

*Studies in Sumerian Language
and Literature*

Festschrift für Joachim Krecher

Edited by

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Published for
the Russian State University for the Humanities
by
EISENBRAUNS
Winona Lake, Indiana
2014

**Orientalia et Classica: Труды Института восточных культур и античности.
Выпуск LVI**

Под редакцией И. С. Смирнова

Вавилон и Библия 8

Редколлегия

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и античности, 2014

ISBN 978-1-57506-354-6

ISSN 1938-5668

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From Court Records to *Sammelurkunden*: A New Tablet from Umma and TCL 5, 6047

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The files stored in the archives of the governor of the Umma province in the Ur III period include compilations of various court cases, known today as *Sammelurkunden*. These were very concise accounts that only provided the main conclusions of a lawsuit or some brief information about its interim stages. One of these texts, first studied by Adam Falkenstein (NSGU 214), is TCL 5, 6047, a collection of ten court cases dealing with the estate of a certain Abī-ati. This compilation was based on litigations that presumably had been recorded in more detailed court records. In fact, one of them is now in the British Museum (BM 105339) and is published here for the first time. The analysis of both these texts provides a more comprehensive picture of the lawsuits and the court inquiries they implied, a better understanding of the roles of the people involved, and new insights into the relationship between the royal and the provincial administrations in respect of legal matters.

Keywords: Neo-Sumerian cuneiform tablets, court records, Umma, judicial system.

The study of the legal texts dated to the Ur III period is frequently rather frustrating. We may translate the tablets and believe that we understand them, but the stories are in many respects exasperatingly incomplete or even lacking sense. We may not only be ignorant of the whole background of the litigation, but we are often unable to identify the people involved or some of the toponyms related to the process. Sometimes, nevertheless, the appearance of a new text allows new approaches and casts some new light on the affairs surrounding the litigation. This is the case of an important judicial document from Umma (TCL 5, 6047), which has found an interesting complement in an unpublished tablet kept at the British Museum (BM 105339).

TCL 5, 6047 was published by Henri de Genouillac in 1922. It is a large tablet from Umma with juridical contents, which was collated and studied by Adam Falkenstein (NSGU 214) in his monumental *Die neusumerischen Gerichtsurkunden* (1956–1957). Falkenstein classified it as a *Sammelurkunde*, a collection of ten court cases dealing with the estate of a certain Abī-ati that were held at Umma. Presumably, the litigations had

been first recorded with more detail on other tablets and filed in the archives of the governor. In fact, one of them was BM 105339, to the best of my knowledge the first example of an Ur III court record used to compile a *Sammelurkunde*. Here follow the transliteration, translation and commentary of the two texts.¹

1. TCL 5, 6047

- i
- 1 a-ša₃ A-bi₂-a-ti
 - 2 ^aagar₄ 1-a ki 3-am₃ i₃-in-ġal₂
 - 3 inim lu₂-kiġ₂-gi₄-a lugal-ka-ta
 - 4 ugula ġeš₂-da u₃ agar₄-niġin₂ a-ša₃-ga-ke₄ in-na-an-pa₃-de₃-eš
 - 5 še ki 3-a-ba ki 1-am₃ ba-da-an-ba
 - 6 ki 2-am₃ a₂ in-da-an-dar-eš₂
 - 7 gu₂ Ur-niġar_x^{ġar} nu-banda₃-ka bi₂-in-ġa₂-re-eš
 - 8 inim Ur-niġar_x^{ġar} nu-banda₃-ta-am₃
 - 9 bi₂-in-eš
 - 10 Šu^d-Nin-mug-ga ugula ^rġeš₂²?
 - 11 u₃ A-puzur₄-a-a šar₂-ra-ab-du
 - 12 a-ša₃ dam A-bi₂-a-ti-ka 1.0.0 GANA₂-am₃
- ii
- 1 Lugal-me-^rlam₂¹-[e a₂] bi₂-in-dar [(x)]
 - 2 bi₂-in-eš
 - 3 bur u₂ ze_x(SIG₇)-a [(x)]
 - 4 Ur^d-Ma₂-ġa-šu-um-ma
 - 5 E₂.IGL.IN.DAR.SAL
 - 6 mu ^{ġeš}kiri₆ ba-ġul-a-še₃
 - 7 A-bu-um-DIĠIR egir šakkan₆-ke₄ la-ġe-dam
 - 8 šuku 5-am₃ 1.0.0 GANA₂-ta-am₃
 - 9 inim Urdu₂^d-Nanna nu-banda₃-ta
 - 10 PU₃.ŠA-I₃-šu-^rum¹-e in-na-an-pa₃
 - 11 še-bi ki-su₇-ka ġal₂-la-bi
 - 12 Ur^d-Nin-mug-ga-ke₄
 - 13 Ur-niġar_x^{ġar} nu-banda₃-am₃ mu-da-an-kar bi₂-in-du₁₁
 - 14 Ur-niġar_x^{ġar} nu-gub-am₃
 - 15 en₃ la-ba-na-tar^{ar}
 - 16 kaskal-a mu-un-ti-il
 - 17 Ša-lim-nu-ri geme₂ A-bi₂-a-ti-kam
 - 18 e₂ šu šum₂-ma i₃-zah₃-am₃
 - 19 buru₁₄-ka Šar-ru-ba-ni in-dab₃

¹ Photographs of AO 6047 are found in Figs. 1–2, courtesy of the Musée du Louvre. BM 105339 (Figs. 3–6) is here published by kind permission of the Trustees of the British Museum. This research has been made possible thanks to the financial support granted by the Spanish Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad through the project FFI2011–23981.

- rev. i 1 *A-da-lal*₃-e ba-an-da-an-kar
 2 Ur-^dŠara₂ u₃ Lu₂-kiri₃-zal ib₂-ge-en₆
 3 1 gu₄-gēš gu₄ *A-bi*₂-a-ti
 4 Šu-^dNin-mug-ga ugula gēš₂-da-ke₄
 5 Lugal-me-lam₂-e ba-an-tum₂ bi₂-in-du₁₁
 6 2 <saḡ> saḡ-rig₇-a-ni
 7 1 saḡ dam-ni in-na-an-ba
 8 3 saḡ šeš-a-ni in-na-an-ba
 9 bi₂-in-du₁₁
 10 ki dam *A-bi*₂-a-ti-ka i₃-du₂-ru-ne₂-ša-am₃
 11 dam *A-bi*₂-a-ti u₃ Mes-DU ge-ne₂-dam
 12 Pu₃-ki₂-na-ti saḡ-ḡa₂-ni 6-am₃
 13 Šu-^dNin-mug-ga-ke₄ geme₂ *A-bi*₂-a-ti-kam bi₂-in-du₁₁
 14 geme₂ *A-bi*₂-a-ti 'i₃'-m[e]-'a'¹
 15 *E-šu-tum* nam-e[rim₂ ...]
 16 'x' 'ŠU'¹ 'x' [...]
 17 [...]
- ii 1 lu₂-inim-ma-še₃
 2 im-ta-e₃-eš
 3 1 ma₂ 60.0.0 gur Ur-^dDumu-zi-da dam-gar₃-še₃ ba-an-ši-sa₁₀
 4 ma₂ eren₂-na i₃-me-a
 5 Šu-^dNin-mug-ga nam-erim₂-e ba-šum₂
 6 I₃-li₂-a u₃ Šu-zu
 7 lu₂-inim-ma-še₃ im-ta-e₃-eš
 8 u₄ lu₂-kiḡ₂-gi₄-a lugal-ke₄ e₂ šu ba-ab-šum₂-a
 9 esir₂ ma₂-a e₂-a i₃-in-si-ga-a inim ba-a-ḡa₂-ar
 10 esir₂ eren₂-na i₃-me-a
 11 Šu-^dNin-mug-ga ugula nam-erim₂-bi ku₅-dam
 12 _____
 13 inim inim-ma
 14 e₂ *A-bi*₂-a-ti
 15 Ur-^dNin-mug-ga-ke₄ ba-an-de₆
 16 ḡiri₃ ^dŠul-gi-ši-lu-ul 'lu₂'-k[iḡ₂]-gi₄-a l[ugal]

Translation

§ 1. i 1–9. The field of Abī-ati has three plots in a single field. (Concerning this,) on the command of the king’s envoy, the captain of sixty men and the guard of the field found out for him (the following): of the barley of the three plots, (the barley) of one plot was (regularly) distributed, (while) they (= Ur-niḡar’s officials) deceitfully took over the two other plots; they assigned (the barley of the plots) to Ur-niḡar, the colonel; they declared: “It was (done) on the command of Ur-niḡar, the colonel.”

§ 2. i 10 – ii 2. Šū-Ninmuga, the captain of ‘sixty’²¹ (men), and Apuzuraya, the **šarrabdu**-official, declared: “Lugal-melam deceitfully took over the field of the wife of Abī-ati, measuring eighteen **iku** (= ca. 6.5 ha).”

§ 3. ii 3–7. Water reservoirs and plants have been removed: Ur-Maḥašuma and E₂.IGI.IN.DAR.SAL, as the orchard (of Abī-ati) was destroyed, it is Abum-ilum, the second-in-command of the general, who will bring them.

§ 4. ii 8–16. As for the five shares of subsistence, each eighteen **iku**, on the command of Urdu-Nanna, the colonel, Puzur-Išum found out for him (the following): while that barley was on the threshing-floor, “it was Ur-niḡar, the colonel, who took it away from me,” Ur-Ninmuga declared. Ur-niḡar not being available, he has not been questioned. He was on a military expedition.

§ 5. ii 17 – rev. i 2. Šalim-nūri being a slave-girl of Abī-ati, and having fled (when?) (Abī-ati’s) property was transferred, Šarrum-bāni seized her at harvest-time. (Nevertheless,) Adalal took her away from him. Ur-Šara and Lu-kirizal have confirmed this.

§ 6. rev. i 3–5. One yoked ox, an ox of Abī-ati. Šū-Ninmuga, the captain of sixty men, declared: “Lugal-melam took it away.”

§ 7. rev. i 6–11. She (= Abī-ati’s wife) declared that two (slaves) are her marriage gift, that her husband gave her one slave, (and) that her brother gave her three slaves. That (the slaves) lived at the place of Abī-ati’s wife has to be confirmed by Abī-ati’s wife and MesDU.

§ 8. rev. i 12 – ii 2. Six are the slaves of Pū-kīnāti. Šū-Ninmuga has declared: “They are slave-girls of Abī-ati.” Ešutum [was given to/will take] the (declaratory) oath regarding the fact that they were slave-girls of Abī-ati. ‘PN₁’ (and) [PN₂] came forward as witnesses.

§ 9. rev. ii 3–7. One boat of sixty **gur** was bought from Ur-Dumuzida, the merchant. Šū-Ninmuga was given to the (declaratory) oath regarding the fact that it was a boat which belonged to the **eren** (= military). Ili’a and Šuzu came forward as witnesses.

§ 10. rev. ii 8–11. When the king’s envoy transferred the properties (of Abī-ati), a claim was laid on the bitumen for ships that he (= Abī-ati) had deposited in the house. Šū-Ninmuga, the captain (of sixty men), will take the (declaratory) oath regarding the fact that it was bitumen which belonged to the **eren** (= military).

rev. ii 13–16. Legal case concerning the estate of Abī-ati. Ur-Ninmuga brought it. Under the responsibility of Šulgi-šillūl, envoy of the king.

Commentary

For this text see in general the commentaries and interpretation by A. Falkenstein, NSGU 214, most of which are still perfectly valid. For the identity of the people involved in the cases recorded in this text and in BM 105339, see below under 3. *Participants and disputants.*

i 1–9. On this paragraph, see Civil 2011:266, who discusses **agar₄-niġin₂** ‘field watcher’ (see also Marchesi 2001:315), **a₂ dar** ‘to do something by fallacious means,’ and **gu₂ ġar** ‘to assign; to charge (to the account of someone).’

i 2. **agar₄** with phonetic complement is also attested in MVN 1, 89 and ASJ 12, p. 35, No. 4 (**a-ša₃ ^aagar₄-tur**).

i 10. **ġeš₂** could have been written after **ugula** and partially covered by the first sign of the line on the right.

i 11. For the **šarrabdu**, an official whose precise duties, connected to agricultural activities, still remain unclear, see Grégoire 1970:147 and Steinkeller 1981:87.

ii 3. The interpretation of this line as ‘water reservoirs and plants have been removed’ is only tentative. The word **bur** in the context of orchards and fields is rarely attested; it apparently designated a fishing pond that was filled with water from irrigation canals, at times diverted illegally. It is associated with the verb **nu₂** ‘to lay down,’ which probably designated the preparation of the pond bed. Fish from ponds are attested in Lagaš II (MVN 6, 111; MVN 6, 265) and Ur III tablets (AUCT 1, 226; SNAT 347; and BM 110140). The following texts are particularly relevant for the interpretation of **bur** in this context:

a-ša₃ ka-ma-ri₂-ta, a ba-ra-ḫa-aš, bur ‘ba-an-nu₂¹, [*ca.* 4–5 lines lost], [x] **ba-an-^rx¹** [...], [x] **ku₆ šeg₆ g[ur²]**, **Ur-^{ġis}gigir-ke₄, su-su-dam** ‘The water was diverted from the field of Kamari (and) a (fish)pond was laid out ... [x] **gur²** of smoked fish are to be repaid by Ur-gigir’ (MVN 18, 516).

a-ša₃ la₂-tur-a, bur in-ni-nu₂, 5 gu₂ ku₆ ‘bur’, im-^rde₆² ‘In the field of Latur he laid out a (fish)pond, (so) he brought² five talents of fish from the pond’ (BM 110140 ii 22–25, unpubl.).

a-gar₃-a-gar₃-ta a um-ta-ḫaš bur u₃-mu-ni-ib-nu₂-nu₂ ki nam-šu-ḫa-da um-mi-ġar-ġar ku₆ gur₇ u₃-mu-dub-dub ‘When water has been diverted from the fields, when the (fish)ponds have been laid out, when the fishing places have been prepared, when the fish have been piled up’ (*Summer and Winter* 174–175; cf. ETCSL 5.3.3).

For **ze/i_x**(SIG₇), ‘to cut, remove, tear out, mutilate,’ see Molina–Such-Gutiérrez 2004; see also Meyer-Laurin 2011:50.

ii 5. E₂.IGI.IN.DAR.SAL should be the name of an official, who together with Ur-Maḥašuma comprise the plural object of the verb **la-ḥe-dam**. I cannot give an interpretation of this PN, which is otherwise unattested.

ii 17 – rev. i 2. For e₂ **šu šum₂** ‘to transfer (the administration of) a property,’ see Grégoire 1970:121, Sigrist 1992:96, Sallaberger 1993:49, Maekawa 1996:153, Michalowski 2002:417–418, Dahl 2007:63, and Paoletti 2012:103. After Abī-ati’s death, some of his belongings were temporarily managed by a royal envoy, as mentioned in rev. ii 8 (see below under 3. *Participants and disputants*). Probably at that time, the slave-girl Šalim-nūri found an opportunity and fled, but was captured by the well-known pursuer Šarrum-bāni (see Molina 2003:53 and Heimpel 2009:62). Nevertheless, she was not returned to her legitimate owner, but to a certain Adalal, perhaps a member of the military.

Rev. i 6. For **saḡ-rig₇**, a gift received by the woman on the occasion of her marriage, which remained her property and was thus different from the dowry, see Civil 2011:270–271. In our text the reduplication of **saḡ** has been avoided, perhaps inadvertently, but no doubt reference is being made to two slaves.

Rev. i 16 – ii 5. On this paragraph, see Sallaberger 2008:167.

Rev. ii 3. On Ur-Dumuzida, see Neumann 1993:86 and Steinkeller 2004:102.

Rev. ii 13. For a discussion on genitive constructions like **inim inim-ma**, see Jagersma 2010:126–127. Its reading and interpretation are not always easy to ascertain. In the context of incantations it is to be read **ka inim-ma** (Schramm 1981; Finkel 1999:230); in such contexts and in Edubbâ texts, it designated a “fixed wording” (Mittermayer 2009:273–274). Other passages in literary texts are more difficult to interpret, e. g., LSU 438–439 (**dub-la₂-maḥ ki nam tar-re-de₃ KA inim-ma nu-ḡal₂ ḡis^{is}gu-za ki di ku₅-ru-bi nu-mu-un-gub di si nu-um-sa₂-e** ‘There was no eloquence² in the Dublamah, the place where oaths² used to be taken. The throne was not set up at its place of judgment, cases were not settled’); cf. Michalowski 1989 and ETCSL 2.2.3, but see the remarks by Attinger 2009:22, n. 318.

In our context, the reading **inim inim-ma** is suggested by the lexical sequence in SIG₇.ALAN IV 30–36 (MSL 16, p. 78), which includes (31) **inim inim-ma** = *amātu* ‘matter, affair, legal case’ (for the use of the plural form of *awātum* with this meaning, see CAD A₂ 38–40 s. v. *amatu* A 5). This is the meaning that fits better with the Ur III texts where this expression occurs (TCL 5, 6047; BM 105339; BPOA 2, 2549; and twenty-one mes-

senger texts from Ĝirsu). In BM 105339 and BPOA 2, 2549, **inim inim-ma** appears in the same context as the compound verb **en₃ tar** ‘to question, to interrogate, to investigate.’ BPOA 2, 2549 is a tablet that records barley expenses for seed, fodder, and wages, calculated after the receipts presented by chief plot managers (**nu-banda₃ gu₄**); the text concludes, **inim inim-ma niĝ₂-kas₇ nu-banda₃ gu₄-ke₄-ne en₃-bi tar-re** ‘the affair (concerning) the balanced account of the chief plot managers has to be investigated.’ The messenger text group from Ĝirsu, discussed by P. Notizia (2009:76–77, 138), deals with envoys (**sukkal, lu₂-^{ĝis}tukul**) who travelled to take part in legal processes that concerned stolen animals (Nisaba 3–2, 15; 46, and 48), a man called Lugal-kuzu (TCTI 2, 3746), and the son of the governor (MTBM 123); in most of the texts the reasons for the process are not specified (Notizia 2009:138; add CUSAS 16, 206; 216; 236; and McNeil 1970, No. 529); in some texts, **inim inim-ma** is abbreviated as **inim** (references collected by Notizia 2009:138).

According to BM 105339 (see below), three inquiries (**en₃ tar**) were made after Ur-Ninmuga’s claim. The whole process was described with the phrase **inim inim-ma Ur-^dNin-mug-ga-ka** (ii 10–11) ‘case of Ur-Ninmuga,’ which was clearly distinguished from **di** ‘case, process’ (ii 12 – rev. i 7: **igi ensi₂-ka-še₃** [and seven more officials] **di-bi ba-til**). The nuances and differences between these two terms in Ur III times are not entirely clear, although it seems that the word **di** implied the intervention of an authoritative third party (see Culbertson 2009:41–58), while **inim inim-ma** did not.

2. BM 105339

1913-4-16-171

AS 6 – 110×63×26 mm

- i 1 ʿx-x-LUMʿ-[raʿ]
 2 **lu₂-kiĝ₂-[gi₄-a] / lugal-[ke₄ʿ]**
 3 **en₃ a-ba-n[a-tar]**
 4 **tukum-[bi] / Ur-^dNin-mug-[ga]-/ra-am₃ ba-an-[na]-/šum₂ ib₂-be₂**
 5 **Ur-^dNin-mug-ga-/ke₄ ba-an-tum₃**
 6 **tukum-bi / inim i₃-im-ĝal₂-/la-am₃ ib₂-be₂**
 7 **dam A-bi₂-a-ti-ke₄ ba-an-tum₃**
 8 1 *Na-na-a-nu-ri*
 9 1 *A-ḫi-ba-aš-ti*
 10 1 *Ša-lim-nu-ri*
 11 **dam A-bi₂-a-ti-/ke₄**

- ii 1 [...]
 2 [...] AN [...]
 3 [...] ṛX¹ AN [...]
 4 [...] NI ṛX¹
 5 [...] šeš [(x)]
 6 [en₃-bi² tar²]-re-d[am²]
 7 [Ur-niḡar_x]^{ḡar} kaskal-t[a]/[...]-ḡen
 8 še a-[ša₃ ...]-ṛX¹-a-ka
 9 en₃-[bi tar]-re-dam
- =====
 10 inim inim-ma
 11 Ur-^dNin-mug-ga-/ka
 12 igi ensi₂-ka-še₃
 13 igi Ur-^dBa-u₂ / dumu Gu-du-du-še₃
 14 igi Ni-da-mu-še₃
- rev. i 1 igi Lu₂-^dŠara₂ dumu / um-mi-a-še₃
 2 igi U-bar nu-banda₃-še₃
 3 igi Šar-ru-um-i₃-/li₂ nu-banda₃-še₃
 4 igi Lugal-me-lam₂-še₃
 5 igi A-bu-um-DIĜIR / egir šakkan₆-še₃
 6 _____
 7 di-bi ba-til
 8 ^dŠul-gi-ši-/lu-ul lu₂-kiḡ₂-/gi₄-a lugal maškim
- =====
 ii _____
 1 [(...)]
 2 [mu ^dAmar-^dEN].ZU / [lugal-e Ša-aš]-šu₂-ru[^{ki} / mu]-ḡul

Translation

i 1–7. Once the envoy of the king has questioned ṛPN¹, if he/she says that it is to Ur-Ninmuga to whom (the slave) was given, Ur-Ninmuga will take her/him (the slave); if he/she says that she has a (legitimate) claim, then the wife of Abī-ati will take her/him (the slave).

i 8 – ii 6. (Concerning the slave-girls) Nanâ-nūri, Aḫi-bāštī, (and) Šalim-nūri, the wife of Abī-ati ... (her) brother ... will be questioned.

ii 7–9. When Ur-niḡar comes back from the military expedition, he will be questioned about the barley of the field ...

ii 10–11. Legal case of Ur-Ninmuga.

ii 12 – rev. i 5. Before the governor; before Ur-Bawu, son of Gududu; before Niḏamu; before Lu-Šara, assistant of the head gardener; before Ubar, the colonel; before Šarrum-ilī, the colonel; before Lugal-melam; before Abum-illum, the vice-general.

rev. i 7. This case has been closed.

rev. i 8. Šulgi-šillūl, envoy of the king, was the commissioner.

rev. ii 1–2. (...) The year Amar-Suen, the king, destroyed Šašrum.

3. Participants and disputants

In his commentary to TCL 5, 6047 (= NSGU 214), Falkenstein noted that most of the people recorded in the text were unknown in other sources from Umma, while the equally unknown toponyms should belong to a region not documented in Umma texts. Most recently, Piotr Steinkeller (2013:355–356, 417) has dealt with some aspects of this document, identifying the members of the military organization mentioned in it as coming from NAGsu, a royal settlement with scarce administrative presence of the institutional economy. In this light, the following remarks will draw on evidence regarding the many people who intervened in the process.

a) *Plaintiff*: It can be gleaned from BM 105339 that Ur-Ninmuga was the plaintiff involved in all the cases recorded in TCL 5, 6047. His identity could be deduced from the text published in *Orient* 16, p. 108, No. 175 (Š 41²),² where a certain Ur-Ninmuga is recorded as someone working for Urdu-Nanna, a colonel who was also involved in the investigation recorded in our text. Another clue to establishing Ur-Ninmuga's identity is given by BPOA 1, 1748 (Š 35), a tablet recording a delivery of barley received by Ur-Ninmuga, the merchant, on behalf of Urdu-Nanna, the colonel.³ If in both cases Ur-Ninmuga is in fact to be identified with the plaintiff of our texts, one should conclude that he worked for the Crown as a merchant. Ur-Ninmuga's profession may also find support from the fact that he was possibly the son of Abī-ati, who worked with the well-known merchant Ur-Dumuzida (§ 9). In this regard, it should be noted that on two occasions (§ 5 and § 10) TCL 5, 6047 mentions that the belongings of Abī-ati had been transferred, using a term (**e₂ šu šum₂-ma**) that stands for the transfer of a property on a temporary basis (see

² *Orient* 16, p. 108, No. 175: 120.0.0 še gur lugal, kišib Ur-^dNin-mug-ga, nam-nu-banda₃ Urdu₂-^dNanna, 120.0.0 še gur, kišib Ḫe₂-DU.DU, nam-nu-banda₃ Bu₃-u₂-za-a, kišib nam-eren₂-na, Urdu₂ šu ba-ti, lu₂-bi-ne ba-an-de₆-eš₂, mu us₂-sa mu us₂-sa-a-bi (= Š 41²). This text has been studied by Steinkeller 2013, Text 27.

³ BPOA 1, 1748: 5.0.0 še gur lugal, še ur₅-ra zi₃-da, ki Ad-da-ta, mu Urdu₂-^dNanna nu-banda₃-še₃, Ur-^dNin-mug-ga dam-gar₃, šu ba-ti, guru₇ Du₆-ku₃-sig₁₇-ta, Š 35/xii.

bibliography above, under TCL 5, 6047 ii 17 – rev. i 2). Most probably, after Abī-ati's death and the interruption of the business he had with the Crown, the assets that legitimately belonged to the latter were recovered by royal representatives. The freezing and balancing of a merchant's assets after his death are known, in relation to the Fiscal Office of the provincial administration, from Nik. 2, 447, a text discussed by Steinkeller (2004:100–102). In our case, it seems that Abī-ati's son challenged the outcome of the royal assessment, at least in cases § 9 and § 10.

b) *Defendants*: Besides the abovementioned claims that concerned his father's activities as a merchant, Ur-Ninmuga raised claims against Ur-niġar, the colonel (§ 1, § 4). As Steinkeller has pointed out (2013:356, n. 34), he is most probably the same Ur-niġar, colonel of NAGsu, attested in Molina 2010:208, No. 6:10.⁴ Both in TCL 5, 6047 and BM 105339 it is said that the investigation concerning the misappropriation he was accused of remained unresolved because he was away on a military expedition. Ur-Ninmuga raised further claims against Ur-Maġašuma and E₂.IGI.IN.DAR.SAL (§ 3), Adalal (§ 5), and Lugal-melam (§ 2 and § 6), perhaps also military officials from NAGsu, although this is not beyond doubt. The claims against Adalal (§ 5) and Lugal-melam (§ 2) also implied a litigation between Ur-Ninmuga and Abī-ati's wife, presumably his mother; case § 5 is closely related to case § 7, which BM 105339 recorded as a dispute between Ur-Ninmuga and Abī-ati's wife. Another claim raised against a member of Ur-Ninmuga's family was probably the one recorded in case § 8, where Pū-kīnāti, possibly a child of Abī-ati, was not recognized as the legitimate owner of six slave-girls.

c) *Royal commissioner*: Šulgi-šillūl was the commissioner (**maškim**)⁵ designated by the Crown to coordinate the inquiries and delegate investigations; he is also attested in PDT 1, 68 (Š 47/xi/4).

d) *Investigators*: Military officials of all ranks were involved in these investigations: Abum-ilum, vice-general (probably of NAGsu), was in charge of bringing those responsible for the destruction of an orchard (§ 3); Urdu-Nanna, colonel (probably of NAGsu),⁶ asked Puzur-Išum to

⁴ This Ur-niġar could have been promoted to the rank of general later, if he is the same Ur-niġar, general of NAGsu, attested in BPOA 6, 112 (ŠŠ 5); see Molina 2013:132, n. 67.

⁵ For the PN Šulgi-šillūl, see Verderame 2010:401–402. For the role of the **maškim** in Ur III legal texts, see Molina 2013:127–128.

⁶ Steinkeller 2013:356, n. 34, and cf. SAT 2, 601:2 (= Steinkeller *ibid.*, Text 26), where Urdu-Nanna, colonel of NAGsu, is attested.

investigate Ur-niġar (§ 4); Šū-Ninmuga, captain (probably of NAGsu), investigated cases § 1, § 2, § 6, § 8, § 9, and § 10; he was occasionally assisted by other professionals, such as a field watcher (§ 1) and a šarrabdu-official (§ 2).

e) *Bystanders*: The litigations recorded in BM 105339 were attended by several officials. On behalf of the provincial administration, the governor of Umma, who in that year (AS 6) was Ur-Lisi, presided over the cases; at his side was Ur-Bawu, son of Gududu, who was perhaps the son of Dadaga⁷ (brother of Ur-Lisi and later governor of Umma). On behalf of the royal administration the following officials were present: Abum-ilum, a vice-general involved in the investigation (see above); Šarrum-ilī, a colonel (possibly of Ğirsu);⁸ Ubar, a colonel; Nīdamu, a peripatetic official appointed by the Crown;⁹ and Lugal-melam, most probably the official accused in TCL 5, 6047 of having taken over the field of Abī-ati's wife and a yoked ox that belonged to Abī-ati. The ascription of Lu-Šara, assistant of the head gardener, is uncertain.

4. The cases

Our two texts provide evidence for an important court case that concerned the estate of Abī-ati, probably a merchant who worked for the Crown. After Abī-ati's death, the military institution, some of its officers, his wife, and perhaps some other of his children, seized some of his properties. Ur-Ninmuga, possibly his son and heir, who perhaps had been away because he was a merchant, raised certain claims against them. The court case proceeded in several stages, one of them recorded in BM 105339. This text provides some additional information on three of the claims presented by Ur-Ninmuga, namely those that concerned the property of slaves and the yield of a field. The relationship of the legal cases recorded in these two texts could be established as follows:

⁷ Dahl 2007:82 and n. 297; Molina 2013:134, n. 105.

⁸ Steinkeller 2002:130–131; Molina 2010:209.

⁹ Molina 2013:135, n. 108.

TCL 5, 6047

§ 7. rev. i 6–11. She (= Abī-ati's wife) declared that two (slaves) are her marriage gift,

her husband gave her one slave,

(and) her brother gave her three slaves.

That (the slaves) lived at the place of Abī-ati's wife has to be confirmed by Abī-ati's wife and MesDU.

BM 105339

i 1–7. Once the envoy of the king has questioned 'PN', if he/she says that it is to Ur-Ninmuga to whom (the slave) was given, Ur-Ninmuga will take her/him (the slave); if he/she says that she has a (legitimate) claim, then the wife of Abī-ati will take her/him (the slave).

i 8 – ii 6. (Concerning the slave-girls) Nanâ-nūri, Aḫi-bāštī, and Šalim-nūri, the wife of Abī-ati ... (her) brother ... will be questioned.

§ 4. ii 8–16. As for five shares of subsistence, of eighteen **iku** each, on the command of Urdu-Nanna, the colonel, Pu-zur-Išum found out for him (the following): while that barley was on the threshing-floor, "it was Ur-niḡar, the colonel, who took it away from me," Ur-Ninmuga declared. Ur-niḡar being not available, he has not been questioned. He was on a military expedition.

ii 7–9. When Ur-niḡar comes back from the military expedition, he will be questioned about the barley of the field ...

Considering the two texts together, the claims raised by Ur-Ninmuga could be summarized as follows:

- § 1. Ur-niḡar, a colonel of NAGsu, appropriated the barley of two plots of a field that belonged to Abī-ati. The investigation was carried out by Šū-Ninmuga, the captain of sixty men, and the guard of the field, on the command of the royal envoy Šulgi-šillūl, who apparently also coordinated the rest of the inquiries. With the demonstration that the plots belonged to Abī-ati, it is assumed that Ur-Ninmuga, his heir, was recognized as their legitimate owner. This must also have been the case for § 3, § 6, and § 8.
- § 2. The same Šū-Ninmuga and Apuzuraya, a **šarrabdu**-official, concluded that Lugal-melam seized the field of Abī-ati's wife; this Lugal-melam was probably the bystander recorded in BM 105339. In this case, I presume that there was a dispute between Ur-Ninmuga and Abī-ati's wife concerning the ownership of a field, which Lugal-melam had illegally appropriated.

- § 3. Ur-Maḥšašuma and E₂.IGI.IN.DAR.SAL were considered responsible for the destruction of Abī-ati's orchard. Abum-ilum, the vice-general of NAGsu, was appointed to seize them.
- § 4. As part of the investigation carried out by Puzur-Išum on the command of Urdu-Nanna, a colonel of NAGsu, Ur-Ninmuga declared that Ur-niḡar, also a colonel of NAGsu, seized his barley from the threshing floor. Nevertheless, Ur-niḡar could not be questioned on this regard since he was away on a military expedition.
- § 5. Šalim-nūri, a slave-girl of Abī-ati, fled from his household but was captured by the pursuer Šarrum-bāni. The slave-girl was not returned to her legitimate owner. On the contrary, it was confirmed that a certain Adalal, perhaps an official from the military organization of NAGsu, took her away from him. Šalim-nūri was one of the three slave-girls claimed by Ur-Ninmuga in case § 7, said by Abī-ati's wife to have been given to her by her brother.
- § 6. Lugal-melam appropriated an ox that belonged to Abī-ati, a fact confirmed by the statement of Šū-Ninmuga, the captain.
- § 7. Abī-ati's wife declared that she received two slaves as a marriage gift, probably from her father; one slave from her husband, and three slaves from her brother. As for the slave received from her husband, BM 105339 states that the litigation would be solved when someone whose name is not preserved was questioned by the king's envoy. Concerning the three slave-girls called Nanâ-nūri, Aḡi-bāštī, and Šalim-nūri, given to Abī-ati's wife by her brother, the resolution of the conflict would have to wait until Abī-ati's wife and MesDU, possibly her brother, confirmed that the slaves lived in the house of Abī-ati's wife. According to case § 5, Šalim-nūri had fled, but she was seized by Šarrum-bāni and unlawfully given to a certain Adalal.
- § 8. Six slave-girls were said to be the property of Pū-kīnāti, possibly a child of Abī-ati. Thanks to the statement of Šū-Ninmuga, the captain in charge of the investigation, the oath of Ešutum (one of the slave-girls?), and the testimony of two witnesses, it was demonstrated that the slave-girls belonged to Abī-ati's household.
- § 9. It was decided that a ship bought from Ur-Dumuzida actually belonged to the military, probably because Abī-ati purchased it for them. This was confirmed by the oath of Šū-Ninmuga and the statement of two witnesses.

§ 10. It was established that bitumen stored at Abī-ati's place actually belonged to the military, probably also because he purchased it for the military. This would be confirmed through the declaratory oath of Šū-Ninmuga.

5. Conclusions

The town of NAGsu, to which some of the people involved in the process belonged, was a royal settlement within the Umma province. It should probably be identified with the site WS 175, which lies 10 km northwest of Umma (Steinkeller 2001:48). As a royal settlement, NAGsu enjoyed limited interference in its business from the provincial administration, whose economic interests in it were only marginal (Steinkeller 2013:356). Nevertheless, the texts discussed here and several others show that the provincial structure of the Ur III state required an equivalent organization of the judiciary, according to which the inhabitants of an Ur III province were subject to the jurisdiction of its governor (see Molina 2013: 125–126, 139–141). If this was formally true, royal dependents and local administrators could have very strong influence in court procedures, to such an extent that the provincial authority was at times quite irrelevant.

This seems to be the case of the litigations recorded in the texts under discussion. Although the governor of Umma presided over the procedures, the Crown was certainly also fully involved. The whole process, conducted by the royal envoy Šulgi-šillūl, led to ten different investigations, of which eight at least, if not all of them, were carried out by members of the military. Out of the eight court officials who attended the procedures recorded in BM 105339, only the governor, and perhaps Ur-Bawu, came from the provincial administration, while three of them were members of the military, one more was a peripatetic official appointed by the Crown, and yet another could have even be one of the defendants and a military officer. The disputants were also royal dependents: besides the military, Ur-Ninmuga and Abī-ati were merchants who worked for the Crown. In these circumstances, the development and resolution of the process apparently escaped the control of the governor. In fact, as BM 105339 states, the cases were “closed” (**di-bi ba-til**) from the provincial administration's point of view, even though little seems to have been resolved: the royal envoy still had to make his inquiry, Abī-ati's wife and her brother had to be questioned, and colonel Ur-niġar was on a military expedition, all of which probably meant that any settlements were left in the hands of the Crown.



Fig. 1. AO 6047 obv. © Musée du Louvre, Dist. RMN / Christian Larrieu

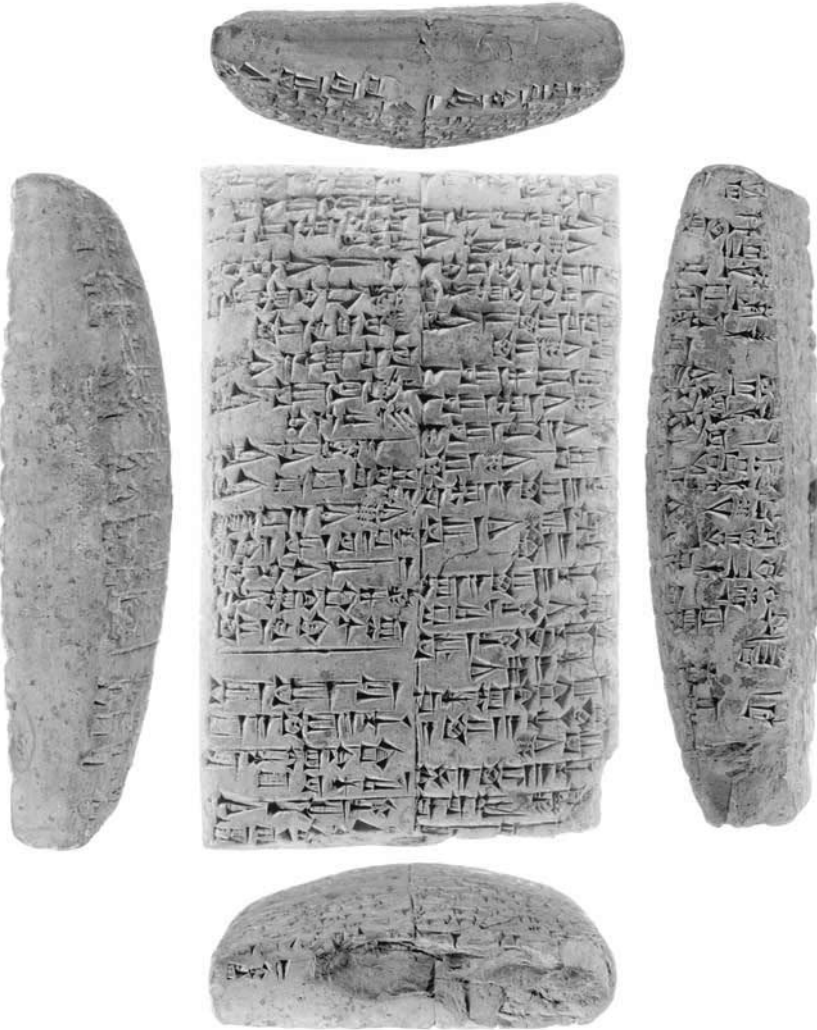


Fig. 2. AO 6047 rev. © Musée du Louvre, Dist. RMN / Christian Larrieu



Fig. 3. BM 105339 obv.



Fig. 4. BM 105339 rev.



Fig. 5. BM 105339 obv. (drawing)

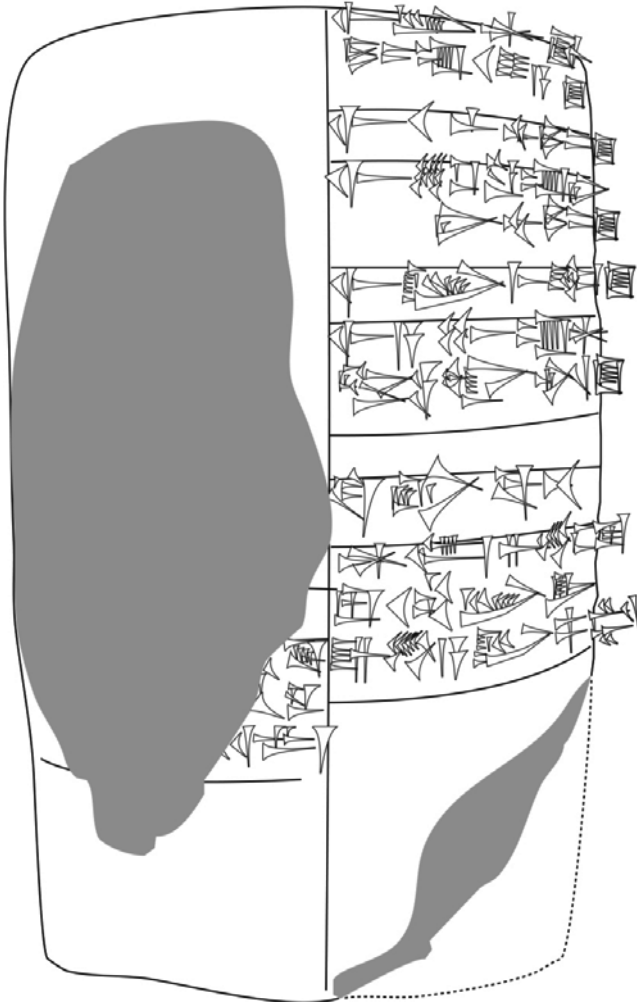


Fig. 6. BM 105339 rev. (drawing)

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