge-na "confirmed on a tablet", see *OTR* 251 rev. i 14; *BPOA* 1, 14 obv. ii 8 (im-ma<sup>!</sup>[=UR] ge-na). For im

sions the latter is the best recognizable of the three characters that were originally represented on the seal's surface. In fact, the receiving goddess is almost completely preserved on the reverse and partially distinguishable in one impression on the obverse. She sits on a niched throne and wears a flounced robe and a headgear of the multi-tiered horned crown kind, with a disk-like element on its top. The scene was certainly completed by the typical couple of a goddess and a man standing hand in hand. What remains visible of them in the impressions is only part of the body of the male figure (wearing his typical fringed mantle), who raises his right hand before his face. Before the sitting goddess no traces of astral symbols are visible in the top part of the field, but, in its middle region,

a barely legible integrating motif clearly appears. In presentation scenes of Ur III period such a position can be occupied by an animal or monster, like a goose, an Anzu-like eagle, a lion or a bull. Seal impressions of SM 1899.2.135 do not show enough of this motif to allow a sound interpretation of its nature. According to what can still be observed in one of the impressions on the reverse, one can suppose that this element could correspond to a lion placed on a standard and facing towards the right. Such iconography recurs in this region of the scene in some well-known published specimens of presentation scenes of the same period.<sup>20</sup> The presence here of an Anzu-like eagle or a lion standing on his hind-legs or cowering down is much less likely.<sup>21</sup>

For example in the impressions on *YOS* 4, 201 (Buchanan 1981: no. 620; here the lion is left-oriented), *BPOA* 6, 1476, and *SAT* 2, 400, all from Umma and kept in the Yale Babylonian Collection.

Some examples of these iconographies can be located in: Collon 1982: no. 386; Buchanan 1966: no. 422; Collon 1982: no. 433; von der Osten 1934: no. 136; Legrain 1925: no. 263; Buchanan 1981: no. 572 (*SAT* 3, 1492 = YBC 1704); MLC 166 (Yale Babylonian Collection).

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