



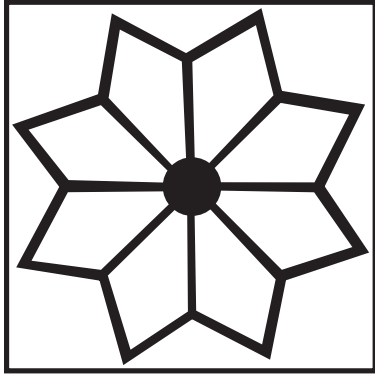
Sumerian Texts from Ancient Iraq
From Ur III to 9/11

Benjamin Studevent-Hickman

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Sumerian Texts from Ancient Iraq

From Ur III to 9/11



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Preface

The present manuscript publishes 145 new cuneiform tablets from ancient Babylonia, from a time that scholars call the Ur III period (ca. 2110–2003 BCE)—the heyday of Sumerian civilization. Based on month names and other evidence, we know they are from a site near the ancient city of Nippur (modern Nuffar), the religious capital of Babylonia and an important political center for the kings of the Ur III dynasty. With a few possible exceptions, they appear to stem from the archive of a figure named Aradmu.

While tablets from the Aradmu archive have been published elsewhere, this volume more than doubles the number of available records from that collection and offers the first systematic study of its contents. Aradmu may be identified as a “head administrator” (Sumerian *šabra*), perhaps of the temple household of Ninurta, the city-god of Nippur. Based in part on his activities, which deal principally with agricultural tools and personnel, he was more likely a head agricultural administrator (Sumerian *šabra gud*). Aradmu, his father, and two of his brothers administered land in several fields, two of which are attested for the first time. Given Aradmu’s further association with the temple household of Ninurta, these texts offer the first detailed information on the landed holdings and agricultural personnel of that institution in Ur III Nippur. Personnel and property of the temple of Inana also appear, as do those of the household of a deified king, namely Šu-Suen, penultimate ruler of the Ur III dynasty.

The find spot of the tablets is unknown. It is tempting to tie them to the site established by king Šu-Suen after his well-known campaign against the kingdom of Šimanum, which took him to Nineveh and other sites in the northern Tigris region. According to a later copy of his inscriptions, Šu-Suen built a site near Nippur for Enlil (the head of the Sumerian pantheon) and his wife, the goddess Ninlil, specifically to settle deportees from Šimanum.

The story of the tablets since leaving the ground has received considerable attention. They were confiscated by US Customs, in 2001; stored in the World Trade Center complex in Manhattan; damaged during the attacks of 9/11; repaired through funding from the US Department of State; and returned to Iraq. The repair work was done by the conservators Dennis and Jane Piechota, at their lab in Arlington, MA, and at the nearby Harvard Semitic Museum, in Cambridge. A revised version of the Piechotas’ conservation report forms part of this volume.

The Aradmu records from the aforementioned lot of antiquities are published here in transliteration and translation. The difficulties of translating administrative records, owing to their highly abbreviated nature and other factors, are well known. Still, I found it worthwhile as a matter of user-friendliness to include translations, inadequate as they may be in places. Far too many publications of Mesopotamian administrative texts are completely useless to the larger academic community and the general public because they offer transliterations only. This is much to the detriment of Mesopotamian studies, which is in bad enough shape already. In my translations, I have tried to remain true to the Sumerian and to the genre, taking as few liberties as possible while making my sense of the text clear. Given the limited time I had with the tablets, the assorted photos of tablets that appear in the accompanying conservation report, and the fact that detailed photographs are available online, hand-copies of the tablets are not included, nor are drawings of the seals. Once fresh eyes look upon the photos of the tablets—even before then, no doubt—emendations to this manuscript can begin, especially where difficult lines of text are concerned.

Also published here is a response to my Freedom of Information Act request concerning the circumstances that led to the tablets’ confiscation. It is, I think, the responsibility of scholars of the ancient world not only to publish the contents of the items that cross their desks but also to gather and make available as much information as possible about those items since they left the ground. If our responsibility is indeed to preserve historical information and, by doing so, to honor the memory of the ancients, then surely such details are as important as the data in

the texts. This is a truism based solely on comprehensiveness of research, for that information, too, is history; it becomes all the more our task, it would seem, if those details have some impact on the destruction of the very knowledge we are trying to save.

I warmly dedicate this volume to the people of Iraq. While the data presented here may “belong” to all of us for our common stake in the ancient past, the objects from which those data stem are, at least in this case, Iraqi property. The data themselves, not to mention who publishes them, are of importance for not only Iraq’s cultural heritage, but also its status in the international academic community. There is no question that the Aradmu records published here and known to exist elsewhere were looted in Iraq, exported illegally, and bound for a chain of sales that brought them to the United States and other countries. Here is not the place for an excursus on the legal and ethical issues involved with collecting and/or publishing unprovenanced antiquities, nor for a detailed presentation of my stance on those issues. Suffice it to say that, were it not for the fact that the Iraqis had been notified of these tablets and given final say in their publication, I would not have undertaken this project. This volume is, I hope, yet another testament to the extraordinary richness of Iraq’s ancient past and a small step toward the responsible treatment of its unprovenanced material.

Benjamin Studevent-Hickman
Louisville, Kentucky
January 2018

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Many people helped make this volume possible, but three deserve special thanks. The first is Dr. Amira Edan, Director General of Iraqi Museums, who generously gave me permission to publish the tablets. The second is Piotr Steinkeller, who alerted me about the texts and suggested I take on this project. He and I spent many hours together working with the tablets and discussing the issues they raised. He also read a draft of the completed manuscript and made many valuable suggestions and corrections. Lance Allred is the third. When he heard about this project, now several years ago, he told me that he had been working on a collection of tablets at Cornell University belonging to the same archive. He was thinking about presenting some preliminary remarks on that material at an upcoming conference devoted to Ur III studies. Seeing how far along I was with my project, and since I could not attend the conference myself for various reasons, he selflessly chose another topic to present. It was a testament to his generosity as both a scholar and friend. Where the history of our field is concerned, he deserves equal credit, if not more, for the identification and study of this archive.

Further thanks are due John Russell, for working with me to secure permission to publish the texts; Dennis and Jane Piechota, for their hospitality during my visits to Arlington and for contributing a revised version of their conservation report to this volume; Joseph Greene, Adam Aja, and Tim Letteney, for granting me access to the tablets while they were at the Harvard Semitic Museum; Xiaoli Ouyang, Seth Richardson, Elizabeth Stone, Jason Ur, and Aage Westenholz, for discussing specific issues raised by the texts; Piotr Michalowski, Walther Sallaberger, and an anonymous reviewer for reading a draft of the entire manuscript and offering wonderful feedback; attendees of my public talks about the archive, at the University of Little Rock and Harvard University, for their questions and suggestions; my colleagues at St. Francis School, especially Suzanne Bizot Gorman and Ralph Marshall, for their flexibility and support as I finished the manuscript; Robert Englund, for so expeditiously making the photos of the tablets available online; and Piotr Michalowski, for inviting me to publish this study in the *Journal of Cuneiform Studies Supplemental Series*.

Last, but certainly not least, I thank my wife, Ali, for her support throughout this project, and our sons, William and Olin, for providing many joyful distractions during its final stages—reminders of the important things in life. This would have been a much more difficult task without them.

Abbreviations and Other Conventions

AfO	<i>Archiv für Orientforschung</i>
Akk.	Akkadian
AnOr	Analecta Orientalia
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
ASJ	<i>Acta Sumerologica</i>
AUCT	Andrews University Cuneiform Texts
AuOr	<i>Aula Orientalis</i>
AuOrSup	Aula Orientalis Supplementa
BBVO	Berliner Beiträge zum Vorderer Orient Texte
BDTNS	Database of Neo-Sumerian Texts (http://bdtms.filol.csic.es/)
BiMes	Bibliotheca Mesopotamica
BMQ	<i>British Museum Quarterly</i>
BPOA	Biblioteca del Proximo Oriente Antiguo
BSA	<i>Bulletin of Sumerian Agriculture</i>
ca.	circa
CAD	<i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of Chicago</i> . Edited by Ignace J. Gelb et al. Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1956–2010.
CDLJ	<i>Cuneiform Digital Library Journal</i>
CDOG	Colloquien der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft
CHANE	Culture and History of the Ancient Near East
CM	Cuneiform Monographs
CNIP	Carsten Niebuhr Institute Publications
col.	column
DoCu	Dominique Charpin and Jean-Marie Durand. <i>Documents cunéiformes de Strasbourg</i> . Paris: ADPF, 1981.
ECTJ	Aage Westenholz. <i>Early Cuneiform Texts in Jena: pre-Sargonic and Sargonic documents from Nippur and Fara in the Hilprecht-Sammlung vorderasiatischer Altertümer, Institut für Altertumswissenschaften der Friedrich-Schiller-Universität, Jena</i> . Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1975.
esp.	especially
FAOS	Freiburger altorientalische Studien
GN	Geographical name
ha	hectare
Hh.	Lexical series HAR.ra = hubullu
HLC	George A. Barton. <i>Haverford Library Collection of Cuneiform Tablets</i> . Philadelphia: Winston, 1905–1914.
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JCS	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
JCSSS	Journal of Cuneiform Studies Supplemental Series
JESHO	<i>Journal of the economic and Social History of the Orient</i>
JHNES	Johns Hopkins Near Eastern Studies
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
KWU	Nikolaus Schneider. <i>Die Keilschriftzeichen der Wirtschaftsurkunden von Ur III nebst ihren</i>

	<i>charakteristischen Schreibvarianten</i> . Keilschrift-paläographie 2. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1935.
L	liter
l.e.	left edge
lit.	literally
MC	Mesopotamian Civilizations
MHEM	Mesopotamian History and Environment Memoirs
MSL	Materialien zum sumerischen Lexikon/Materials for the Sumerian Lexicon
MVN	Materiali per il vocabulario neosumerico
NATN	Owen, David I. <i>Neo-Sumerian Archival Texts Primarily from Nippur in the University Museum, the Oriental Institute and the Iraq Museum</i> . Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1982.
NRVN	<i>Neusumerische Rechts- und Verwaltungsurkunden aus Nippur</i> . Muazzez İlmiye Çığ and Hatice Kızılyay. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1965–.
NS	new series
OB	Old Babylonian
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
Or	<i>Orientalia</i> (New Series)
PapyFlor	Papyrologica Florentina
PDT	M. Çığ, Hatice Kızılyay, and Armas Salonen. <i>Die Puzris -Dagan Texte der Istanbul Archäologischen Museen</i> . Helsinki : Suomalaisen Tiedeakatemia Toimituksia, 1954–.
pers. comm.	personal communication
pl.	plate
PN	Personal name
R	<i>Reichskalendar</i>
RA	<i>Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale</i>
RIME	Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Period
RIA	<i>Reallexikon der Assyriologie</i> . Edited by Erich Ebeling et al. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1928–.
SAAS	State Archives of Assyria Studies
SANER	Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Records
SAOC	Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilizations
SAT	Sumerian Archival Texts
SFSMD	Studia Francisci Scholten Memoriae Dicata
SNAT	Tohru Gomi and Susumu Sato. <i>Selected Neo-Sumerian Administrative Texts from the British Museum</i> . Abiko: Research Institute Chuo-Gakuin University, 1990.
Sum.	Sumerian
TCCBI 2	Francesco Pomponio, Aage Westenholz, and Marten Stol. <i>Tavolette cuneiformi di varia provenienza delle collezioni della Banca d'Italia: Volume II</i> . Rome: Banca d'Italia, 2006.
TCL	Textes cunéiformes. Musées du Louvre
TMH	<i>Texte und Materialien der Frau Professor Hilprecht Collection of Babylonian Antiquities</i> . Edited by Julius Lewy et al. Leipzig, 1932–.
UTI	Die Umma-Texte aus den Archäologischen Museen zu Istanbul
var.	Variant spelling
ZA	<i>Zeitschrift für Assyriologie</i>

Dates of texts are provided in the form (x.y.z), where x = year, y = month, and z = day. A dash (-) indicates that the tablet is intact but that element of the date is not provided; brackets indicate that the tablet is damaged where the element would have appeared. Years in this notation represent regnal years of Ur III kings, abbreviated as follows:

Š	Šulgi
AS	Amar-Suen
ŠŠ	Šu-Suen
IS	Ibbi-Suen

For example, a text with a date of IS2.vii.28 would be from the second year of Ibbi-Suen, the seventh month, the twenty-eighth day. An R after the month name indicates that the text uses the *Reichskalendar*, a separate set of month names in Ur III times that tied a record to the royal sector of the economy.

Sumerian numerals are transliterated without being broken down into their components (e.g., “100” is written instead of “60 (1×DIŠ) 40 (4×U)”). Unless otherwise noted, units of one are written with the cuneiform graph DIŠ.

Measurements of capacity are given in transliteration in the form x.y.z, where x = gur (ca. 300 L), y = PI (ca. 60 L), and z = BÁN (ca. 10 L). As with the numerals, amounts greater than one gur are not broken down into their gur components (e.g., 61 gur as “61.0.0” vs. “60 (1×DIŠ) 1 (AŠ)”).

Measurements of surface area in transliteration are given in the form x.y.z, where x = BÛR (ca. 7.29 ha), y = ÈŠE (ca. 1.22 ha), and z = IKU (ca. 0.41 ha).

Cuneiform graphs are transliterated following well-established values in the field, although some scholars may disagree on specific readings (e.g., Árad-mu vs. Úrdu-gu₁₀). The transliterations are unconventional in two main respects: nasalized g is left without a diacritic, as is hooked h; and Akkadian, Sumerian, and other components are not formally distinguished in personal names (e.g., dingir-lu-ba-ni vs. DINGIR-*lu-ba-ni*). The transliterations, moreover, simply record the signs, in the order they appear, with determinatives alone distinguished from other categories of graph. Where a transliteration is indented, it is because that text was indented in the tablet.

Personal names are rendered with hyphens between major elements, and vowel sequences are separated by an apostrophe, except where y is standard (e.g., Aya-urumu vs. Lugal-me'a) or the combination occurs in words where the vowel cluster generally lacks an apostrophe (e.g., Šu-Suen instead of Šu-Su'en).

Other proper nouns are rendered in their standard form for translation and discussion purposes (e.g., Nipur vs. Nibru). Readings and translations of month names follow Mark E. Cohen, *Festivals and Calendars of the Ancient Near East* (Bethesda, MD: CDL, 2015), 115–62.

The index is for the texts only, not for the prose, and presents entries alphabetically based on the form of the name in translation. Moreover, only proper nouns are covered. It was felt that the catalog (see §5) offers enough content, and the number of texts is small enough, to be consulted more thoroughly for research on specific types of transactions, phrases, and so on. For some personal names, there are occasional references to other names in the index. Those appear when it is possible that they refer to the same individual but that identification could not be confirmed.