TEXTS AND FRAGMENTS

A ŠÀ BALA-A TABLET

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1. 5 gú gi
2. ki šeš-a-ni-ta
3. lugal-e-ba-an-s[afl]
4. šu ba-ti
5. šà bala-a mu-ús-sa bàd ba-dù

Reverse uninscribed; sealed with a currently illegible sealing. ¹

“Lugale-bansa received five talents of reeds from Šešani, within the bala.”
Date: Šulgi Year 38.

This tablet records the expenditure of five talents of reeds from Šešani to Lugale-bansa, an official in Umma’s provincial administration. The transaction is classified as šà bala-a, “within the bala.” ² Šešani, a producer of reeds, reed mats, and wooden items, appears only in early šà bala-a tablets from Umma, ranging over a five year period between Šulgi 33 and Šulgi 38.¹

The man who received the reeds in this tablet, Lugale-bansa, was an administrator in Umma’s provincial government. Seal inscriptions tell us that Lugale-bansa’s father was Ur-Ištaran, and that he had at least two brothers, Ur-šulpae and En-kâš, both of whom were also part of the énsi’s administration. Ur-Šulpae’s seal reads: ur-šul-pa-ê/ dumu ur-šul-êštaran/ lú udu niga, “Ur-šulpae son


² For a detailed discussion of the genre of šà bala-a texts from Umma, including previous scholarship, see T. M. Sharlach, Bala: Economic Exchange between Center and Provinces in the Ur III State (Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 1999), esp. pp. 62–77.

³ Šešani’s earliest appearance in a šà bala-a tablet is in Šulgi 33a viii (Umma calendar), according to T. Frederici,
of Ur-Ištaran, the man (in charge of) fattened sheep.”4 His brother, En-kaš₄, whose name is almost always abbreviated simply as Kaš₄ within the text of the tablet, appears in a number of texts recording sà bala-a transactions, sometimes with the title nam-sà-tam.5 In short, it seems clear that both the father and the three sons were agents of the provincial governor of Umma. Although detailed prosopography of the Umma archive has yet to be completed, preliminary study indicates that at Umma, most administrative positions were concentrated in the hands of a limited number of families.

Lugale-bansa himself appears from Šulgi 35 to Šu-Sin 4 in sà bala-a tablets.6 Lugale-bansa received reeds from Šešani in four other sà bala-a tablets known to us. These are summarized in Table 1.

This chart corroborates the model suggested by the examination of a large corpus of sà bala-a texts, namely, that the recipients specialized in particular types of transactions. That is to say, we can see that the same men received the same commodity over and over again. Many sà bala-a tablets note the destination or use of the commodity being transferred. In such instances, the same recipi-

### Table 1. sà bala-a tablets in which Lugale-bansa receives reeds from Šešani.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Commodity</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Touzalin 63</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>bundles of šid reeds</td>
<td>má-da-lá lugal, “the royal barge”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touzalin 136</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>reed bundles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touzalin 67</td>
<td>40, 4</td>
<td>reed bundles/gi-ru-uš reeds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MVN 14 16</td>
<td>30, 10 gú</td>
<td>bundles of izi reeds/gi-ru-uš reeds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. An impression of this seal occurs on UTAMI 3 1654 (AS7), as well as on many other Umma tablets.
5. For example, SACT 2 293 (AS5), is a sà bala-a text sealed by the nam-sà-tam (En)-kaš₄ concerning two reed workers who are to work for thirty days on behalf of the royal guard (lugal-ra-ūs-sa).
6. The earliest references are from Š35; e.g. MVN 14 101, and the latest from ŠŠ4; e.g. Nikolski 2 226. It is perhaps noteworthy that there are very few references to Lugale-bansa in sà bala-a tablets dated to the reigh of Amar-Sin.
7. For example, Umani provided beer for the men of Mari in AUCT 3 223 (undated) and the men of Ebla and Uršu in Contenau 27 (also undated).
boats of various sorts, most of which were destined to travel outside the province of Umma.

As in the case of the tablet published here, some šà bala-a tablets do not specify the use or the destination of the expended items. However, because the recipients in šà bala-a tablets were engaged in repeated deliveries for specific purposes, we may extrapolate and surmise that the reeds received by Lugale-bansa in this tablet were likely intended for a boat.

The tablet published here is, on its own, merely one more Ur III administrative document. Only when placed within its archival context, namely, with the genre of šà bala-a tablets, can we begin to use such a text to shed light upon the administration of Ur III Umma.
Colorado State University owns an administrative tablet of the Ur III period and a cone of Lipit-Eštar, which are kept in the university archives, in CSU’s Morgan Library.¹ No record relating to the acquisition of these two objects can be located, but they are said to have been the gift of a professor early in the institution’s history.² It may be surmised that they were among the many tablets and other ancient Near Eastern artifacts that were dispersed by Edgar J. Banks during the early twentieth century.

CSU’s tablet and cone are kept encased in individual mountings of clear plastic, each mounting having been custom-made to fit the object inside, as well as to stand on its own. These mountings make it possible to pick up and look at the artifacts without touching them, although their edges and corners are obscured. I had the tablet removed from its mounting in order to copy it, but because the cone bears a text that is well known from numerous exemplars, I merely examined it through its mounting.

The texts of the cone records Lipit-Eštar’s construction of the “House of Justice” (ē-níg-si-sá), and is the same as the text inscribed on at least ninety-three other cones so far known. Ninety-two exemplars of this inscription are listed by Douglas Frayne in RIME 4 (Old Babylonian Period [2003–1595 BC] [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990], no. E4.1.5.4), and to that list one should add MMA 1971.71, published as text 114 in Ira Spar, ed., Cuneiform Texts in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, vol. I (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1988).

The tablet, which is in an almost perfect state of preservation (measurements: 3.7 × 2.9 × 1.4 cm), originates from Drehem and is dated to the third month of Shulgi’s 41st year. It records the disbursement by Apilia of three animals for three different purposes: a goat for the palace, a fattened sheep for the elûnum-festival, and another fattened sheep for the regular offerings of the goddess Al-latum. Apilia is well attested as the official in charge of livestock administration for the queen, Shulgi-simtum, during the years Shulgi 39–41, and his presence allows this tablet to be recognized as belonging to the archive of Shulgi-simtum (on which see most recently W. Sallaberger, OBO 160/3 [Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1999], 253–60). It is characteristic of this archive that disbursements for both secular and cultic purposes are recorded on the same tablet (Sallaberger, OBO 160/3, 258). A copy and transliteration follow:

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¹ I thank John Newman, archivist at Colorado State University, for graciously facilitating my examination of these artifacts and for permission to publish them.
² Information courtesy John Newman.
(1) 1 máš ba-ug₇ (2) é-gal-la ba-an-ku₄ (3) 1 udu niga (4) ȅ-.lu-núm (5) sag-rig₇-ke₄-ne (6) itita u₄ 1 ba-ra-zal (7) 1 udu niga (8) sískur ȁl-la-tum (9) itita u₄ 4 ba-ra-zal (10) zi-ga (11) á-pi₃-

lí-a [blank line] (12) iti u₃-bí-gu₇ (13) mu ús-sa é puzur₄-iš₃-da-gan ba-dù (14) mu ús-sa-bi₃

3. Since I am inexperienced in reading Ur III tablets, I gratefully acknowledge David I. Owen’s assistance with the transliteration.