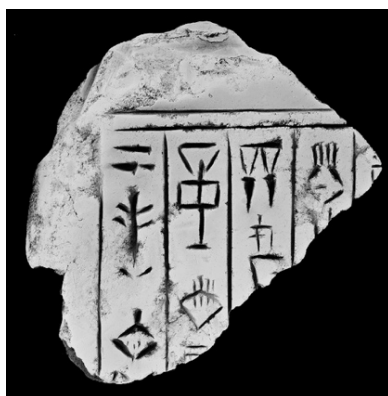


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Manuel MOLINA <manuel.molina@csic.es>  
CSIC, Madrid (SPAIN)

**86) A merchant’s votive inscription from the Rosen Collection** — This short note publishes a private votive inscription of unknown provenance that was formerly on loan to the Jonathan and Jeanette Rosen Ancient Near Eastern Studies Seminar and Tablet Conservation Laboratory at Cornell University until its closure in June 2019.<sup>1)</sup> The preserved dimensions of the stone fragment bearing the registration number CUNES 52-13-015 are 75\* (length) × 69\* (width) × 33\* (thickness) mm. The flatness of the inscribed surface and the considerable thickness of the fragment suggest that it may have belonged to a votive plaque. That the original artifact may indeed have been a square or rectangular stone plaque is also indicated by the incised line that runs parallel to the frame of the inscription, which can be identified with the outer border that delimited the internal panel of the plaque.<sup>2)</sup>



(beginning lost)

1’.	ṛx <sup>1</sup> [...]	[...],
2’.	N[E.NE]	N[E.NE],
3’.	dumu a[1-la]	son of Al[la]
4’.	dam-gara <sub>3</sub> -k[e <sub>4</sub> ]	the merchant,
5’.	a mu-na-r[u]	presented (this object).

The distance between the border of the plaque and the frame of the inscription is only 4 mm. The inscription, written in Sumerian, is arranged in one column and has five partially preserved lines, each one 12 mm wide and probably ca. 60 mm long (the closing line 5’ measures 48\* mm). The original size of the framed inscription is difficult to reconstruct. If the text had only five lines, the frame would measure approximately 60 × 60 mm. However, the traces in line 1’ are not compatible with diĝir, that is, the sign for the divine determinative that preceded the name of the god or goddess to whom the plaque was offered. This means that line 1’ was not the first line of the inscription. One may suppose that it contained the expression lugal/nin-a-ni, “his lord/mistress,” which often followed the deity’s name (and epithets, if present), but the preserved traces do not seem to match either lugal or nin. Alternatively, it may have recorded the closing line of the more elaborate dedicatory formula “for the life (of the local ruler or king),” which usually included his full titulary. If the broken sign is ma, then the line may be read as (nam-ti PN ...) [lugal urim<sub>5</sub><sup>ki</sup>/]-ṛma<sup>1</sup>-[ka-še<sub>3</sub>] (cf., e.g., Sb 2745 [Braun-Holzinger 1991: 61, K 83; Frayne 1997: 221–222, E3/2.1.2.2036]), which hints at an Ur III date for the inscription.<sup>3)</sup> Such a dating would be also supported by the paleography of the signs TUR, DAM, and GAR<sub>3</sub>.<sup>4)</sup>

If my reconstruction is correct, the name of the donor of this votive object was NE.NE, the son of a merchant named Alla. Since early Mesopotamian merchants usually operated as family collectives, chances are that NE.NE shared the same occupation as his father.<sup>5)</sup> If this is the case, then the repetition of

the term *dam-gara<sub>3</sub>* was probably redundant.<sup>6)</sup> The fact that the professional designation is found only after Alla's name may also imply that the latter held a more senior position in the merchant organization than his son. Inscribed votive objects commissioned by third-millennium tradesmen – or by their sons – are numerous (Braun-Holzinger 1991: 20–21; Andersson 2016: 59–60). In total, nineteen objects dedicated by merchants (*dam-gara<sub>3</sub>*), chief merchants (*dam-gara<sub>3</sub>-gal*), overseers of merchants (*ugula dam-gara<sub>3</sub>*), and long-distance traders (<sup>ga</sup>*gaeš*), are known from places such as Adab, Ġirsu, Mari, Nippur, Sippar, Susa, Šuruppag, and Ur (see Table 1). The occasions on which votive offerings were made by merchants are unknown, but one may speculate that dedications to (personal) deities were in some cases connected with the safe return of these individuals from trade expeditions in distant lands.<sup>7)</sup> Nor can it be excluded that tradesmen played an important role in the procurement of raw materials used by craftsmen to manufacture the votive objects they had commissioned (Andersson 2016: 54).<sup>8)</sup>

**Table 1** – Third-millennium votive objects dedicated by tradesmen or sons of tradesmen.

<i>Museum no.</i>	<i>Provenance</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Occupation/Filiation</i>	<i>Object</i>	<i>Bibliography</i>
MMA 62.70.10	Nippur	ED IIIa	Chief merchant ( <i>dam-gara<sub>3</sub>-gal</i> )	Stone (alabaster) bowl	Braun-Holzinger 1991: 133, G 103
VA 6731	Šuruppag	ED IIIa	Merchant ( <i>dam<sup>1</sup>-gara<sub>3</sub></i> )	Stone (alabaster) mace-head	Braun-Holzinger 1991: 74, F 987
VA 6789	Šuruppag	ED IIIa	Merchant? <sup>2</sup> ( <i>dam<sup>1</sup>-[gara<sub>3</sub><sup>2</sup>]</i> )	Fragment of a stone statue	Braun-Holzinger 1991: 243, St 15
A 220	Adab	ED IIIb	Son of a merchant ( <i>dam-gara<sub>3</sub></i> )	Stone (alabaster) bowl fragment	Braun-Holzinger 1991: 122, G 38; Wilson 2012: pl. 25a
M 2241	Mari	ED IIIb	Steward ( <i>sagi</i> ), son of a long-distance trader ( <sup>ga</sup> <i>gaeš</i> )	Stone vessel fragment	Braun-Holzinger 1991: 127, G 69; Frayne 2008, 318, E1.20.22.2002
M 2248	Mari	ED IIIb	Long-distance trader ( <sup>ga</sup> <i>gaeš</i> )	Stone (slate) plaque fragment	Braun-Holzinger 1991: 311, W 11
CBS 9621+9617	Nippur	ED IIIb	Son of a merchant ( <i>dam-gara<sub>3</sub></i> )	Stone (limestone) bowl fragment	Braun-Holzinger 1991: 128, G 76; Frayne 2008: 353, E1.11.2
CBS 9652	Nippur	ED IIIb	Merchant ( <i>dam-gara<sub>3</sub></i> )	Stone (calcite) vessel fragment	Braun-Holzinger 1991: 129, G 82
EŠ 1944	Nippur	ED IIIb	Chief merchant ( <i>dam-gara<sub>3</sub>-gal</i> )	Stone (slate) plaque	Braun-Holzinger 1991: 311, W 12
BM 22451	Sippar	ED IIIb	Merchant ( <i>dam-gara<sub>3</sub></i> )	Stone (alabaster) vase fragment	Braun-Holzinger 1991: 139, G 149; CUSAS 26, 3
BM 38305	Sippar	ED IIIb	Merchant ( <i>dam-gara<sub>3</sub></i> ), son of a scribe ( <i>dub-sar</i> )	Clay tablet; Neo-Babylonian copy of an original Pre-Sargonic inscription engraved on a statue	Gelb/Kienast 1990: 26, MP C 1
BM 116439	Ur	ED IIIb	Merchant ( <i>dam-gara<sub>3</sub></i> )	Stone (calcite) vessel fragment	Braun-Holzinger 1991: 146, G 173; Frayne 2008: 418–419, E1.14.146; CUSAS 26, 218

AO 175	Ĝirsu	Lagaš II	Merchant (dam-gara <sub>3</sub> )	Stone vessel fragment	Braun-Holzinger 1991: 168, G 245; Edzard 1997: 173, E3/1.1.7.89
AO 2886p	Ĝirsu	Lagaš II	Long-distance trader ( <sup>g</sup> a gaeš)	Stone (alabaster) vessel fragment	Braun-Holzinger 1991: 180, G 313; Edzard 1997: 216, E3/1.1.0.1017
AO 4643	Ĝirsu	Lagaš II	Son of a merchant (dam-gara <sub>3</sub> )	Stone (steatite) bowl	Braun-Holzinger 1991: 181, G 318; Edzard 1997: 219, E3/1.1.0.1022
YBC 2158	Umma?	Ur III	Son of a merchant (dam-gara <sub>3</sub> )	Stone (marble) vase fragment	Braun-Holzinger 1991: 186, G 347; Frayne 1997: 227, E3/2.1.2.2044
Sb 2745	Susa	Ur III	Sea-faring traders ( <sup>g</sup> a gaeš-a-ab-ba)	Stone (marble) mace-head	Braun-Holzinger 1991: 61, K 83; Frayne 1997: 221–222, E3/2.1.2.2036
Unknown	Unknown (Ĝirsu?)	Late Ur III- Early OB	Son of an overseer of merchants (ugula dam-gara <sub>3</sub> )	Agata bead fragment	Klein/Brenner 2013: 616–617, no. 7, 623–624 (copy & photos), 630
L 29-219	Unknown (Umma?)	Late Ur III- Early OB	Son of a merchant (dam-gara <sub>3</sub> )	Stone (limestone) mace-head	Braun-Holzinger 1991: 66, K 108

## Notes

1. Rudi Mayr (personal communication, July 2022) kindly informs me that CUNES 52-13-015 was not among the objects that were returned to the Iraq Museum in August 2021. To the best of my knowledge, this is the only non-royal votive inscription among the epigraphic material previously kept in the Rosen Collection at Cornell University.

2. Cf., e.g., the Early Dynastic perforated plaque fragment YBC 2305 (Frayne 2008, 443–444, E1.15.4.1). A high-quality photograph of this object is available at <http://collections.peabody.yale.edu/search/Record/YPM-BC-016909>. Note that post-Early Dynastic plaques usually feature a double-band raised border (Pelzel 1974: 265). On Mesopotamian votive plaques, see also Boese 1971.

3. This reconstruction implies that line 1' was wider than the preserved ones.

4. TUR = LAK 528, RSP 381, KWU 801; DAM = LAK 523, RSP 191, KWU 799; GAR<sub>3</sub> = LAK 160, RSP 346, KWU 261. Cf. the shape of these signs in the inscriptions on: 1) MMA 62.70.10, an alabaster bowl from Nippur dating to the ED IIIa period (Braun-Holzinger 1991: 133, G 103; <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/325416>); 2) AO 4643, a stone bowl dating to the Lagaš II period (Braun-Holzinger 1991: 181, G 318; Edzard 1997: 219, E3/1.1.0.1022; <https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010165414>); and 3) YBC 2158, a vase fragment possibly from Ur III Umma (Braun-Holzinger 1991: 186, G 347; Frayne 1997: 227 E3/2.1.2.2044; CDLI no. P226899).

5. An Ur III merchant named NE.NE is attested in the following documents: AOS 32 P01 (IS.01.01.00; Nippur), seal inscription; and the unpublished text BDTNS 059331 (Š.48.00.00; Adab?), obv. 15. No merchant by the name of Alla is known in the extant Ur III sources.

6. Cf. the case of an Early Dynastic mace-head dedicated to the god Ningirsu by a stonecutter (zadim), whose father, mentioned in the inscription, bears the same title as his son (Braun-Holzinger 1991: 42, K 2, with previous literature). Note, however, that in the votive inscription M 2241 from ED IIIb Mari (Braun-Holzinger 1991: 127, G 69; Frayne 2008, 318, E1.20.22.2002), the title of the devotee, a steward (sagi), differs from that of his father, a long-distance trader (<sup>g</sup>a gaeš). Similarly, in a Neo-Babylonian copy of a Pre-Sargonic inscription commissioned by a Mariote merchant – which bears a dedication to the god Šamaš of Sippar (Gelb/Kienast 1990: 26, MP C 1) – the father of the offerer is said to have been a scribe (dub-sar).

7. It is interesting to note that female deities outnumber male ones as divine beneficiaries of inscribed votive objects offered by tradesmen and sons of tradesmen. Eleven of fifteen objects preserving the names of the divine recipients feature a dedication to a female deity, for a total of seven different goddesses: Baššurat (2×), Bau (3×), Inana (2×), Niniriamudu, Ninlil, Ninmena, and Nintinuga. The male gods are Nanna, Šara (2×), and Utu. According to Nancy Highcock and Christina Tsouparopoulou (2020: 196), Inana and Bau are the most common deities mentioned in inscribed votive objects dedicated by male donors. In the inscription on the stone bowl AO 4643 (Braun-Holzinger

1991: 181, G 318; Edzard 1997: 219, E3/1.1.0.1022), the name of the divine beneficiary is unfortunately lost, but the text mentions the name given to the object, which alludes to the devotee's personal god (na<sub>4</sub> diĝir-ĝu<sub>10</sub> ti al ba-ni-du<sub>11</sub> mu-bi, "My god requested life' is the name of (this) stone (bowl)").

8. Aside from raw materials, Babylonian merchants of the third millennium were most likely also involved in the long-distance trade of "Jiroft-style" carved vessels produced in southeastern Iran, which were imported to Mesopotamia and engraved with Sumerian or Akkadian inscriptions with the aim of consecrating them as votive objects (Marchesi 2016).

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Palmiro NOTIZIA <[palmiro.notizia@unibo.it](mailto:palmiro.notizia@unibo.it)>

Department of History and Cultures, Alma Mater Studiorum – University of Bologna (ITALY)

**87) A new Ur III list of Nippur month names** — While date lists containing shortened or full versions of year names are well attested from the Ur III period onwards, lists of month names are scarce. The present note seeks to publish a new list of Nippur month names. The small tablet NBC 9738 (measurements: 48 × 38 × 17 mm) contains the spellings of all month names that were used at Nippur in this period. This is not the earliest document listing all Nippur month names. The Old Akkadian administrative text *CUSAS 27, 53 (CDLI P323480)* recording barley rations lists the amounts of barley for the individual months of the year (lines 2–13), starting with the twelfth month (Cohen 2015: 115–116). The new text is comparable to NBC 7439, another Ur III list of month names that were used at Girsu (Cohen 1993: 70; see Fig. 2, below). Both texts are presented side by side

below.

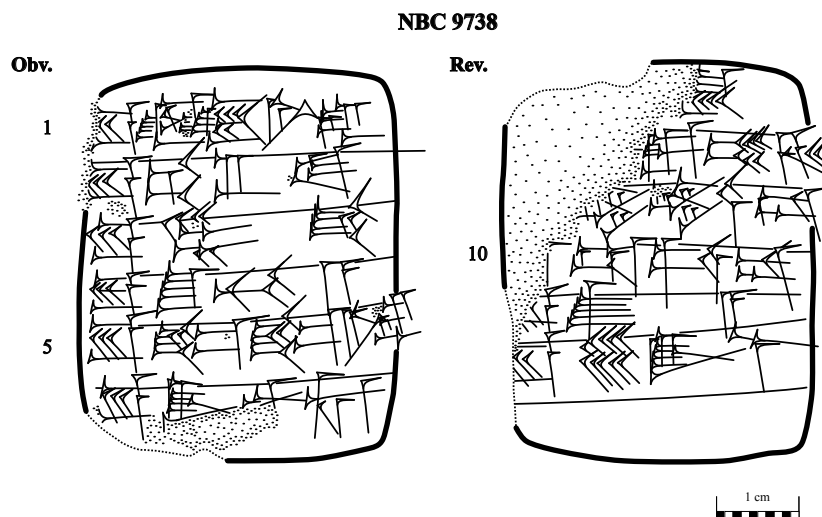


Fig. 1 Drawing of NBC 9738 (YPM BC 012705) (For a photograph see <https://collections.peabody.yale.edu/search/Record/YPM-BC-012705>)