

MESOPOTAMIAN ECONOMICS

Two Sumerian Economic Tablets from Umma

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The two Sumerian economic tablets analyzed below are from the ancient Mesopotamian city of Umma (Jokha in modern Iraq) and can be dated by year, at the very end of the third millennium, (2028 BCE for M 38 and 2035 for M39) which falls during the Neo-Sumerian period. M38 is a record of bundles of reeds and it has a beautiful, legible seal rolled over the back of it. M39 concerns the yield of dates from two date palm orchards tended by two (named) gardeners. Both tablets were gifts of Henry Thatcher Fowler, Professor of Biblical Literature at Brown University from 1901 to 1934.

Museum Object 38

This clay tablet was written in month twelve of the first year of the reign of Ibbi-Sin, 2028 BCE. It records the delivery to some central storehouse of bales of bundled reeds, some of which were then set aside for tax payments. A cylinder seal had been rolled over the entire surface of the front and back of the tablet and the cuneiform impressed over the seal impressions. The tablet was then sealed once again, and a clear image can be seen between lines 8 and 9.

Transcribed and translated by Nicholas A. Kammer, Brown University, Class of 2002



OBVERSE		
line	Transliteration	Translation
1	9,180	9,180
2	[] s[a-g]i	[] re[ed bund]les
3	gu-kilib-ba 14 sa-ta	in each bale 14 bundles
4	30 gú sa-ta-zi	30 fresh reed bundles for taxes
5	ki Šeš-a-ni-ta	from Šešani



REVERSE		
line	Transliteration	Translation
6	kišib Inim- ^d Sára	sealed by Inim- ^d Sára
7	gìr Kù-ga-ni	under the responsibility of Kugani
8	iti ^d Dumu-zi	month of the god Dumuzi
9	mu ^d I-bí -	the year when Ibbi-
10	^d Suen lugal	Sin became king
SEAL		
1	Inim- ^d Sára	Inim- ^d Sára
2	dub-sar	scribe
3	dumu Lugal-iti-da	son of Lugal-itida

Museum Object 39

This clay tablet was written in month six of the third year of the reign of Šu-Sin, 2035 BCE. It records the harvest of ripe dates in two gardeners' date palm orchards. As is sometimes a problem with the reconstruction of ancient economic texts, the numbers here do not always add up properly. While the total yield of dates from the orchard of Ur-^dlškur is accurate, the sum of dates picked in Undaga's orchard has a minor discrepancy.

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OBVERSE		
line	Transliteration	Translation
1	2 giš 1 bán	2 trees, 1 bán
2	11 giš 3 bán	11 trees, 3 bán
3	21 giš 3 bán	21 trees, 3 bán
4	20 giš 2 bán 5 sila	20 trees, 2 bán 5 sila
5	25 giš 2 bán	25 trees, 2 bán
6	22 giš 1 bán 5 sila	22 trees, 1 bán 5 sila
7	36 giš 1 bán	36 trees, 1 bán
8	36 giš 6 sila	36 trees, 6 sila
9	14 giš 2 sila	14 trees, 2 sila
10	135 giš šà sù	135 unproductive trees
11	šu-nígin 2 pi 2 bán 8 sila zú-lum gur	total amount of dates: 2 pi 2 bán 8 sila
12	Ur- ^d lškur nu-giš ₆ kirī ₆	Ur- ^d lškur, gardener
13	1 giš 2 bán	1 tree, 2 bán
14	2 giš 2 bán	2 trees, 2 bán



REVERSE		
line	Transliteration	Translation
15	7 giš 1 bán 5 sîla	7 trees, 1 bán 5 sîla
16	8 giš 1 bán	8 trees, 1 bán
17	19 giš 5 sîla	19 trees, 5 sîla
18	9 giš 2 sîla	9 trees, 2 sîla
19	166 giš šà sù	166 unproductive trees
20	šu-nígin 1 pi 1 bán 2! (8) sîla zú-lum gur	total amount of dates: 1 pi 1 bán 2! (8) sîla
21	Un-da-ga nu-gi ^s kiri ₆	Undaga, gardener
22	iti šu-numun-ta u ₄ -8-àm ba-ra-zal-ta	month of the seed grain, 8 days having elapsed
23	mu-ús-sa má ^a En-ki ba-ab-du ₈	the year after the ship of the god Enki was finished