

## Unpublish Administrative Document of Hides from the Reign of Išbi-Erra, King of Isin (2018–1985 B.C) in the Iraqi Museum

وثيقة اقتصادية غير منشورة بخصوص الجلود من عهد إشبّي-إيرا، ملك إيسن (٢٠١٨-١٩٨٥ ق.م) في المتحف العراقي

Assist.Prof.Dr. Aram Jalal Hassan

University of Salahaddin- Erbil

[Aram.hassan@su.edu.krd](mailto:Aram.hassan@su.edu.krd)

Mob. 009647504902080



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

[International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

### Abstract

During our PhD research, we identified a distinct economic text among the corpus of texts assigned to us. As all the texts were of unknown origin, the researcher relied on an analysis of the text's formal features, cuneiform script, content, and historical context to determine its date.

The text dates to the early Old Babylonian period, specifically to the thirty-third year of the reign of King Išbi-Erra, the founder of the Dynasty of Isin.

Preserved in the Iraq Museum under number ( IM 62890), the text addresses an economic matter pertaining to leather. Notably, its writing style exhibits a predominantly Sumerian character, employing a greater number of Sumerian vocabulary and lexemes than Akkadian—a distinctive feature of texts from this period.

**Keywords:** Cuneiform texts, Ishbi-Erra, Kingdom of Isin, Economic texts, Old Babylonian period

### الملخص

أثناء إجراء دراستنا للدكتوراه، وجدنا نصاً اقتصادياً خاصاً بين النصوص المخصصة لنا. وبما أن جميع النصوص كانت مجهولة المصدر، فقد اعتمد الباحث على خصائص شكل النص، وأسلوب كتابته المسمارية، ومحتوى النص، بالإضافة إلى السياق التاريخي لتحديد زمنه. وبناء على ذلك يرجع النص إلى بدايات الفترة البابلية القديمة، وبالتحديد إلى السنة الثالثة والثلاثين من حكم الملك إشبّي-إيرا، الذي أسس سلالة إيسن.

النص محفوظ في المتحف العراقي برقم (IM. 62890)، ويتناول موضوعاً اقتصادياً يتعلق بالجلود. كما أن أسلوب الكتابة في النص يميل إلى الطابع السومري، حيث تم استخدام مفردات وكلمات سومرية أكثر من الاكدية، وهذا يعد من الخصائص المميزة لنصوص هذه الحقبة.

### الكلمات المفتاحية :

نصوص مسمارية، إشبّي-إيرا، مملكة إيسن، نصوص اقتصادية، العصر البابلي القديم.

## **Introduction**

The early second millennium BCE in southern Mesopotamia witnessed the emergence of the First Dynasty of Isin (c. 2017–1794 BCE), which rose from the ashes of the collapsing Third Dynasty of Ur.<sup>1</sup> Following the Elamite sack of Ur and the capture of the last Ur III king Ibbi-Sin around 2004 BCE, a power vacuum engulfed the region, leading to the fragmentation of centralized authority into competing city-states.<sup>2</sup> It was in this context that Ishbi-Erra (c. 2018–1985 BCE), originally an official serving under Ibbi-Sin, established himself as the founder of a new dynasty at Isin.<sup>3</sup>

Ishbi-Erra's rise to power was strategic and calculated. Tasked by Ibbi-Sin with procuring grain supplies from the regions of Isin and Kazallu to alleviate widespread famine, Ishbi-Erra instead diverted approximately 72,000 gur of grain to fortify Isin's defenses against Amorite incursions, marking his definitive break from Ur's authority<sup>4</sup>. Over a reign of thirty-three years—attested by the Sumerian King List and his extant year-names—he consolidated control over key southern cities including Nippur and Ur, expelled Elamite garrisons, and adopted traditional Sumerian royal titles such as "king of Sumer and Akkad" to legitimize his rule.<sup>5</sup>

The administrative apparatus of the Isin dynasty inherited and adapted the bureaucratic practices of its Ur III predecessor. Temple and palace archives from this period reveal a highly organized system for recording economic activities, including agricultural production, craft manufacturing, and resource distribution.<sup>6</sup> Among the most significant sectors of this administrative economy was the leather industry. Skins and hides constituted valuable commodities in ancient Mesopotamia, utilized for clothing, containers, military equipment (shields, quivers), and as writing material. Professional designations such as *su-si-(ig)*—interpreted as "animal handler" or "preparer of cleaned animal skins"—attest to the specialized labor force dedicated to leather processing within large institutional workshops.<sup>7</sup>

The tablet that is the subject of this study belongs to this tradition of administrative documentation. It records quantities of hides distinguished by type (sheep with wool, sheep without wool, mature goat hides) and by anatomical designation.

The text is preserved in the Iraq Museum under number (MI. 62890), and it is in good condition with a dark color.

This document thus offers a valuable window into the economic history of early Isin, illuminating not only the commodities and accounting practices of the period but also the legal mechanisms (sealing) by which transactions were authenticated. It exemplifies the continuity of Mesopotamian administrative traditions across political transitions and contributes to our understanding of craft production and resource management in the early second millennium BCE.

## **Description of the Document:**

The document, as indicated by its form with rounded edges, dates to the beginning of the Old Babylonian period and was written in the Sumerian language. Its content and writing style imitate the period of the Third Dynasty of Ur (Neo-Sumerian period), specifically its very end. The text may have been copied, or its owner may have had possessions in Isin.

(IM. 62890)

**OB.**30 kuš udu-a-lum(aslum<sub>x</sub>)

10 kuš udu

40 kuš maš<sub>2</sub>-galki a-gal<sub>2</sub>-am-ar-ši-[ta]5- 50 kuš udu-a-lum(aslum<sub>x</sub>)

50 kuš udu

30 kuš maš<sub>2</sub>-gal**Rev.**ki tu-ra-am-i<sub>3</sub>-li<sub>2</sub>-[ta]gaba-ri kišb<sup>d</sup>amar.utu /10- ki-ag<sub>2</sub> u<sub>3</sub><sup>d</sup>Adad-ki-[tum]itu ab u<sub>4</sub>-5-at (*hamšat*)mu us<sub>2</sub>-sa nin.dingir<sup>d</sup>Lugal!-Ir<sub>2</sub>-ra ba-il<sub>2</sub>!**Translation:****Obv.**

- 30 sheep hide with their wool
  - 10 sheep hides
  - 40 mature goat hides (billy goat)
  - From Agalam-arshi
- 5- 50 sheep hide with their wool
- 50 sheep hides
- 30 mature goat hides (billy goat)

**Rev.:**

- From Turam-ili
- A copy sealed by Marduk-
  - 10- the Beloved (Beloved of the god Marduk) and Adad-kittum (the god Adad of Justice) "who sealed the copy of the contract"
- On the fifth day of the month of Abu
- year after the year the high priesyess of the god lugal-irra was elevated to office (It is the thirty-third year of the reign of Ishbi-Erra, King of Isin)

**General meaning:**

A quantity of fleeced sheep hides together with mature goat hides, from Agalam-arshi and Turam-ili respectively, the copy of which document was sealed by Marduk- rāmu and Adad-kittum. This text belongs to the thirty-third regnal year of King Ishbi-Erra.

Notes:

1. Kuš : A Sumerian term meaning 'hides' and its Akkadian equivalent is "Mašku" however it is also used as a determinative sign for hides. For more informations.<sup>8</sup> CAD, M1, p.376
2. a-lum(aslum<sub>x</sub>) : Sumerian term meaning ( long-fleeced, fat tail of sheep) and its Akkadian equivalent is "ālum".<sup>9</sup> Halloran, J.: Sumerian Lexicon a dictionary guide to ancient language , USA, 2006, p.4

3. gaba-ri : A Sumerian term meaning ‘sealed’ and its Akkadian equivalent is “*gabarû*” .<sup>10</sup>
4. <sup>d</sup>amar.utu ki-ag<sub>2</sub> Sumerian writing form to Babylonian personal name (<sup>d</sup>*marduk-râmu*). which meaninig “Beloved of the god Marduk”, I think this name is the first time appear from texts.
5. About year of date formulae.<sup>11</sup>

IM. 62890

Ob.



Rev.



IM. 62890



ob.



Rev.



## Endnote

١. عباس علي الحسيني : مملكة ايسن بين الارث السومري والسيادة الامورية، دمشق، ٢٠٠٤، ص٢٦
٢. آرام جلال حسن الهموندي: نصوص مسمارية غير منشورة من مدينة بيكاسي من العصر البابلي القديم، دمشق، ٢٠١٧ ، ص٢٥
٣. سامي سعيد الأحمد: " العصر البابلي القديم" في العراق في التاريخ، بغداد ، ١٩٨٣ ، ص٨
٤. سعدون عبدالهادي امير: الازمات السياسية الداخلية في العراق القديم ٣٠٠٠ - ٥٣٩ ق.م، رسالة ماجستير، جامعة واسط ، ٢٠٠٥ ، ص٥٦-٥٩
٥. طه باقر: المقدمة في تاريخ الحضارات القديمة ، بغداد، ١٩٨٥ ، ج ١ ، ص٤١٢
6. Van de Mieroop, Marc: Sumerian Administrative Documents from the Reigns of Išbi-Er-ra and Šu-ilišu, Yale University Press, 1987, BIN, Vol.10, p.1

٧. شذى بشار حسين محمد الصوفي : دباغة الجلود و صناعتها في بلاد الرافدين، رسالة ماجستير ، جامعة الموصل ، ٢٠٠٥ ، ص ص ٨٢ - ١٤٤
8. CAD, M1, p.376
9. Halloran, J.: Sumerian Lexicon a dictionary guide to ancient language , USA, 2006, p.4
١٠. علي ياسين الجبوري : قاموس اللغة السومرية -الأكديّة - العربية، ابوظبي، ٢٠١٦، ص ٣٩٥
11. Sigrist, M.: Isin Year Names, USA, 1988, p. 21

### Bibliography

1. *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago (CAD)*. Vol. 10 (M, part 1). Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1977.
2. Halloran, John A. *Sumerian Lexicon: A Dictionary Guide to the Ancient Sumerian Language*. Los Angeles: Logogram Publishing, 2006.
3. Sigrist, Marcel. *Isin Year Names*. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1988.
4. Van de Mierop, Marc. *Sumerian Administrative Documents from the Reigns of Išbi-Erra and Šu-ilišu*. Babylonian Inscriptions in the Collection of James B. Nies (BIN), vol. 10. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987.
٥. الأحمد، سامي سعيد. "العصر البابلي القديم." في *العراق في التاريخ*. بغداد: دار الحرية للطباعة، ١٩٨٣.
٦. باقر، طه. *المقدمة في تاريخ الحضارات القديمة*. ج.١. بغداد: دار الشؤون الثقافية العامة، ١٩٨٥.
٧. الجبوري، علي ياسين. *قاموس اللغة السومرية - الأكديّة - العربية*. أبوظبي: هيئة أبوظبي للسياحة والثقافة، ٢٠١٦.
٨. الحسيني، عباس علي. *مملكة ايسن بين الارث السومري والسيادة الامورية*. دمشق: دار صفحات للدراسات والنشر، ٢٠٠٤.
٩. الصوفي، شذى بشار حسين محمد. "دباغة الجلود وصناعتها في بلاد الرافدين." رسالة ماجستير غير منشورة، جامعة الموصل، ٢٠٠٥.
١٠. أمير، سعدون عبدالهادي. "الازمات السياسية الداخلية في العراق القديم ٣٠٠٠ - ٥٣٩ ق.م." رسالة ماجستير غير منشورة، جامعة واسط، ٢٠٠٥.
١١. الهموندي، آرام جلال حسن. *نصوص مسمارية غير منشورة من مدينة بيكاسي من العصر البابلي القديم*. دمشق: دار صفحات للدراسات والنشر، ٢٠١٧.