An introduction to Sumerian Cuneiforms

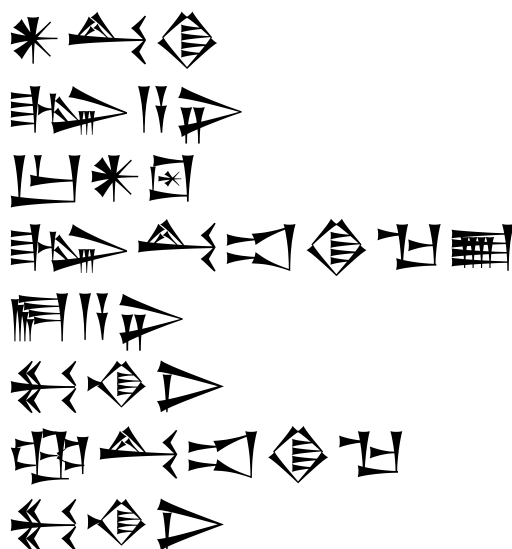Eduardo Costa   Marcus Santos   Sergio Teixeira

Chapter 1

Ur-Nammu-9

The Sumerian cuneiform script was the first writing system invented by humankind. Therefore, all educated individuals should learn this 5,000-year-old script. In this tutorial, we will learn how to read and reproduce the writing on the Ur-Nammu 9 Brick.

𒀭𒂗𒆤

𒀭𒌫𒈬𒌝

𒈗𒀀𒉌

𒈗𒌵𒆠𒈠𒄿𒀀𒆠

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𒂗𒆤

There are few grammar books for Sumerian. Unfortunately, Marie-Louise Thomsen's **"The Sumerian Language"** does not use cuneiform, so I cannot recommend it. This leaves us with John Hayes' Manual of Sumerian and Joshua Bowen's Learn to Read Ancient Sumerian. Therefore, I advise you to buy **"A Manual of Sumerian: Grammar and Texts"** by Hayes to learn this ancient language in depth. It is also a good idea to acquire **"Learn to Read Ancient Sumerian"** by Joshua Bowen and Megan Lewis.

1.1   Disclaimer

The authors of this book are not a scholars in Sumerian studies in any sense. Therefore, they may not help serious students of cuneiforms to solve their pendencies and questions.

For scholars and graduate students who are writing their thesis, the authors recommend John Hayes' **Manual of Sumerian** and Joshua Bowen's **Learn to Read Ancient Sumerian**. Hayes' manual strong points are inscriptions and dedicatories, while Bowen and Lewis prefer literary texts.

1.2   Sentence structure

To discuss grammar, scholars use a transliteration of Sumerian cuneiforms to the Latin alphabet. Below, you will find the transliteration of the Ur-Nammu-9 document that we will study in this lesson.

```
1- [NANNA
2-    LUGAL.ANI].{(R)} #dat            -- For his king
3- [UR-NAMMU                          -- Ur-Nammu,
4-    LUGAL.URIM5.{AK}].{E} #gen/erg   -- the king of UR,
5- [E2.ANI].{Ø}  #object              -- his temple
6- MU.NA.DU3 #verb                    -- he built
7- [BAD3.URIM5.{A(K)}].{Ø} #gen/obj   -- the city wall of Ur
8- MU.NA.DU3  #verb                   -- he built
```

1.3   Grammar functions in transliteration

In the transliteration, grammar functions are represented by indicators between braces. In the example, the grammar functions are:

1,2 The benefactive has an unwritten R, which is represented by `{(R)}`

3,4 The genitive ends in `{AK}` after consonant; the ergative ends in `{E}`

5 The object of the action has no ending, which is represented by `{Ø}`

7 The genitive has an unwritten K, which is represented by `{A(K)}`

8 The verbal chain 𒈬𒈾𒆕 (tr mu na du3) starts with the ventive prefix 𒈬, followed by a cross-reference 𒈾 (tr na) to the dative.

Square brackets delimit a noun chain, i.e., a noun followed by a sequence of limiting qualifiers that may contain adjectives, apositives and a genitive. Example: `[UR-NAMMU LUGAL.URIM5.{AK}].{E}` means

> `[Ur-Nammu, Ur's king].{task-doer}`

After the close square bracket, a braced symbol suffix indicates the function of the noun chain. For instance, `.{E}` shows that `[UR.NAMMU...].{E}` is the doer of the sentence's task. The `{(R)}` symbol shows that `[NANNA...].{(R)}` receives the benefits of the task: `[God Nanna].{benefactive}`.

The noun chain may contain a genitive, as was stated in the previous paragraph. If you don't know the role of a genitive, it is a grammar function that shows possession. In English, the Saxon genitive marks the possessor with apostrophe-s and comes before the noun: *Ur's king*. In Sumerian, the possessor follows the noun and is marked with `{AK}` after consonant and `{K}` after vowel: `{URIM5 MA}.{K}` is equivalent to *Ur's king*.

Braces represent the grammatical function endings. For instance, the ergative function-ending represents the doer of the task and is written as `{E}` `#erg`, where `#erg` is a comment that will be omitted in more advanced lessons. The person who receives the benefit of the action is called dative and is represented as `{RA}` `#dat`, where the `#dat` comment is usually omitted.

The empty ending of the object is commented as `{ }` `#obj` or simply as `{}` `#obj`. In the example, the objects are the constructions of king Ur-Nammu:

```
[E2 A NI].{ }             -- his temple
[[BAD3.URIM5].{A(K)}].{ }  -- the city wall of Ur
```

Unwritten endings are placed between parentheses, such as `{(R)}`.

1.4   Line 1 & 2

The Ur-Nammu 9 document is divided into eight lines.

^{d}nanna   lugal   a ni
(tr an nanna lugal a ni)
For the god Nanna, his master,

 (^{d}nanna) the god Nanna
 (lugal) king, master
 (a ni) his
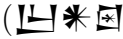
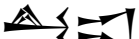In the first line, the text ✳️⛰️⟨⬧ is written, which is the Sumerogram for
the name of Nanna, the god of the Moon. The ✳️ symbol is read as `an` (or
`digir`) and is determinative for deity. We will learn in the next paragraph
that this word is in the dative case; therefore, the translation of the rectangle
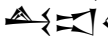is *"For Nanna."*

Sumerian uses symbols, called determinatives, to make the meaning clearer.
The star ✳️ in front of a god's name is the determinative of divinity. In
transliteration, the determinatives are represented as a superscript letter,
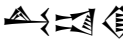such as ^{d}`nanna`.

The Emacs command (`tr an nanna lugal a ni`) is used to typeset
Sumerian. There are instructions about this command on the page where
you found this tutorial.

1.5   Line 3 & 4

The third line of the Ur-Nammu-9 document contains the name of Ur-Nammu
(⊔✳️⊡), the king who rebuilt the temple of ^{d}Nanna and is the document's
author. The king's name is formed by ⊔ (`ur`), which means *man* or *dog*,
and ✳️⊡ (^{d}`nanna`), the Mother Earth of the Sumerians. Therefore, the king's
name, ⊔✳️⊡, means *"The Man of Nammu."* Note that the determinative
of deity (✳️) precedes the goddess' name.

⊔✳️⊡	𒈗	⛰️⟨⬧	⊔	▦
ur-^{d}nammu	lugal	urim	ma	ke4

(`tr ur nammu lugal urim ma ke4`)
Ur-Nammu, the king of Ur,

⊔✳️⊡ (ur-^{d}nammu) King Ur-Nammu
𒈗 (lugal) king, master
⛰️⟨⬧ (urim^{ki}) the city of Ur
⬧ (ki) *determinative of places*
⊔ (ma(k)) *dative after the consonant "M"*
▦ (ke4) *contraction of dative with ergative*
⊔▦ (ma ke4) *genitive contracted with ergative*

The fourth line contains 𒈗⛰️⟨⬧⊔▦ (`tr lugal urim2 ma ke4`), where
⛰️⟨⬧ (`tr urim`) represents the city that was the cult center of Nanna.
It is formed by the Sumerograms (`tr shesh`) (⛰️⟨) and (`tr unug`) (⟨). The
Sumerogram ⬧ is the determinative for geographic names. Determinatives,

such as ✳ ("digir" - deity) and ⬦ ("ki" - place), are not pronounced. Their role is to make the meaning of the word clearer.

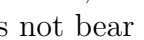The genitive case denotes possession. Unlike the dative, English has a genitive case, formed by an apostrophe followed by **"s."** In English, one would say, **"Urim's King."** In Sumerian, the genitive follows the possessor and is marked with `{ak}` after consonants and `{k}` after vowels. In this nominal chain, the "a" of `{ak}` was assimilated with the previous consonant, becoming ⌐⊔ (`ma`). The Sumerogram 𒆤 (`ke4`) represents the `{k}` of the genitive and the `{e}` of the ergative.

Sumerian is an ergative language, meaning the agent of transitive actions is marked. In Sumerian, the ergative marker is `{e}`. However, the subject of an intransitive verb, like "to go" or "to sleep," does not receive the `{e}` that marks the agent, whom linguists call ergative. Unmarked functions, such as the Sumerian subject of an intransitive verb and direct object of a transitive verb, are called absolute and said to be marked with the null symbol `{∅}`. In short, for the Sumerians and modern Basques, if the subject of a sentence does not perform a task, it cannot be called ergative.

1.6 Line 5

The fifth rectangle introduces the temple (e2 - 𒂍) that Ur-Nammu built. The expression 𒂍𒀀𒉌 (e2 ani) means "*his temple.*" It is in the absolutive case and, therefore, receives the null symbol mark `{∅}`, a technical way of saying it does not bear a mark. The noun chain 𒂍𒀀𒉌 (e2 ani) undergoes the consequences of the task performed. Thus, it is often called patient, accusative or target.

𒂍 　 𒀀 　 𒉌
e2　　a　　ni
(tr e2 a ni)
his temple

𒂍 (e2) house, temple
𒂍𒈨𒌍 (e2 me esh-pl) pl. houses, temples
𒀀𒉌 (a ni) his

1.7   Line 6

A verbal stem prefixed by a sequence of particles and possibly followed by a
suffix is called a *verbal chain.* The verbal chain 𒈬𒈾𒆕 (mu-na-du3) can
be translated as "*built.*"

mu	na	du3

```
(tr mu na du3)
```
he has built for the god

𒆕 (du3) to build, to make, to plant
𒈬 (mu) *conjugation prefix (CP), ventive prefix,* here
𒈾 (na) *cross-references the dative*

The verbal chain of the example has two prefixes and a stem:

𒈬 — Ventive Conjugation Prefix (CP). The Ventive CP indicates that the
action occurs here, close to the speaker.

𒈾 — Dimensional Prefix (DP) cross-referencing the dative. Sumerian has a
DP for each sentence component, except the ergative and the absolutive
cases.

𒆕 — verbal stem, *he has built*

1.8   Line 7 & 8

The noun phrase 𒂣𒌰𒈠 (tr bad3 urim ma) means "*wall of Ur.*"
The sumerogram 𒂣 (tr bad3) means "*city wall.*" The {(k)} of the genitive
is omitted, meaning it is not expressed because it was not pronounced at the
end of a nominal phrase.

bad3	urim		ma	mu	na	du3

```
(tr bad3 urim ma mu na du3)
```
the city wall of Ur, he has built

𒊏 (ra) ra, *dative ending*
𒈾 (na) *reference to dative*

1.9 Reading the brick

Let's read the whole brick inscription.

1. (tr an nanna) (𒀭 𒀭𒋀) – ***For the god Nanna...***

2. (tr lugal ani) (𒈗𒇽𒀀𒉌) – ***his master,*** // The word 'lugal' means king or master. It is formed from 'lu2,' (𒇽) which means 'man,' and 'gal,' (𒃲) which can be translated as 'great.' The expression 'a-ni' (𒀀𒉌) is equivalent to the possessive pronoun 'his.'

3. (tr ur-nammu) (𒌨𒀭𒅎) – ***Ur-Nammu,***

4. (tr lugal urim ki ma ke4) (𒈗𒌷𒆠𒈠𒆤) – ***the king of Ur,***

5. (tr e2 a ni) (𒂍𒀀𒉌) – ***his temple,*** // Remember that you already learned the meaning of 'a ni.'

6. (tr mu na du3) (𒈬𒈾𒆕) – ***he has built.***

7. (tr bad3 urim ma) (𒂦𒌷𒈠) – ***The wall of Ur,***

8. (tr mu na du3) (𒈬𒈾𒆕) – ***he built for Nanna.***

1.10 Translation

The meaning of the whole document is something like this: ***"For the god Nanna, his Master, Ur-Nammu, the King of Ur, built his temple. The king also built the city walls of Ur for Nanna."***

1.11 The method

I will use the method I employed in this first chapter to introduce a few other documents. In other words, each chapter will contain grammar, vocabulary, syllables, and essential Sumerograms for reading a Sumerian document. This methodology ensures you can handle a manageable amount of information initially.

After discussing how to read a Sumerian inscription, each chapter contains an in-depth presentation of the Sumerian grammar. Initially, you can do without reading this final grammar section. You can return to it after practicing Sumerian with a few inscriptions.

1.12   APPENDIX: Grammar notes

Congratulations. You have finished the first lesson. This appendix gives further details about the case elements, the noun chain and the verbal chain. If you don't feel like it, you don't need to read it now. You can return to this lesson after completing a few Sumerian documents.

Case elements

The subject of a sentence is the topic of the conversation. Besides the subject, the sentence may have other marked components called case elements. Case elements may have references in the verbal chain. The leading case elements with their marks and references are:

Ergative: 𒂊 {e} task doer

𒈗𒂊 𒂦 𒌷𒈠𒈬𒈾𒁺

(tr lugal e bad3 urim ma mu na du3)
The king built the city wall of Ur.

Dative: 𒊏 {ra}/ 𒈾 (-na-) for

� 𒊏𒈗 𒂊 𒂦 𒌷𒈠𒈬𒈾𒁺

(tr nin a ni ra lugal e bad3 urim ma mu na du3)
The king built the wall of Ur for his lady.

Locative: 𒀀 {a} /𒉌 (-ni-) in, on

𒈗𒂊 𒌷𒀀𒂍𒈬𒉌𒁺

(tr lugal e uru a e2 mu ni du3)
The king built a house in the city.

Terminative: 𒂠 {še}/�施 (-ši-) in order to

𒂊𒌷𒈬𒊺𒂠𒂵�施𒁺

(tr ĝe26 e uru ĝu10-my she-goal ga shi ĝen)
I will go there to my city.

Ablative: 𒋫 {ta}/ 𒋫 (-ta-) or 𒊏 (-ra-) out of

𒌷𒋫𒁀𒋫𒁺

(cn uru ta ba ta ĝen)
He went out from the city.

Comitative: 𒁕 {da} / 𒁕 (-da-) with

𒈗𒂊𒌉𒀀𒉌𒁕𒂍𒈬𒌦𒁕𒆕

(tr lugal e dumu a ni da e2 mu un da du3)
The king built the house with his son.

Equitative: � {gin} / 𒁶 (-gin-) like, as

𒀀𒁀��net𒁶

(tr a ba shesh ĝu10-my gin-equitative)
Who is like my brother?

Absolutive: ∅

�𒈗𒂊𒁀𒆕𒈬𒈾𒆕

(tr nin a ni ra lugal e bad3 mu na du3)
For his lady, the king has built the city wall.

Dative conjugation

When used as a prefix to a verb, the dative takes different forms depending on the person and number it is referring to.

𒈠 (-ma-) to me

𒂷𒊏𒈗𒂊𒂍𒈬𒈠𒆕

(tr ĝe26 ra lugal e e2 mu ma du3)
The king built a house for me.

𒊏 (-ra-) to you

𒍢𒊏𒈗𒂊𒂍𒈬𒊏𒆕

(tr ze2 ra lugal e e2 mu ra du3)
The king has built a house for you.

𒆤 (-na-) to him/to her

𒎏𒊏𒇽𒂍𒂍𒈬𒈾𒆕
(tr nin ra lugal e e2 mu na du3)
The king has built a house for the lady.

𒈨 (-me-) to us

𒇽𒂍𒂍𒈬𒈨𒆕
(tr lugal e e2 mu me du3)
The king has built a house for us.

𒉈 (-ne-) to them

𒇽𒂍𒂍𒈬𒉈𒆕
(tr lugal e e2 mu ne du3)
The king has built a house for tem.

Transitive verbs

A transitive verb describes an action that transitions from a subject to a direct object. In a transitive verb, the subject is the doer of the action and is called ergative, which is the Greek term for the person who performs a task. In Sumerian, the ergative is marked with 𒂍 {e}.

The absolutive case is the entity that undergoes the consequences of a task. The absolutive case can be the person accused of a deed. In this case, it is called accusative.

The absolutive case can also be a target of a shooting. Or it can be the object of health care, in which case it is called patient by the doctors.

Some linguists call *patient* all kinds of absolutive cases of a transitive verb, while others prefer the term accusative. In Sumerian, the absolutive case receives no mark, but the linguists say it is marked by the null symbol {∅}.

The transitive verb itself comes last in a Sumerian sentence, and is described by a chain of affixes surrounding the stem. This verbal chain may contain a Modal Prefix (MP, such as 𒉡 • nu • not), a Conjugation Prefix (CP, such as 𒈬 • mu • *ventive*, here), initial pronominal prefix (IPP, such as N in 𒈬𒂗𒁳𒂍 • mu-n.dab.e • he seizes her) and suffix pronouns (𒂗𒉈𒂗 • en-de3-en • us, 𒂗�ce2𒂗 • un-ze2-en • you people). Below, there are examples of all initial pronominal prefixes.

Initial Pronominal Prefixes (IPP)

In the verbal chain, the Initial Pronominal Prefixes (IPP) come after the Conjugation Prefix (CP) that is 𒈬 (-mu-) in the examples below. The 𒈬 (-mu-) prefix is the ventive, i.e., it shows that the action is performed towards the speaker. English uses different verbs for the *andative* (motion away from the speaker) and the *ventive* (motion towards the speaker): *to take away / to bring*, *to go / to come*, etc. Sumerian gets the same effect by adding the *ventive* Conjugation Prefix (CP) to the verbal chain.

𒈬𒁖𒂆 **(mu'dab.e)**

He seizes me.

𒈬𒂊𒁖𒂆 **(mu e dab e)**

He seizes you.

𒈬𒌦𒁖𒂆 **(mu un dab e)**

He seizes her.

𒈬𒈨𒁖𒂆 **(mu me dab e)**

He seizes us.

𒈬𒌦𒉈𒁖𒂆 **(mu un ne dab e)**

He seizes them.

I have for you a complete example of a transitive sentence below. I provide a pronunciation key and vocabulary, so I hope you can scan the sentence.

𒊩𒊏𒇽𒂊𒊺𒌷𒀀𒈬𒈾𒀊�𒂆
(tr munus ra lu2 e she uru a mu na ab shum2 e)

𒊩𒊏	𒇽𒂊	𒊺	𒌷𒀀	𒈬𒈾𒀊�𒂆
munus ra	lu2 e	she	uru a	mu na ab shum2 e
for the woman	the man	barley	in the city	he gave it to her

The translation of the sentence is: *The man gave barley to the woman in the city.* The person who receives the barley is marked with the dative 𒊏 {ra}; the doer of the action has the ergative marker 𒂊 {e}, and the place of the occurrence has the locative marker 𒀀 {a}.

𒊩 • (munus) woman, female

𒊏 • (ra) *dative marker*

𒇽 • (lu2) man, male

𒂊 • (e) *ergative marker*

𒊺 • (še) barley, grain

�delta • (uru) city

𒀀 • (a) *locative marker*

𒈬 • (mu) *venitive conjugation prefix*, here

𒈾 • (na) *cross-reference to the dative*, to her

𒀊 • (ab) *Initial Prefix Pronoun*, it

𒋳 • (shum2) to give

Intransitive verb

An intransitive verb does not have a direct object. In Sumerian, the subject of an intransitive verb goes to the absolute case and, therefore, is not marked.

(tr lu2 uru ĝu10-my she-goal i3 im ĝen)

lu2	uru ĝu10 she-goal	i3 im	ĝen
the king	to my city	*finite verb prefix*	came

The translation of the above example is: *The king came to my city.* You find the vocabulary necessary to scan this example below.

𒈗 • (lugal) king

𒄿𒅎 • (im) *finite verb marker*

𒁺 • (ĝen) to come

𒂠 • (še3) to, towards

𒌷 • (uru) city

𒌷𒈬 • (uru.ĝu10) my city

𒌷𒈬𒂠 • (uru ĝu10 she-goal) to my city

Modal Prefix (MP)

The modal prefixes express modality, i.e., relationships to reality or truth. You can only learn the indicative and negation modal prefixes for now. You may learn the other prefixes when you encounter them in Sumerian documents.

Indicative: (∅-)

In Sumerian, the indicative is unmarked. The empty prefix /∅-/ may represent this fact in transliteration. However, people rarely show unmarked prefixes.

Negation: 𒉡 /nu-/

𒉡𒂗𒅥
(tr nu un gu7)
He didn't eat it.

Let him: 𒆠𒄭 **hhe2-**

𒆠𒄭 𒄫 𒅥𒂊

(tr hhe2 ib gu7 e)
Let him eat it.

Indeed: 𒄩 **hha-**

𒄩 𒀭 𒅥

(tr hha an gu7)
He ate it, indeed.

Cohortative: 𒂵 **ga-**

𒂵 𒉌 𒄫 𒈔 𒊑 𒂗 𒉈 𒂗

(tr ga i3 ib2 ĝar re en ne en)
Let us put it there.

Prohibitive: 𒈾 **na-**

𒈾 𒀊 𒅥𒂊

(tr na ab gu7 e)
He must not eat it.

Conjugation Prefix (CP)

The main Conjugation Prefixes (CP) are `/mu-/` to indicate that the action occurs here, `/bi2-/` in front of open vowels such as `/i/`, `/ba/` to form middle/passive voice, `/i3/` to create a finite verbal tense, and `/ma/` in combination with `/ra/` of benefit. Below, you will find a fairly complete list of Conjugation Prefixes, but you need to learn only `/mu-/` and `/i3/` for this first lesson.

1. Here: 𒈬 - 𒌦𒊑

(tr mu un re6)
He brought it here.

2. Followed by open vowel: 𒔓 - 𒊺𒊑

(tr bi2 in re6)
He made the team bring it.

3. Followed by ra: 𒈠 - 𒊏𒀭𒊑

(tr ma ra an re6)
He brought it here to you.

4. Finite verb: 𒉌 - 𒅎𒊑

(tr i3 im ĝen)
He came here.

5. Middle voice: 𒁀 - 𒀭𒊑

(tr ba an re6)
He took it for himself.
Obs. The middle voice with /ba/ indicates an action that affects the doer.

6. Passive voice: 𒁀 - 𒊑

(tr ba re6)
It was brought.

Nominal chain

In Sumerian, most adjectives are formed from verbs by adding the suffix 𒀀 {a}. For example, the verb below means to be strong.

𒆗 • (kalag) to be strong

To form an adjective from kalag, one adds an {a}. In Sumerian, different from English, the adjectives follow the noun.

The expression below means *mighty king.* Note that the adjective follows
the verb, and the 𒀀 marker contracts with the previous consonant to form
the 𒂵 (ga) syllable.

𒈗 𒆗 𒂵

(tr lugal kalag ga)
a mighty king

In English, the Saxon genitive is marked with S and precedes the verb.
Therefore, one writes "*Elil's Warrior.*" In Sumerian, the genitive is marked
with {k} after a vowel and {ak} after a consonant. Like the adjective, the
genitive follows the noun. The {k} of the genitive was rarely written except
when combined with the ergative. In this case, it was written as 𒆤 {ke4}.

Below, there is another example of the adjective 𒀀 {a} marker contracting
with the previous consonant to form an open syllable.

𒂍 𒈗 𒆷

(tr e2 lugal la)
the king's house

Now, let us examine a somewhat longer example of a noun chain.

𒂼 𒀀 𒉌 𒀭
𒌉 𒈗 𒆷 𒆤
𒂍
𒈬 𒈾 𒆕
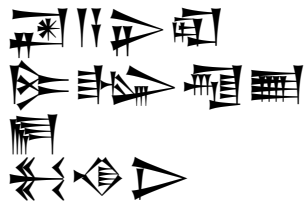
(tr ama a ni ra) for his mother,
(tr dumu lugal la ke4) by the king's son
(tr e2) a house
(tr mu na du3) was built for her

Chapter 2

Inscription in Inanna's temple
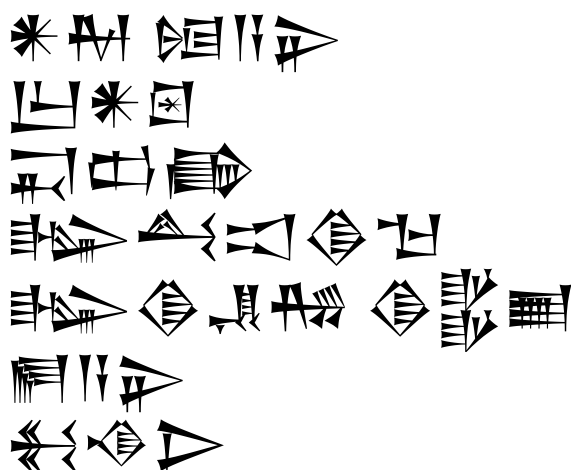
Translation: ***For Inanna, his lady, Ur-Nammu, the mighty man, the king of Ur, the king of Sumer and Akad, built her temple.***

2.1   Sentence structure

```
1- [inanna nin a ni].{(r)}        -- For Inanna, his Lady,
2- [ur-nammu                      -- Ur-Nammu,
3-   [nita kalag].{a}             -- the mighty man,
4-   [lugal urim ma].{(k)}        -- the king of Ur,
5-   [lugal ki-en-gi ki uri].{k}].{e} -- the king of Sumer and Akkad,
6- [e2 a ni].{}                   -- her (Inanna's) temple
7- mu na du3                      -- built.
```

From now on, the sentence structure will not contain the comments .{k} #gen for the genitive, .{r} #dat for the dative or .{e} #erg for the

ergative (doer of the task). The suffixes `.{r}` for the dative, `.{k}` for the genitive and `.{e}` for the ergative should suffice for showing the grammatical function of the noun chain and its components. However, functional suffixes you didn't learn in the previous lessons will be commented on.

2.2 Annotations

𒀭𒈹 𒌋𒈫 𒀀𒉌

𒀭 𒈹 𒌋𒈫 𒀀𒉌

an   inanna   nin   a ni

(tr an inanna nin a ni)

For Inanna, his lady,

𒀭𒈹 • (dinana) Inanna

𒌋𒈫 • (nin) lady, queen, mistress

𒀀𒉌 • (a ni) his, her

This noun phrase ends in an unwritten `{(r)}`, the dative marker. However, there is no ambiguity since the verb chain has a dative reference.

𒌨𒀭𒉺 �-𒆗 𒂵

𒌨𒀭𒉺 � 𒆗 𒂵

ur-nammu   nita   kalag   ga

(tr ur-nammu nita kalag ga)

Ur-Nammu, the mighty man,

� • (nita) man, male

𒆗 • (kalag) to be strong, to be mighty

𒆗 𒂵 • (kalag ga) *adj. from verb*, mighty

One may form adjectives by adding a nominalizing `{a}`-particle to a verbal root, *kalag* in the present expression. The nominalizing particle contracts with the preceding word's final `g`, giving extra information about its correct reading. Different from English, Sumerian adjectives follow the noun they modify.

𒈗 𒋀𒀕𒆠 𒈠
lugal   urim   ma

(tr lugal urim ma)

the king of Ur,

As we learned from text 1, the genitive is formed by `{k}` after vowels and `{ak}` after consonants. The scribe often omitted the `{(k)}` of `{ak}`. The "*m*" of "*ma*" is contamination from the final consonant of the previous word.

𒈗 𒆠𒂗𒄀 𒆠 𒌵 𒆤
lugal   ki-en-gi   ki uri   ke4

(tr lugal ki-en-gi ki uri ke4)

the king of Sumer and Akkad,

𒆠𒂗𒄀 • (ki-en-gi) Sumer
𒆠𒌵 • (ki-uri) Akkad

In ke4 (𒆤), the `{k}` is the genitive marker, and the `{e}` is the ergative marker. You already saw the analysis of the last two lines in lesson 1, therefore they should pose no difficulty to you.

𒂍𒀀𒉌

𒂍 𒀀 𒉌
e2   a   ni

(tr e2 a ni)

his temple

𒂍 (e2) house, temple
𒂍𒈨𒌍 (e2 me esh-pl) houses, temples
𒀀𒉌 (a ni) his

𒈬𒈾𒆕

mu	na	du3

(tr mu na du3)

he has built for the god

𒆕 (du3) to build, to make, to plant

𒈬 (mu) *conjugation prefix (CP), ventive prefix,* here

𒈾 (na) *cross-references the dative*