



‘Open the Granary!’ Ur-Zababa’s Letter to Šilli-Šamaš: The Duplicate from the Cotsen Collection

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		<p>– CUSAS 8 71: 5 (MUNUS <i>a-at-ta-a</i>). Her husband is attested in several texts: – CUSAS 8 59: 41 (<i>a-at-ta-a</i>); – CUSAS 8 60: 19 (<i>a-at-ta-a</i>); – CUSAS 8 62: 39 (<i>a-at-ta-a</i>); – CUSAS 29 171: 9 (¹<i>a¹-at-ta-a</i>).</p>
Sin-ituram	[x] 30- <i>i-tu-ra-am</i> (Cots. Coll. 96222: 34)	
Sunanu, <i>šandabakkum</i>	0,1.0 <i>sú-na-nu</i> (Cots. Coll. 96222: 18)	<p>– CUSAS 8 59: 17 (<i>sú-na-nu</i>); – CUSAS 8 60: 32 (<i>sú-na-nu</i> GÁ.DUB.BA); – CUSAS 8 61: 14 (<i>sú-na-nu</i>); – CUSAS 8 62: 20 (<i>sú-na-nu</i> GÁ.DUB.BA); – CUSAS 8 89: 1 (<i>sú-na-nu</i>).</p>
Šumum-libši	0,2.0 <i>šu-mu-um-li-ib-ši</i> (Cots. Coll. 96222: 51)	A man named Šumum-libši is attested as barber (ŠU.I) in two receipts from the year Samsu-ditana 3 (CUSAS 8 33: 4 and 38: 4).
Taribum, <i>šatammum</i>	0,4.0 <i>ta-ri-bu ŠÀ.TAM</i> (Cots. Coll. 96222: 6)	– CUSAS 8 62: 44 (<i>ta-ri-bu-um ŠÀ.TAM</i>).
Taribum	¹ x ¹ <i>ta¹-ri-bu</i> (Cots. Coll. 96222: 40)	There are several men with that name, cf. CUSAS 8 61: 5+6.
Utu-luti, <i>šandabakkum</i>	0,3.0 ^d UTU.LÚ.TI GÁ.DUB.BA (Cots. Coll. 96222: 15)	<p>– CUSAS 8 59: 37 (^dUTU.LÚ.TI GÁ.DUB.BA); – CUSAS 8 60: 40 (^dUTU.LÚ.TI); – CUSAS 8 64: 6 (^dUTU.LÚ.TI); – CUSAS 8 68: 3 (^dUTU.LÚ.TI). And in two texts written under Ammi-šaduqa: – CUSAS 8 23: 25 (^dUTU.LÚ.TI GÁ.DUB.BA; Ammi-šaduqa 8; sacrificial sheep receipt); – CUSAS 8 54: 16 (^dUTU.LÚ.TI GÁ.DUB.BA; Ammi-šaduqa 2; barley receipt).</p>

Notes

¹. Museum number PARS 64. CDLI P273826.

². On this practice, see: G. Chambon and A.-I. Langlois, “*nikkassum napiš* « le compte est clos », *nipiš nikkassim* « reddition/apurement du compte »”, *NABU* 2017/13.

³. K. Van Lerberghe & G. Voet, *A Late Old Babylonian Temple Archive from Dūr-Abiešuḫ*, CUSAS 8, Bethesda, 2009, p. 2.

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59) ‘Open the Granary!’ Ur-Zababa’s Letter to Šilli-Šamaš: The Duplicate from the Cotsen Collection — Andrew George recently published sixty-six Akkadian letters from the Schøyen collection which he identified as school exercises.¹⁾ Several unpublished tablets from the Rosen and Cotsen collections are quoted as well, and one of them is edited (Cots. Coll. 40719).

Among the tablets from the Cotsen collection (Los Angeles) mentioned in his book is Cots. Coll. 52150, which he identified as a duplicate of three tablets from the Schøyen collection (MS 2748 = CUSAS 43 5A, MS 3688 = 5B, and MS 3747 = 5C) and two tablets from the Rosen collection (CUNES 48-09-288 and CUNES 48-11-074, unpublished). All six tablets have the same text. A. George gives it the title “‘Open the Granary!’ Ur-Zababa’s Letter to Šilli-Šamaš” in CUSAS 43. Having photographed Cots. Coll. 52150 while working in the Cotsen collection in 2017, I am offering here an edition of this tablet.

Cots. Coll. 52150, now in the Lloyd E. Cotsen Cuneiform Tablets Collection at UCLA, has the museum number SC-III-1i.²⁾ A photograph and a short description have been published by M. Wilson,

Education in the Earliest Schools: Cuneiform Manuscripts in the Cotsen Collection, Los Angeles, 2008, p. 26 and 173 (no. 72).



Cots. Coll. 52150, Lloyd E. Cotsen Cuneiform Tablets Collection (Collection 1883). Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA. Photographs by M. Béranger.

Cots. Coll. 52150 is a rectangular single-column tablet. As attested for other school texts, the tablet has been smashed shortly after being written, while the clay was still wet. The cuneiform signs are well formed and regular, and a piece of clay envelope still adheres to the reverse. Thus, this tablet adds to the number of school letters in envelopes. There are only six of them known to me to date.³⁾ In real-life, envelopes were used to protect the tablet during its transport, and to guarantee the confidentiality and integrity of the message. Once the letter was enclosed, senders wrote the name of the addressee on the

envelope (*ana* PN “To so-and-so”) and rolled their seal. As expected for a tablet written at school, no sealing is preserved on the fragment of the envelope attached to Cots. Coll. 52150. Besides, there is more text on the envelope than just the address, and although it is fragmentary, it is clear that the scribe wrote another text. This is consistent with what I have already observed: as opposed to real-life letters, letters from the school context contain additional text on the envelope. Thus, the students were using the clay of the envelope to practice writing.

1. Edition of Cots. Coll. 52150. Tablet

O.	<i>a-na</i> ¹ <i>ši</i> ¹ - <i>lī</i> ^d UTU	(1-3) Say to Šilli-Šamaš: thus (speaks) Ur-
2	<i>qí-bí-ma</i> <i>um-ma</i> UR. ^d ZA.BA ₄ .BA ₄ - <i>ma</i>	Zababa.
4	[<i>a</i>]- <i>nu-um-ma</i> [¹ <i>a</i>]- <i>pil</i> ^d - <i>da-mu</i>	
6	[<i>a-na</i>] <i>še-ri</i> ¹ - <i>ka</i> ¹ [<i>aṭ-ṭá</i>]- <i>ar</i> ¹ - <i>dam</i>	(4-7) Herewith I’ve sent you Apil-Damu. (8) (It is) urgent! (9-10) When you see this sealed tablet of mine, (11-14) you and him open the 180 kor (= 54000 liters) outer granary and (20) give: (15-19)
8	[<i>ap</i>]- <i>pu</i> ¹ - <i>tum</i> [<i>ku</i>]- <i>nu</i> ¹ - <i>uk</i> ¹ - <i>ki</i> ¹ <i>an-ni-a-am</i>	- 8 kor (2400 liters) as barley ration: the plowman
10	[<i>i-n</i>] <i>a-ma-ri-ka</i> [<i>na-aš</i>]- <i>pa</i> ¹ - <i>ka-am</i> <i>a-hi-a-am</i>	- 18 kor (5400 liters) as barley ration: the 3 ox-drivers
12	[<i>ša</i> 3 <i>š</i>]- <i>u-ši</i> GUR [<i>a</i>]- <i>t-ta</i> <i>ù šu-ú</i>	- 32 kor (9600 liters) as barley ration: the 4 boatmen
14	[<i>p</i>]- <i>te-a-ma</i> 8,0.0 GUR ŠE.BA ENGAR	- 7 kor (2100 liters) as barley ration: the shepherd
16	10+8,0.0 GUR ŠE.BA 3 ERIN ₂ ŠÀ.GU ₄ 30+2,0.0 GUR ŠE.BA 4 ERIN ₂ LÚ.MÁ.TUR	- 7 kor as barley ration: the cowherd
18	7,0.0 GUR ŠE.BA SIPA U ₈ <.UDU>.HI.A 7,0.0 GUR ŠE.BA SIPA GU ₄ .HI.A	
R.20	<i>id-na-a-ma</i> <i>ša-pe</i> ¹ - <i>el</i> ¹ - <i>tam</i> <i>šu-un-ni-a</i> ¹ - <i>ma</i> ¹	and (21) measure again the reminder and (22-24) let it stay at your disposal as provision for the oxen and fodder for the small livestock. (25-27) Also, Apil-Damu must not stay overnight with you for another day. (28) Send him back to me.
22	<i>a-na</i> ŠÀ<.GAL> GU ₄ .HI.A <i>ù ki-is-sà-at</i> U ₈ .UDU.HI. ¹ A ¹	
24	<i>i-na</i> <i>qá-ti-ka</i> <i>li-ib-ši</i> <i>ù</i> ¹ <i>a-pil</i> ^d - <i>da-mu</i>	
26	<i>ša-ni-a-am</i> <i>u₄-um-šu</i> <i>mah-ri-ka</i> <i>la i-bi-it-tam</i>	
28	<i>ṭù-ur-d</i> [<i>a-aš</i>]- <i>šu</i> <i>an-ni</i> -[<i>ki-a</i>]- <i>am</i>	(29) Here the work is interrupted. (30) Don’t keep him! (31) (It is) urgent!
30	<i>ši</i> ¹ - <i>ip</i> ¹ -[<i>ru-rum na</i>]- <i>di</i> <i>la</i> <i>t</i> [<i>a-ka-al-la-aš</i>]- <i>šu</i>	
32	<i>a</i> [<i>p-pu-tu</i>] <i>m</i>	

Envelope:

1’	[...] ¹ <i>x</i> ¹ [...]
2’	[...] ¹ <i>x</i> ¹ [...] [...] ¹ <i>x</i> ¹ <i>tam</i> ¹ <i>x</i> ¹ [...]
4’	[...] ¹ <i>i</i> ²¹ ¹ <i>x</i> ¹ [...] [...] ¹ <i>at</i> ²¹ U ₈ [...]

Notes to the text:

Line 21: it seems that the scribe hesitated between PI and PA since there are two horizontal strokes at the end of the sign. Perhaps, he wrote PA first and then wrote PI over it.

Line 5': the scribe may have repeated line 23. If so, we should read: [ù ki-is-sà]¹ar¹ U₈. [UDU.HI.A]. The signs in line 4' do not match those on line 22.

2. Commentary

2.1 Comparison of the manuscripts

The letter on Cots. Coll. 52150 is identical to the three letters published by A. George. There are hardly any variation between the manuscripts:

(a) Layout:

- (i) grouping of two lines on the same line (52150: 29-30 = 5A: 29 = 5B: 28 = 5C: 28-29).

(b) Spelling variants:

- (i) *še-ri-i-ka* (5C). Instead of *še-ri-ka* (52150: 6, 5A: 6, and 5B: 6);
- (ii) *pi-te-a-am* (5A: 14) vs. *pi-te-e*-ma* (5C: 13);
- (iii) *ša-pa-el-tam* (5A: 21). Instead of *ša-pe-el-tam* (52150: 21, 5B: 20, and 5C: 20);
- (iv) *šu-ni-a-ma* (5C: 20). Instead of *šu-un-ni-a-ma* (52150: 21 and 5A: 21);
- (v) [k]i-is-sù^o-at (5A: 23). Instead of *ki-is-sà-at* (52150: 23, 5B: 22, and 5C: 22);
- (vi) *a-pil^d-da-mu* (5B: 24). Instead of *¹a-pil^d-da-mu* (52150: 25, 5A: 25, and 5C: 24);
- (vii) *la i-bi-tam* (5B: 26). Instead of *la i-bi-it-tam* (52150: 27, 5A: 27, and 5C: 26).

(c) Additional line:

- (i) *at-ta ù šu-ú* (52150: 13 and 5A: 13).

(d) Omissions (most of them due to carelessness and appearing on 5B):

- (i) 3 ŠÀ.GU₄ (5B: 15). Instead of 3 ERIN ŠÀ.GU₄;
- (ii) 4 LÚ.MÁ.TUR (5B: 16). Instead of 4 ERIN₂ LÚ.MÁ.TUR;
- (iii) U₈<.UDU>.HI.A (52150: 18);
- (iv) *id<-na>-a-ma* (5B: 19);
- (v) *šu<-ni>-a-ma* (5B: 20);
- (vi) ŠÀ<.GAL> GU₄.HI.A (52150: 22).

(e) Content variants:

- (i) *pi-te-a-ma* (52150: 14 and 5B: 13) (imperative plural) vs. *pi-te-a-am* (5A: 14) and *pi-te-e*-ma* (5C: 13) (imperative singular);
- (ii) 7,0,0 GUR (52150: 18 and 5C: 17) vs. 8,0,0 GUR (5A: 18 and 5B: 17);
- (iii) 7,0,0 GUR (52150: 19 and 5C: 18) vs. ¹6+×¹,1,0 GUR (5A: 19) vs. 8,0,0 GUR (5B: 18).

2.2 Mirroring actual administrative practices?

In the text the plowman and each boatman are to receive 8 gur (2400 liters) of barley ration; the shepherd is to receive 7 gur or 8 gur (2100 or 2400 liters); the cowherd 6+× gur 1 pi, 7 gur or 8 gur depending on the manuscript (1860+, 2100 or 2400 liters); and each ox-driver shall receive 6 gur (1800 liters). Basic workers received an average of 60 liters of barley per month (720 per year) during the Old Babylonian period: the amounts given here are, thus, tremendous and unrealistic. According to A. George, this could be explained, if the rations were to be given not to individuals but to their households (CUSAS 43, p. 20). This seems atypical to me. Here the numbers were probably not meant to mirror actual practices. Rather, they are here because the students practiced using the capacity measure system.

2.3 Provenance

The four tablets from the Cotsen and Schøyen collections show little variations and were perhaps produced in the same school. In his book, A. George assumes that the tablets in the Schøyen collection come from Larsa or a city under its control, such as Adab (CUSAS 43, p. 47).⁴⁾ My work on a few school letters from the Cotsen collection also led me to the conclusion that they were written in southern Mesopotamia (Mél. Charpin, p. 126). It is certain that there are tablets found in Larsa, or its vicinity, in the Los Angeles collection, as several tablets from that collection bear year names of Rim-Sin I or mention this king:

- Cots. Coll. 40720 (Wilson Education 170; CDLI P388373) is not a school letter but a real letter sent by Rim-Sin;
- Cots. Coll. 40834A (Wilson Education 57; P388290) is a personal name list dated Rim-Sin 33 according to Mark Wilson. I cannot verify the date on the CDLI photograph;
- Cots. Coll. 52149 (Wilson Education 73; P388302) is not a school letter but a letter sent by Rim-Sin;
- Cots. Coll. 52154 (Wilson Education 172; P388375) is not a school letter but a letter sent by Rim-Sin;
- Cots. Coll. 52177 (Wilson Education 177; P388377) is a model contract mentioning Rim-Sin in the final oath;⁵⁾

- Cots. Coll. 96279 (Wilson Education 174; P273801) is not a school text but a real administrative list dated xii/Rim-Sin 20.

Since the use of the sign PI for the sound [pi] is a characteristic of letters from southern Mesopotamia (Larsa, Uruk), it is likely that the manuscripts of *Ur-Zababa's Letter to Šilli-Šamaš* come from southern Mesopotamia.

With the publication of CUSAS 43, it becomes clear that it was more common to practice writing a letter in Akkadian at school than previously thought. The students who wrote the four manuscripts of *Ur-Zababa's Letter to Šilli-Šamaš* had already spent several months in school, as they knew how to write and were familiar with the capacity measure system. The tablet Cots. Coll. 52150, with its clay envelope preserved, reveals an additional skill in the making of an envelope.

Notes

* My thanks go to Ceren Mengi and Francesca Nebiolo for the photomontage, and to Lynn-Salammô Zimmermann for proofreading the English of an earlier draft.

¹ A. George, "Old Babylonian School Letters" in A. R. George and G. Spada (ed.), *Old Babylonian Texts in the Schøyen Collection. Part 2. School Letters, Model Contracts, and Related Texts*, CUSAS 43, University Park, 2019, p. 9-72 & pl. I-XXXII + LXV.

² CDLI P388301 and Archibab T25643. According to the website of the Cotsen collection (<<http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt0t1nf169>>), the dimensions of the tablet are: 3 5/8" height x 1 15/16" width x 1 1/2" depth.

³ Cots. Coll. 52150, Cots. Coll. 52152, Cots. Coll. 52153, CUSAS 43 4C, CUSAS 43 8, and FM 6 68. On the making of envelopes at school, see M. Béranger, "Du signe à l'enveloppe. L'enseignement du genre épistolaire à l'époque amorrite d'après un nouveau modèle de lettre scolaire avec enveloppe" in G. Chambon, M. Guichard and A.-I. Langlois (ed.), *De l'argile au numérique. Mélanges assyriologiques en l'honneur de Dominique Charpin*, PIPOAC 3, Leuven/Paris/Bristol, 2019, p. 125-168. I published Cots. Coll. 52152 and Cots. Coll. 52153 in the Mél. Charpin, 2019. See the website Archibab for updated editions, based on the new duplicates published by A. George in CUSAS 43: <http://www.archibab.fr/T23735>, T23736.

M. Wilson identified the tablet Cots. Coll. 52187, which has an envelope, as a school letter (*Education in the Earliest Schools*, Los Angeles, 2008, p. 85 no. 171; P388374). Because only a small portion of the tablet is visible, I am not sure that this is a school exercise.

⁴ "Since internal evidence suggests that many of the Old Babylonian tablets in the Schøyen Collection stem from Larsa, or a place controlled by Larsa—such as Adab—and date to the era of Rīm-Sîn I, it may be supposed that the school letters published here belong to the scribal curriculum of the Larsa state at the end of that city's domination." (CUSAS 43, p. 47).

⁵ Text edited by G. Spada, "I modelli di contratto nell'edubba paleo-babilonese. Un esempio di contratto di adozione," *AION* 72, 2012, p. 133-148.

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60) The Sealand I comprising two lines of 184 years each, with the conquest of Babylon 35 years before its end — According to the *Babylonian King List A* (BM 33332, CT 36 pls. 24-25; henceforth BKL.A), the Sealand I reigned 368 years (i.15), but several data (in particular the synchronisms with Babylon I) imply that the dynasty cannot have lasted that long (Poebel 1947: 120; Jaritz 1958: 189; Brinkman 1977: 346 n. 5; Gasche et al. 1998: 67; van Koppen 2010: 454; Boivin 2018: 77-78, 241-247). Recently it has been argued that both the late Akkadian period (Mahieu 2019) and the entire Kassite period (Mahieu 2021) comprise two lines of rulers. A similar hypothesis can be made for the Sealand I as well. The regnal years of its kings can be split into two exact parallels of $368 \div 2 = 184$ years each:¹⁾

	Subtotal		Subtotal
Ili-ma-ilu (BKL.A i.4, 60 years) ²⁾	60	Itti-ili-nibi (BKL.A i.5, '55 ¹ years) ³⁾	55
Dam(i)q-ilišu (BKL.A i.6, '39 ¹ years)	99	Iškibal (BKL.A i.7, '15 ¹ years) ⁴⁾	70
		Šušši (BKL.A i.8, '24 ¹ years) ⁵⁾	94
Pešgaldarameš (BKL.A i.10, 50 years)	149	Gulkišar (BKL.A i.9, 55 years)	149
Ayadaragalama (BKL.A i.11, 28 years) ⁶⁾	177	Akurduana (BKL.A i.12, 26 years)	175
Melamkura (BKL.A i.13, 7 years) ⁷⁾	184	Ea-gamil (BKL.A i.14, '9 ¹ years) ⁸⁾	184