From All the Stacks to the Center of Ur:
A Note on the Handling of Finished Garments
in the Neo-Sumerian Period

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This short article offers a revised translation and interpretation of an Ur III tablet first published by Walther Sallaberger in 1993/94. The tablet records how Iddin-Erra, in all likelihood a fuller working in the city of Ur, is receiving takkīrum garments. The text specifies that the garments were requested from all the (surrounding) textile stacks and that they should be brought to the center of Ur. This suggests that textiles were stored temporarily outside the city, or in the outskirts of the city, before they were ordered to be transported into the city proper. The article argues that this handling of the textiles within the administration of the Ur is comparable to how different food products and agricultural produce were kept in temporary storage facilities outside the city before they were brought to the central facilities of the city.

Keywords: Neo-Sumerian, Ur, garments, transportation, storage

I. The Origin of Sallaberger 1993/94 No. 6

In 1994 Walther Sallaberger published a transliteration, translation and commentary of a small, undated Ur III tablet, the interpretation of which will be reexamined in this short article (Sallaberger 1993/94, 60). Sallaberger did not attribute the text to any particular city, but mentioned that a certain I-dī₃-Er₃-ra working as lu₂-azlag₂ (“fuller”) is attested in texts from the Early Drehem Series.² He further recognized the unexpected writing of šu ba-an-ti in line 8. All other texts in which this official receives textile products have šu ba-ti. In his article, Sallaberger referred to AUCT 1:967 from Šu-Suen 7, where an official with the very common name Lu₂-diṯir-ra receives (= šu ba-an-ti) uš-bar garments from a lu₂-azlag₂ named I-dī₂-Er₃-ra.³ The lu₂-azlag₂ I-dī₂-Er₃-ra in this text led Tohru Ozaki to the conclusion that AUCT 1:967 most likely was drawn up either in Puziriš-Dagan, where an I-dī₂₃-Er₃-ra with this profession was active during the reigns of Šulgi and Amar-Suen,⁴ or the city of Ur, where a

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lu₂-azlag₂ by the name I-di₃-Er₃-ra is attested during the reign of Ibbi-Suen (Gomi 1987, 155). In fact, an official called I-di₃-Er₃-ra is attested in connection with the textile industry in Ur already during Šu-Suen 5 (UET 3:1585, Reverse, Column V) or Šu-Suen 9 (UET 3:1647). Therefore, it is conceivable that the lu₂-azlag₂ in AUCT 1:967 from Šu-Suen 7 refers to this contemporary official in Ur, while it must be considered unlikely that he would represent the same I-di₃-Er₃-ra as we find delivering wool in Puzri-Dagan in e.g. text BIN 3:405 from Šulgi 30, i.e. 34 years before AUCT 1:967 was written.

Obviously, this does not necessarily prove that the I-di₃-Er₃-ra in Sallaberger’s text also refers to the Ur fuller. However, it attenuates the connection between the writing šu ba-an-ti and the official I-di₃-Er₃-ra who received textiles in Puzri-Dagan. Scribes generally preferred šu ba-an-ti over šu ba-ti in the city of Ur, and all the tablets from Ur concerned with I-di₃-Er₃-ra have šu ba-an-ti. Therefore, the use of šu ba-an-ti in Sallaberger’s text does suggest that this text was drawn up by a scribe from Ur rather than Puzri-Dagan, and that the I-di₃-Er₃-ra in this text refers to the official in Ur with this name. Moreover, the rare type of garments mentioned in the text further strengthens the connection to this fuller in Ur. The takkīrum (tak₂-ki-ru-um) garments are attested in similar receipts from Ur (UET 3:1673 and 1697) but do not appear in the Early Drehem Series or in later Puzriš-Dagan texts. This does not mean that the text could not have been archived in Puzriš-Dagan (or in some other location within the state). In OIP 115:64 from Puzriš-Dagan, dead animals are disbursed “for the fullers of the center of Ur” (lu₂azlag₂ šag₄ Urim₅ki-ma-še₃), certainly a comparable transaction to the garments received by I-di₂-Er₃-ra (a fuller in Ur) “for the center of Ur” in Sallaberger’s text.

Like all Ur III receipts of this type, Sallaberger’s text would have been archived by the institution responsible for delivering the goods, not the institution receiving it. As is commonly known among students of the Ur III period, the specific mention of the city of Ur as the destination of the garments (see below) would actually suggest that this text was not archived in Ur. Thus, while it is possible that the tablet was drawn up in the city of Ur, we may assume that it was archived in a different location (i.e. the location of the origin of the garments in the text).

II. The Expression šag₄ Urim₅ki-ma-še₃
The expression šag₄ Urim₅ki-ma-še₃ in line 4 of Sallaberger’s text is rare in Ur III texts. If the ancient scribe intended to write the rather common šag₄ Urim₅ki-ma, which simply means “in Ur,” in order to clarify where the transaction took
place, he would have written it at the end of the document after šu ba-an-ti. We should therefore view the -še₃ here as a terminative postposition denoting a motion towards the šag₄ Urim₅ ki₃-ma. Since a translation “to/towards in Ur” hardly makes sense, apart from being grammatically impossible, it seems very likely that we should understand and translate the šag₄ literally here: “to the heart of Ur” (i.e. /šag₄ Urim₅ ki₃-ak-še₃/). It is reasonable to interpret the šag₄ as a reference to the central part of the city and the area where I-di₃-Er₃-ra was active.

I have previously argued that various food products, such as oils, fats, dairy products and fruits were brought from regional storage facilities surrounding the city to e₂-kišib-ba, the central store house in the city of Ur (Widell 2004), and that grain was stored temporarily outside the city before it was transported to the city’s central granary gur₇ (Widell 2002). If the interpretation of šag₄ Urim₅ ki₃-ma-še₃ in Sallaberger’s text is correct, we now see that also garments were transported to the center of the city, presumably from the local production areas.

III. The Expression TAG-TAG-ta

Sallaberger translated (referring to personal communications with Pascal Attinger) the expression TAG-TAG-ta ba-ab-dug₄: “(sie) zu weben wird zugesagt” with the -ta as a writing for /-(e)da/ and the TAG-TAG as marû form with a vocalic ending, possibly to be read tutku, duda, or similar (Sallaberger 1993/94, 60). Regardless of the theoretical feasibility of this grammatical explanation (see Attinger 1993, 301, n. 889), the translation offered by Sallaberger is difficult to accept. The mention of the receiving official by name suggests that the garments already existed (or, at any rate, they would of course exist when I-di₃-Er₃-ra received them and the receipt came into force), something that ought to render any comments on whether the garments were to be woven or not superfluous. Hartmut Waetzoldt suggested, for this reason, that the expression TAG-TAG-de₃ should be understood as an abbreviated form of ki-la₂-tag-tag(e)-de₃, which he translated “um zu wiegen” (Waetzoldt 1972, 143, n. 551; cf., however, Powell 1976, 463). That the four garments in our text were ordered (ba-ab-dug₄) to be weighed certainly makes sense since they—contrary to all other known occurrences of this type of garment in Ur—are presented with their measurements instead of information about their weight (hence they are not yet weighed). A further argument against a meaning of TAG-TAG-de₃ (or tutku-de₃ / duda-de₃) as “to be woven” in at least some contexts can be seen in the texts from Ur where the TAG-TAG-de₃ is preceded by the line tug₂-mu-TAG (i.e. tug₂-mu-tuku₅ “woven garments;” see UET 3:1643, 1650, 1752 or UET
9:194), thus producing the highly dubious translation: “woven garments, to be woven.”

While Waetzoldt’s rejection of the TAG-TAG-de₃ as “to be woven” in some texts for these reasons may seem justified, his alternative translation “to be weighed” produces new problems: in the examples mentioned above from the city of Ur, the garments are already enumerated with their weights. Why should already weighed garments be weighed?

In view of these problems connected with the meaning of TAG here, it is surprising that Leon Legrain’s understanding of TAG as the verb “to stack” or as the noun “stack, scale-stack” has not found more support (Legrain 1947, 274). Granted, Legrain’s proposition appears to have been based primarily on the contexts in which the expression occurred in his texts, rather than on any semantic evidence. However, while TAG read as tuku₅ normally means “to hit” (mahāṣum) and, by extension, also “to weave” (CAD M/I, 71ff. esp. 78), it should be noted that TAG, read as tag, also denoted something like “to write down, to record” as the Sumerian word for lapāṭum (CAD L, 82ff.),¹⁰ as well as “to tie things together, to pack” as the Sumerian word for rakāṣum (CAD R, 91ff. esp. 94), and it is certainly very easy to connect these meanings with the packing/recording of textiles to stacks. Since garments that have already been weighed or woven could obviously be stacked, packed or recorded, Legrain’s translation appears to solve all the different problems mentioned above,¹¹ and the translation also fits very neatly with Sallaberger’s text: if the -e₃ in the expression šag₄ Urim₅ ki₃-ta₃-e₃ in line 4 is to be understood as the terminative postposition “to” in the nominal chain, it is feasible that the -ta in the following line would represent an ablative-instrumental ending, in other words “from the tag-tag.”¹² The tag-tag-ta would be a reduplication of the substantive tag “stack” expressing totality with the ablative-instrumental postposition -ta, i.e. “from all the stacks” (see Thomsen 1984, 61 and 103-105). These unspecified textile stacks were in all likelihood located in the vicinity of the city of Ur, where they would temporarily store locally produced garments for the central households of the city.

IV. A New Translation and Interpretation of Sallaberger 1993/94 No. 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transliteration</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obverse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 3 tug₂</td>
<td>ta₂-ki-ru-um tur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 gid₂-bi 5 kuš₃ / 5 šu-si</td>
<td>their length: 5 cubits (and) 5 fingers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From All the Stacks to the Center of Ur

3  dağal-bi 2 1/2 kušš₂₃ their width: 2 1/2 cubits (= 1.25 m).
4  šag₄ Urim₃ki⁻ma-še₃ To the center of the city of Ur.

Reverse
1  tag-tag-ta From all the stacks,
2  ba-ab-dug₄ it is ordered.
3  I-di₃-Er₂⁻ra Iddin-Erra
4  šu ba-an-ti received.

Notes
1 I would like to thank Dr. Jacob Dahl and Mr. Foy Scalf for reading this article and discussing various issues with me. Needless to say, I alone am responsible for any and all errors.
2 For the texts of the so-called Early Drehem Series, possibly to be located in nearby Nippur rather than in Puzri-Dagan, see Wilcke 1992 and Sallaberger 1999, 253-260.
3 Sallaberger 1993/94, 60, n. 24: “… I-din-Èr-ra (andere Schreibung des PN!) empfängt Ludigira Stoffe.”
4 For references to texts within this group with the official I-di₂⁻³-Er₂⁻ra receiving textile products, see Sallaberger 1993/94, 60. Note also Ontario 1:8 from Šulgi 47).
5 For the problems associated with the date of UET 3:1647, see Owen 1997, 392, n. 39.
6 Note, however, the large number of texts mainly dealing with precious metals from Ibbi-Suen 15 (and to some extent IS 16-17) found in the E₂-dub-la-mah using šu ba-ti rather than šu ba-an-ti. For a more detailed study on the geographical distribution of the texts from the city of Ur, see now Widell 2003, 91-101.
7 For the tákktûrum garments, see CAD T, 78.
8 I am aware of only four other attestations of šag₄ Urim₃ki⁻ma-(ka)-še₃: the already mentioned Puzri-Dagan texts OIP 115:64 from Šulgi 41, TCS:205 (Šulgi 41) and Torino 1:192 (Šulgi 45); and the Umma text BE 3-1:100, Reverse, Column I (šag₄ Urim₃ki⁻še₃) from Šulgi 35. The similar šag₄ Nibrûki⁻še₃ is slightly more common, and can be found in a handful of texts: MAOG 4 194:4-4a; MVN 4:55; MVN 16:752; MVN 18:425; PBOA 1:670; SAT 3:1902. Note also šag₄ Unugki⁻ša-ša-še₃ (OIP 115:80) and šag₄ Gir₂⁻šuški⁻še₃ (MVN 5:179).
9 TAG-TAG-de₃ is attested in Ur (see Legrain 1947, 169), but not TAG-TAG-da.
10 The basic meaning of lapatûm is to “to touch, take hold of” but it was also used with the meaning “to write down, to record” from at least the early second millennium and onwards (see CAD L, 86f.).
11 I.e. the TAG-TAG-de₃ should in these examples be understood as tag-tag-(ge)-de₃ and translated “to be stacked, recorded” rather than “to be woven” or “to be weighed.”
12 Although one would, of course, expect the ablative-instrumental to precede the terminative and not vice versa (i.e. “from …, to …”).

Abbreviations
All references to cuneiform texts in this article follow the abbreviations used by the Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative (www.cdli.ucla.edu).

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