

Aids and  
Research  
Tools in  
Ancient  
Near  
Eastern  
Studies

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JOHN L. HAYES

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*A MANUAL OF SUMERIAN GRAMMAR  
AND TEXTS*



UNDENA

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Malibu

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***Editor: Giorgio Buccellati***

This is an introductory pedagogical grammar, designed for readers with no previous knowledge of Sumerian or its writing system, to be used either with or without a teacher. It includes a general description of the language and its writing system, and a series of 22 lessons. Each lesson includes: sign-list and vocabulary; cuneiform text(s); transliteration, transcription, and translation; linguistic commentary. The texts used are royal inscriptions of the Ur III period, presented in photograph or autograph. A certain amount of historical, archaeological, and cultural background is also included. While primarily meant for students of Mesopotamia who already are familiar with Akkadian, it is also designed for students of West-Semitic, who may know no Akkadian. For this latter audience, emphasis has been placed on transliteration and transcription, to enable the Manual to be used without learning the cuneiform signs.

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Library of Congress Card Catalog Number: 89-51971

ISBN 0-89003-198-3 (cloth) / 0-89003-197-5 (paper)

Issued under the auspices of IIMAS—The International Institute for Mesopotamian Area Studies

**UNDENA PUBLICATIONS, P.O. BOX 79, MALIBU, CALIFORNIA 90265**

## PREFACE

Anyone who has ever tried to learn or to teach Sumerian faces a difficult task. First of all, knowledge of Sumerian is still at an imperfect stage, with fundamental questions yet to be resolved. Second, there is a lack of both scholarly and pedagogical tools. Although a recent descriptive grammar exists, there is no up-to-date sign list or dictionary, and there is no text-book of any kind. This situation makes it difficult for both student and teacher, and makes it virtually impossible for someone to learn Sumerian without a teacher.

The aim of this book is to help alleviate this situation. It is a textbook of the Sumerian language, based on the royal inscriptions of the Ur III period. It is self-contained, so that it will be of use to students with or without a teacher. It includes a general description of the Sumerian language and its writing system, and then a series of graduated lessons. Each lesson contains: sign-list and vocabulary; notes on selected vocabulary; text(s) in cuneiform, either photograph or autograph; transliteration, transcription, and translation; line-by-line commentary on the text. Each lesson concludes with discussions, arranged thematically, of grammatical issues raised by the text, and of the meaning, function, and historical context of the text. Later lessons also include supplementary texts for review and practice, with no new vocabulary or grammar. In each lesson the grammar has generally been presented inductively from the texts. Finally, there are several appendices, some treating more general topics, and some serving as reference; the last of these is an index to grammatical (and other) points.

This book has been designed for a one-semester, three-hour per week class. It can serve as an introduction to the language for students who will not pursue their study of Sumerian any further, but it will also prepare students for more advanced work.

Two possible audiences are envisaged. The first is composed of those students who are comfortable in Akkadian, and who wish to learn Sumerian principally because of their interest in Mesopotamia. The second is composed of those students who are more comfortable in West-Semitic, and who wish to learn Sumerian principally because of their interest in Ebla. The latter audience will either not have studied Akkadian at all, or will have studied it at some time in the distant past, and may have forgotten much. A certain amount of material for this latter audience is included which will already be known to those who are familiar with Akkadian. Throughout, a knowledge of basic linguistic terms and concepts has been assumed. Since the learning of cuneiform signs often seems like an onerous chore for those students primarily interested in West-Semitic, the book has been designed with sufficient emphasis on transliteration and transcription to allow it to be used without learning the signs.

This book is based on the language of the royal inscriptions of the Ur III period. It is thus a grammar solely of the written form of the language. It attempts to be purely synchronic, avoiding a mixture of synchronic and diachronic levels. At the same time, areas of disagreement about the language are pointed out. Some stress has been placed on the methodological principles involved in studying a language like Sumerian. Since many of the problems in understanding Sumerian phonology, morphology, and even syntax are

rooted in difficulties with the script, a certain emphasis has been placed on the nature of the Sumerian writing system.

In order to give an idea of the context in which the texts are rooted, some archaeological, historical, and cultural information is included. Similarly, typological observations about the Sumerian language have been pointed out, to show that there are other languages which work in ways similar to Sumerian.

Because of the limited subject-matter of the texts which are used here, not all features of the language are encountered. Some of these features are touched upon in Lesson 23, where some alternative views of Sumerian grammar are sketched. Appendix 5 discusses the ways by which students, including those working alone, can deepen their understanding of Sumerian. This book will be followed by a second volume, consisting of heavily annotated extracts from Inanna's Descent. The reading of a major literary text will introduce students to a number of problems not encountered in reading the rather stereotyped texts used in this book.

Appendix 4 is a basic bibliography of the most important and interesting books and articles on Sumerian. In order for students to become acquainted with the names of some of the scholars in the field, a number of modern-day Assyriologists and Sumerologists are quoted throughout the book; all works so quoted are listed in Appendix 4.

The genesis of this book goes back to my teaching of Sumerian at the University of California at Los Angeles. It is a pleasure to thank those who have helped out along the way. Thorkild Jacobsen was my first teacher of Sumerian; his influence can easily be seen throughout the book. Sara Denning-Bolle graciously drew the cuneiform signs used in the sign-lists and those scattered throughout the book; I am especially grateful to her. Barbara De Marco made a number of useful stylistic observations, and helped in the overall structure. Several individuals read earlier gestations; I would especially like to thank Daniel Foxvog, Samuel Greengus, and Stephen Lieberman. Other individuals read certain sections; I thank Denise Schmandt-Besserat and Russell Schuh. James Platt, who studied from this book, made a number of suggestions. Christopher Walker helped me attain access to a number of photos from the British Museum. Giorgio Buccellati helped in many ways, from the initial conception to the final product. And, I would like to thank the staff at Undena Publications, especially Frank Comparato and Patricia Oliansky. Faults remaining are my own; I would be very grateful to hear from readers with suggestions for revisions.

I would like to dedicate this book to my mother, for her support and encouragement over all the years.

## CONTENTS

PREFACE . . . . .	i
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### INTRODUCTION

Importance of Sumerian . . . . .	1
Difficulties in studying Sumerian . . . . .	1
Historical background and texts used . . . . .	2

### PART ONE: THE SUMERIAN LANGUAGE

CLASSIFICATION . . . . .	5
Linguistic affiliation . . . . .	5
Dialects . . . . .	5
Typological characteristics . . . . .	7
Ergativity . . . . .	7
Agglutination . . . . .	10

WRITING SYSTEM . . . . .	11
External characteristics . . . . .	11
Original nature . . . . .	12
Internal principles . . . . .	13
Transliteration . . . . .	14
Transcription . . . . .	16

PHONOLOGY . . . . .	18
Problems . . . . .	18
Vowels . . . . .	19
Consonants . . . . .	20
Other features . . . . .	23

### PART TWO: LESSONS IN SUMERIAN GRAMMAR

Lesson 1 . . . . .	25
Lesson 2 . . . . .	47
Lesson 3 . . . . .	57
Lesson 4 . . . . .	65
Lesson 5 . . . . .	73

Lesson 6 . . . . .	79
Lesson 7 . . . . .	85
Lesson 8 . . . . .	95
Lesson 9 . . . . .	101
Lesson 10 . . . . .	109
Lesson 11 . . . . .	117
Lesson 12 . . . . .	129
Lesson 13 . . . . .	147
Lesson 14 . . . . .	157
Lesson 15 . . . . .	165
Lesson 16 . . . . .	181
Lesson 17 . . . . .	191
Lesson 18 . . . . .	205
Lesson 19 . . . . .	211
Lesson 20 . . . . .	223
Lesson 21 . . . . .	231
Lesson 22 . . . . .	245
Lesson 23 . . . . .	257

### PART THREE: APPENDICES

Appendix 1: History . . . . .	265
Appendix 2: Mesopotamian sources . . . . .	273
Appendix 3: Glossary . . . . .	283
Appendix 4: Bibliography . . . . .	291
Abbreviations . . . . .	291
Works cited . . . . .	291
Concordance of texts . . . . .	299
Appendix 5: Further work . . . . .	305
Appendix 6: Topical index . . . . .	309

## TEXTS and ILLUSTRATIONS

Text 1:	brick of Ur-Nammu — autograph . . . . .	29
Text 2:	brick of Ur-Nammu — photograph . . . . .	47
Text 2:	brick of Ur-Nammu — autograph . . . . .	49
Text 3a:	brick of Ur-Nammu — photograph . . . . .	57
Text 3a:	brick of Ur-Nammu — autograph . . . . .	59
Text 3b:	brick of Ur-Nammu — autograph . . . . .	60
Text 3c:	brick of Ur-Nammu — autograph . . . . .	63
Text 4:	votive bowl of Ur-Nammu — autograph . . . . .	66
Text 4a:	brick of Ur-Nammu — autograph . . . . .	72
Text 5:	cone of Ur-Nammu — autograph . . . . .	75
Text 6:	brick of Ur-Nammu — autograph . . . . .	81
Text 7a:	foundation tablet of Ur-Nammu — photograph . . . . .	86
Text 7b:	brick of Ur-Nammu — autograph . . . . .	87
Text 7c:	brick of Ur-Nammu — autograph . . . . .	93
Text 8:	door socket of Ur-Nammu — autograph . . . . .	96
Text 8a:	brick of Ur-Nammu — autograph . . . . .	99
Text 9:	brick of Ur-Nammu — autograph . . . . .	102
Text 10:	weight of Shulgi — autograph . . . . .	110
Text 10a:	brick of Ur-Nammu — autograph . . . . .	116
Text 11:	wig of Shulgi — autograph . . . . .	120
Text 11a:	brick of Ur-Nammu — photograph . . . . .	128
Text 12:	vase of Ur-Nammu — autograph . . . . .	131
Text 12a:	door socket of Shulgi — autograph . . . . .	144
Text 13a:	brick of Amar-Sin — autograph . . . . .	149
Text 13b:	brick of Amar-Sin — autograph . . . . .	150
Text 13c:	brick of Amar-Sin — autograph . . . . .	155
Text 14:	brick of Amar-Sin — autograph . . . . .	159
Text 14a:	cone of Ur-Nammu — autograph . . . . .	164
Text 15:	pedestal of Amar-Sin — autograph . . . . .	167-168
Text 16:	door socket of Amar-Sin — autograph . . . . .	183
Text 16a:	bead of Shulgi — autograph . . . . .	189
Text 17:	door socket of Amar-Sin — photograph . . . . .	191
Text 17:	door socket of Amar-Sin — autograph . . . . .	194
Text 18:	door socket of Shu-Sin — autograph . . . . .	206
Text 18a:	bead of Shulgi — autograph . . . . .	210
Text 19:	door socket of Shu-Sin — autograph . . . . .	214
Text 19a:	amulet of Amar-Sin — autograph . . . . .	221
Text 20:	brick of Shu-Sin — autograph . . . . .	226
Text 21a:	weight of Shu-Sin — photograph . . . . .	231
Text 21b:	seal of Ibbi-Sin — autograph . . . . .	234

Text 21c: seal of Ibbi-Sin — autograph . . . . .	241
Text 21d: weight of Shulgi — photograph and autograph . . . . .	243
Text 22: seal of Shulgi — photograph . . . . .	245
Text 22: seal of Shulgi — autograph . . . . .	249
Text 22a: seal of Ur-Nammu — photograph and autograph . . . . .	255
reconstruction of ziggurat of Ur-Nammu . . . . .	42
remains of ziggurat of Ur-Nammu . . . . .	42
Stela of Ur-Nammu . . . . .	43
Old Akkadian brick-stamps . . . . .	53
figurine of Ur-Nammu . . . . .	92
reconstruction of ziggurat of Nabonidus . . . . .	107
duck weight . . . . .	112
door socket of Inanna Temple . . . . .	145
Neo-Babylonian pedestalal . . . . .	179
Old Akkadian seal . . . . .	236

## INTRODUCTION

### **Importance of Sumerian**

For students of Mesopotamia, the need to study Sumerian is obvious. Alongside Akkadian, Sumerian is of prime importance for reconstructing many aspects of Mesopotamian history and culture. However, a knowledge of Sumerian is also useful for those students primarily interested in Semitic linguistics, and for those interested in biblical studies.

For Semitists, Sumerian is of importance because of its pervasive influence upon Akkadian – influence upon the phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexicon. Only through a knowledge of Sumerian can one differentiate between features of Akkadian which are a product of its Semitic ancestry, and those which have arisen secondarily under the influence of Sumerian.

Even though Eblaite has only been known for a short while, it is clear that its study will have a profound effect on Semitic linguistics. However, the majority of the texts found at Ebla are written in pure Sumerian, not in Eblaite. The remaining texts, although written in the Eblaite language, are couched in a Sumerian writing system which obscures many of the actual Eblaite forms. This means that a knowledge of Sumerian, especially a thorough understanding of the principles underlying the Sumerian writing system, is of importance for research in Eblaite.

### **Difficulties in studying Sumerian**

Sumerian is not as well understood as is Akkadian; a number of features in the morphology and in the syntax are not clear. Although there has been considerable linguistic progress in the last two decades, enough still remains unsure so that scholars often have widely divergent views about Sumerian. Some of the reasons for these difficulties are summarized here; they will be discussed in more detail in the course of this book.

(1) Sumerian is not genetically related to any other known language, living or dead. By contrast, it was discovered early-on that Akkadian was a Semitic language. This genetic relationship aided early scholars in their reconstruction of Akkadian grammar and vocabulary. But in the case of Sumerian, there is no such help available.

(2) The writing system of Sumerian only imperfectly mirrors the spoken language; it does not indicate all the grammatical features which are known to have existed in the spoken language. This schematic nature of the script makes it very difficult to reconstruct the morphology.

(3) There are many instances of sentences which seem to differ only slightly in their morphology or syntax. But with no comparative evidence, and with no native speakers to turn to, it is difficult to determine what these differences in morphology and syntax may mean. There are undoubtedly many nuances of meaning which cannot be determined at all.

It has been remarked by Igor Diakonoff, “It is a joke well known among

Assyriologists that there are as many Sumerian languages as there are Sumerologists” (1976:99). Similarly, Thorkild Jacobsen has recently said:

Knowledge of Sumerian is still in a rudimentary, experimental stage where scholars differ on essential points, so that translations, even by highly competent scholars, may diverge so much that one would never guess that they rendered the same text. ... Scholars have not yet been able to agree on basic grammar and its restraints (1987:xv).

In certain ways, however, it is actually easier to study Sumerian than it is to study, for example, Akkadian. This is because Sumerian does not have (at least, there is not visible) a great deal of “morphology”; there are not a large number of grammatical forms to learn. There is nothing like the weak-verb systems of Akkadian and Hebrew, which require a great deal of sheer memorization. Rather, many students find the difficulties to be more conceptual in nature: the language works in ways different than English, or other languages which students are likely to have been exposed to. It is sometimes difficult to understand some of these principles, and even more difficult to observe these principles in action.

### **Historical background and texts used**

The texts utilized here are all royal inscriptions of the Ur III Dynasty (approximately 2112–2004 BC), sometimes referred to as the Neo-Sumerian Dynasty. It grew out of the vacuum left by the collapse of the Dynasty of Akkad, which had been ruled by Akkadian-speaking kings of Semitic stock (approximately 2334–2193 BC).

The Ur III Dynasty was founded by Ur-Nammu, who ruled in the city of Ur from about 2112 to 2095. He had previously been governor of Ur under the suzerainty of the king of Uruk, Utu-Hengal; he may have been a relative of the latter. At some point he declared himself independent. During his rule, and especially during the rule of his son Shulgi, the territory controlled by Ur expanded, until it reached most of the area previously controlled by the rulers of Akkad, that is, most of central and southern Mesopotamia. After three more descendants of Ur-Nammu, the dynasty collapsed in 2004, partially due to pressures from the intrusion of nomadic, Semitic-speaking tribes. Thus, the Ur III period lasted a little more than a century; with the fall of Ur, Sumerian civilization, for all intents and purposes, also fell.

Ur III was a period of relative calm and stability in much of Mesopotamia. Because of the blooming of Sumerian art and literature, which had been somewhat submerged under the Semitic dynasty of Akkad, this period is often called the “Sumerian Renaissance”. Towns were fortified, many temples were rebuilt, and canals were dredged; trade with various foreign countries flourished.

The city of Ur itself, the capital of the Ur III Dynasty, was primarily excavated by Sir Leonard Woolley, perhaps the most famous of all Near Eastern archaeologists. The principal results were published by him and others in a series entitled Ur Excavations. Ten volumes have appeared: Volume I in 1929, and Volume VII in 1976 (Volume X appeared in 1951). Woolley popularized his results in a one-volume work entitled Ur of the

Chaldees (1929). After Woolley's death, P.R.S. Moorey revised and updated the work; it appeared as Ur 'of the Chaldees' (1982). This is a readable and interesting description of the city at different historical periods.

Many Ur III texts have been preserved. The vast majority are economic and administrative; these number in the tens of thousands. Unfortunately, there are very few texts of what might be called a "historical" nature. There is much that is not known about such matters as Ur-Nammu's rise to power, the internal politics of the Ur III Dynasty, or even the physical extent of the Ur III "Empire"; C. J. Gadd refers to the "tantalizing want of information due to the singular unwillingness of the age to record even the triumphs, much less the failures, of its kings" (1971:617).

Some original literary texts are also preserved from this period, as well as older works now committed to writing. Jacobsen says that the kings of Ur III, especially Shulgi,

were much concerned to preserve extant older literary works and to encourage the creation of new ones. The court background of these works is unmistakable. ... A major portion of Sumerian Literature as we have it traces back to the court of the kings of the Third Dynasty of Ur, where it was composed and performed by the royal bards (1987:xii, 277).

The royal inscriptions of the Ur III kings have been the object of study by W. W. Hallo. According to Hallo's definition, royal inscriptions are texts which "were dedicated either by, or to, or on behalf of the king" (1962:1). Hallo catalogued these texts, providing a standard system of reference. He also studied the different sub-types of royal inscriptions, categorizing them according to their function and according to their form.

These texts range in difficulty, from quite simple to very complex. They also contain a high degree of formulaity; many of the epithets of the king, for example, occur in a large number of the inscriptions. Even the phrasing of the verbal expressions is rather fixed. Since the genre of royal inscriptions existed both before and after the time of Ur III (in Sumerian and in Akkadian), a knowledge of the Ur III texts gives immediate access to other similar texts.

There has been much recent discussion about when Sumerian ceased to be a spoken language. This is not an easy question to answer; there are both historical issues and issues of general linguistics to resolve. (The subject is further discussed in Appendix 1.) Most Sumerologists would say that Sumerian was a living spoken language in Sumer during the Ur III period, although some would say that it was already starting to die out during the latter part of this period. A minority would say that spoken Sumerian was either pretty far on its road to extinction, or might even have ceased to be a spoken language by the end of the Ur III period. Even the proponents of this view, however, would admit that the language of the Ur III royal inscriptions is "good" Sumerian, unlike some Sumerian of later periods.



## PART ONE: THE SUMERIAN LANGUAGE

### CLASSIFICATION

#### Linguistic affiliation

Sumerian appears to be what is called a language-isolate, that is, it has no genetic connection with any known language, living or dead. Attempts have been made to link Sumerian with many different languages – the most popular have been Hungarian, Turkish, Caucasoid, Dravidian, and the Indus Valley language(s) – but none of these has found general acceptance. Such attempts have usually been based on surface-level resemblances with languages which are typologically similar.

A. Leo Oppenheim has pointed out:

The fact that Sumerian is a complicated though very well understood language which cannot be linked to any other known language has created during the past hundred years a large literature attempting to relate Sumerian to practically all languages between Polynesia and Africa. The authors of such studies unfailingly “prove” that either their own language or a language in which they happen to be interested is related to ancient Sumerian (1971:219).

Sir Gerard Clauson has summed this up: “Sumerian ... has every appearance of being a ‘loner’, in spite of numerous attempts to foist relatives upon it, some grotesquely improbable”(1973:38).

The possibility that a connection might be found with some other language is slim. Any related languages have probably died off without leaving any written records. The original homeland of the Sumerians is unknown, so it is not even clear where its possible linguistic relatives might be located. Wherever such a homeland might be, it was probably not in an area where writing developed very early.

#### Dialects

The Sumerians referred to their own language by a term often transliterated as: eme-gir<sub>15</sub>. The value of the second sign is not sure, and so the term is variously transliterated as eme-gi<sub>7</sub>, eme-ku, etc., especially in older secondary literature. eme means “tongue” in Sumerian. The meaning of gir<sub>15</sub> is unsure. Older scholars thought that it meant “Sumer”; in that case, the term would mean “language of Sumer”. More recently it has been argued that the term means something like “noble, prince”; eme-gir<sub>15</sub> would then mean “the noble language”. Because of the uncertainties in reading this word, the term “Main Dialect” is often used instead.

There is also a “dialect” called eme-sal. The meaning of the second element of the name is uncertain; it may mean “fine, thin”. The “status” of this dialect is also uncertain. It has traditionally been called a “women’s language”, because it appears in literary texts of the Old Babylonian period, used by women when speaking to other women. For example, in the myth “Inanna’s Descent to the Netherworld”, when Inanna speaks to her aide Nin-

Shubur, she does so in Emesal. There is no consistency in this usage; in other texts Inanna may speak in Main Dialect. Moreover, in texts of the later Old Babylonian period Emesal is also used for specific genres of text. Certain kinds of lamentations are always written in Emesal, even though recited by male priests. (Texts in some of these genres were preserved and even composed in schools for a thousand years after Sumerian had ceased to be a spoken language.) This use by men makes it difficult to determine exactly what Emesal is, and whether or not it should be classified as a “dialect”.

Emesal is well-attested from the beginning of the Old Babylonian period on. However, there appear to be at least one or two Emesal forms in the Gudea texts, and there has been a recent attempt to see Emesal forms in a group of texts written in an unusual orthography from Tell Abu Salabikh (approximately 2600 BC).

Emesal differs from Main Dialect in phonology and in the lexicon, but not apparently in morphology. In phonology, the Emesal forms often appear to be older. For example, the word for “lord” in Main Dialect is /en/, in Emesal /umun/. It is difficult to say exactly what the more original form was; it may have been something like \*/ewen/ or \*/uwun/. In any case, the Emesal form appears more conservative than the Main Dialect form. According to other scholars, however, Emesal forms are linguistically the more innovative; Emesal forms result from consonants being shifted to a more fronted or to a higher place of articulation. For example, Main Dialect /g/ > Emesal /b/; Main Dialect /d/ > Emesal /z/, etc. But there are several exceptions to these general principles, and there are a number of details of Emesal phonology which are not clear. As an example from the lexicon, the Main Dialect word for the interrogative “what?” is /ana/; the Emesal form is /ta/. These are apparently two etymologically distinct words.

It has been claimed that Emesal shares certain characteristics of “women’s languages” which occur elsewhere in the world. In particular, women’s languages are said to differ from “standard” dialects in phonology – the women’s dialect being more conservative than the standard dialect – and in the lexicon. More work needs to be done in defining the characteristics of Emesal, and in comparing Emesal with other women’s languages.

Not much is known about geographical variation within Sumerian. The extent of the Sumerian-speaking area is unsure; Sumerian texts are preserved from only a rather limited area. Moreover, the nature of the Sumerian writing system makes it difficult to see such variation. Only traces can be found, particularly in the later periods. There was undoubtedly more dialectal variation present than the writing system allows us to see.

Similarly, although Sumerian was spoken over a long period of time, there does not appear to be much variation before the Old Babylonian period. More differentiation is noticeable in post-Old Babylonian periods, when Sumerian was no longer a spoken language. But here the differences may reflect the practices of different scribal schools and scribal centers, and not differences which were originally in spoken Sumerian.

There are occasional references in late Sumerian texts to what are apparently specialized languages, or jargons of particular occupations. For example, there are passing references to eme-utula, “the language of shepherds”, and to eme-má-lah<sub>4</sub>-a, “the language of sailors”. It is hard to say what these dialects or jargons were like. Similarly, there are only passing references to what may be some kind of “literary dialects”: eme-gal, “great

language”, eme-sukud, “high language”, etc. It is not known what these designations mean.

## Typological characteristics

### Ergativity

There are several ways in which Sumerian works differently than the Semitic or Indo-European languages. Consider the Akkadian sentence, “The king went”:

(1)	<u>šarrum</u>	illik
	king-NOM	VERB

Now, consider the Akkadian sentence, “The king built the house”:

(2)	<u>šarrum</u>	<u>bītam</u>	Ipuš
	king-NOM	house-ACC	VERB

In Akkadian, “king” is the subject in both sentences: It is the subject of an intransitive verb in sentence (1), and the subject of a transitive verb in sentence (2). Therefore, in both sentences it is put into the nominative case, šarrum. In sentence (2), “house” is the direct object of a transitive verb, and so it is put into the accusative case, bītam.

Languages in which the subject of a transitive verb and the subject of an intransitive verb are marked one way (called the “nominative” case), and the direct object is marked a different way (called the “accusative” case), are often called “accusative” languages (or “nominative-accusative” languages).

Sumerian, on the other hand, is what is called an “ergative” language. In an ergative language, what we consider to be the subject of a transitive verb is marked by the “ergative” case. But, what we consider to be the subject of an intransitive verb, *and* what we consider to be the direct object of a transitive verb, are both marked by the “absolute” case.

In some ergative languages the ending for the ergative case, and the ending for the absolute case, may look completely different. In other ergative languages, the ergative case will have one marking, but the absolute case will be unmarked. (“Unmarked” can also be understood as “marked by zero”. This can be symbolized by “zero”: Ø.) In other languages, there is no case-marking on any of the nouns; rather, ergativity is reflected in the way that certain elements within the verb cross-reference the case relationships.

In Sumerian, sentences (1) and (2) would be expressed as follows (Here and elsewhere, a period is used to separate morphemes; the verb forms have been slightly simplified):

(3)	lugal.Ø	i.gin
	king-ABS	VERB
(4)	lugal.e	e.Ø
	king-ERG	house-ABS VERB

In (3), the subject of the intransitive verb is marked by  $\emptyset$ , the absolute case-marker. In (4), the subject of the transitive verb is marked by  $.e$ , the ergative case-marker, while the direct object is marked by  $\emptyset$ , the absolute case-marker. This fits the definition of an ergative language: The subject of a transitive verb is marked one way (in Sumerian, by  $.e$ ), while the subject of an intransitive verb, *and* the direct object of a transitive verb, are marked a different way (in Sumerian, by  $\emptyset$ ).

Ergativity is a different way of marking the primary participants in a sentence. In an accusative language, the subject of a transitive verb and the subject of an intransitive verb fall into one grammatical category; in an ergative language, the subject of an intransitive verb and the object of a transitive verb fall into one grammatical category. Consider the two English sentences, “The ball rolled down the hill”, and “The boy rolled the ball down the hill”. In English, “ball” in the first sentence is the subject, but in the second sentence it’s the direct object. Yet in each case, it’s the ball that is rolling down the hill. In an ergative language, “ball” would be in the absolute case in both the first and second sentences, and “boy” would be in the ergative case in the second sentence. In this example, an ergative language seems to capture our intuitions about the rôle of the ball in these two sentences better than does our accusative language.

In the above discussion, the terms “subject” and “object” were used. However, it is imprecise (and unjustified on theoretical grounds) to use these two terms when talking about an ergative language. Most linguists prefer to use the term “agent” to refer to the subject of the transitive verb (marked by the ergative case), and the term “patient” to refer both to the subject of the intransitive verb, and to the direct object of a transitive verb (both marked by the absolute case). Thus, in the examples above, “boy” is the agent, and “ball” is the patient. In practice, it is very difficult to escape using such common terms as “subject” and “object”, especially in unambiguous contexts, even if these terms do not really fit Sumerian.

There are many ergative languages in the world, belonging to a number of different language families: many languages in Australia, many American Indian languages, the Caucasoid languages (for example, Georgian), Basque, to name a few. However, none of what are sometimes referred to as the “major cultural languages” of Europe are ergative, and so the concept is unfamiliar.

There are two other important points about ergativity. First, the definition given above describes what may be called “minimally” ergative languages. However, ergativity can also be reflected in other parts of a language’s grammatical system – it may affect verbal agreement, cross-referencing of case-markers, coordination and subordination, etc. This will be discussed in more detail later.

Second, there appear to be very few (if any) “pure” ergative languages. Most (perhaps all) ergative languages are “split”. In certain constructions, the language behaves in an ergative manner; in other constructions, the language behaves in an accusative manner. In Sumerian, for instance, the perfect aspect functions in an ergative manner, while the imperfect aspect functions in an accusative manner. That is, Sumerian is split along an aspectual axis. There are other languages in the world which are split along exactly such an axis, that is, the perfect aspect functions in an ergative manner, and the imperfect aspect

functions in an accusative manner. Also, the independent pronouns in Sumerian function basically on an accusative, not an ergative, basis. Languages of the world show a rather bewildering variety and complexity in the ways that they are split.

In addition, there are languages which use an ergative ~ absolute differentiation to mark semantic distinctions which are not easily made in the Semitic or Indo-European languages. An oft-cited example is the sentence “We fell” in Bats, a member of the Caucasoid language family, spoken in Georgia. If the act of falling is purely an accident, outside of our control, the subject of the sentence is in the absolute case. If we fell as a result of our own action, the subject is in the ergative case. Other languages use an ergative ~ absolute differentiation to mark other kinds of information, such as degrees of animacy.

Because there are very few (if any) pure ergative languages, it is perhaps best not to think of “ergative ~ accusative” as a simple binary opposition. C.T. van Aalderen has said that “One suspects that the whole phenomenon is more a continuum than a set of oppositions” (1982:27). That is, some languages are closer to one “pole” than to the other. Several recent linguists, for example, speak of “degrees of ergativity” in different languages.

In the last twenty years or so, general linguists have shown a great deal of interest in ergative languages; the bibliography of recent works is vast. In one of the more recent articles, John Du Bois says:

Seemingly, ergativity stands as a challenge to the view that all languages are built on one universal archetype. ... Why are there ergative languages in the world? ... Ergativity ... would seem somewhat perverse in splitting up an apparently basic category like subject, assigning half its contents to a contrasting category like object. This perception of unnaturalness is of course only an index of our failure to apprehend the actual basis of ergativity, a difficulty which is simply reinforced by traditional grammatical terminology (1987:805-7).

It is only somewhat recently that the term ergative has been systematically used for Sumerian. Although some early researchers had intimations that this was how Sumerian worked (even if all the details were unclear, as they still are), it is only in the last few years that ergativity has been explicitly discussed in Sumerian. This means that in reading even fairly recent Sumerological literature, such concepts and terms as “ergative”, “agent”, “patient”, etc., may not be used at all. The material might be discussed in what would now be called an ergative model, without use of the term ergative, or in older works the material might be presented in an accusative model. Moreover, not all scholars believe that Sumerian functions on an ergative basis. Some Sumerologists believe that not enough evidence has been presented to prove the case, and also believe that there are too many “exceptions” to the model. Others disagree on the degree to which Sumerian can be said to be split. Given the complexities of split ergativity in the languages of the world, it may be that current presentations of ergativity in Sumerian are too simplistic. “Full” proof can only be forthcoming when there is more secure knowledge of Sumerian verbal morphology.

The first person to apply the term ergative to Sumerian was apparently Viktor Christian in 1957, although he used the term a little differently than it is usually understood.

Diakonoff (1965) sketched the system of ergativity in Sumerian and other Ancient Near Eastern languages, without explaining the details of morphology. The articles by Daniel Foxvog (1975) and Piotr Michalowski (1980a) viewed Sumerian in an explicitly ergative framework, while elucidating the verbal morphology. Van Aalderen (1982) has explored some of the theoretical issues in more detail. The grammar by Marie-Louise Thomsen (1984) also follows a split-ergative model. A recent survey of ergativity in Sumerian is by Gong Yushu (1987).

### Agglutination

Sumerian is often described as an “agglutinative” language. This term goes back to the nineteenth century, when linguists attempted to classify the languages of the world into a few basic types, based solely on typological (not genetic) criteria. For these linguists, the three most common types of language could be classified as:

#### **Isolating**

In isolating languages, virtually every morpheme forms a separate “word”. In Chinese, for example, there are no tense-markers on verbs; such information is conveyed by separate adverbs. There are also no plural-markers on nouns or verbs; this information is conveyed by separate number-words.

#### **Fusional**

In fusional languages, such as Akkadian or Latin, grammatical morphemes are expressed through endings on nouns or verbs, and several different morphemes tend to “fuse” together. Latin amo, for example, means “I love”. The /o/ ending on the verb signals several things: the verb is first person, singular, present tense, indicative mood, active voice. However, none of the morphemes for person, number, tense, mood, or voice can be segmented out – they are all fused into the ending /o/.

#### **Agglutinative**

In agglutinative languages, as in fusional languages, several grammatical morphemes are combined into one word. However, the morphemes are distinct from each other; they do not fuse together. In an agglutinative language, strings of prefixes or suffixes tend to occur; each affix is formally distinct, and expresses one morpheme. The paradigm example of a language of this type is Turkish. In Turkish, the phrase “from his houses” is expressed as: evlerinden. Ev means “house”, ler is the plural marker, in is the possessive pronoun “his”, and den is the postposition expressing the ablative “from”. In general, each affix expresses one morpheme; each morpheme is invariant: ler is the automatic plural marker for all nouns; den means “from” after any nominal phrase, etc. The morphemes are distinct, not fused into each other.

Sumerian is similar to Turkish. The verbal phrase, for example, consists of a string of prefixes, followed by the verbal root, and then a smaller string of suffixes. Each affix expresses one morpheme, and each affix is (basically) invariant. Nominal phrases can be very long, with a noun, modifying adjectives and appositives, genitive phrases, etc., with a

case-marker at the end of the entire nominal phrase.

The typological scheme presented here has been somewhat simplified. Moreover, languages only tend to one category or the other; they are not “purely” isolating, fusional, or agglutinative. English, for example, is largely isolating, but it is also to some degree fusional. It is occasionally agglutinative in its processes of word formation. In English words such as “predictability” or “antidisestablishmentarianism”, it is fairly easy to separate several different morphemes, both as prefixes and as suffixes.

Most modern linguists who specialize in linguistic typology are not very interested in this particular “morphological typology”. They believe that such a scheme is not especially useful, because it does not offer any interesting or helpful intuitions or generalizations about language. The methodological underpinning of this classification scheme has also been attacked on several grounds. For example, it was mentioned above that languages do not usually fall neatly into one of these types. However, since the term agglutinative is still used in Sumerological literature, especially in popular descriptions of the language, it is useful to have some idea of what the term means.

The two terms ergative and agglutinative refer to different categories. The ergative ~ accusative distinction depends on how the primary participants in a sentence are marked in relation to each other. The isolating ~ fusional ~ agglutinative distinction refers to the different ways that morphemes are combined into words. In theory, a language can be either ergative or accusative, and also either isolating or fusional or agglutinative, although not all of these possible categories seem to occur.

## WRITING SYSTEM

### **External characteristics**

In discussing any writing system, there are two factors to consider: the external characteristics of the script, and the principles behind the script.

Because of the external shape of the signs in the Sumerian script, its writing system is called “cuneiform”. “Cuneus” is the Latin word for “wedge”; the term was coined because of the most striking characteristic of the script – the fact that the signs are built up of strokes looking like little wedges. (The term cuneiform was apparently first used by one Thomas Hyde in 1700. In his Historia religionis veterum Persarum, he refers to “dactuli pyramidales seu cuneiformei”).

The cuneiform signs were inscribed by means of a stylus probably formed from an actual reed (such as still grows in modern-day Iraq), by impressing the stylus upon a tablet of moist clay (or, occasionally, upon other surfaces). The stylus could also be made of bone, metal, hardwood, or even other material.

The first cuneiform texts discovered were all relatively late, from a period when the wedge-shaped characteristics of the script were most striking. In the earliest phases of the script, however, this wedge-shaped character is less pronounced; the script of most of the Ur III inscriptions in this book does not look nearly as wedge-shaped as do later texts.

The term cuneiform refers solely to the external shape of the individual signs. Cuneiform script was adopted and modified by many peoples of the Ancient Near East; it was used to write Akkadian, Ugaritic, Hurrian, Persian, etc. However, the fact that these languages use signs with the same general external characteristics says nothing about their possible genetic relationship. Sumerian, Akkadian, Hurrian, and Persian, for example, belong to four entirely unrelated language families. Expressions such as “cuneiform language” are occasionally encountered, but this is a rather imprecise way of referring to one or several languages, which may or may not be related, which use a script with the same external characteristics.

### **Original nature**

The writing system used for English is an attempt to render speech as closely as possible. Although English does suffer from numerous archaic spellings, and there are certain features (such as upper and lower-case letters) which are found only in writing, writing is basically an attempt to reproduce speech sounds. By contrast, the Sumerian writing system was never an exact, phonetic representation of speech; it was not “designed” to reproduce spoken language as such. Rather, to some degree the writing system is only a mnemonic device, to jog the memory of the writer and reader. The earliest uses of writing were for administrative texts, which were of a formulaic nature, and whose contents were familiar to the scribes. There was no need to write down what would be obvious to a scribe who was a native speaker of Sumerian, and who was familiar with the material being written. When such scribes “read” the texts, they knew how to supply the information not indicated explicitly in the writing.

Thus, a certain amount of information in the spoken language was not expressed in the writing. The further back in time one goes, the less the Sumerian writing system expresses grammatical elements which are assumed to have been present in the spoken language. For example, the basic graphic shape representing the root for “to build” was originally a picture of a wooden peg. In the earliest Sumerian, this one sign could be used for any inflected form of the verb: any tense, mood, or person. Similarly, the expression for “on that day” in Sumerian was: ud-bi-a (“day-that-on”). But in the earliest Sumerian, only the ud-sign was written; the reader inferred the rest.

As might be imagined, this lack of explicitness in the script can cause much trouble in interpreting Sumerian texts. Nor is this problem limited to the earliest Sumerian texts; in late economic texts, for instance, it is often difficult to tell if something is being distributed “to” or “from” somebody.

As time passed, the scribes wrote more and more down, that is, the writing became more and more explicit. For example, there is a Sumerian text known as the “Kesh Temple Hymn”, attested in several copies mostly from the Old Babylonian period (dating to around 1800 BC). In the 1960s, a version of the same text was found at Tell Abu Salabikh, dating to about perhaps 2500 BC. Unfortunately, only a few lines of the Tell Abu Salabikh version survive. But if one compares the Old Babylonian version with the Tell Abu Salabikh version, it can be seen that although the text itself is relatively stable, the Old Babylonian version indicates more verbal affixes than does the Tell Abu Salabikh version.

This increase in explicitness may be connected with the fact that Sumerian was gradually dying out, and so scribes needed more help in their own understanding of texts.

Thus, a fundamental feature of the Sumerian writing system is its lack of explicitness. It does not fully represent the spoken language. This has been summarized by Jacobsen: “The history of Sumerian writing is one of progressively ever greater but never quite attained adjustment to Sumerian speech” (1957:366 n.1). Similarly, Marvin Powell has pointed out that “We find traces of its mnemonic character enduring to the very end of the Sumerian orthographic tradition” (1981:421).

A further complicating problem is that the writing system is to some degree morpheme-bound. There is indirect evidence to show that there were certain phonological changes which took place in Sumerian, such as contraction, vowel deletion, etc., but these changes are masked by the script; the script often reproduces the basic morpheme, without showing the changes which are assumed to have taken place in the spoken language.

The view here presented, that the Sumerian writing system in origin and in practice is basically mnemonic, has been especially expounded by Diakonoff (1976) and Stephen Lieberman (1977).

### Internal principles

The script used for writing Sumerian is a combination of “logographic” and “syllabic” elements. Logographic means that a sign stands for a particular word. For example, the sign  stands for the word utu, “sun”; the sign  stands for the word digir, “god”. The external shape of many of these signs is clearly pictographic in origin. Thus the sign for “sun” was originally a picture of the sun rising over a mountain. The sign for “god” was originally a picture of a star. The original significance of many signs cannot yet be determined.

The same sign can often have more than one logographic value. Thus, the same sign can represent digir, “god”, or it can represent an, “sky”. In general, it is only the context which determines the meaning of the sign, and its correct reading.

Syllabic signs are used to reproduce a sequence of phonetic elements. For example, the sign  is used to represent the syllable /ga/. This particular syllable can form a component of several different morphemes: it may be part of the cohortative prefix on verbs, or part of the ending of a genitive phrase on nouns, etc. The sign  in these contexts does not stand for any particular word; rather, its purpose is to represent the phonetic sequence /g/-/a/, which may form part of a number of different morphemes.

Syllabic signs can represent several different kinds of segments of consonants and vowels. Some syllabic signs stand for single vowels, e.g., a and i. More common are signs standing for the sequence consonant-vowel (ba, mu) or vowel-consonant (ab, in). There are some signs that stand for consonant-vowel-consonant, but these are not common; instead, the script uses a convention that represents /CVC/ by CV-VC. For example, the segment /nir/ is written by: ni-ir. A writing such as ni-ir does not imply a long vowel; this is purely an orthographic convention, to reduce the number of CVC-signs which would otherwise be necessary.

Many signs have more than one syllabic value. Many signs have both logographic

and syllabic values – sometimes more than one of each. The correct value of the sign can usually only be derived from the context. Signs with more than one value are called “polyvalent”, or are said to have several “readings”.

Thus, the Sumerian writing system is both logographic and syllabic. The syllabic value of most signs derives from a logographic value. For example, the sign  in its meaning as “sky” is pronounced /an/. This phonetic value was then generalized, so that this sign can stand for the syllable /an/ in other contexts.

In general, lexical morphemes are written logographically, and grammatical morphemes are written syllabically, but this is not always the case. The system is complicated by the fact that certain syllabic signs tend to be used for certain morphemes. For example, there is a “conjugation-prefix” on the verb, pronounced /bi/. There are several different possible ways that this phonetic sequence could be represented in the script. In practice, however, the scribes almost always used only one of these possibilities, the sign . That is, certain morphemes tend to be indicated in only one way, and, conversely, certain signs tend to be used only for certain morphemes.

In addition to logographic and syllabic signs, there are a few other elements present in the script. One of these is “determinatives”. Determinatives are signs which are used to indicate the general semantic class to which a following (occasionally a preceding) noun belongs. For example, almost all divine names are preceded by the sign ; this sign tells the scribe that “what follows is a divine name”. Most names of countries are followed by the sign ; this sign tells the scribe that “what precedes is the name of a country”. Determinatives were probably not spoken, even when Sumerian was read out loud. They were only a feature of the written language.

In other contexts, the cuneiform signs which function as determinatives can also function as logographic or syllabic elements. For example, the sign  can represent digir, “god”; the sign  can represent ki, “country”.

To sum up, Sumerian is mostly logographic, and only partially syllabic. Akkadian, on the other hand, is mostly syllabic, and only partially logographic. Persian cuneiform is almost entirely syllabic, and Ugaritic cuneiform is basically alphabetic. In practice, people sometimes confuse the issue, and the term cuneiform is occasionally used to refer in general to any logographic-syllabic system of writing, but this is wrong; there are many logographic-syllabic scripts which have existed in the world, which are not cuneiform.

This has been a somewhat simplified discussion of the Sumerian writing system. There has been much recent discussion about the script, mostly hinging on theoretical questions, such as the difference between pictographic and logographic, or the degree to which the script is morpheme-bound.

## Transliteration

When citing Sumerian texts, or when discussing Sumerian grammar or vocabulary, Sumerologists do not generally reproduce the original cuneiform signs. Rather, they cite the word or passage in transliteration into Latin characters. Transliteration is a sign-by-sign image of the original written text. It is designed specifically to reflect the actual cuneiform signs present. By looking at a transliteration, one should be able to determine exactly

which cuneiform signs occur in the original text (excluding palaeographic niceties). Transliteration serves several purposes. It is more convenient, quicker, and cheaper to produce Latin characters than it is to produce cuneiform characters. Also, it provides an approximate phonetic rendering of the signs occurring in the Sumerian. Since many Sumerian signs have more than one reading, a scholar, by giving the text in transliteration, explicitly states his opinion about the reading of a particular cuneiform sign. For example, the sign  can be read Iškur (the name of a god), or im ("wind"), or ni ("self"). Based on his understanding of the text, a scholar decides the correct reading.

There are some complexities of transliteration. It is possible for several different cuneiform signs to have the same pronunciation. These signs must be differentiated in transliteration, so that the original cuneiform can be reconstructed from the transliteration. For example, there are at least four different signs pronounced as /u/. If u were used as the transliteration for all four signs, it would not be possible to go backward from the transliteration: Given a transliteration u, one could not tell which of the four possible signs actually was written in the cuneiform. To obviate this problem, scholars have devised the following system: The most common (or most important) sign with a particular value is unmarked. The second most common (or most important) sign with this same value is marked with an acute accent: ú. The third most common (or most important) sign with this same value is marked with a grave accent: ú. The fourth, and higher, most common signs with this same value are marked with subscripts: u<sub>4</sub>, u<sub>5</sub>, etc. This system is purely arbitrary; it provides a convenient means to differentiate between signs pronounced alike, thus enabling us to reconstruct the cuneiform from the transliteration.

This use of the acute and grave accent-marks as "indices" has nothing to do with pronunciation. They do not indicate anything about accent, nor do they indicate anything about vocalic length, nor do they indicate anything about tone. They are used instead of a possible u<sub>2</sub> and u<sub>3</sub> simply because it is easier to type accent marks (at least in Europe) than it is to turn the typewriter carriage up to make a subscript.

These indices are based largely on frequency. However, these frequencies were determined on the basis of Akkadian texts, not on the basis of Sumerian texts (for the simple reason that Akkadian was "discovered" before Sumerian). This produces a certain inconsistency. In Sumerian, for example, the bi-sign is much more common than the bi-sign. This inconsistency is not really a problem; the only other alternative would have been to devise a separate system for Sumerian, based on values and frequencies in Sumerian. But this would have engendered so much confusion and complication that it is far easier to work with the traditional system.

Confusion arises when indices are used on bisyllabic signs, that is, signs which represent a segment of two syllables, such as /kala/ or /Urim/. If there is more than one sign with the same bisyllabic reading, some scholars put the accent-marks on the first vowel, then continue onto the second syllable if there are several signs with the same reading. Other scholars, however, begin with the last vowel, moving back to the first. Either system is prone to mechanical mistakes in printing, and the mere presence of the two different systems can cause problems in determining what the cuneiform sign actually was. To mitigate against this difficulty, some Sumerologists do not use acute or grave accent-

marks on bisyllabic signs. Instead, they use a subscript <sub>2</sub> or subscript <sub>3</sub> when necessary. For example, there are several signs with the value of /kala/. These are differentiated as: kala, kala<sub>2</sub>, kala<sub>3</sub>, kala<sub>4</sub>, etc. This is the system followed here. Some recent publications, including the Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary, use subscripts in place of accent-marks, even on monosyllabic signs. Thus, instead of ú, they use u<sub>2</sub>; instead of ù, they use u<sub>3</sub>.

Determinatives are a feature of the written language, and were probably not spoken. To indicate that they were not pronounced, they are transliterated with superscript letters: X<sup>ki</sup>, túg<sup>X</sup>, etc. For convenience sake, the determinative for god (the dīgir-sign) is transliterated as a superscript d: d<sup>Istar</sup>. Because of the typographical difficulties of printing superscripts, some publications instead print the determinatives on the same print-line, connected by a period: X.ki; túg.X.

In transliteration, signs comprising one “word” are linked by hyphens: kalam-ma, dīgir-ra-ni, etc. (Determinatives are an exception; no hyphens are used.) As will be seen below, it is not always easy to determine what constitutes a “word” in Sumerian.

Some Sumerologists use initial capital letters in their transliteration of Sumerian proper names; other Sumerologists do not. Those who do not use them, consider capital letters to be a feature particular to the English writing system; since capital letters have no correlate in the Sumerian writing system, they should not be used in transliteration. Other scholars feel that since transliteration is an artificial device anyway, there is no harm in using capital letters, if they help make the text clearer to the reader. This second practice is followed here.

Finally, it is necessary to say a few words about the typographic conventions used in transliterating Sumerian. Throughout this book, Sumerian is transliterated by Roman characters, underlined. The few Akkadian citations used here follow the same system. However, it is occasionally inconvenient to use the same typographic conventions for two different languages. To solve this problem, many publications cite Sumerian in Roman characters, but widely-spaced. Thus, the word for “god” will be transliterated as: dīgir. This may seem like a convenient procedure to differentiate citations from the two languages, but it is prone to produce mechanical errors in printing.

It is frequently the case that it is not known how a particular Sumerian sign (or word) is to be read. Some scholars elaborate the system just discussed, by presenting such doubtful or unsure readings in caps. For example, the word for “interest-bearing loan” in Sumerian is written:  . It is not sure how the first sign is to be read. For this reason, the word is often cited as: HAR-ra. Some scholars do, however, believe that they now know how to read this word, and so nowadays one is likely to see the reading: ur<sub>5</sub>-ra. That is, wide-spaced Roman is used for the “standard” transliteration of Sumerian, and caps Roman is used for unsure readings. Not all Sumerologists follow this system, however, and what is sure for one scholar may be unsure for another scholar.

## Transcription

Transliteration is, by definition, a reflection of the written language, and so does not necessarily reproduce the spoken language well (as we think we understand it). For this reason, most Sumerologists use some form of transcription in their study of Sumerian.

Transcription is not used as frequently as is transliteration; it occurs in discussions of grammar, and appears in scholars' own notes.

Transcription attempts to reproduce Sumerian forms in their approximately correct phonological and morphological shape, disregarding the omissions, conventions, and idiosyncrasies of the written language. For example, signs appearing as kalam-ma in transliteration, will appear as kalama in transcription, since that is probably how the word was actually pronounced.

There is no “official” or “standard” system of transcription of Sumerian. It tends to be somewhat personal and idiosyncratic, used by each Sumerologist to enable himself to understand the language behind the written form. This situation contrasts with that of Akkadian, for example. In Akkadian there is a standard way of transliterating texts, and also a reasonably standard way of transcribing them. This can be done for Akkadian, because scholars are generally confident of their understanding of the rules of Akkadian phonology and morphology; in general, transcriptions of Akkadian done by different scholars will be quite similar. In the case of Sumerian, there is much less confidence about the language. Because the script does not always express all grammatical elements, the morphology is not always sure. Moreover, there are several different analyses of the phonetic structure of Sumerian.

The system of transcription used by most Sumerologists is not always transcription in the precise sense of the term. For example, morpheme boundaries are often indicated. Also, full forms of morphemes are often indicated, even when it is assumed that some vocalic or consonantal segment probably dropped. Thus, it is actually a kind of morphological transcription.

The system of transcription used in this book is based on the system of Jacobsen, and is similar to what many Sumerologists use. It is a morphological transcription, in that it separates morphemes from each other. In this system, morphemes are separated by periods. Features which are assumed to have been present in the spoken language, but which do not show up in the written language, are enclosed in parentheses. The different indices which appear in transliteration are ignored. Thus, é will be transcribed as e, and Urim<sub>5</sub> as Urim. Exceptions to this latter rule are sometimes made, particularly for grammatical morphemes which tend to be written in only one way. Thus, the “terminative” case-ending is normally transcribed by .šè, because it is always written with the šè-sign, and never with the še-sign or the šé-sign. Similarly, the “enclitic copula” is normally transcribed as .àm, since it is regularly written by the àm-sign, and not by the am-sign or the ám-sign. (Details of these conventions will be discussed below.)

The difference between transliteration and transcription should be kept in mind. Transliteration is essentially sign-by-sign, with the goal of representing the cuneiform signs which were used in the original. Transcription is essentially word-by-word, with the goal of approximating the correct phonological and morphological shape of a word. (In practice, however, the terms transliteration and transcription are occasionally used promiscuously.)

Transcription is important, because transliteration alone masks too many morphological and phonological issues. Only a consistent transcription can reveal a thorough understanding of the language of the texts. Some of the simplest inscriptions, for

example, could be translated without knowing much Sumerian, simply from a knowledge of Akkadian and of simple vocabulary; a transcription reflects the structure of the language hidden beneath the written form.

At certain times in this book, the purely phonemic structure of Sumerian will be stressed, ignoring any morphological considerations. In that case, normal linguistic practice will be followed, and the item will be put between slashes, e.g., /kalama/.

Thus, our understanding of Sumerian may be reflected in three different ways: a transliteration, reflecting the written shape; a phonemic transcription, reflecting the pronunciation; and a morphological transcription, reflecting our understanding of the pronunciation and morphology.

## PHONOLOGY

### **Problems**

It is not easy to reconstruct the phonological system of Sumerian, or the precise pronunciation of any of its sounds. There are two main reasons for this problem. Since Sumerian is a language-isolate, there is no comparative evidence to provide help. Moreover, most of the evidence for Sumerian phonology has been filtered through the Akkadian phonological system; Sumerian phonology is seen through Akkadian eyes. For instance, it is quite likely that the word for “son” in Sumerian was pronounced /domu/, with an initial /o/-quality vowel. But Akkadian does not have an /o/-quality vowel, and hence no /o/-sign, and so this word is spelled out in syllabic Akkadian as: du-mu. If there were only Akkadian evidence, it might never even be known that Sumerian had an /o/-quality vowel. Thus, the picture of Sumerian of the Ur III period (2112-2004 BC) is actually based on Akkadian of the Old Babylonian period (1894-1595 BC), and later. (Similarly, much knowledge of Sumerian grammar derives from the interpretations given to it by Akkadian-speaking scribes and scholars; this topic is discussed in Appendix 2.)

Likewise, very little is known about the historical development of Sumerian phonology. Sumerian was spoken over a period of several centuries (and was used as a written language for even more centuries). The phonological system of Sumerian at the time of, say, Tell Abu Salabikh and that of the time of Ur III may have been significantly different.

To some degree, more is known about the value and pronunciation of Sumerian grammatical morphemes, than about Sumerian lexical morphemes. This is because grammatical morphemes are mostly written syllabically, while lexical morphemes are usually written logographically. Without the evidence of lexical lists (Appendix 2), it is quite difficult to fix the value of a logogram. For the same reason, it is occasionally possible to see phonetic change through the course of Sumerian in grammatical morphemes, but it is more difficult to see such changes in lexical morphemes.

The upshot of this is that Sumerian probably possessed sounds which Akkadian did not, and which can only be determined using a variety of indirect evidence. Because of the difficulty of dealing with this indirect evidence, there have been several different

reconstructions of the Sumerian phonological system. These reconstructions differ both in the number of phonemes present in Sumerian, and in the value attributed to certain phonemes.

In practice, however, most Sumerologists do not try to exactly reproduce the sounds of Sumerian. Rather, they use the standard values known from Akkadian. Thus, virtually all transliterations of Sumerian will use the value dumu for “son”, even though this is one of the clearest cases where an /o/-quality value can be postulated for Sumerian. Similarly, it is sure that Sumerian had a velar /ŋ/, which did not exist in Akkadian. The sign , for example, represents /ŋu/, the velar nasal followed by an /u/-quality vowel; this is the morpheme for the first person singular possessive-suffix on nouns. But the normal value of this sign in Akkadian is /mu/. Therefore, many Sumerologists transliterate this sign as mu, e.g., ugal-mu, “my king”. Other scholars, however, transliterate this sign as gu<sub>10</sub>, e.g., ugal-gu<sub>10</sub>. Still others, who wish to be more precise, in fact transliterate this sign as ŋu<sub>10</sub>, or as some typographical equivalent, such as gū<sub>10</sub>, gū̄<sub>10</sub>, etc.; for example, ugal-gū<sub>10</sub>. This means that transliterations of Sumerian will differ somewhat from scholar to scholar. The transliteration used here will reflect the conventional method of transliteration used by most Sumerologists, even if this reconstruction is somewhat shaky and incomplete.

## Vowels

Sumerian had at least the following vowels:

i	u
e	
a	

The precise phonetic value of these vowels, particularly the /e/, is unsure.

Many scholars also believe that Sumerian had an /o/-quality vowel, but since no /o/ existed in Akkadian (at least on the phonemic level), there is only indirect evidence to reconstruct it. It is very difficult to determine whether any particular Sumerian word had an /o/-quality vowel or an /u/-quality vowel; its existence has been established for only a few cases. Under the assumption of the existence of this /o/-quality vowel, the vocalic system of Sumerian is more symmetrical:

i	u
e	o
a	

Other Sumerologists have posited other vowels, such as both an open /e/ and a closed /e/. Others have posited the existence of nasalized vowels, but the exact number and quality of these varies from one scholar to another: /i/; /ē/; /ī/ and /ā/; /i/; /ā/ and /ē/, etc. Claude Boisson (1988) has investigated various reconstructions of the phonemic system of Sumerian, in comparison with what is known about language in general. He feels that if Sumerian possessed only four vowels, then the vowel normally represented as

/e/ was more likely /ɛ/ than /e/. He also feels that none of the systems of nasals which have been posited for Sumerian is likely.

It is not sure if there was a phonemic distinction between short and long vowels; this cannot be told from the script. It has been postulated that there were no originally long vowels in Sumerian, but that they did arise through vocalic contraction, in particular the contraction of final root-vowels with initial vowels of suffixes.

As discussed above, in practical terms most transliterations of Sumerian usually only reflect the vowels known from Akkadian; that is, the four vowels listed above.

## Consonants

Most analyses of Sumerian would include the following consonants:

b	p	m
d	t	n
g	k	ŋ
z	s	š
h		
l	r	

(For ease in printing, the consonant indicated above as h is often simply transliterated as h, without the “dish”. Since Sumerian does not have a “simple” /h/, there is no ambiguity in this usage.)

Virtually all Sumerologists accept the existence of the velar nasal /ŋ/ (although some scholars prefer to speak of a palatal nasal, and others have seen more complex phonemes, such as /ŋm/). When Sumerian words containing this phoneme are loaned into Akkadian, it is usually (although not always) reflected as ng. For example, saga, “kind of priest” (Lesson 21) appears in Akkadian as šangû.

Transliterations of this phoneme vary. In older works, and in many contemporary works, it may simply appear as g. Some recent works use ġ, or some typographical equivalent (ğ, etc.). It will be transliterated here as ġ, in cases where it is assumed by most Sumerologists to be present. With many words, however, it is not known whether a phoneme is /ŋ/, /g/, or even /n/ or /m/, and so some variation in the transliteration of certain words appears. For example, the verb “to go” is understood by some Sumerologists to be /gin/, but by others to be /ğin/ (or /ğen/).

Many Sumerologists believe that Sumerian had a phoneme usually symbolized by /dr/; its exact phonetic significance is unsure. Its existence has been proven in only a few cases. Because of the difficulties of proving its existence in specific words, it is usually not indicated in transcription; instead, in the standard sign-lists and in most transcriptions it is reflected as d.

Several other consonants have been posited for Sumerian: /h/, /w/, /y/; two (or more) types of /l/; two (or more) types of /r/; a labiovelar /kʷ/; a pre-nasalized labial stop /m̚b/; etc. Since none of these sounds exists in Akkadian, the evidence for their existence in Sumerian is indirect at best, and individual Sumerologists have their own preferences.

Transliterations of Sumerian do not normally try to reproduce these disputed phonemes.

As a typical example of a reconstruction of Sumerian phonology, it may be instructive to present that postulated by Lieberman:

e	i	b	p	m	š
a	o	d	t	n	ž
u		g	k	g̪	
		z	s		
			h̪		
		l	r	ṛ	

In the tables above, certain consonants are indicated as differing only in voice: /b/ ~ /p/; /d/ ~ /t/; etc. It is not in fact sure what differentiated such pairs; Lieberman explicitly says that the distinction he marks as /b/ ~ /p/ was not one of voice. Some Sumerologists have speculated that the difference was one of aspiration; this is not an uncommon view today. Boisson, for example, says: "A correlation of aspiration seems to be the only hypothesis with a high probability of success" (1988:25). Other Sumerologists have speculated that the difference was one of glottalization.

There does not appear to have been a phonemic distinction between short and long consonants; it is not in fact sure if long consonants occurred at all.

One of the thorniest questions in Sumerian involves the status of word-final and syllable-final consonants. According to most Sumerologists, certain consonants, when in word-final position, were not pronounced. For example, the root for "dais" is /barag/, with a word-final /g/. However, unless this /g/ was followed by a vowel, it was not pronounced: this word would have been pronounced as /bara/.

The word-final consonant in a root is usually referred to by the German term "Auslaut". Thus, it is said that the word for "dais" (pronounced /barag/) had a "g-Auslaut", or the word for "to live" (pronounced /til/) had a "l-Auslaut".

The consonants which were regularly not pronounced in word-final position are called "amissable" consonants. Those which were pronounced in word-final position are called "non-amissable". (These terms are apparently peculiar to Sumerologists; they are not used by general linguists.)

Sumerologists differ among themselves about which consonants were not pronounced. Some believe this affected all consonants, although perhaps not "to the same degree". Others believe that it affected a smaller number of consonants (although no two lists of such consonants seem to agree exactly). Also, it is not known if the amissible consonants were not pronounced in word-final position only; most Sumerologists believe that they were not pronounced in any syllable-final position. Arno Poebel, for example (the real father of Sumerian grammar), states that "As a rule, an amissible consonant is dropped whenever it stands at the end of a word or syllable" (1935:147). Similarly, Samuel Noah Kramer says: "All final consonants in Sumerian are amissible. ... The term 'final consonant' as here used includes the consonant at the end of a syllable as well as the one at the end of a word" (1936:19).

The existence of amissable consonants is certainly not impossible. There is a close parallel in French: In spoken French, word-final consonants are not pronounced (under certain conditions), although they still appear in the written form. A few Sumerologists, however, are not convinced of the existence of amissable consonants. They interpret the problem as being orthographic in nature.

The reason this question is still unresolved is because of ambiguities in the writing system. At various points in this book, different pieces of evidence will be cited, some of which seem to indicate that word-final consonants were pronounced, and some of which seem to indicate that word-final consonants were not pronounced.

The existence of amissable consonants means that the cuneiform signs which represent words with these amissable Auslauts have two values: a “long” value, which includes the amissable Auslaut (e.g., kalag, Urim<sub>5</sub>, til), and a “short” value, which does not (kala, Uri<sub>5</sub>, ti). With some signs, the long value and the short value have different indices, e.g., til [with diacritic] and ti [without diacritic]. This annoying situation is partially due to the fact that indices were originally assigned on the basis of frequency in Akkadian, not Sumerian.

Some scholars transliterate Sumerian using basically only the long values; others transliterate Sumerian using basically only the short values. Other scholars use both, the choice being determined by syllabic conditions: the short form if word-final (or syllable-final), the long form if not. Others are less consistent, using a mixture of long and short values. This latter practice is particularly true of less recent Sumerological literature, where one finds a mixture of transliteration principles, based primarily on customary readings of the cuneiform signs. Such customary readings have arisen from the piece-meal growth in understanding of Akkadian and Sumerian. For example, in 1940 Kramer published an edition of the “Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur”. This is a Sumerian poem, some 436 lines long, bemoaning the destruction of Ur at the end of the Ur III period; it was written probably about a century after its destruction. In his Introduction, Kramer says that “The time is not yet ripe for a thorough and scientific overhauling of the Sumerian system of transliteration”. Therefore, he “deems it best to follow the more or less established usage”. In this system,

In the case of signs representing roots that end in a consonant and may have either the long or the short value (e.g., the signs for pa(d), “to call”, du(g), “good”, etc., which may be read either pàd, dùg, etc. or pà, du<sub>10</sub>, etc.) the transliteration uses the longer value in spite of the fact that the shorter is scientifically the more correct. Only in cases such as u(d), “day”, and ša(g), “heart”, where the shorter value has become more or less standard, is that value used in our transliteration, although the inconsistency in transliterating the signs for pa(d) and du(g) as pàd and dùg while giving those for u(d) and ša(g) as u<sub>4</sub> and šà is only too patent (1940:6).

Kramer is obviously irked by this inconsistency, but feels that there is nothing he can do about it. Although he wrote this passage almost forty-five years ago, some editors of Sumerian texts still follow such customary usage. A compromise made by some Sumerologists is to put the Auslaut within parentheses, e.g., kala(g). However, if the short and long forms have different indices, this can create confusion; some scholars transliterate

as ti(l), others as t̪i(l). In this book, all word-final consonants have been consistently transliterated (and transcribed).

### Other features

There were undoubtedly other features in the spoken language, which the writing system only hints at. There is only marginal evidence, for example, to determine word-stress, and it will not be dealt with here. Similarly, there is only the most indirect evidence for sentence-intonation.

Because of what is claimed to be a large number of homonyms in Sumerian, it has several times been argued that Sumerian possessed phonemic tones. Diakonoff, for example, says: "Sumerian was certainly a tonal language, or else the many homonyms would have made spoken Sumerian quite unintelligible" (1983:86). However, the evidence is indirect and slight. In fact, many words which earlier Sumerologists believed to be homonyms have been shown to contain different Auslauts, and so are not actually homonyms.



## PART TWO: LESSONS IN SUMERIAN GRAMMAR

# Lesson 1

This first text is a royal inscription of Ur-Nammu, the founder of the Ur III Dynasty (ruled 2112-2095 BC).

### Sign-list and vocabulary

In this and subsequent sign-lists, the signs are loosely organized according to function. Determinatives are first, followed by proper names, nouns, verbs, and syllabic signs.

 Determinative preceding divine names (DNs). Transliterated by a superscript “d”: d

 Determinative following geographical names (GNs). Transliterated by a superscript “ki”: ki

 Nanna Nanna (DN, masc)

 Nammu Nammu (DN, fem)

 Ur-dNammu Ur-Nammu (personal name [PN], masc)

 Urim<sub>5</sub> (Uri<sub>5</sub>) Ur (GN)

 nin lady, mistress; “lord”

 an heaven

 ur man, warrior

 lugal king

 é house

 dù to build

 na

 a

 ni

make₄mu

Especially for those who are primarily interested in West-Semitic, it is not always easy to master cuneiform signs. In certain ways, however, it is easier to learn the signs of this period than the signs of later periods. In later periods, the repertoire of possible sign shapes becomes quite reduced, so that (superficially) the signs of the Neo-Assyrian period, for example, all look very similar. In the earlier periods, however, the signs are much more distinctive, making them easier to learn.

However, one problem in studying the signs of the early periods is the occasional wide variation in external shape of the signs. For example, the sign for é, “house”, looks rather different in Text 2 than it does in Text 1. This variation is due to several factors: nature of the writing surface, different scribal traditions at different scribal centers, individual idiosyncrasies of handwriting, etc. The sign-lists and vocabularies attempt to produce the basic or essential shape of each sign; the signs in the autographs are reproduced exactly as published.

## Notes

The Notes discuss some of the more important vocabulary items. Often, reference is made to Akkadian words which were borrowed from these Sumerian words. This practice is open to methodological criticism, since Akkadian is not Sumerian, and there is no reason to assume that Sumerian words always kept exactly the same meaning when placed into an Akkadian context. But since normally much more is known about the Akkadian term than about the Sumerian term, it is still useful to examine the Akkadian equivalents.

**Nanna** The city-god of Ur. The large temple-complex at Ur discussed below was sacred to him in particular. He was associated with the moon; nanna in fact means “moon”.

In Akkadian, the word nannaru occurs, glossed by the CAD as: “luminary, light (as poetic term, an epithet of the moon god and Ištar)”. This Akkadian word may be some kind of blend or contamination between the Sumerian word nanna and the Akkadian root nawāru.

Because of this Akkadian word, some earlier Sumerologists believed that the Sumerian word had an /r/-Auslaut, and so the name sometimes appears as Nannar. However, there seems to be no inner-Sumerian evidence which would indicate such an Auslaut.

The moon-god was also referred to as Zuen; this problem will be further discussed in Lesson 13.

The Mesopotamian scribes interpreted the cuneiform sign expressing his name as consisting of two signs: the šeš-sign (☞ or ☚) followed by the ki-sign (☜). Therefore, in older works the name is sometimes transliterated as: dšeš-ki. More likely,

however, the second element was originally the na-sign, functioning as a phonetic complement of some kind.

**Nammu** Not much is known about this goddess. However, she is described as “the mother who gave birth to heaven and earth”, and as “the primeval mother, who gave birth to all the gods”. It is thus possible that at one time she played a more important role in Sumerian cosmogony.

The cuneiform sign which represents this name can also be read engur, which lexical texts equate with the Akkadian apsû, the “watery deep” (see Lesson 14). The cuneiform sign may be an abstract representation of this deep.

In some older Sumerological works, the two readings of this sign (Nammu and engur) were not clearly differentiated. Therefore, the name of the founder of the Ur III Dynasty sometimes appears as Ur-Engur, or Ur-Gur.

**Urim<sub>5</sub>** In English, “Ur”. One of the more famous cities in southern Mesopotamia; the city after which the Ur III period is named. The name of the modern site is al-Muqayyar.

The etymology of the name Urim<sub>5</sub> is unknown. It is also not known how these two particular cuneiform signs (presumably, the šeš-sign followed by the ab-sign) came to represent the name.

Urim<sub>5</sub> is the long value of the sign. The short value is variously transliterated as Uri, Uri<sub>2</sub>, Uri<sub>3</sub>, or Uri<sub>5</sub>. The oscillation in diacritics illustrates the problem of diacritical marks on bisyllabic signs.

The sign-lists in this book give the long value first, followed by the short value. Because both are encountered in Sumerological literature, it is necessary to know both values, even though this seems like a totally unnecessary burden upon the student.

Sometimes, the name is written šeš-unug and not šeš-ab, in which case it should properly be transliterated as Urim<sub>2</sub>.

The English equivalent, “Ur”, derives from the Old Testament *Pūr kasdīm/*, “Ur of the Chaldeans”. Exactly how the Hebrew *Pūr/* derives from the Sumerian */Urim/* is unsure.

**nin** In general, the Sumerian word for “lord” is en; the feminine equivalent, “lady”, is nin. (It is not impossible that the two words are etymologically related.) However, in older Sumerian nin can also be used to refer to masculine entities. Perhaps at one time the term was genderless. In the Ur III period, this usage can be considered an archaism.

**ur** The usual interpretation of this word is something like “man; warrior, hero”. In bilingual lexical texts, ur is glossed as amēlu, “man”, and as kalbu, “dog”. ur with the meaning “dog” is not uncommon in Sumerian texts. However, ur meaning “man” seems to occur only in personal names; it does not have this meaning in actual texts (although the compound ur-sag, “hero”, presumably “man-head”, is common).

One might guess that the ur-sign was originally a picture of a dog or some kind of beast, but even the earliest attestations of the ur-sign do not look very animal-like.

**lugal** Etymologically, a compound of lú “man” and gal “great”. This word is further

discussed in Lesson 7.

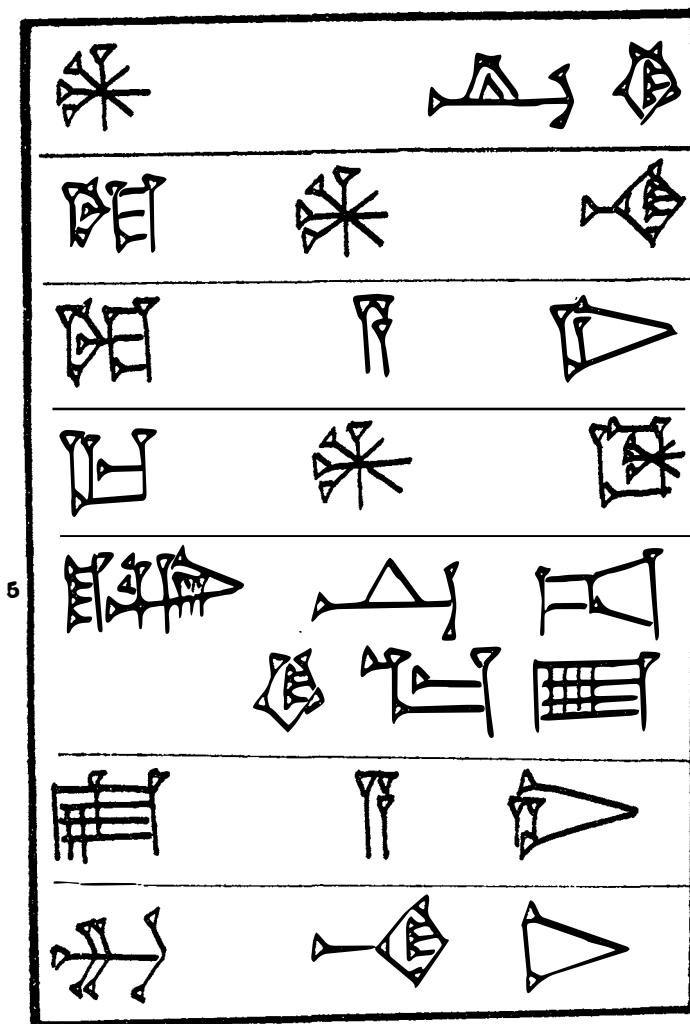
**é** According to I.J. Gelb, “The Sumerian word **é** has several meanings: a) a dwelling house, even a room b) palace, temple c) family, clan d) household. The same meanings occur also for the Akkadian **bītum**” (1979b:2). In the sense of “temple”, it can refer either to one particular building, or to an entire temple complex consisting of several buildings.

In very recent secondary literature, it is occasionally transliterated as: **?ā**.

**dù** Although **dù** occasionally means “to build” **de novo**, it more often means “to rebuild”. It is especially frequent when describing the rebuilding of temples which had fallen into disrepair. Usually, it is difficult to tell in any particular text whether **dù** means “to build” or “to rebuild”; this can only be resolved by historical or archaeological data.

Gelb adds that “It is clear that when a ruler writes of having built a temple for a certain divinity, he means not only that he erected a temple, but also that he provided it with all the necessary means of social and economic support” (1979b:3).

# Text 1



### Notes: autographs

When obtainable, photographs of the texts used in the Lessons have been included. This has not always been possible or desirable, and so most of the texts are presented as “autographs”. In Assyriological parlance, autograph refers to the hand-copy done by a modern Assyriologist, to imitate the cuneiform. The quality of autographs can range from very accurate to very poor. To quote Lieberman,

It is, of course, patent that the “autographs” of all copyists are not equally reliable. Their objectives, ranging from an exact reproduction including every scratch on the tablet to a highly abstract conventional representation of the original (some Assyriologists are even known to have produced “copies” from their transliterated notes) as well as their individual skills and abilities make the value of their copies diverge (1977:67).

It is only through long experience that one gets a feel for how accurate certain Assyriologists are (or aren’t) in their autographs.

#### – Writing practices

Both Sumerian and Akadian are written from left to right across the writing surface. (The earliest Sumerian texts were inscribed in vertical columns, read from right to left.) Most royal inscriptions are subdivided into “lines”, marked by an actual line drawn or impressed on the writing surface. The use of such lines in Sumerian (and Akkadian) is to some extent dependent on the genre of text; royal inscriptions, for example, use them regularly. Many literary texts use them, but just as many do not.

There is some oscillation in the use of the word line. This particular text was divided by its scribe into seven units, but the fifth of these units actually contains two rows of text. In order to be precise, some Sumerologists use the term “case” or “register” to describe the units physically demarcated by the scribe, and the term “line” to describe the actual rows of signs. Thus, in this text case 5 has two lines. Although this is a very handy distinction, most scholars will, in fact, simply use the term line to mean both line or case, especially in unambiguous contexts; this is the procedure followed here.

In line 5, the determinative *ki* begins the second line within the case. There are six cuneiform signs in this particular expression. It would have been physically impossible to put all these six signs on one line, so the scribe put them on two lines. If he had put the *ki*-sign with the *Urim<sub>5</sub>*-sign, there would have been too much empty space on the second line of the case. By indenting the second line of the case, the signs representing the GN are grouped in close proximity to each other.

Transliteration	Transcription	Translation
1: <i>d</i> <u>Nanna</u>	Nanna	For Nanna,
2: <u>nin-an-na</u>	nin.an.a(k)	the “lord” of heaven,
3: <u>nin-a-ni</u>	nin.ani.(r)	his “lord” –
4: <u>Ur-d</u> <u>Nammu</u>	Urnammu	Ur-Nammu,

5: <u>lugal-Urim</u> <sub>5</sub> <u>ki</u> - <u>ma</u> - <u>ke</u> <sub>4</sub>	lugal.Urim.ak.e	the king of Ur -
6: <u>é-a-ni</u>	e.an.i.Ø	his temple -
7: <u>mu-na-dù</u>	mu.na.(n).du.Ø	he built.

### Commentary

1. Nanna is the name of a god; Nammu is the name of a goddess. Sumerian has no gender system; there are no special markers for either inherently masculine or inherently feminine nouns. In most cases, one word may apply to either gender. For example, digir may mean either “god” or “goddess”. In other cases, the masculine and feminine seem to be formed from different roots. In a few other cases, Sumerian adds the word for “female” (munus) after a noun. For example, dumu can either mean “son” (masculine) or “child” (masculine or feminine); dumu-munus is specifically “female child”, hence “daughter”.

2. nin is used here to refer to the male god Nanna. For convenience sake, nin in such contexts may be translated as “lord”.

Sumerian has no definite or indefinite article. For example, é can mean “a house” or “the house”.

nin.an.a(k) forms a “genitive phrase”. The formation of the genitive in Sumerian is quite different from the formations in Semitic or in Indo-European. In Sumerian, in a genitive phrase consisting of two nouns, the “possessor” follows the “possessed”. The two nouns themselves are not formally marked, but the second noun is followed by the “genitive marker” .ak. For example, “the house of the king” is: e.lugal.ak; “lady of heaven” is: nin.an.ak. (Genitive phrases of more than two nouns will be discussed later.)

The form of the genitive marker is /ak/ following a consonant (in transcription, .ak) and /k/ following a vowel (in transcription, .k).

/k/ is one of the amissable consonants discussed under Phonology. As such, when in word-final position, it does not show up in the writing system. As stated above, most Sumerologists believe that the reason such consonants do not appear in writing, is because they were not pronounced. A minority of scholars, however, believe that they were pronounced, and their absence is purely an orthographic problem. In the morphological transcription used here, the /k/ is transcribed within parentheses: .a(k). This transcription shows that the /k/ does not appear in the script.

This genitive phrase is written nin-an-na, which is interpreted as: nin.an.a(k). One might have expected a writing of the type \*nin-an-a. However, Sumerian generally avoids writing word-final (and to some degree, syllable-final) single vowels. Instead, the writing system prefers to graphically reduplicate the consonant immediately preceding the word-final vowel. Thus, in this case, Sumerian writes the na-sign – graphically reduplicating the preceding /n/.

The principle of graphically reduplicating a preceding consonant is common throughout all periods of Sumerian. It is purely a property of the orthography; it does not mean that Sumerian pronounced a double consonant here.

To summarize, nin-an-na represents the genitive phrase: nin.an.a(k). A genitive phrase of two nouns is formed by adding the genitive marker after the second noun. The

genitive marker is /ak/ after a consonant, /k/ after a vowel. /k/ is one of the amissable consonants, and hence does not appear in writing in word-final position. The /a/ of the genitive marker is usually contained within a sign which reduplicates the consonant immediately preceding the /a/.

3. nin-a-ni = nin.an.i(r). Sumerian has a set of suffixes to indicate pronominal possession. They are referred to as “possessive-suffixes” or “pronominal suffixes”. .ani is the possessive-suffix marking third person singular. The forms of the first and second persons, and of all the plurals, are discussed later.

Since Sumerian has no gender system, .ani can mean either “his” or “her”. However, Sumerian does have remnants of what is usually referred to as a distinction in “animacy”. Human beings are “animate”; things and animals are “inanimate”. In the case of the possessive-suffix, .ani is only used to refer to animate antecedents; an entirely different form (.bi) is used to refer to inanimate antecedents (corresponding to English “its”).

After a consonant, the suffix appears as: .ani. After a vowel, it appears both as: .ani, and as: .ni. For example, “his house” can appear as both é-a-ni and é-ni; in the Ur III royal inscriptions, the fuller spelling is much more common.

.ra is the case-marker for the dative case. Its form is /ra/ following a consonant and /r/ following a vowel.

Case-endings in Sumerian work differently than they do in the Semitic or the Indo-European languages. In Sumerian, case-endings occur at the end of an entire nominal phrase. A nominal phrase can vary in size. Minimally, it can consist of a single noun. It can also consist of a noun with a possessive-suffix, or with an adjective, or with an embedded genitive phrase, or even with a long series of appositives. In this particular case, the nominal phrase spans lines 1 to 3. It consists of: a divine name (Nanna); an appositive, consisting of a genitive phrase (nin.an.a(k)); a second appositive, consisting of a noun with a possessive-suffix (nin.an.i). The dative case-marker .r comes at the end of this entire phrase. This can be diagrammed as: [Nanna nin.an.a(k) nin.an.i].r. This is, in general, the way all case-markers work in Sumerian (and, even more generally, in agglutinative languages).

The dative case is primarily used in Sumerian to express an indirect object; for example, “He gave it to the king”. It is also frequently used (as it is here) to express a benefactive, that is, the person on whose behalf an action was performed. In such cases, it can be translated by “for”.

The case-marker /r/ is not written here. Its presence in spoken Sumerian is shown by the fact that it is actually written in other (mostly later) inscriptions. In these other inscriptions, there are forms such as: digir-ra-ni-ir, “for his god” = digir.an.i.r (following the normal convention that CV-VC stands for /CVC/, that is, ni-ir = /nir/). In the body of texts in this book, .r first appears in Text 14, an inscription of Amar-Sin, the grandson of Ur-Nammu.

It is not known why the /r/ is not written; this is discussed in Lesson 14. The situation is different from that of the genitive marker. The /k/ of the genitive marker is an amissable consonant, and so is regularly not written. But /r/ is apparently a non-amissable consonant, and does occasionally appear in the writing.

4. ur followed by the name of a deity is a very common way to form personal names in Sumerian, in all periods of the language. In Text 1, Ur-dNammu occurs; in Text 19a, Ur-dLamar. Such names are genitive phrases, meaning “man of DN” or “warrior of DN”. The name then is to be understood as: Ur.Nammu.(k), with the genitive marker taking the form /k/ after a preceding vowel. However, there is some disagreement about the presence of the genitive marker in proper names. Some Sumerologists believe that in proper names the genitive marker was deleted. Thus, this particular name may have been pronounced as /urnammu/, and not as /urnammuk/. Other Sumerologists however, do not believe this to be so. The first practice has been followed in this book, and thus this name has been transcribed as Urnammu, not as Ur.nammu.(k). In translation, the most common Assyriological practice is to give the name as Ur-Nammu.

5. lugal-Urim<sub>5</sub><sup>ki</sup>-ma-ke<sub>4</sub> = lugal.Urim.ak.e, “king of Ur”. Because the genitive marker follows a consonant (here, /m/), its full form (/ak/, with initial /a/) is used.

When the genitive marker is directly followed by a vowel, the /k/ is pronounced, and shows up in the writing (recall that in such phrases as nin.an.a(k), the /k/ is word-final, and hence does not show up in the writing).

The .e is the marker of the ergative case, as discussed under Ergativity. As do all case-markers, it comes at the end of the entire nominal phrase. The nominal phrase here consists of a personal name, Ur-Nammu (a genitive phrase in origin), and an appositive consisting of a genitive phrase, lugal.Urim.ak. This may be diagrammed as: [Urnammu lugal.Urim.ak].e.

The ergative case-marker .e marks what we would call the active subject of a transitive verb, or, in more appropriate terminology, the agent. (Because of inconsistencies in terminology, however, this .e is sometimes referred to as “agent”, “agentive marker” or “ending”, “subject”, “transitive subject”, “ergative marker”, etc.)

The cuneiform signs do not reflect well the morphology of Sumerian here. In transliteration, the signs are: lugal-Urim<sub>5</sub><sup>ki</sup>-ma-ke<sub>4</sub>. In morphological transcription, this is: lugal.Urim.ak.e. The ma-sign reduplicates the final /m/ of Urim<sub>5</sub>, and includes the /a/ of the genitive marker. The ke<sub>4</sub>-sign includes the /k/ of the genitive marker, and the /e/ of the ergative case-marker. Thus, both the ma-sign and the ke<sub>4</sub>-sign represent segments of two different morphemes. This use of the ke<sub>4</sub>-sign is very frequent; it is the sign normally used for the combination of segments of the genitive marker and the ergative case-marker.

Not much is known about the syllabic structure of spoken Sumerian, but it may have been closer to the written form than to the morphological transcription. This line may have been syllabified something like: /lu-ga-lu-ri-ma-ke/. If so, the written form is actually closer to the presumed syllabic structure of Sumerian than it is to the morphemic structure of Sumerian.

The use of hyphens in transliteration varies to some degree from scholar to scholar. All Sumerologists would use hyphens in the word Urim<sub>5</sub><sup>ki</sup>-ma-ke<sub>4</sub>. Some would put a hyphen between lugal and Urim<sub>5</sub>: lugal-Urim<sub>5</sub><sup>ki</sup>-ma-ke<sub>4</sub>. In this latter case, hyphens are being used to link all the signs which form the entire nominal phrase. Others use hyphens only between signs belonging to one word. It is not always easy, however, to define “word” in Sumerian.

6. é-a-ni = e.an.i.Ø, “his temple”. As in line 3, .ani is the third person animate possessive-suffix. The antecedent is ambiguous; it could refer to Ur-Nammu, or it could refer to Nanna. From other texts it is clear that .ani refers back to Nanna.

The Ø is the case-marker for the absolute case. This case indicates what we would call the direct object of a transitive verb, or, more appropriately, the patient. There is, however, not a great deal of consistency in nomenclature, and so such terms as “accusative”, “direct object marker”, etc., are commonly used.

The nominal phrase here is quite short, consisting of the noun é, and the possessive-suffix .ani: [e.an.i].Ø.

7. mu-na-dù = mu.na.(n.)du.Ø, “he built”. This line contains the verbal phrase. The verb in Sumerian works rather differently than the verb in the Semitic or Indo-European languages. A finite verb form in Sumerian consists of a series of verbal prefixes, followed by a verbal root, then followed by a smaller series of verbal suffixes. Certain of these affixes are obligatory, while others are optional. Because of the general uncertainty of Sumerian grammar, the precise number of prefixes occurring before the verbal root is unsure. The view presented here might be called “minimalist”. Alternative interpretations will be discussed later.

The entire sequence of verbal prefixes occurring before the verbal root is usually referred to as the “verbal chain”. The first prefix to appear in this chain is an optional “modal-prefix” (also referred to as a “mood-marker”). Modal-prefixes are used for such sentence types as cohortative, jussive, subjunctive, etc. A “normal” declarative sentence is in the indicative mood, which is unmarked. The verb in line 7 is indicative, and so there is no modal-prefix.

The second position is occupied by the “conjugation-prefix”. There are some half-dozen conjugation-prefixes. These prefixes are among the most mysterious features of Sumerian; it is not known exactly what information these prefixes convey. This means that it is not known, for example, what the difference in meaning is between a finite verbal form with the conjugation-prefix mu and one with the conjugation-prefix l. Such variation occurs in the texts, but it is not known what this variation implies.

Needless to say, there are several theories about the function of the conjugation-prefixes. They may be connected with time: indicating whether events are near or far (temporally, or even emotionally) relative to the speaker. They may have to do with space: indicating whether events are near or far (spatially, or even emotionally) relative to the speaker. At times, they seem to correspond to a polite ~ familiar distinction.

It is probable that the conjugation-prefixes convey nuances which are not normally conveyed in English. This means that even if it were understood what the conjugation-prefixes meant, it would not be possible to translate them readily into English, except by an elaborate periphrasis. (Jacobsen, for example, believes that the conjugation-prefix mu is used “To indicate ‘closeness’ to the speaker if by closeness we understand not only closeness in space and time but also emotional closeness, empathy, involvement” [1965:437].)

In practice, Sumerologists ignore the conjugation-prefixes; they are not reflected in translation. Writing in 1972, Maurice Lambert said: “Today, the prefix does not exist for

the translator of Sumerian, it is only an object of study for the grammarian" (1972-3:97).

The problem of the conjugation-prefixes cannot be solved here. In subsequent texts, the various conjugation-prefixes will be pointed out, and the possible kinds of information which they may be conveying will be discussed.

Text 1 uses the conjugation-prefix mu. This conjugation-prefix is very common in the Ur III royal inscriptions. In fact, almost all past-tense verbs in main sentences in the Ur III royal inscriptions use the conjugation-prefix mu.

The next set of prefixes are the (mostly) obligatory "dimensional-prefixes". There is nothing comparable to these forms in Semitic or Indo-European. They "cross-reference" (or "resume" or "register") the case relationships appearing in the various nominal phrases in the sentence, with the exception of the agent and patient. In the verb in line 7, the dimensional-prefix .na cross-references the dative case marked by .r in line 3.

Most earlier studies of Sumerian stated that the dimensional-prefixes were obligatory, and that there was a one-to-one relationship between case relationships and dimensional-prefixes: every case relationship is resumed by its dimensional-prefix, and conversely every occurrence of a dimensional-prefix implies a corresponding case relationship somewhere in the sentence. While this one-to-one correspondence may have been valid for "pre-historic" Sumerian, in actual historic Sumerian the situation is not so neat. Gene Gragg has made a detailed study of the dimensional-prefixes in the Old Babylonian literary texts; he states that they "function independently of concord to a much greater extent than has been recognized by current theories" (1973a:10).

The dimensional-prefixes often seem unnecessary or redundant, because they do not convey any new information; rather, they "merely" cross-reference the already-present case relationships. However, all languages have a certain amount of built-in redundancy, to help cope with the possibilities of information being garbled or lost. Many other languages cross-reference case relationships, in various ways.

The nominal phrase in the dative is the only nominal phrase (except those indicating the agent and the patient) in the sentence, so only one dimensional-prefix occurs. If other nominal phrases were present, they would also be resumed. Thus, it is possible for there to be one, two, or three dimensional-prefixes in one verbal chain; that is, the dimensional-prefixes are cumulative. (The longest attested sequence appears to be four dimensional-prefixes in one verbal chain.) There is a hierarchical order to these prefixes; the dative, for instance, always comes first. Not all such rules, however, are understood; in addition, there are certain morphophonemic changes which are not clear. These complications will be discussed later.

Following the dimensional-prefixes comes a (probably) obligatory prefix, the "personal-affix" (there is no generally-accepted term). These forms have been much discussed. They apparently cross-reference the agent and the patient, although this is not completely certain.

In the case of a verb in the past tense, the personal-affix in this position cross-references the agent. Thus, in Text 1, the personal-affix .(n) cross-references the agent marked by the ergative case-marker of line 5.

The form of the third-person singular animate personal-affix is: .n. As will be seen

later, the personal-affix has different forms for first and second person, and also different forms for inanimate agents.

This particular prefix always occupies the position closest to the verbal root. However, this prefix frequently does not show up in the writing. The reason for its absence is not as clear as that of, for example, the dative case-marker. The dative case-marker is not normally written in texts from the early stages of the Ur III dynasty (nor in earlier texts), but it begins to show up frequently in texts from the time of Amar-Sin on. Thus, scholars are reasonably confident that the /r/ of the dative case-marker is present, even if not written; its later appearance is the result of a change in orthographic practice. The rules governing the presence and absence of the personal-affix /n/ are, however, not so clear-cut; it is not often written even in later texts.

The presence or absence of .n cannot simply be correlated with a dimension of time. In the Gudea texts, for example, forms both with and without .n occur, with no obvious rules governing their distribution. And in later Sumerian, forms also occur both with and without the .n. This means that rules cannot yet be determined for the presence or absence of /n/ in the script, and it is not in fact sure at what level such rules would apply. The rules may be purely orthographic; there seem to be other cases in Sumerian where syllable-final nasals are not expressed in writing. Or, the rules may be phonological; the /n/ may have dropped early, leaving a nasalized vowel, which could not adequately be represented in the script. More probably, there may be a complex set of morphological and syntactical rules governing deletion of /n/; it has been posited, for example, that /n/ is only used (and so only expressed in writing) to resolve possibly ambiguous cases.

Partially for convenience sake, I have assumed that the personal-affix .n is always present, unless there is a specific reason for its absence. Hence, it is transcribed as: (n.). This presumed consistency must be taken with a grain of salt.

After all these obligatory and optional prefixes, comes the verbal root, dù in this particular case. The root in Sumerian appears to be invariable. There is nothing like the complicated inflection of Semitic or Indo-European roots for person and number (the only inflection for person is in the personal-affix position, immediately before the verbal root; a limited inflection for number occurs in a set of personal-affixes after the verbal root).

There is no canonical shape of the root. Roots of the syllabic shape CV and CVC are perhaps the most common, but roots of other syllabic structures are frequent.

After the verbal root, there occur a number of optional affixes, not all of which are well-understood. Some of these affixes are used to express modal and other nuances, such as potentiality, irrealis, etc.

For a verb in the past tense, the most important affix which occurs in this position is the personal-affix which cross-references the patient. The personal-affix which cross-references a third-person singular patient can be represented by zero, Ø. Thus, the patient in this sentence (e.ani.Ø) is resumed by a Ø after the verbal root. This means that the patient is marked by Ø, and that it is cross-referenced by Ø. This may vaguely seem like cheating ("nothing resumed by nothing"), but there are theoretical justifications for this interpretation.

Thus, the agent and the patient are resumed differently: The agent is resumed in the

position immediately before the verbal root, and the patient is resumed in the position immediately after the verbal root. The term personal-affix is used to refer to both affixes.

To sum up, the verbal phrase in Sumerian normally consists of: an optional modal-prefix (the indicative is unmarked); an obligatory conjugation-prefix, whose function is unclear; one or more basically obligatory dimensional-prefixes, which cross-reference all case relationships (except that of the agent and patient); an obligatory personal-affix, which in the past tense cross-references the agent; the verbal root; an obligatory personal-affix, which in the past tense cross-references the patient; other optional affixes.

This particular verbal form may be summarized as follows:

mu . na . (n.) du . Ø  
(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

- (1) conjugation-prefix
- (2) dimensional-prefix cross-referencing the dative
- (3) personal-affix cross-referencing the agent
- (4) verbal root
- (5) personal-affix cross-referencing the patient.

The verb in line 7 was translated as past tense, without any discussion. Sumerian has two sets of verbal forms. The difference in function between the two is somewhat unsure. Some Sumerologists believe that the difference was one of tense (past ~ present-future); others believe that it was a difference of aspect (perfect ~ imperfect); and others believe that it was a difference of Aktionsart (punctual ~ durative, etc.). For convenience sake, they will be referred to here as aspects.

Akkadian scribes gave names to these two aspects. One aspect they called hamtu ("quick"), and the other they called marû ("fat"). There is some evidence that the Sumerian word for hamtu was ul₄, and the word for marû was niga; the original meaning of these two words is not sure. The terms hamtu and marû are frequently used by modern Assyriologists when referring to these verbal forms in Sumerian.

In the Ur III royal inscriptions, it does seem that basically the hamtu is used for actions which occurred in the past, and the marû is used for actions in the present and future. That is, the two seem more tense-like than aspect-like. But this may be due to the relative simplicity of these inscriptions.

The hamtu form is unmarked; it is the citation form (the form given, for example, in the Vocabularies). As will be seen later, the marû is formed from the hamtu in several different ways, and the systems for cross-referencing the agent and patient in the hamtu and in the marû are quite different.

#### Discussion: structure

Having examined this inscription with a fine-tooth comb, let us now consider the structure of the inscription as a whole. If all appositional noun phrases are grouped with their head nouns, and their functions are labeled, we see:

[Nanna, nin.an.a(k), nin.ani].(r)	benefactive
[Urnammu, lugal.Urim.ak].e	agent
[e.ani].Ø	patient
mu.na.(n.)du.Ø	verb

The dative marked in .r is resumed by the dimensional-prefix .na; the ergative marked in .e is resumed by the personal-affix .n; the absolute marked in Ø is resumed by the personal-affix Ø. This is a rather aesthetically satisfying system; as will be seen later, however, things often do not hang together so neatly.

Second, let us look at the word order:

BENEFACTIVE - AGENT - PATIENT - VERB  
 (1)                    (2)                    (3)                    (4)

This particular order is actually somewhat different from standard Sumerian syntax. In more standard Sumerian, the word order is:

AGENT - PATIENT - COMPLEMENTS - VERB  
 (1)                    (2)                    (3)                    (4)

or:                    AGENT - COMPLEMENTS - PATIENT - VERB  
 (1)                    (2)                    (3)                    (4)

The difference in word order between standard Sumerian prose and that of the royal inscriptions is in the position of the benefactive. In royal inscriptions, the benefactive is almost always fronted; this gives added emphasis to the deity on whose behalf some act is being commemorated. In English, the difference might be reflected as "For Nanna, Ur-Nammu built his temple", instead of "Ur-Nammu built his temple for Nanna".

Hallo's investigation of the structure of the Ur III royal inscriptions showed that their style is very formulaic. A typical inscription is composed of the following elements, almost always in the same order:

- (1) A benefactive phrase, giving the name of the deity, with optional epithets;
- (2) An agentive phrase, giving the name of the builder or donor, with optional epithets;
- (3) A patient phrase, describing the object built or donated;
- (4) A verbal phrase, highly stylized and formulaic.

### -Terminology

As does any discipline, Sumerology has engendered its own host of technical terms, such as Auslaut, amissable, etc. Some of these terms are peculiar to Sumerologists; they are not standard terms familiar to general linguists. Unfortunately, some of these terms are used in ways which cause general linguists to take umbrage.

The term verbal chain is used here to refer to the series of prefixes which occur before the verbal root. Other people use the term to include the entire verb: prefixes-root-suffixes.

Similarly, the term nominal chain is sometimes used to refer to a nominal phrase. Sometimes both the verbal chain and the nominal chain are subsumed under the category “Kettenbildung”.

The term conjugation-prefix, in particular, is misleading, because these elements have nothing to do with conjugation, as this term is usually understood. However, this is the only term used by Sumerologists.

There is no standard term to refer to what is called here the dimensional-prefix; the most common term is probably dimensional infix. This use of the term infix, however, is often irksome to general linguists, who use the term to refer explicitly to an affix placed within another morpheme; an example would be the /t/ in the Akkadian Bt stem, or the Arabic Eighth Form.

#### –ke₄

The value of the  sign as ke₄ was deduced by Kramer in 1936. There is no native grammatical tradition which gives this value; the Akkadian lexical lists give the values of this sign as gé and ki₄ (in addition to such values as kid, etc.) Kramer reasoned that the only way to make the Sumerian writing be consistent with our understanding of the morphology of the Sumerian genitive was to posit a reading ke₄, even if the lexical lists do not give this value. Virtually all modern scholars have accepted his reasoning. (However, even this seemingly well-established fact of Sumerian grammar has recently been questioned, by Lieberman. He believes that the genitive marker was /ag/, not /ak/, but he has not yet published his reasons for doubting the conventional interpretation.)

#### –Animacy

As was mentioned when discussing the possessive-suffix .ani, Sumerian has traces of an animate ~ inanimate distinction. This distinction is also seen in the personal-affix of the third-person hamtu-transitive verb, where .n marks an animate agent, but .b marks an inanimate agent (rather a rare occurrence). This animate ~ inanimate distinction does not carry through all aspects of the grammar.

The terms animate and inanimate are those traditionally used by linguists, even if this means that animals are called inanimate (Jacobsen prefers the terms “personal” and “non-personal”). In fables, however, animals are usually treated grammatically as animate.

#### –Conjugation-prefixes

Lambert was quoted above, to the effect that the conjugation-prefixes are simply not translated. This is because it is not known what information they convey, and the odds are that their function has no easy equivalent in English. Edmond Sollberger has said:

Their true rôle is so distinctively Sumerian, they express ideas so alien to our languages, that not only is there no consensus on the nature of their function, but we simply ignore them without impairing, or so it seems to us, our understanding of the text. There is no other translation for mu-ğar and i-ğar than “(he) placed”, although it must be pretty obvious that had there been no difference there wouldn’t have been two prefixes. ... It is legitimate to posit

that a certain verbal form implies that the action is performed by the subject wishing to indicate that his goal, though within his immediate perception, remains without his actual sphere of physical contact; it is another thing to try and express that in one good English (or even German) word (1973:160-61).

F.R. Kraus has criticized this view of Sollberger: “Sollberger’s opinion, that Sumerian texts can be understood without paying attention to the verbal prefix, is valid for a certain kind of text, but is certainly not valid for legal documents” (1958:83 n.47).

### –Conjugation

The forms of the hamtu-transitive verb in the singular are listed here. This and other paradigms should be understood as reflecting Ur III morphology, in Ur III orthography. The model verb used is sar, “to write”, with the conjugation-prefix mu.

first person singular	<u>mu-sar</u>	mu. $\emptyset$ .sar
second	<u>mu-sar</u>	mu.e.sar
third animate	<u>mu-sar</u>	mu.n.sar
inanimate	<u>mu-sar</u>	mu.b.sar

The form of the first person is somewhat unsure. The form of the second person is more sure, because the .e sometimes shows up in the script. Similarly, the forms of the third person are “sure”, because of the occasional presence of .n and .b in the script.

In this section, the personal-affixes .n and .b have been discussed as markers for the third person. Earlier, it was said that they cross-reference the agent. Strictly speaking, they cross-reference a third person agent. A first person agent (“I”) is cross-referenced by  $\emptyset$ , and a second person agent (“you”) is cross-referenced by .e. In other words, one can understand the personal-affixes as cross-referencing the agent, or as marking the person of the verb; in Sumerian, these are two different ways of describing the same thing.

### – hamtu and marû

The first person to recognize that hamtu and marû were used as native grammatical terms was Heinrich Zimmern, in 1885, although he did not know what they meant. Paul Haupt was apparently the first to give these words their etymologies as “quick” and “fat”, in 1932.

### – Typology

The Introduction discussed morphological typology, which is one attempt to broadly categorize the languages of the world into a limited number of types. That particular scheme of classification is somewhat out of favor, partially on theoretical grounds, and partially on the grounds that it does not offer more enlightening insights about language. A more revealing scheme of linguistic typology is called “word order typology” (although “constituent order typology” might be a more apt term). This scheme examines the “basic” order of the major constituents in a sentence. In English, for example, the most typical order is: subject-verb-object. Hence, English is said to be a S-V-O language. Sumerian,

on the other hand, is a S-O-V language.

S-O-V languages pattern alike in several ways, not just in word order. For example, very few S-O-V languages have prepositions. Instead, they use case-endings at the end of nominal phrases, that is, “postpositions”.

Also, in most S-O-V languages, adjectives follow their head noun, not precede. As will be seen in Lesson 2, this is also how Sumerian works. Thus, in many ways (not in all), Sumerian is a typical S-O-V language.

G. Haayer (1986) discusses some of the characteristics of Sumerian in light of the universal tendencies of language. He points out, for example, that “Most ergative languages have SOV basic word order”, and “The combination of ergativity and postpositions in a single language points almost invariably to SOV basic word order” (1986:80).

#### – Function of text

Let us now look at the function and *Sitz im Leben* of this particular text. Hallo has divided the Ur III royal inscriptions into five categories, based on typological criteria: standard, building, votive, weight, and seal inscriptions. Text 1 is a building inscription; examples will occur of all the other four types. Building inscriptions are defined by Hallo as “monuments that became integral parts, whether functional or decorative, of the buildings which they commemorated” (1962:8).

The building inscriptions are further subdivided on the basis of the type of object they were inscribed on: bricks (the most numerous of all royal inscriptions), foundation deposits, door sockets, and clay cones. Examples will be seen of each. Text 1 was inscribed on a brick, forming an actual part of the masonry of a building. Building inscriptions in general were not designed to be read by the builder’s contemporaries; rather, they were designed to be read by future rebuilders of the building, most likely future kings. Ultimately, these buildings and their accompanying inscriptions can be thought of as attempts by rulers to attain some form of immortality. (Text 16 is a door socket with two inscriptions. One is of an early ruler of Ur [about 2400 BC]; the other is of a ruler of the Ur III period. The door socket was evidently uncovered during rebuilding carried out in the Ur III period, and was re-used.) As will be discussed in Lesson 2, often several copies of the same inscription are found.

#### – History

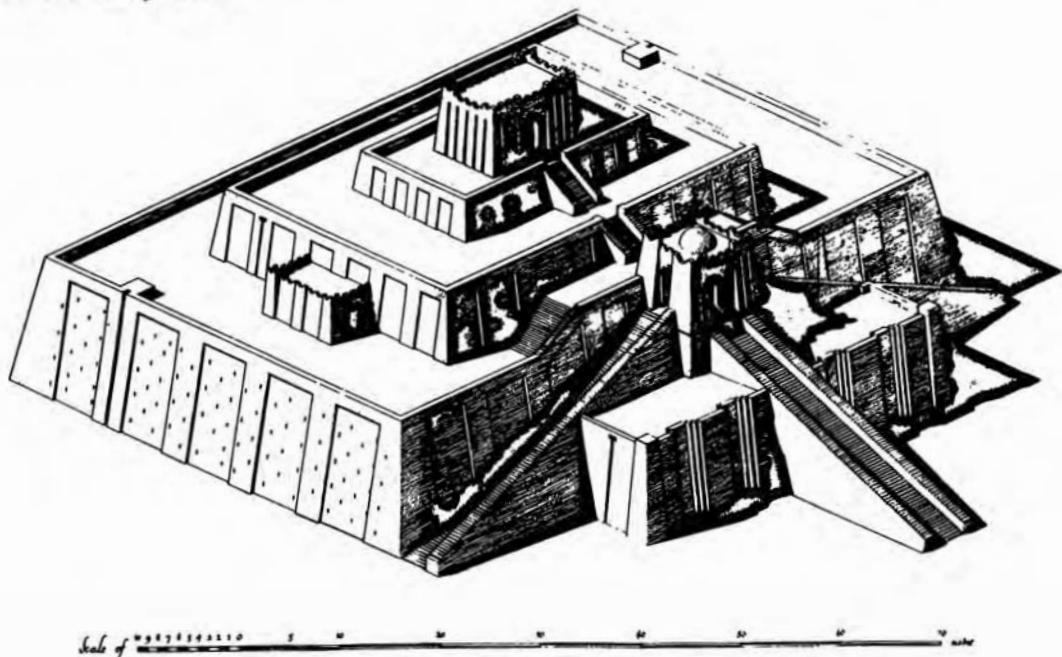
Throughout Mesopotamian history, temples were built, repaired, modified, or virtually entirely rebuilt. During the Ur III period, there were many specifically royal building projects. Building inscriptions of Ur-Nammu have been found at Ur, Eridu, Larsa, Nippur, and Uruk. He was responsible for building (and rebuilding) the large sacred area at Ur, consisting of several structures. The most famous of these is its ziggurat, the best preserved ziggurat in all of Mesopotamia: its base measures some 60 x 40 meters. It was repaired by several later Mesopotamian rulers. (In Lesson 9, Woolley’s reconstruction of Nabonidus’ rebuilding of this same ziggurat is pictured.)

The following drawing is Woolley’s reconstruction of the ziggurat. The following

photo is of the remains now standing; the condition of these remains is partially a result of modern reconstruction of the site.

### THE ZIGGURAT OF UR-NAMMU RESTORED.

*ISOMETRIC PROJECTION*



While the sacred area as a whole was dedicated to Nanna, he also had his own court in front of the ziggurat, and other buildings sacred to him. The entire sacred complex was known as the É-kiš-nu-ğál; the ziggurat was known as the É-temen-ní-guru₃ (see Lesson 9). Both terms are of uncertain etymology. The brick containing Text 1 formed part of a temple known as the É-hur-sağ (“mountain temple”).

One of the more famous pieces of Ancient Near Eastern art is known as the “Stela of Ur-Nammu”. It was found in a very fragmentary state in Ur, scattered throughout the Nanna temple complex; it may have been destroyed during the Elamite sack of Ur in 2004 BC. It depicts a number of symbolic activities, mostly obscure to us, but apparently shows Ur-Nammu himself carrying building tools (his name appears on a floating fragment of the stela). This stela has been known since the 1920s, but restoration work is still on-going. (A very interesting discussion is in Canby 1987.)



In Lesson 7, a photograph is reproduced of a figure which represents Ur-Nammu himself (somewhat stylized) in his rôle as builder.

Discussing the function of the Mesopotamian ruler in this rôle as builder, Wolfgang Heimpel says:

The ruler in Mesopotamia, when building for the gods, manufactured the first brick himself, sprinkled the foundations with precious materials, laid the foundation box, mixed some of the mortar, and led the celebrations of dedication. The best sources for these ceremonies are the building inscriptions of Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian kings and the cylinders of Gudea. The latter contain the most detailed information which is couched in poetic language and presents us with many difficulties of interpretation (1987:205).

#### –Literature

In addition to his well-documented rôle as builder, Ur-Nammu has become famous as the promulgator of the world's first attested law code, the "Code of Ur-Nammu". At least three copies of parts of the text are known, but all are heavily damaged. The largest fragment was found at Nippur. In 1981 a fragment of the Code found at Sippar was published. Basing himself on this new fragment, Kramer suggested that the "author" of the Code was not Ur-Nammu, but rather his son Shulgi; this view has won general acceptance.

Ur-Nammu was also the subject of several literary works. These include "The Coronation of Ur-Nammu", a kind of self-laudatory hymn, and "The Death of Ur-Nammu and his Descent to the Netherworld", in which his premature death on the battlefield is lamented.

#### – Proper names

Most recently, Miguel Civil (1985:27) transliterates the name of the founder of the Ur III Dynasty as Ur-Namma, instead of the usual Ur-Nammu. He bases himself on attestations of the name in syllabic orthography. He suggests that the original form of the name was a theoretical /Ur-Namnam/. Jacobsen also now reads the original form of the divine name as Namma, but derives /Namma/ from /nin inim/, "lady female genital"; /Nammu/ is a later form (1987:155 n.5).

As will be discussed in Appendix 2, a number of bilingual lexical lists have been found at Ebla. Names of gods occur several times in these lists. For Namma, the Eblaite equivalent is given as: ši-nu ha-mi-um. This is somewhat difficult to understand. F.M. Fales thinks that the Eblaite expression might mean "venemous tooth" (1984:176). It is hard to square such a description or epithet with what is known about Namma.

#### –Titulature

Many of the appositive phrases describing the king in these inscriptions are actually titles, occurring in many inscriptions. (Although sometimes it is not possible to tell if an adjectival phrase is a title or not.) Much work has been done in determining the origin of certain titles, their relationship to parallel Akkadian titles, their falling into desuetude, etc.

The principal work on this topic is by Hallo: Early Mesopotamian Royal Titles: A Philologic and Historical Analysis (1957). This was followed by M.-J. Seux in 1967, who studied in particular the individual words occurring in Sumerian and Akkadian titles.

The title used in Text 1, “King of Ur”, was used by all five kings of the Ur III Dynasty.



# Lesson 2

Text 2 is a second building inscription of Ur-Nammu. It was inscribed on a brick, forming part of the Inanna temple (see Lesson 9).



## Sign-list and vocabulary

 Inanna (DN, fem)

 Ki-en-gi Sumer (GN)

 Ki-uri Akkad (GN)

 nitah (nita) man, male

 kalag (kala) to be mighty

 ga

## Notes

**Inanna** The daughter of Nanna. She was the Sumerian goddess of love and fertility, of the morning and evening star, and to some degree of war; she had other sides as well. She may have absorbed some of the attributes of originally independent deities. Later equated with the Akkadian Ishtar, in some ways she was the most important goddess in the Mesopotamian pantheon. Because of her rather fiery temperament, and the manifold aspects of her personality, she is perhaps the most interesting of all Mesopotamian deities.

She was worshipped in many cities, but especially in Uruk, where she was the tutelary goddess. Her principal temple at Uruk was the Eanna (é-an-na = e.an.a(k), “house of the sky/heaven”).

The reading of her name is much disputed. It is also transliterated as: Inana, Innin, and Ninni<sup>6</sup>. The original pictographic meaning of the cuneiform sign is also uncertain. Her name is usually interpreted as: nin.an.a(k), “Lady of the sky/heaven”. This is also how the Akkadian scribes understood her name. Jacobsen believes that Inanna was originally the “numen of the communal storehouse for dates”. He thinks that the /an/-component of her name meant “date-clusters”: “Her name ... would appear to have meant originally ‘the lady of the date-clusters’” (1957:108); later, her name was “re-interpreted” as “lady of the sky/heaven”.

**Ki-en-gi** This GN is always written syllabically. The etymology is unsure; this is discussed below. The word ended in a /r/, not reflected in the script. The Akkadian equivalent of Kiengi was Šumeru. This Akkadian word may be a dialectal pronunciation of the word Kiengi(r). The English word “Sumer” is usually thought to derive from the Akkadian form.

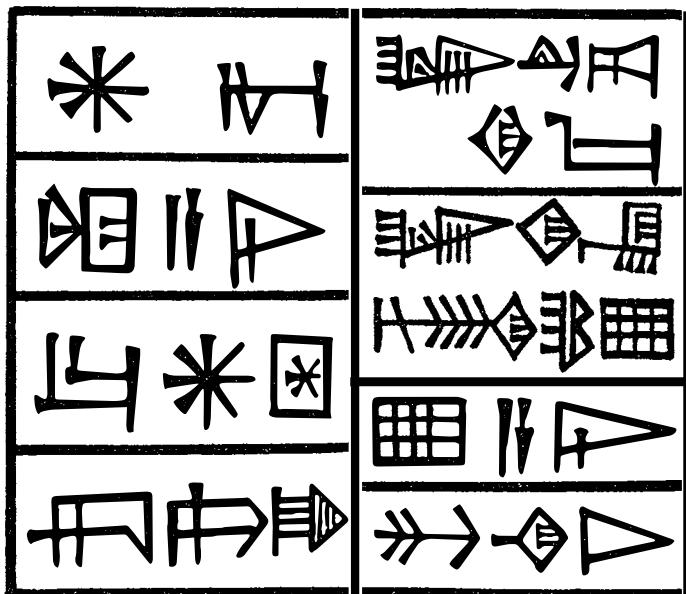
The first appearance of Ki-en-gi is in an inscription of Enshakushanna of Uruk (who ruled approximately 2432–2403 BC), who refers to himself as: en-Ki-en-gi lugal-kalam-ma, “the lord of Sumer, the king of the land”.

**Ki-uri** The etymology is unknown. It is not impossible that the ki-element was originally a determinative.

**nitaḥ** The basic meaning appears to be “male”; it can often be loosely translated as “man”. The Akkadian equivalent is zikaru, glossed by the CAD as: “1. male (human and animal), 2. man, 3. ram”.

**kalag** The Akkadian equivalent verb, danānu, is translated by the CAD as: “to become strong”. The verbal adjective, dannu, is translated as: “1) solid, strong, hard, heavy, thick, massive, fortified, steady, loud, 2) legitimate, binding, reliable, 3) strong, powerful, mighty, great, 4) fierce, savage, difficult, dangerous, serious, grave, obstinate, bad, tyrannical, harsh, pressing, urgent, essential, imperative”.

# Text 2



## Notes

Some of the signs which occur both in Text 1 and in Text 2 differ slightly from each other. In Text 2, the é-sign and the ke₄-sign differ only in their length. In Text 1 they were of the same length, but differed in the position and length of the verticals. Strictly speaking the sign-shapes in Text 2 are more “correct”.

In line 6, the word Ki-en-gi is divided into two lines within the one case.

Transliteration	Transcription	Translation
1: <u>d</u> <u>Inanna</u>	Inanna	For Inanna,
2: <u>nin-a-ni</u>	nin.an.i.(r)	his lady –
3: <u>Ur-d</u> <u>Nammu</u>	Urnammu	Ur-Nammu,
4: <u>nitah-kalag-ga</u>	nitah.kalaga	the mighty man,
5: <u>lugal-Urim<sub>5</sub>ki-ma</u>	lugal.Urim.a(k)	the king of Ur,
6: <u>lugal-Ki-en-gi-Ki-uri-ke<sub>4</sub></u>	lugal.Kiengi.Kiuri.k.e	the king of Sumer and Akkad –
7: <u>é-a-ni</u>	e.an.i.Ø	her temple –
8: <u>mu-na-dù</u>	mu.na.(n.)du.Ø	he built.

### Commentary

2. nin-a-ni = nin.an.i.(r), as in Text 1. Here the nominal phrase expressing the benefactive consists of the DN and an appositive, which itself consists of a noun with a possessive-suffix.

In this text, nin is used to refer to a goddess. This is the more normal practice; in Text 1, nin referred to a god.

4. nitah-kalag-ga = nitah.kalaga. nitah is one of several Sumerian words meaning approximately “man”.

kalag-ga, representing /kalaga/, is an adjective meaning “mighty”. Many adjectives in Sumerian end in /a/, representing a morpheme .a. This .a has many uses: formation of adjectives from verbal roots; nominalization of verbal phrases; marking of certain kinds of subordinate clauses; etc. It is sometimes called a “nominalizer” or “nominalizing particle” (although such terms do not cover all its uses). For convenience sake, the term “nominalizer” will be used here. In this particular case, the adjective /kalaga/ is formed from the verbal root /kalag/, by the addition of the nominalizer /a/. Since the nominalizer .a is “built into” the adjective, it is not separated-out in transcription. That is, it is transcribed as: kalaga, and not as: kalag.a. This is further discussed in Lesson 6.

Some Sumerologists prefer to say that Sumerian has no real (morphological) class of adjectives, but instead has two kinds of “participles”, one of which ends in the nominalizer /a/. For convenience sake, however, the traditional term adjective is retained here.

The two cuneiform signs of the adjective are here transliterated as kalag-ga. However, the same two signs of this word are often transliterated as kala-ga. If one looks in the standard sign-lists for this particular sign () , it is given the values kal, kala, kalag, kalaga, and even kalga.

Probably all Sumerologists would say that the word for “mighty” was formed from two morphemes: the root /kalag/ with the addition of the nominalizer /a/. They would also say that the word was probably pronounced something like /kalaga/. (There are late, syllabic spellings of this word as kal-la-ga, etc.) But exactly how do the two written signs convey this information? There have been three approaches to the problem. One view is to see the first sign as representing the entire word /kalaga/. In this case, the following ga-

sign would be a kind of “phonetic complement”: It gives some extra information to the reader, helping him to choose the correct reading of the previous sign. The word might then be transliterated as: kalaga<sup>ga</sup>.

A second view attempts to make the signs approach the transcription. Since this word is pronounced /kalaga/, and since the /ga/ is expressed by the ga-sign, this view says that the first sign must therefore be read /kala/: kala-ga. Thus, this view really derives the transliteration from the transcription.

The third view says that the transliteration should not necessarily be expected to fit the transcription. Rather, there are certain general rules of Sumerian orthography which are found in several different contexts. In this particular case, the transliteration kalag-ga reflects the orthographic rule that a consonant is graphically reduplicated before a word-final (occasionally syllable-final) vowel, particularly across a morpheme boundary. For example, in Text 1 there occurred: nin-an-na, for nin.an.a(k).

The entire problem is not easy to resolve. Several obvious questions come to mind: How can one know, for instance, that the sign  can, in fact, be read as kal, or kala, or kalag, or kalaga, or kalga? To what extent are readings “manufactured”, to make the transliteration more closely approximate the transcription? How valid is the general rule of Sumerian orthography presented above?

In practice, inconsistencies arise in transliteration, because no matter which transliteration system is followed, the meaning is normally clear. Whether these two signs are understood as kalaga<sup>ga</sup>, kalag-ga or as kala-ga, everyone would understand the pronunciation to be /kalaga/, and the meaning to be “mighty”. (Even here, however, some Sumerologists would say that the original form \*/kalaga/ > /kalga/. It is true that similar cases of vocalic loss are attested in Sumerian. However, the [late] syllabic writings of the type kal-la-ga would seem to argue against such an interpretation in this particular case.) Therefore, some Sumerologists prefer not to deal with these problems, unless they are interested in the writing system per se.

This problem has been discussed at some length, because it is useful to be aware of the theoretical principles which underpin our understanding of the writing system. This type of knowledge is also essential if one is to understand borrowings of the Sumerian writing system, such as, e.g., the writing system used for Eblaite. And, it is important to be prepared for (and to understand the reasons for) the inconsistencies and variations in transliteration which are encountered in Sumerological literature.

In general, adjectives in Sumerian follow the noun they modify.

5. ugal-Urim<sub>5</sub><sup>ki</sup>-ma = ugal.Urim.a(k), “king of Ur”. Just as both kalag-ga and kala-ga are found in transliterations of the same two signs, so also these signs are found transliterated as Urim<sub>5</sub><sup>ki</sup>-ma and Uri<sub>5</sub><sup>ki</sup>-ma.
6. ugal-Ki-en-gi-Ki-Uri<sub>4</sub>= ugal.Kiengi.Kiuri.k.e., “king of Sumer and Akkad”.

Sumerian has a conjunction meaning “and”, linking nouns, but it is relatively uncommon. Instead, Sumerian prefers to conjoin two nouns directly: an-ki “heaven and earth”.

The first element of the genitive phrase is the single noun ugal. The second element is formed by the two conjoined nouns, Kiengi.Kiuri. The genitive marker .k follows the two

elements. This can be diagrammed as: lugal.[Kiengi.Kiuri].k. It is possible for either element of a genitive phrase to be even more complex, consisting of a noun with a possessive-suffix, an adjective, a relative clause, etc.

Lines 3-6 form a long nominal phrase, ending in the ergative case-marker .e. This nominal phrase consists of: a personal name (line 3); an appositive consisting of a noun and an adjective (line 4); a second appositive consisting of a genitive phrase (line 5); and a third appositive, consisting of a more complex genitive phrase (line 6).

### Discussion: structure

It is instructive to compare the structure of Text 1 and Text 2:

#### Text 1:

[Nanna, nin.an.a(k), nin.ani].(r)	benefactive
[Urnammu, lugal.Urim.ak].e	agent
[e.ani].Ø	patient
mu.na.(n.)du.Ø	verb

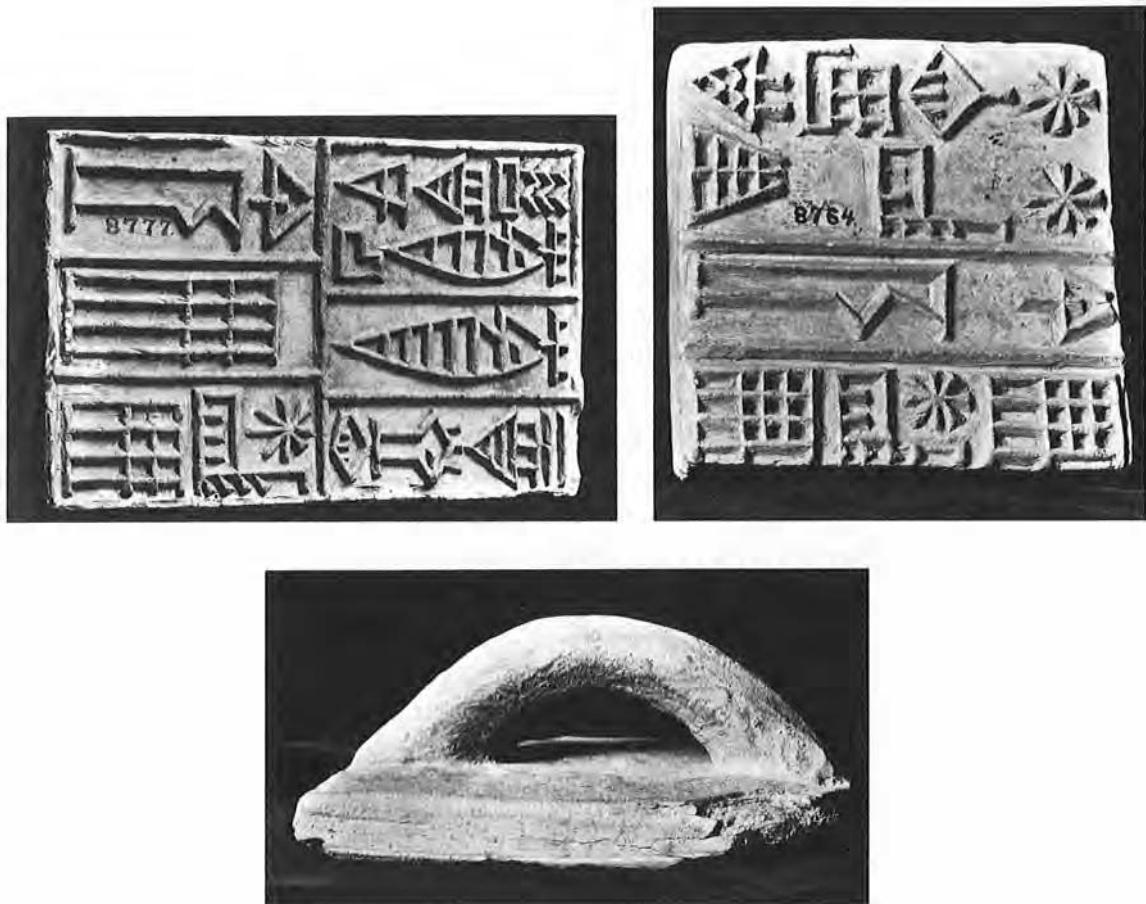
#### Text 2:

[Inanna, nin.ani].(r)	benefactive
[Urnammu,nitah.kalaga,lugal.Urim.a(k), lugal.Kiengi.Kiuri.k].e	agent
[e.ani].Ø	patient
mu.na.(n.)du.Ø	verb

The order of the constituents is the same. As mentioned in Lesson 1, the constituent order in these inscriptions is quite formulaic. The difference in the two inscriptions is in the length of the various nominal phrases, and not in the basic structure.

#### – Brick-stamps

The cuneiform signs in this text are much more “linear” than those of Text 1. This is because Text 1 was “handwritten” by a particular scribe. Text 2 was produced by a “brick-stamp”. Brick-stamps were used to mass-produce copies of inscriptions. The writing on them is done in reverse (“mirror-writing”), so that the impression comes out correctly. The shape of the signs used tends to be linear, although occasionally they can approach the shape of the handwritten signs. Several brick-stamps have been preserved, although apparently none from the Ur III period. The following illustrations are of brick-stamps from the Old Akkadian period:



### -Case relationships

.ra and the other case-markers in Sumerian are variously referred to as “cases”, “case-markers”, “case-endings”, “postpositions”, “postfixes”, etc. Strictly speaking, these terms are not all synonymous, because they do not all refer to the same level of analysis.

The term “dative case”, for example, refers purely to a grammatical relationship. This case can be used to indicate several different semantic relationships: indirect object, benefactive, etc. “Dative case-marker” or “case-ending” refers to the specific formal device which signals this grammatical relationship, that is, the .ra. “Postposition” or “postfix” means that the case-marker occurs at the end of a nominal phrase. (This contrasts with English, for example, where “prepositions” occur in front of a nominal phrase.) Thus, in Text 1 and 2, .ra can be described as a postpositive case-marker of the dative case, used to express the benefactive.

Although these terms are distinct, in practice they are often used somewhat indiscriminately. This is because it will normally be clear from the context which level of analysis is being referred to. Similarly, the dimensional-prefixes are sometimes said to

cross-reference the cases, and at other times are said to cross-reference the case-endings. Strictly speaking, they cross-reference the case relationships which are marked by the case-endings. For ease of exposition, however, it is usually easier to present them as cross-referencing the case-endings themselves.

### – Genitives and cases

The genitive does not behave like the (other) cases in Sumerian, and so it is occasionally referred to as a “genitive marker”, instead of as a case. First, a genitive phrase can be embedded within a nominal phrase, which can then have its own case-marker. That is, the genitive can be cumulative with respect to the (other) cases. For example, the genitive can be directly followed by the ergative case-marker .e, as in Text 1 and Text 2. The (other) cases, however, are not cumulative with respect to each other. If a nominal phrase has the dative case-marker, for example, it is impossible for it to have any other case-marker. Second, the genitive is not resumed by any dimensional-prefix. The dative, for example, is resumed by the dimensional-prefix .na. However, the genitive is not resumed.

The reason for the difference in behavior is because of the different rôle which the genitive plays in a sentence. Genitives relate noun phrases to noun phrases. But the (other) cases relate noun phrases to verb phrases. That is, genitives and cases perform two different functions. However, “case” is the term most frequently encountered in Sumerological literature.

Some scholars use the term “adnominal” case to refer to the genitive and to the equitative (to be mentioned later). Both can be cumulative, and neither is resumed by any dimensional-prefix.

The ergative and absolute cases pattern together, in that they are the only cases cross-referenced in the immediately pre- and post-verbal root slot. (In some ergative languages, verbal cross-referencing only occurs with the agent and the patient, and not with any other case relationship.)

The cases besides the ergative, absolute, genitive, and equitative are referred to as “adverbial”. They include the following; they will be studied in subsequent lessons: dative; terminative; locative; locative-terminative; comitative; ablative. Some scholars use the term “oblique” instead of “adverbial”; others use the term “dimensional”. The latter is rather nice, since these cases are the only ones to be cross-referenced by the dimensional-prefixes.

To sum up, the Sumerian cases may be categorized as:

<b>primary</b>	(ergative; absolute)
<b>adverbial</b>	(dative; terminative; locative; locative-terminative; comitative; ablative)
<b>adnominal</b>	(genitive; equitative)

### – Earlier views of genitive

It was Poebel who definitively established the form and function of the Sumerian genitive (1935). Earlier views were quite different. For example, François Thureau-

Dangin saw the genitive in Sumerian as being formed in two different ways: either by simple “juxtaposition” of two nouns (lugal-uru, “king-city” = “king of the city”), or by an ending .a of a “general indirect case”. He thought that the /k/ which appears when a vowel follows the genitive marker was “inorganic”; it was a “hiatus-breaker” to avoid a sequence of two vowels. Poebel effectively destroyed Thureau-Dangin’s views, but traces of the latter are still encountered in some works. Poebel’s work was further elaborated by Jacobsen (1973).

### – Typology

Scholars have pointed out previously that the genitive in Sumerian behaves differently than the (other) cases. This is typical of agglutinative languages, where the genitive will be cumulative with respect to cases.

In most S-O-V languages, genitive constructions are expressed by the sequence “possessor-possessed” (regardless of the exact morphological devices used). Sumerian, then, would seem to be atypical, in that the sequence is “possessed-possessor”. It will be seen later that Sumerian also possesses a genitive construction of the type possessor-possessed, but this construction is not as common as the possessed-possessor one.

In Sumerian, modifiers of nouns typically follow their head noun. In this lesson an adjective follows its head noun, and in Lesson 7 a relative clause follows its head noun. It is a general characteristic of S-O-V languages for modifiers to follow their head nouns.

### – Proper names

Many different etymologies of Ki-en-gi have been proposed, and just as many explanations for the derivation of Sumeru from Ki-en-gi. The sheer variety of such explanations shows how unsure such attempts are. Some of those proposed by more prominent Sumerologists include:

Arno Poebel: Ki-en-gi(r) is a dialectal form of kalam “land”.

Anton Deimel: Ki-en-gi(r) = ki.gir “land of the foot”, i.e. “stopping place”.

Thorkild Jacobsen: Ki-en-gi(r) = ki-Nigir; Nigir > Nibir > Nibur > Nibru, “Nippur”. That is, the term “Nigir” (whatever this may have meant originally) was at first applied only to the city of Nippur. Later, in the form “ki-Nigir” (“place of Nigir”), it became generalized to the whole land of Sumer.

Edmond Sollberger: Sumeru is the Emesal form of Ki-en-gi(r), whatever the etymology of the latter might be.

Edmund Gordon: Ki-en-gi = ki.gir<sub>15</sub>, “noble place”.

Many other dubious etymologies have been proposed. They illustrate the fact that there is really very little evidence to make a positive decision; the data can be made to fit many different interpretations.

### -Titulature

nitaḥ-kalag-ga is a very old title, attested even with rulers preceding the Akkad dynasty. It was also used by Utu-hengal of Uruk. It is difficult to say exactly what an expression like “strong man” or “mighty man” means; Hallo says: “‘strong man’ (that is, we might almost say, independent ruler)” (1966:138).

Ur-Nammu was the first Mesopotamian ruler to use the title lugal Ki-en-gi Ki-uri. It was used by his son Shulgi, but not (apparently) by the other rulers of the Ur III Dynasty. It was used sporadically by later rulers (in both a Sumerian and an Akkadian form), right down to the Persian period, especially by conquerors of Babylonia (such as Cyrus).

Ur-Nammu first assumed this title about the fourth year of his rule. In the early years of his reign, the extent of his control was too limited, and his hold too weak, to permit use of such a grandiose title.

## Lesson 3

This is another building inscription of Ur-Nammu. Like many royal inscriptions, it exists in several copies. To illustrate the range of variation in the external shape of the signs, two different copies of this one inscription are reproduced. Text 3a was produced by a brick-stamp, as was Text 2. Text 3b was hand-written, as was Text 1. Both copies are from Ur.



[90004]  
BRICK OF UR-GUR, KING OF UR.  
RECORDING THE BUILDING OF A TEMPLE TO  
NANNAR, THE MOON-COD, AND THE RESTORATION  
OF THE WALLS OF THE CITY OF UR.  
FROM MUKEYYER. [ABOUT B.C. 2500]

This brick is on display in the British Museum. The display stand was obviously made many years ago. It refers to Ur-Nammu as "Ur-Gur", it refers to Nanna as "Nannar", and it dates the brick to "about B.C. 2500" – about four centuries earlier than today's chronology.

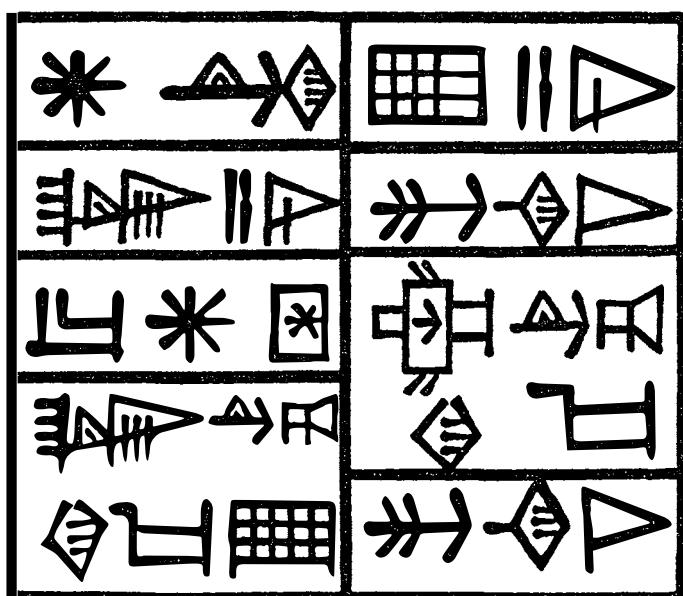
**Sign-list and vocabulary**

 bād city wall, rampart, fortification

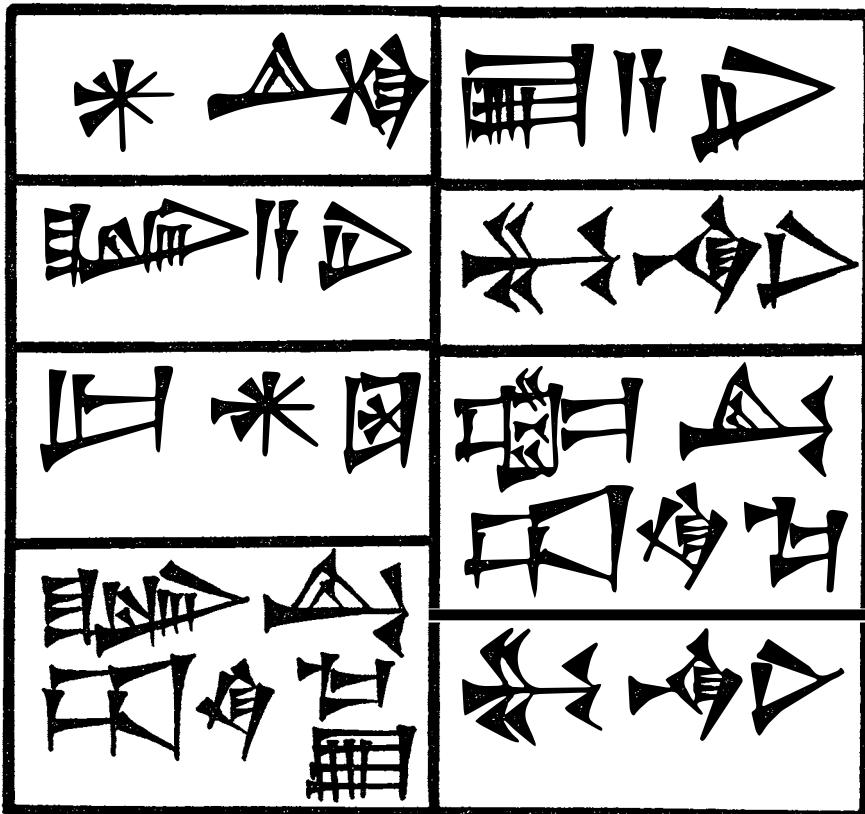
**Notes**

**bād** The PSD translates bād as: “wall”, “fortification”. Its normal Akkadian equivalent is dūru, glossed by the CAD as: “1. city wall, fortification wall, 2. inner city wall, 3. fortress, 4. enclosure of a house”.

## Text 3a



## Text 3b



### Notes

Both inscriptions are inscribed on bricks, yet the signs in Text 3a are much more linear than the signs in Text 3b. Because of the clearly wedge-shaped form of the signs, Text 3b looks more like what we are accustomed to think of as cuneiform.

Differences between Text 3a and Text 3b also occur in lines 4 and 7. The various signs which make up the geographical names are differently divided between the two lines in each case.

Transliteration	Transcription	Translation
1: <u>d</u> <u>Nanna</u>	Nanna	For Nanna,
2: <u>lugal-a-ni</u>	lugal.an.(r)	his king –
3: <u>Ur-d</u> <u>Nammu</u>	Urnammu	Ur-Nammu,
4: <u>lugal-Urim</u> <sub>5</sub> <sup>ki</sup> <u>-ma-ke</u> <sub>4</sub>	lugal.Urim.ak.e	the king of Ur –
5: <u>e-a-ni</u>	e.an.i.Ø	his temple –
6: <u>mu-na-dù</u>	mu.na.(n.)du.Ø	he built;
7: <u>bàd-Urim</u> <sub>5</sub> <sup>ki</sup> <u>-ma</u>	bàd.Urim.a(k).Ø	the city wall of Ur –
8: <u>mu-na-dù</u>	mu.na.(n.)du.Ø	he built.

### Commentary

1. The first six lines are essentially the same as those of Text 1 and Text 2. In line 2, however, the term lugal is used to refer to Nanna, instead of the nin of Text 1.
7. The next two lines form a new sentence, “he built the city wall of Ur”. Line 7 is the direct object (patient), consisting of a simple genitive phrase.
8. The verbal phrase is exactly as in the previous inscriptions, and as in line 6.

The verb form in line 8 contains a dimensional-prefix .na, and a personal-affix (n.). However, there is no expressed dative phrase, nor agent, in lines 7 or 8. Rather, the logical benefactive to which the .na refers is Nanna of line 1, and the logical agent to which the (n.) refers is Ur-d Nammu of line 3.

The syntax of Sumerian beyond the level of the simple sentence has yet to be adequately studied. However, it often happens that a verbal chain will contain elements which cross-reference nominal phrases occurring in a previous sentence.

### Discussion: structure

The basic structure of this text is:

[Nanna, lugal.an].(r)	benefactive
[Urnammu, lugal.Urim.ak].e	agent
[e.an.i].Ø	patient
mu.na.(n.)du.Ø	verb
[bàd.Urim.a(k)].Ø	patient
mu.na.(n.)du.Ø	verb

### – Sign formation

Some cuneiform signs are, in origin, combinations of two different signs, one of which is pictographic, and one of which is a phonetic indicator of some kind. For example, the bàd-sign is a picture of a city wall, with an inscribed bàd-sign (); the function of the inscribed bàd-sign is to aid the reader in the correct pronunciation (another example occurs in Lesson 15).

In Lesson 1, it was mentioned that the second element of the Nanna-sign (), which

was interpreted by later Mesopotamian scribes as a ki-sign, may originally have been a na-sign, functioning as some kind of phonetic indicator.

#### –Co-ordination

In general, independent sentences in Sumerian are coordinated without any conjunction. In Text 3, no conjunction appears in line 7. In Lesson 16 there occurs the use of a conjunction ù, borrowed from Akkadian.

#### – History

Most building inscriptions refer to only one undertaking (for example, the building of a single temple), but it is not uncommon to find such inscriptions referring to two closely-related activities.

The wall referred to in this inscription was undoubtedly the wall which surrounded the city of Ur. Woolley describes it as follows:

The walled city was in shape an irregular oval, measuring about 1130 yards in length by 750 yards in width, and was surrounded by a wall and rampart. The rampart was of mud-brick with a steeply sloping outer face. ... Along the top of this ran the wall proper, built of burnt bricks. ... Of Ur-Nammu's wall not a trace remained ... just because the defences of Ur had been so strong the victorious enemy [that is, the later Elamites who sacked the city] had dismantled them systematically, leaving not one brick upon another (1982:137-8).

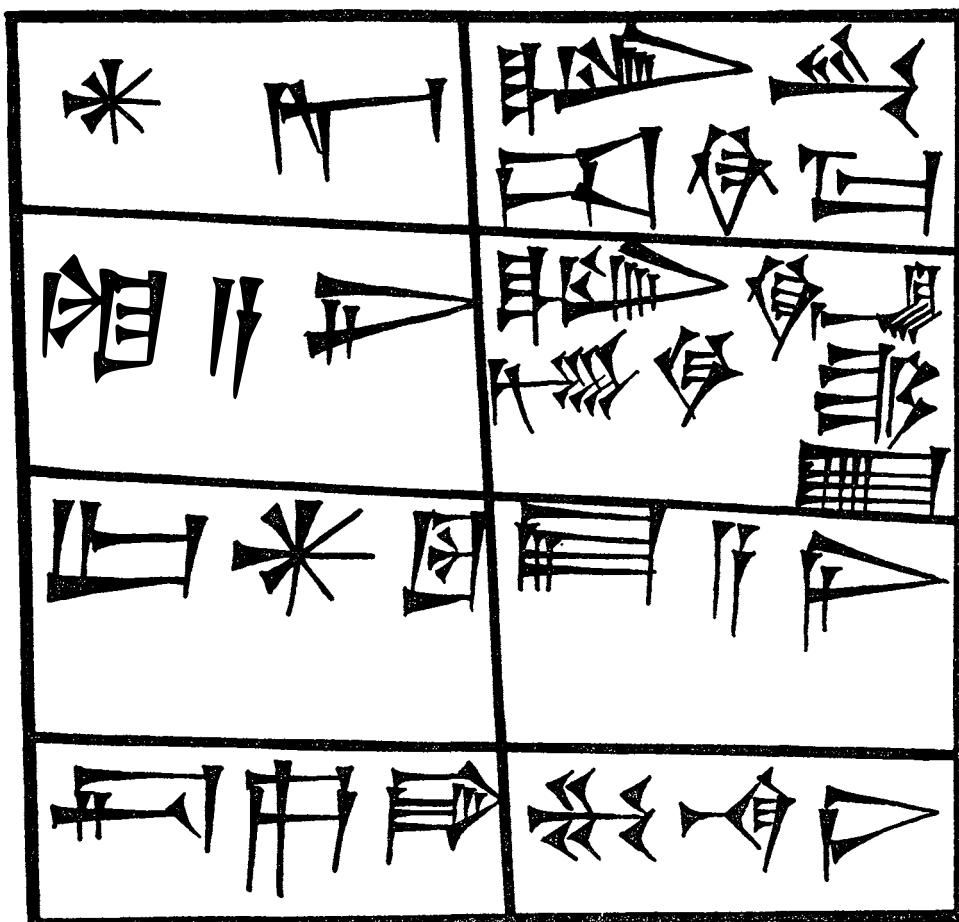
Although Ur-Nammu's wall may have originally enclosed the entire city of Ur, the city rapidly expanded beyond these walls. The original walled city may have comprised no more than one-fourth or one-fifth of the city in the Isin-larsa or Old Babylonian periods. The situation must have been similar to that of many Middle Eastern cities today, with a core consisting of an "Old City" (often referred to as a "madina" in Arabic or English), but with much extension beyond it.

## Text 3c

supplementary

The supplementary texts included here and in subsequent lessons are meant for practice and review. They will normally contain no new vocabulary or grammar; any new features will be explained.

This particular text is another brick.





# Lesson 4

This inscription was engraved upon a stone bowl. No photograph is available.

## Sign-list and vocabulary

  Nin-gal Ningal (DN, fem)

  ti (ti) to live

  a...ru to dedicate a votive object

  nam

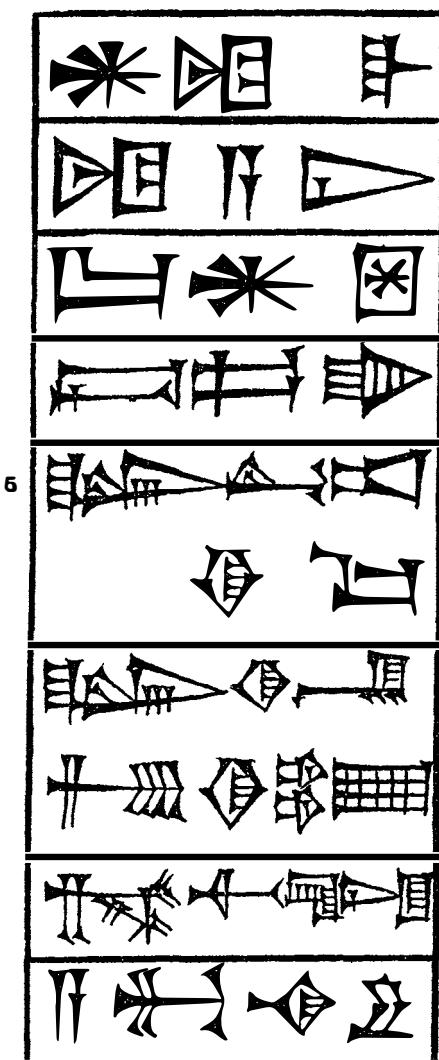
  la

  se

## Notes

**Nin-gal** Ningal was the wife of Nanna, and the mother of Inanna. Being the wife of Nanna, she was especially worshipped in Ur. Her name means “great lady”.

## Text 4



	Transliteration	Transcription	Translation
1:	d <u>Nin-gal</u>	Ningal	For Ningal,
2:	<u>nin-a-ni</u>	nin.an.i.(r)	his lady –
3:	<u>Ur-d_Nammu</u>	Urmammu	Ur-Nammu,
4:	<u>nitah-kalag-ga</u>	nitah.kalaga	the mighty man,
5:	<u>ugal-Urim<sub>5</sub>ki-ma</u>	ugal.Urim.a(k)	the king of Ur,
6:	<u>ugal-Ki-en-gi-Ki-uri-ke</u> <sub>4</sub>	ugal.Kiengi.Kiuri.k.e	the king of Sumer and Akkad –
7:	<u>nam-til-la-ni-ṣè</u>	nam.til.an.i.ṣè	for the sake of his life –
8:	<u>a-mu-na-ru</u>	a.mu.na.(n).ru	he dedicated a votive offering.

### Commentary

7. Sumerian does not have many processes of word formation. However, it does have a formative element nam. Prefixed to verbal and nominal roots, it produces what are called “abstract nouns”. For example, ugal is “king”, nam-ugal is “kingship”; til is “to live”, nam-til is “life”.

ṣè is a case-marker not seen up till now, marking the “terminative” or “directive” case. It does not have any one exact translation into English, although it generally indicates “direction towards” or “action towards”. Here, the meaning is something like “for the sake of”, or “on behalf of”. This phrase means something like “for his life”, that is, “so that the king will live a long time”.

The exact phonemic value of this case-marker is not actually sure. Since the dative case-marker /ra/ > /r/ after a vowel, one might expect /ṣe/ > /ṣ/ after a vowel. Such a reduction does occasionally happen, although not apparently in this particular expression (the sign 𒂵 does not appear to have any reading in /iṣ/). The original value of this morpheme may have been, in fact, /eṣe/. Conventional Sumerological practice is to simply transliterate it as ṣè. It will be further discussed below.

The two signs transliterated here as: til-la are also found transliterated as: ti-la. This is the same problem seen earlier with kalag-ga ~ kala-ga, and Urim<sub>5</sub>ki-ma ~ Uri<sub>5</sub>ki-ma. In this particular case, there is the added irritation that the sign 𒌠 is read ti (with no diacritic) and til (with diacritic).

8. a...ru, “to dedicate a votive offering”. This is a “compound verb”, a type of word-formation very common in Sumerian. A compound verb is made up of two elements. The first element of the compound verb immediately precedes a complete verbal form, including its prefix chain. The second element functions as the regular Sumerian verbal root. In this case, the first element is a; then comes a regular verbal form, consisting of a prefix chain and the verbal root ru; ru is the second element of the compound verb.

The original function of the two elements of a compound verb is often not clear. In many cases, the first element is (historically, at least) the patient of the verbal root which forms the second element. For example, gù...dé means “to speak”. dé means “to pour out”, and gù means “voice”. Historically, then, this particular compound verb means “to pour

out the voice”; that is, gù is historically the patient of dé. In such cases, the first or second element may appear elsewhere as a free morpheme, functioning in other contexts like any other noun or verb.

In other instances, the nominal element of the compound verb is in one of the adverbial cases. For example, “to found” or “to establish” a temple or building of some kind is: ki...gar. gar means “to place”; ki means “ground”. Here, ki is in the “locative” case (ki.a, Lesson 6). The historical meaning was “to place (something) on the ground”.

In some cases, the relationship between the nominal and the verbal components is not sure. In this particular case, for example, ru probably means “to send” (judging from its use in other contexts as a “simple”, that is, non-compound verb), but it is not known what the element a means here.

Synchronously, it is not easy to define the term “compound verb”. Certain verbs, for instance, are almost always used with certain patients (cf. gù...dé above). Are these compound verbs or not? It is difficult to say; it is not easy to produce a rigorous definition of compound verbs. Compounds are basically identified on semantic criteria. If the meaning of the compound is more than the sum of its parts – that is, if it is loosely an idiom – then it is felt as a compound.

In the sign-lists and vocabularies in this book, compound verbs are indicated by the use of three periods: a...ru.

In line 7, the terminative case-marker šè occurs. According to what was said earlier about the dimensional-prefixes, one might expect this šè to be cross-referenced by a dimensional-prefix. The dimensional-prefix which cross-references the terminative šè is ši; it follows the datival dimensional-prefix in the prefix chain. Therefore, one might have expected to find a form such as: a-mu-na-ši-(n)-ru.

This verbal form illustrates the basic problem of the dimensional-prefixes. Although theoretically there is a one-to-one correspondence between case relationships and dimensional-prefixes, in practice it isn’t so. Case relationships are found that are not apparently cross-referenced by a dimensional-prefix, and conversely dimensional-prefixes are found even when no case relationship is apparently present.

This is probably more than just an orthographic problem. That is, it is not simply the case that the dimensional-prefix is “there”, but not written. In all the Ur III votive inscriptions, the šè in expressions of the type nam.til.anı.šè seems never to be resumed.

The presence or absence of dimensional-prefixes probably depends on semantic factors at the level of the sentence, and at the level of the discourse, that is, beyond the level of one single sentence. Certain nominal phrases are less closely bound to the sentence or to the discourse than others. For example, nam.til.anı.šè is only loosely bound to the sentence; it could be omitted, without any great loss of information. Such loosely-bound phrases (almost idiomatic or formulaic in character) may perhaps not need to be resumed, while such important constituents as the benefactive phrase would need to be resumed. Not a great deal is known about the structure of Sumerian at this discourse level.

To sum up, although the problem is still open to discussion, it is more likely that it is a semantic-syntactic problem, and not an orthographic problem. Therefore, no dimensional-prefix ši is indicated in transcription.

## Discussion: structure

The structure of this text is:

[Ningal, nin.an].(r)	benefactive
[Urnammu, nitah.kalaga, lugal.Urim.a(k),	agent
lugal.Kiengi.Kiuri.k].e	
[nam.til.an].šè	purpose
a.mu.na.(n.)ru	verb

### – Abstracts and concretes

nam is the regular element used to form abstract nouns in Sumerian. níg is regularly used to form concrete nouns from verbal roots; this is discussed in Lesson 22.

### – Phonology of -šè

The reason it is difficult to determine the phonetic shape of šè is because it seems to appear in different forms even under identical conditions. For example, the writing šu-zu-uš (“towards your hand”) would justify an interpretation as: šu.zu.šè, with the loss of the final vowel, presumably conditioned by the presence of the /u/-vowel before the /š/. However, the form gír-zu-šè (“towards your foot”), which would presumably represent gír.zu.šè, with no reduction of the final vowel, is also found. Such variation can occur within one text, or even in different copies of one Sumerian literary work. For example, line 72 of the Sumerian composition entitled “Schooldays” has the expression “towards my hand”, šu.ğu<sub>10</sub>.šè. In most copies of the text, this is written: šu-ğu<sub>10</sub>-šè. However, at least one copy has: šu-ğu<sub>10</sub>-uš.

The problem is further compounded by the fact that the šè-sign also has a reading eš, so that if the terminative case-marker follows a word ending in /e/, the writing is ambiguous.

It is possible that the writings in -šè should be understood as morphographemic, standing for: /š/. The scribe wrote the full, more original form of the morpheme, even though in certain phonetic contexts it had been reduced in speech. That is, -šè is written conventionally for the terminative case-marker, without regard for its precise phonetic shape. Other such morphographemic writings occur in Sumerian.

### – Usage of -šè

As stated above, the terminative case marked in -šè in this fixed expression is apparently not cross-referenced in any of the Ur III royal inscriptions. Curiously enough, however, there are a few cases in royal inscriptions from earlier periods where the terminative in -šè in such expressions is so cross-referenced by its dimensional-prefix. This is strange, because the early texts are usually less explicit than the later texts. Also, this dimensional-prefix often appears in the writing of Ur III administrative texts. Such a distribution indicates that factors such as genre and style help determine the use or non-use of the dimensional-prefix .ši (and of the use and non-use of the dimensional-prefixes in general).

For anyone who has studied Akkadian, the Sumerian terminative in /še/ immediately calls to mind the Akkadian terminative in /iš/. To some degree, the two morphemes overlap both in form and in function. At least as far back as 1925, it was proposed that the Akkadian terminative morpheme was borrowed from Sumerian (Albert Schott). However, most scholars do not accept this view, for two reasons: First, the Akkadian terminative appears to have cognates in other Semitic languages; it has recently turned up in Eblaite, in certain limited contexts. Second, there do not appear to be any cases where Akkadian has borrowed Sumerian grammatical morphemes. Similarly, it is difficult to believe that the Sumerians borrowed the morpheme from the Akkadians. Although rare, it does show up in very early Sumerian texts.

It is more likely that the two are independent developments. It is not impossible, however, that the chance formal similarity between the two morphemes has caused the two to influence each other in meaning, pulling them closer together in meaning than they may have been at some earlier period. Given the fact that Sumerian and Akkadian were in close contact for over a millennium, such reciprocal influence upon the grammar is not too surprising.

#### – Compound verbs

Most compound verbs are of the type noun-verb, where the noun is (historically) the patient of the verb. It is not sure whether these nouns are to be regarded as patients in synchronic terms; this problem is discussed in Lesson 12. In some cases, the noun is in one of the adverbial cases. However, more complicated compound verbs also occur, of differing types: adjective-verb, noun-adjective-verb, and even noun-noun-verb. In the case of the latter, one noun is (historically) the patient, and the other is (historically) in an adverbial case. An example is “to pray”, kiri<sub>3</sub>.šu...gál, literally, “to place (gál) the hand (šu) on the nose (kiri<sub>3</sub>)”; kiri<sub>3</sub> is either in the locative case (kiri.a) or the locative-terminative case (kiri.e).

Because there is no obvious formal way to define compound verbs, it is a legitimate question to ask whether such a class of words actually exists. If more were known about the etymology of each individual case, one might be less inclined to even posit the existence of the class of compound verbs.

#### – Votive inscriptions

This text is a typical votive inscription, a second subclass of royal inscriptions as distinguished by Hallo. Votive inscriptions are found on objects which were actually donated and placed in a temple. The object can be of various kinds; this particular inscription is found on a stone bowl. Possibly, such vessels would have been used for ceremonial food offerings. Since stone is not common in Sumer, such a vessel would have been considered as something special. In this book, the following votive objects occur: a stone headdress (Text 11), a vase (Text 12), beads (Texts 16, 18a, and 19a), and a cylinder-seal of limestone (Text 22).

The purpose of such votive objects was to convey a hope from the donor for the long

life of the king (the donor might or might not be the king himself). The objects were not “functional”, as we would understand the term; that is, this bowl was not actually used as a daily eating utensil. Similarly, the votive cylinder-seal in Text 22 was probably not used as a daily, routine, cylinder-seal.

Except for the *a* component of the compound verb, there is no direct object (patient) in the text. This is because the votive object itself can be thought of as constituting the direct object (patient).

The use of the term “votive” to describe such inscriptions has been criticized by A. Grayson:

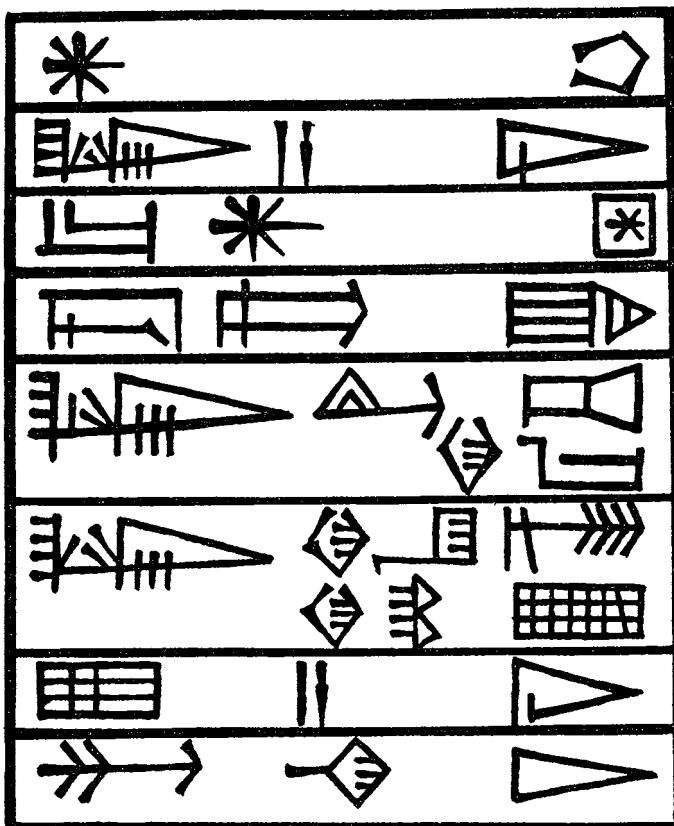
The etymology of the word “votive” implies a vow and, since no vow is involved in the ancient Mesopotamian texts under discussion, the term is incorrect. They are certainly not “votive” or “ex-voto” inscriptions in the ancient Roman sense where a vow preceded the dedication (1980:157).

For this reason, Grayson prefers to refer to such texts as “dedicatory inscriptions”.

## Text 4a

supplementary

This is another brick.



### Sign-list and vocabulary

Utu Utu (DN, masc)

### Notes

**Utu** This was the son of Nanna, and older brother of Inanna. He was primarily the god of the sun (his name means “the [visible] sun”), but was also connected with truth, justice, and law-giving. He was equated with the Semitic Shamash, who is pictured on the top of the stela of Hammurapi as handing over the law code written on the stela to Hammurapi. Utu was especially worshipped in Larsa and Sippar.

# Lesson 5

This text is another building inscription, inscribed on a clay cone.

## Sign-list and vocabulary

  En-lil Enlil (DN, masc)

  En-erin<sub>2</sub>-nun Enerinnun (canal name)

 kur mountain; highland; foreign land

  id (i<sub>7</sub>) river, canal

  nidba food offering

  ba-al to dredge, excavate

 ra

 ka

## Notes

**En-lil** Father of Nanna; the most important god of the Sumerian pantheon. His name means “Lord Air” or “Lord Wind”, but he was in general responsible for the orderly running of the universe (although he had a destructive side as well).

Enlil functions as the active leader of the Sumerian gods; he has apparently displaced the sky-god An from this rôle. He was worshipped at many places, but his special sanctury was the É-kur in Nippur.

The lil-sign is the same ke<sub>4</sub>-sign seen previously.

(The term en, “lord”, is discussed in Lesson 9.)

**En-erin<sub>2</sub>-nun** The location is uncertain, as is the etymology (although it is presumably Sumerian).

**kur** The original meaning of this word was probably “mountain”; the kur-sign, in fact, is thought to be the picture of three mountain tops. The word then comes to mean “foreign land”.

**id** This sign is composed of two elements:  , which by itself represents a, “water”, and  which by itself represents engur, “watery deep, sweet waters” (see Lessons 1 and 14), or Nammu the goddess. The original meaning of the sign may then have been

something like “water coming from the sweet-waters”, as opposed to “water coming from the salt-waters”, and as opposed to “rain” (šeg, which is composed of the a-sign followed by the an-sign:  

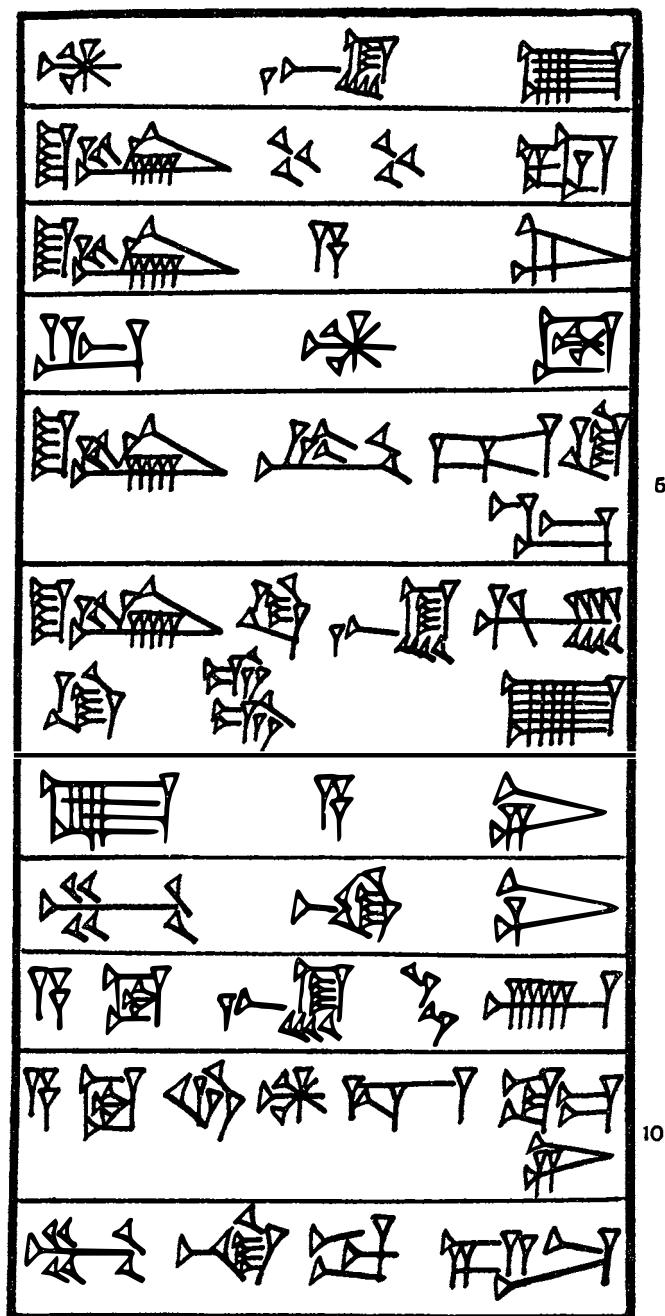
**nidba** The reading is uncertain; it is also transliterated as nindaba. When scholars are unsure of the reading of a “compound logogram” (a single “word” graphically composed of several individual logograms), they occasionally add in parentheses the reading of the component parts. Thus, this sign is also transliterated as: nidba (PAD<sup>d</sup>INANNA), or any of several variants, such as: nidba (ŠUKUR<sub>2</sub> -dINANNA), since it is in fact not clear exactly what all the components of this particular logogram are!

This word was borrowed into Akkadian as nindabû, although the forms nindabbu, nigdabbu, nidabû, nidbû and nidpû also occur. CAD translates the Akkadian word as: “cereal offering, food offering, provisions”.

**ba-al** This is the normal verb used to describe the restoration of a canal, that is, clearing it by dredging it of accumulated silt and trash.

The verb is almost always written in this way, with two signs. There are a few instances where it is spelled bal or ba-la. It is not sure what the writing ba-al implies about Sumerian phonetics. The vowel may have been long, or there may have been a glottal stop or a glide between the two /a/-quality vowels. Because of this unusual writing, it has even been speculated that the word is a borrowing from an as-yet unidentified language. For convenience sake, it will be transcribed here as: ba-al.

## Text 5



	<b>Transliteration</b>	<b>Transcription</b>	<b>Translation</b>
1:	<u>d</u> <u>En-lil</u>	Enlil	For Enlil,
2:	<u>lugal-kur-kur-ra</u>	ugal.kur.kur.a(k)	king of the lands,
3:	<u>lugal-a-ni</u>	ugal.ani.(r)	his king –
4:	<u>Ur-</u> <sup>d</sup> <u>Nammu</u>	Urnammu	Ur-Nammu,
5:	<u>ugal-Urim</u> <sub>5</sub> <u>ki-ma</u>	ugal.Urim.a(k)	the king of Ur,
6:	<u>ugal-Ki-en-gi-Ki-uri-ke</u> <sub>4</sub>	ugal.Kiengi.Kiuri.k.e	the king of Sumer and Akkad –
7:	<u>é-a-ni</u>	e.ani.Ø	his temple –
8:	<u>mu-na-dù</u>	mu.na.(n.)du.Ø	he built;
9:	<u>id</u> <u>En-erin</u> <sub>2</sub> <u>nun</u>	id Enerinnun	the Enerinnun canal,
10:	<u>id-nidba-ka-ni</u>	id.nidba.k.ani.Ø	his canal (productive) of food –
11:	<u>mu-na-ba-al</u>	mu.na.(n.)ba.al.Ø	he dredged.

### Commentary

2. There are two common plural formations of nouns in Sumerian. For animate nouns, the plural is formed by a suffixed .ene. For example, “gods” is *diğir.ene*, written diğir-re-ne. For inanimate nouns, the plural is formed by reduplication of the noun: kur-kur, “lands” (This type of plural formation is also occasionally used for animate nouns.)

It is quite probable that such reduplicated plurals were phonetically reduced, but because of the morpheme-bound nature of the script, such reduction does not normally show up in the writing.

In Text 6, the plural noun is the second element of a genitive phrase: *ugal.[kur.kur].a(k)*, “king of the lands”.

9. id means “canal” or “river”. The name of the canal forms an appositive.

10. A second appositive. The suffix .ani refers to the entire genitive phrase: “his [canal of food offering]”. The genitive phrase “the canal of his food offering” would be: *id.[nidba.ani].a(k)*. The sequence of third-person possessive-suffix followed by the genitive marker is /anak/, not the expected /anik/, so this would be written id-nidba-na.

### Discussion: structure

The structure of this text is:

[Enlil, lugal.kur.kur.a(k), lugal.ani].(r)	benefactive
[Urnammu, lugal.Urim.a(k),	agent
ugal.Kiengi.Kiuri.k.e	
[e.ani].Ø	patient
mu.na.(n.)du.Ø	verb
[id Enerinnun, id.nidba.k.ani].Ø	patient
mu.na.(n.)ba.al.Ø	verb

### - Writing system

The word for “food offering” illustrates a problem not yet seen in the script. Its pronunciation as /nidba/ is given by various lexical lists, where it is spelled out syllabically as: ni-id-ba. It is thought to derive from ninda “bread, food” and ba “to divide, to apportion”; ninda would presumably be an incorporated direct object (patient) of ba. (It is occasionally spelled ninda-ba.) The pronunciation as /nidba/ shows a phonetic reduction of \*/nindaba/ > /nidba/. The various spellings in Akkadian, mentioned above, reflect both the older and later Sumerian pronunciations.

It is difficult, however, to say how this word came to be written as “PAD-dINANNA”. That is, there does not appear to be any way to phonetically relate the word /nindaba/ or /nidba/ to the individual signs forming this logogram. Rather, the reading /nidba/ refers to the “sum” of the three signs. Without the evidence of lexical lists, in fact, there would probably be no way to figure out that this group of three signs was to be read as /nindaba/ or /nidba/. The pad-sign has several different readings, and in Akkadian stands for several different words: kusāpu, “a kind of bread” (probably of Semitic etymology); kurummatu, “food portion” (a Sumerian word), etc. The significance of the Inanna-sign (if that is how it is to be understood here) is uncertain.

### - Proper names

In the bilingual texts from Ebla, the equivalent of En-lil is given as: I-li-lu. This seems to agree with later Akkadian pronunciations of the name, which also show an assimilation of /Enlil/ > /Illil/; some Sumerologists, in fact, transliterate the two signs En-lil together as: Ellil. (It has also been speculated that the interpretation of the name as “Lord Wind” is a Sumerian folk-etymology, and that the word is of pre-Sumerian etymology.)

### - Cones

The building inscriptions seen up to this point have all been inscribed on bricks. Text 5, on the other hand, was inscribed on what is commonly known as a “clay cone” or “clay nail”. Clay cones were used throughout Mesopotamian history; their form and function varied to some degree from period to period. A detailed description is that of Grayson, describing the clay cones of the Neo-Assyrian period. The clay cone

is an oblong conical object of clay. It is tapered almost to a point at one end and at the other there is a large semi-spherical head. The same inscription usually appears on both the shaft and head. The shaft was commonly inserted in the upper portions of walls with the head, which was painted a bright colour, protruding (1980:145).

In this view, the clay cone would have been at least partially visible to on-lookers. Other scholars believe, however, that the protruding end would have been plastered over, covering up the inscription (at least, in the Ur III period). In fact, the exact purpose of these cones is still something of a mystery to us.

Woolley found such cones in situ, forming part of the terrace of the ziggurat of Ur-

**Nammu:**

Such cones were familiar enough as objects on museum shelves, but now for the first time we saw them in position just as the builders had set them four thousand years before. ... One felt a quite unscientific thrill at seeing those ordered rows of cream-coloured knobs which even the people of Ur had not seen when once the terraced wall was finished and plastered (1982:140).

The latest such cones found in Ur date from the Neo-Assyrian period. Curiously, they were not in the wall, but were buried below the floor.

Clay cones were usually inscribed in several duplicates; at least eight copies of Text 5 are known. The point of such cones, again quoting Woolley, was not to "parade [the ruler's] achievements before his fellow-men, but to keep the record of his piety fresh in the mind of the god, who presumably can see through a brick wall" (1982:228).

Some scholars differentiate between clay "nails" and clay "cones". Gelb says that clay nails "are easily recognized by their mushroom shape, with broad, thick heads and short shafts. ... Clay cones are characterized by a total or almost total lack of the head" (1948:267). Different places and periods seem to prefer one or the other; it is also possible they had different functions. Gelb says that "the function of such nails and cones is much the same as that of tablets commemorating the erection of public structures in modern times" (1948:268).

No photograph of Text 5 is available. The following is a photograph of a dedicatory cone from the time of Gudea's father:



It was mentioned in Lesson 3 that it is not too uncommon for building inscriptions to treat more than one activity. In the case of building inscriptions inscribed on clay cones, it is less common for more than one activity to be mentioned. In this particular text, the Enerinnun canal may have brought the waters which irrigated the fields of the temple being rebuilt.

All of the Ur III kings were involved with repairing the canals and drainage systems of Mesopotamia, by dredging and rebuilding. The names of many canals in use during the Ur III period are known; most of the names are Sumerian. Ur-nammu is known to have built and to have repaired a number of canals. It is usually assumed that much damage had been done to these systems by the Gutis, who are thought to be responsible for bringing about the fall of the Dynasty of Akkad. Revisionist thinking, however, believes that the Gutis did not do as much damage as is commonly thought, nor did they hold that much control over Mesopotamia. Most scholars seem to feel that inscriptions such as Text 5 refer more to routine maintenance and expansion of the canals; various kinds of administrative texts refer to such activity.

# Lesson 6

This is another brick of Ur-Nammu.

## Sign-list and vocabulary

 Determinative preceding objects of wood. Transliterated by a superscript “giš”.

 An An (DN, masc)

 digir god

  kiri<sub>6</sub> garden

 barag (bara<sub>2</sub>) dais

 ki place, earth

 mah to be splendid, magnificent

 sikil to be pure, clean

 gub to stand; to make stand, to plant

 re

 ne

## Notes

**giš** In addition to its use as a determinative, giš means “tree; wood; object made of wood”. The Akkadian equivalent, isu, is translated by the CAD as: “1. tree, 2. timber, lumber, wood, wooden implements, aromatic wood, firewood, 3. wooded area”. It is sometimes transliterated as ges.

**An** The god of the sky. At one time he may have been the active leader of the Sumerian gods, but at some point prior to our written records he was displaced in this role by Enlil. Scholars sometimes refer to him as “shadowy”, or as a kind of deus otiosus.

His name is almost always written without the divine determinative.

**digir** It is usually assumed nowadays that this word was pronounced with a velar nasal. Some think it may have been pronounced /dingir/, and in fact it is most commonly transliterated as dingir.

**giškiri<sub>6</sub>** This is also transliterated with an initial /g/, especially in older transliterations: giri<sub>11</sub> and giri<sub>12</sub>. Some Sumerologists do not think that the giš-component here is a determinative, and so it is also transliterated: giš-kiri<sub>6</sub>. (This is also the view found in some lexical texts.) However, other Sumerologists believe that the kiri<sub>6</sub>-sign includes what here is called a determinative; that is, the one sign kiri<sub>6</sub> is composed of two separate elements:  and , and so there is no determinative. The most current practice is to read the two signs as giškiri<sub>6</sub>.

**barag** The PSD translates this simply as “dais”; many Sumerologists translate it as “throne-dais”. It was borrowed into Akkadian as parakku, which is translated by AHw as: “Kultsockel, Heiligtum”.

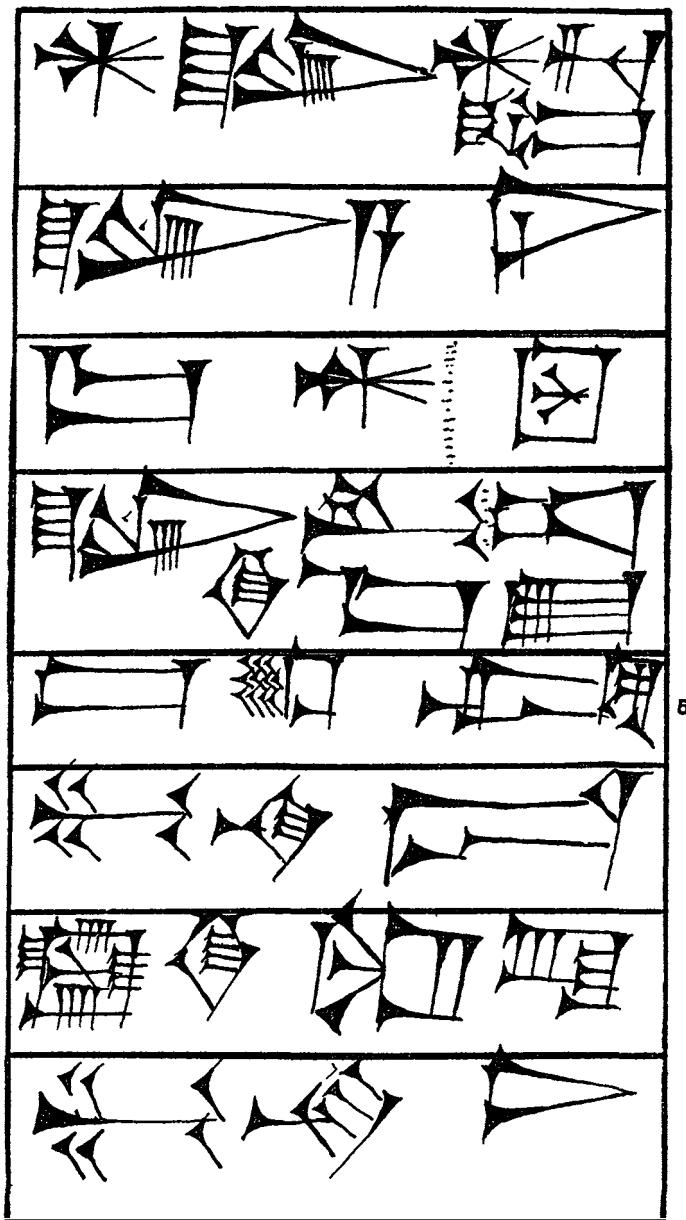
Text 6 was inscribed on a brick which apparently was part of the barag of the temple.

**ki** It is not known what the cuneiform sign is a picture of.

**mah** This is not common in finite verbal forms. The most common Akkadian equivalent of its use as an adjective is šīru, translated by the CAD as: “first-rank (in importance, quality), outstanding (in size), august, excellent (used only as a poetic term)”.

**sikil** This is also not common in finite verbal forms, but its adjective is frequent. The usual Akkadian equivalent of the adjective is ellu, glossed by the CAD as: “1. clean, pure, 2. holy, sacred, 3. free, noble”.

## Text 6



Transliteration	Transcription	Translation
1: <u>An</u> <u>lugal-dígir-re-ne</u>	An.lugal.dígir.ene.(k)	For An, the king of the gods,
2: <u>lugal-a-ni</u>	lugal.aní.(r)	his king –
3: <u>Ur-d</u> <u>Nammu</u>	Urnammu	Ur-Nammu,
4: <u>lugal-Urim</u> <sub>5</sub> <sup>ki</sup> <u>ma-ke</u> <sub>4</sub>	lugal.Urim.ak.e	the king of Ur –
5: <u>giš</u> <u>kiri</u> <sub>6</sub> <u>-mah</u>	kiri.mah.Ø	a magnificent garden –
6: <u>mu-na-gub</u>	mu.na.(n.)gub.Ø	he planted;
7: <u>barag</u> <u>ki-sikil-la</u>	barag.Ø ki.sikil.a	A dais, – in a pure place –
8: <u>mu-na-dù</u>	mu.na.(n.)du.Ø	he built.

### Commentary

1. The sign ✪ can be very confusing in context. It can represent the determinative before divine names; the god An (as in Text 6); or the word dígir, “god” (or the word an, “sky”).

.ene is the normal plural marker for animate nouns. In the previous lesson, reduplication occurred as the normal plural marker for inanimate nouns.

5. mah is an adjective from a verbal root. As discussed in Lesson 2, some of what are translated as adjectives end in the nominalizer /a/, e.g., kalag-ga = kalag.a = /kalaga/. Other adjectives do not. Certain adjectives sometimes appear with the nominalizer /a/, and sometimes without it, but with no apparent difference in meaning.

The forms in .a are sometimes described as “passive participles”, and those in .Ø as “active participles”. For example, the adjective mah could be described as an “active participle in .Ø”, mah.Ø. This, however, may not be a valid use of the term “participle”.

Although etymologically giškiri<sub>6</sub>-mah is composed of two words, it may have been “felt” as one word. It was borrowed into Akkadian as kirimahu, translated by the CAD as “pleasure garden”.

7. The /g/ of barag is an amissable consonant, so the sign has both a long value (barag) and a short value (bara<sub>2</sub> or bára). Since in Text 6 /g/ is word-final, some Sumerologists would transliterate it here by bara<sub>2</sub>.

sikil is another adjective from a verbal root. It is like mah, in that it appears without the nominalizer/a/.

The /a/ which forms part of the la-sign is a new case-marker, that of the “locative” case. This case is used to express location, either spatial (“in that place”) or temporal (“on that day”). Spatially, it can usually be translated by the English “in”.

Its basic form is /a/. Following a vowel, it usually does not contract. “In the earth”, for example, is almost always written: ki-a. After a consonant, it is normally written by a sign which reduplicates the final consonant of the previous word. Thus, sikil.a is written sikil-la.

8. The dimensional-prefix which cross-references the locative is .ni. In a sequence of dimensional-prefixes, it always occurs last. In this line, one might have expected to find: mu-na-ni-(n)-dù, but the dimensional-prefix does not appear. In fact, in the Ur III royal

inscriptions, the locative .a is usually not cross-referenced. This is probably more than just an orthographic problem. In Lesson 4, an instance occurred where the dimensional-prefix for the terminative was not expressed. There, it was said that it may have been because of the idiomatic nature of the phrase. However, such an explanation hardly fits the numerous cases where the locative case is not cross-referenced. Perhaps locative phrases in general were felt as less closely bound to the verbal phrase than were the other adverbial cases.

The logical antecedent of the datival dimensional-prefix .na is the nominal phrase in lines 1-2 of this inscription, which is part of a different, independent sentence. The same situation occurred in Text 3, where a datival dimensional-prefix referred logically to a nominal phrase in a preceding sentence.

### Discussion: structure

The structure of this text is:

[An, lugal.digir.ene.(k), lugal.anj].(r)	benefactive
[Urmammu, lugal.Urim.ak].e	agent
[kiri.maḥ].Ø	patient
mu.na.(n.)gub.Ø	verb
[ki.sikil].a	place
mu.na.(n.)du.Ø	verb

#### -Amissability

It may be useful here to summarize the ways the amissable consonants are reflected in the writing system. In the case of grammatical morphemes (which are normally written syllabically), such as the genitive .ak, the amissible /k/ does not show up in word-final position: “King of Ur” is written: lugal-Urim<sub>5</sub> ki-ma. When not in word-final position, it does show up: The same expression, with an ergative case-marker, is written: lugal-Urim<sub>5</sub> ki-ma-ke<sub>4</sub>.

In the case of lexical morphemes (which are normally written logographically), it cannot be determined from the writing system whether the Auslaut was pronounced or not. That is, just by looking at the sign, there is no way to tell whether the word for “dais” was read /barag/ or /bara/.

When the amissable consonant of a lexical morpheme is not word-final, there is less of a problem in understanding the phonology, but still a problem in understanding the nature of the orthography. As discussed in Lessons 2 and 4, should a form such as “for the sake of his life” be understood as nam-til-la-ni-ṣe or as nam-ti-la-ni-ṣe? Or should the adjective for “mighty” be understood as kalag-ga or as kala-ga? Phonetically, probably all Sumerologists would understand these forms to be /namtilaniṣe/ and /kalaga/. The question, rather, is how does Sumerian orthography represent these pronunciations.

#### - Loan words

In a number of early loan words from Sumerian into Akkadian, final voiced stops appear as unvoiced, and usually as geminated: išib (“kind of priest”, Lesson 19) > išippu; agrig (“an official”) > abarakku. Word-initial voiced stops usually appear as unvoiced in

Akkadian: barag > parakku.

It is not sure what this tells us about Sumerian phonology. As was discussed above, the difference between the two sets of consonants /b d g/ ~ /p t k/ may not have been one of voice.

#### -Locative

Locative phrases such as “in the earth”, ki.a, are almost always written ki-a. That is, the /a/ of the locative case-marker almost always appears in the writing. It has been speculated that the /a/ of the locative case-marker actually assimilates into or contracts into a preceding vowel, but the script is morphographemic, and writes the /a/ anyway.

The locative case-marker .a does not usually appear when the head noun is the first element of a compound verb (kiri₃.šu...gáл was mentioned in Lesson 4). It is possible that this is more than a case of assimilation or contraction. As discussed in Lesson 4, it is not sure how “present” case-markers were in the case of compound verbs, in a synchronic sense; they may have been deleted or somehow reinterpreted.

Although in the Ur III royal inscriptions the locative case is usually not cross-referenced by a dimensional-prefix, in the contemporaneous Ur III administrative documents it quite frequently is cross-referenced. As was mentioned in Lesson 4, this may mean that factors such as genre and style must be taken into account, to describe and explain the different distributions.

#### -Adjectives

In Text 6 the adjectives mah and sikil occur. In Text 2 the adjective kalag-ga occurred. As stated above, some adjectives end in .Ø, others in .a. Some adjectives are occasionally found sometimes in .Ø, other times in .a. This situation is not well understood. The most recent discussion is by Joachim Krecher (1978). He believes that, at least in certain cases, the forms in .a mark a nominal phrase as “definite” or “determined” in some way; those in .Ø are the unmarked forms.

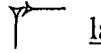
The difficulty in investigating this problem (and many other problems in Sumerian grammar) is that it is not easy to find sentences which are very close in structure, but differ only in the presence or absence of .a on an adjective. There are usually too many variables involved, to be able to sort them all out.

# Lesson 7

Two copies of this inscription are reproduced. The variation in the shape of the cuneiform signs is fairly minimal. Text 7a is a stone foundation tablet. Text 7b is a brick. The inscription appearing on them is a standard inscription, a further sub-class of royal inscription as distinguished by Hallo.

## Sign-list and vocabulary

    lú    man

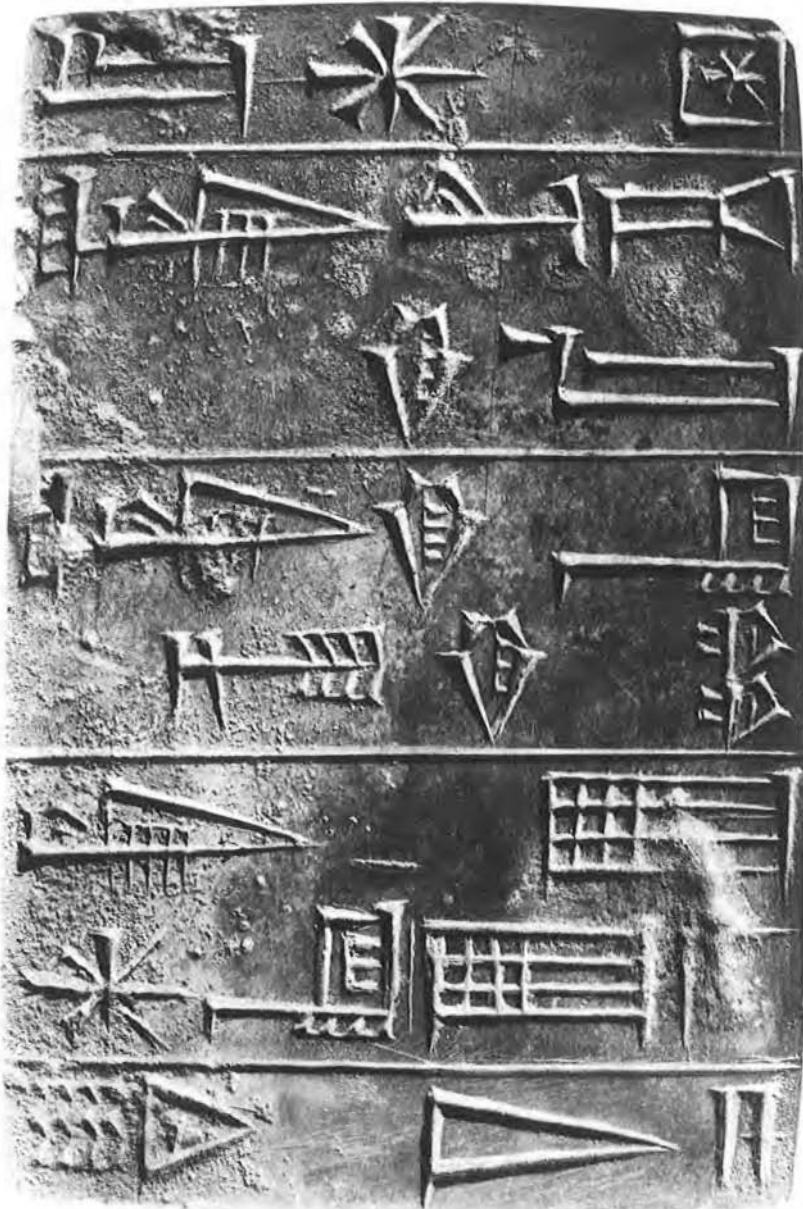
    lá

    in

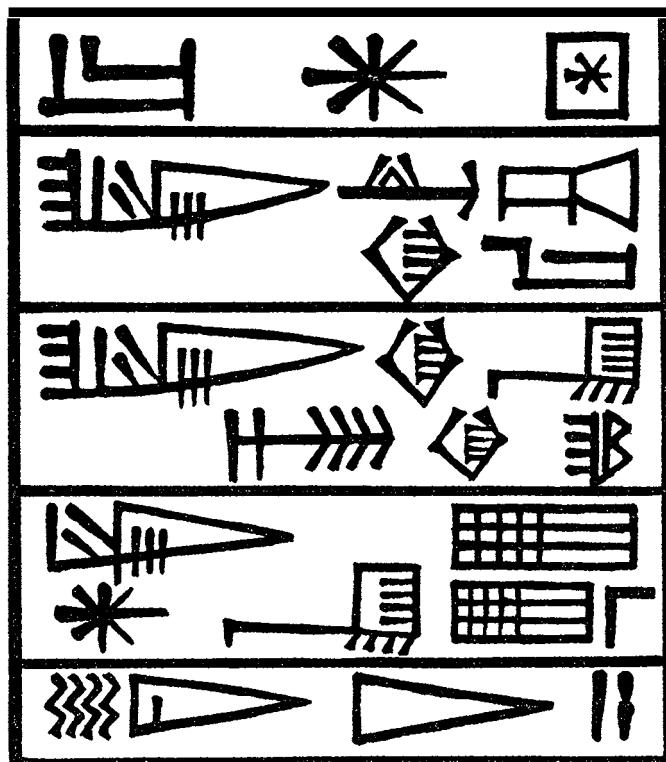
## Notes

**lú** According to Gelb, “The Sumerian word lú is a noun meaning ‘person, man’ (in the sense of *homo, Mensch*, not *vir, Mann*), and may be used for both males and females” (1979b:51). Jacobsen says that lú “denotes a man (Akkadian awīlum) or woman (Akkadian awīltum) who heads a household, firm, or city” (1987:130 n.17).

## Text 7a



## Text 7b



Transliteration	Transcription	Translation
1: Ur-d <u>Nammu</u>	Urmammu	Ur-Nammu,
2: lug <u>al-Urim</u> <sub>5</sub> ki-m <u>a</u>	ugal.Urim.a(k)	the king of Ur,
3: lug <u>al-Ki-en-gi-Ki-uri</u>	ugal.Kiengi.Kiuri.(k)	the king of Sumer and Akkad,
4: l <u>ú</u> é-d <u>En-lil-lá</u>	lu e.Enlil.a(k).Ø	the man who built the temple of Enlil.
5: in-d <u>ú-a</u>	i.n.du.Ø.a	

### Commentary

4. é-dEn-lil-lá = e.Enlil.a(k). Following certain words which end in /l/, the lá-sign (instead of the la-sign) is used to express the combination of the reduplication of the previous word-final /l/ with the /a/ of the genitive marker, or the /a/ of the locative case-marker. Such a word is lil. There are other words ending in /l/ where the la-sign (and not the lá-sign) is used. In Lesson 6, there occurred: ki-sikil-la. These differences in writing are a clue that Sumerian had more than one type of /l/-sound. Not enough is yet known about Sumerian phonology to say exactly what this means.

Lines 4-5 correspond to a relative clause in English, “the man who built the temple of Enlil”. In Sumerian, relative clauses (for want of a better term) are composed of two elements: a noun serving as relative marker (corresponding in function to an English relative pronoun), and a nominalized sentence, which stands in apposition to the preceding relative marker. In Text 7, the relative marker is lú. The nominalized sentence is formed by the addition of the nominalizer .a to a complete sentence. For example, “he built the temple of Enlil” is: e.Enlil.a(k).Ø mu.(n.)du.Ø. This can be nominalized by the addition of .a: [e.Enlil.a(k).Ø mu.(n.)du.Ø].a, meaning something like “(the one) who built the temple of Enlil”. Put into apposition with the relative marker lú, this means “the man who built the temple of Enlil”.

The simplest way to understand relative clauses in Sumerian is to think of them as being equivalent to big adjectives. For example, “the mighty man” is: [nitah][kalag].a. “The man who built the temple of Enlil” is: [lu][e.Enlil.a(k).Ø mu.(n.)du.Ø].a. (As a matter of fact, many linguists consider adjectives in general to be “reduced” relative clauses: “the mighty man”, in English, derives, in some sense, from “the man who is mighty”.) The principle is the same; adjectives and relative clauses fulfill the same function.

Sumerian does not have a morphologically distinct class of “relative pronouns”. Because of the frequency of the noun lú in these contexts, however, it functions almost like a relative pronoun. The Akkadians themselves sometimes translated lú as ša, the Akkadian relative pronoun. Occasionally, other words may function as the equivalent of a relative pronoun.

Although such a construction as: lu e.Enlil.a(k).Ø mu.(n.)du.Ø.a is theoretically possible, in fact the verb form used in Text 7 is different in two ways from the rather stock or formulaic verbs seen in the previous texts. First, it uses a different conjugation-prefix. The conjugation-prefix which occurred in all the previous inscriptions was /mu/, written mu. However, this text uses the conjugation-prefix /i/. If not immediately preceded by a

consonant, this conjugation-prefix is normally written by the i-sign (that is, the sign which occurred earlier with the value ni).

Second, here the personal-affix /n/ cross-referencing the agent is expressed in the script. The in-sign expresses the combination of the .i conjugation-prefix with the .n of the personal-affix. This particular use of the in-sign is quite regular.

It is difficult to say why the finite verb forms seen previously use the conjugation-prefix mu, but the nominalized form uses the conjugation-prefix i. As discussed in Lesson 1, the essential difference between mu and i is elusive. Jacobsen says that the conjugation-prefix i “presents the occurrence denoted by the verb as touching on the subject without inwardly conditioning him in any lasting manner” (1965:251). mu is the

mark of location of the occurrence denoted by the verb on the inside border (.u) of the area of the speech situation (m.). ... It adds to this implications of emotional involvement of the speaker, of his being personally engaged (1965:254).

However, not all scholars are as certain as Jacobsen in their conviction; Poebel, for instance, seemed to have the opposite view of the relationship between mu and i. J.N. Postgate has expressed perhaps the most negative view:

For many years a vexed question in Sumerian has been the distinction between the prefixes mu- and i-, and our failure to define the difference in a satisfactory way has epitomized our helplessness before Sumerian grammar as a whole (1974:24).

And, as discussed in Lesson 1, in actual practice the conjugation-prefixes are basically ignored in translation.

It is likewise difficult to say why the personal-affix /n/ is written here, whereas it did not appear in any of the previous finite verbal forms. In the previous texts, the finite verb form always had an expressed subject (agent). In this particular text, there is no expressed agent, since the verb is inside a relative clause; the lú of line 4 is the relative marker, not an agent of the sentence as a whole. One might hypothesize a rule such that “expressed agents do not use the personal-affix /n/, but verbal forms without expressed agents do”, but from other texts it is known that the situation is not nearly as simple as this.

To sum up, lú of line 4 is the relative marker of the relative clause. The relative clause is formed by nominalizing a finite sentence, by use of the nominalizer a. The nominalized clause stands in apposition to the relative marker.

### Discussion: orthography

In both copies of this text, the relative clause is split into two cases. The first case contains the more nominal component, and the second contains the more verbal component. It is not uncommon for long relative clauses to be split into two or even more cases.

The Sumerian word for “king”, lugal, is a noun-adjective compound from lú, “man”, and gal, “great, big”. In older forms of the lugal-sign, the gal-component was written a little above and to the right of the lú-component. At times the two signs were totally separated, and can even be written on two different lines of one case. As the cuneiform signs gradually became more linear, the gal-sign shifted position, and so in “standard”

Sumerian the lugal-sign is all one sign, with the gal-component in front of the lú-component.

As will be discussed in Lesson 13, the order of cuneiform signs within a case in the earliest texts was to some degree free, with the order-as-written not necessarily reflecting the order-as-read.

### –Conjugation-prefixes

As hinted at above, the fact that the conjugation-prefix i appears in the relative clause instead of mu raises several obvious questions: Does i appear outside of relative clauses? Does mu appear inside of relative clauses? What about the distribution of i and mu in general? What about different types of relative clauses: clauses where the relative clause modifies an agent (“the man who built”), clauses where the relative clause modifies a patient (“the house which the man built”), etc. What about the distribution of the conjugation-prefixes in topicalized and emphatic sentences?

Unfortunately, not all of these questions can be answered. The data are both ambiguous and limited; the number of attested relative clauses is not that large. Without access to native speakers, such questions cannot be tested.

In the Ur III texts, the verb form in the relative clause in this particular expression seems always to appear as: in-dù-a. In some bricks of Gudea, the form mu-na-dù is used in a sentence as a main verb, while the verb of an embedded relative clause uses the form in-dù-a:

<sup>d</sup>Nin-ğiš-zid-da dígir-ra-ni  
Gù-dé-a ensi<sub>2</sub> Lagaški lú É-ninnu <sup>d</sup>Nin-ğír-su-ka in-dù-a  
é Ğír-su-ki-ka-ni  
mu-na-dù.

For Ningishzidda, his god –  
 Gudea, the ensi of Lagash, the man who built the Eninnu of Ningirsu –  
 built his Girsu temple.

The most recent investigation of the conjugation-prefix /i/ is by Herman Vanstiphout (1985). He believes that the opposition mu vs. i cannot be understood simply on the level of the individual sentence; rather, the larger context (discourse) must be examined. His tentative results are that

*/i/* seems to carry substantially ‘secondary’ information in discourse (accompanying or descriptive information, *including* consecutive verbs) ...  
 on the supra-sentential or *discourse* level the prefix */i/* serves as a *backgrounding device* (1985:11; 13).

He does not examine relative clauses specifically, but such an investigation might prove useful.

It has also been suggested that i was a nasalized vowel, and that the presence or absence of a following n is a question of phonology, not of morphology or syntax. But it is not even sure that nasalized vowels existed in Sumerian.

### – Standard inscriptions

It will be noticed that there is no finite verbal form (or any other predicate) in this text! Instead, there is only a personal name, followed by a series of titles or epithets. Jacobsen has referred to such sentences as “label sentences”. Hallo, in his discussion of the different categories of royal inscriptions, refers to such inscriptions as standard inscriptions or property inscriptions. By “standard”, Hallo means that the text is something like a flag or other identifying device: It identifies the building as being the property of Ur-Nammu.

Such inscriptions, which serve to indicate ownership of a building, are often regarded as the “simplest” form of royal inscriptions. They usually consist of a royal name, followed by a limited number of epithets, one of which may be a relative clause, as in Text 7a/b. There is no verbal predicate. These texts can be very short; Text 13c is a standard inscription consisting of only two lines.

### – Foundation deposits

The building inscriptions presented here up to now have been inscribed on either bricks or clay cones. Text 7b is such a brick. A third category of building inscriptions is referred to as “foundation deposits”. These were actually buried under the foundations of walls in a building, in a small pit. Text 7a is one sub-type of such foundation deposit, a stone foundation tablet. In Woolley’s words:

Foundation-deposits are found in the corners of buildings. Built into the wall-foundations there is a small box of burnt bricks, lined with matting and waterproofed with bitumen; in it is set a copper figure of the king modestly represented as a labourer carrying on his head a basket of mortar; at his feet is a stone tablet in the form of a plano-convex brick; on the brick and on the king’s skirt is an inscription recording his name and that of the temple (1982:161).

Occasionally, the figurine or the tablet is uninscribed. It is thought that these foundation tablets were intended to represent “model bricks”.

The following photograph is of a figurine which was found in Nippur along with Text 7a, and so bearing the same inscription. (At least two of these bronze canephore figurines are known.) The figurine is thought to represent Ur-Nammu himself, carrying a basket on his head with the building materials used to make the “first brick” of a building.

*Lesson 7*

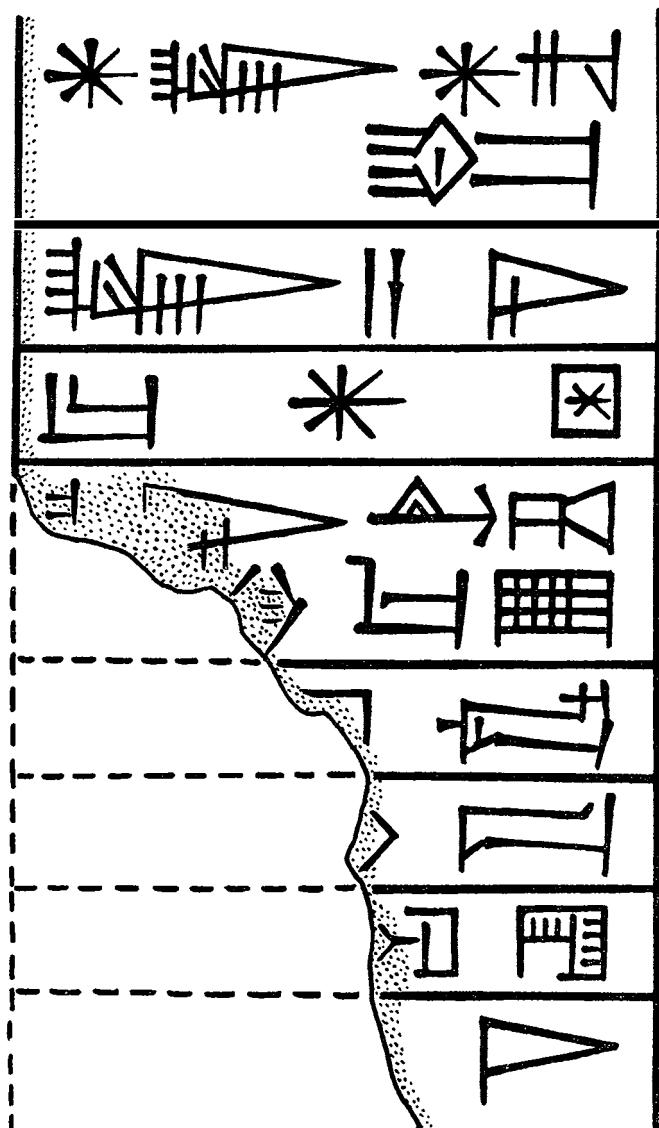
92



## Text 7c

supplementary

Another brick.





# Lesson 8

This text was inscribed on what is commonly called either a door socket or pivot-stone.

## Sign-list and vocabulary

  É-kur Ekur (temple name [TN])

   ki...aḡa₂ to love

 gá

## Notes

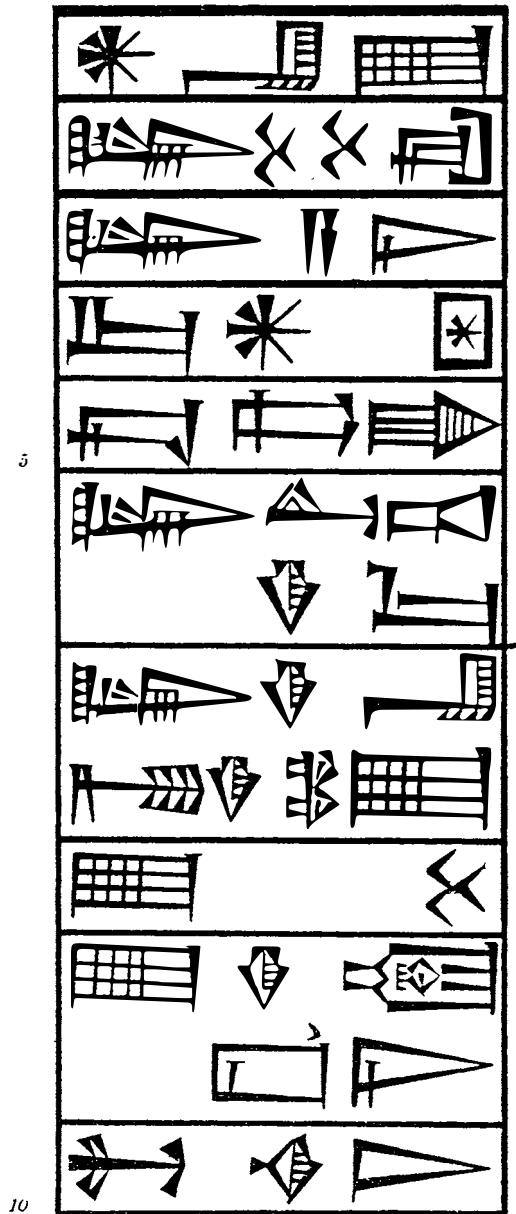
**É-kur** This was the main temple of Enlil in Nippur, by far his most important sanctuary. It was in the Ekur that the assembly of the high gods would meet, as occasion demanded. The god An presided over these meetings, but it was the responsibility of Enlil to carry out the decisions. One of the reasons meetings were held was to select the rulers of Mesopotamia.

**ki...aḡa₂** The verb meaning “to love” is written both   and     . Most Sumerologists believe that both writings represent /ki...aḡa/. The first writing is to be understood as: ki...aḡa₂, and the second as: ki...áḡ-ḡá. This means that the  sign has two values: áḡ and aḡa₂. The problem of the “overhanging vowel” in such cases will be discussed in Lesson 11.

It is not clear what the two elements of this compound verb mean. The most common meaning of aḡa₂ is “to measure” (the Akkadian equivalent is madādu), but it can also mean “to mete out”. The most common meaning of ki is “earth”. It is hard to say how an expression like “to measure the earth” could come to mean “to love”. Either the word ki, “earth”, had some other meaning, not known to us, or else the element ki in ki...aḡa₂ is an entirely different root ki (that is, a homonym).

The most common Akkadian equivalent of ki...aḡa₂ is rāmu, “to love”.

## Text 8



Transliteration	Transcription	Translation
1: <u>d</u> <u>En-lil</u>	Enlil	For Enlil,
2: <u>lugal-kur-kur-ra</u>	lugal.kur.kur.a(k)	the king of the lands,
3: <u>lugal-a-ni</u>	lugal.anि.(r)	his king –
4: <u>Ur-</u> <sup>d</sup> <u>Nammu</u>	Urnammu	Ur-Nammu,
5: <u>nitah-kalag-ga</u>	nitah.kalaga	the mighty man,
6: <u>lugal-Urim</u> <sub>5</sub> <u>ki-ma</u>	lugal.Urim.a(k)	the king of Ur,
7: <u>lugal-Ki-en-gi-Ki-uri-ke</u> <sub>4</sub>	lugal.Kiengi.Kiuri.k.e	the king of Sumer and Akkad –
8: <u>É-kur</u>	Ekur	the Ekur,
9: <u>é-ki-ág-ğá-ni</u>	e.ki.ağ.a.anि.Ø	his beloved temple –
10: <u>mu-na-dù</u>	mu.na.(n.)du.Ø	he built.

### Commentary

9. In Text 2, the adjective kalag-ga occurred, derived from the root /kalag/ with the nominalizer .a. In Text 8, the same formation occurs, but from a compound verb. ki...ağ<sub>2</sub> is “to love”; the adjective “beloved” is [ki.ağ].a. The scope of the nominalizer here involves both the nominal and verbal elements of the compound verb; therefore, the nominalizer is given in transcription, unlike the case with “simple” adjectives such as /kalaga/.

As discussed in Lesson 1, the third person possessive-suffix after vowels appears both as a-ni and as ni. Perhaps, then, this form should be understood as: ki.ağ.a.anि, instead of: ki.ağ.a.anि.

### Discussion: structure

The structure of this text is:

[Enlil, lugal.kur.kur.a(k), lugal.anि].(r)	benefactive
[Urnammu, nitah.kalaga, lugal.Urim.a(k),	agent
lugal.Kiengi.Kiuri.k].e	
[Ekur, e.ki.ağ.a.anि].Ø	patient
mu.na.(n.)du.Ø	verb

### – Door sockets

Many texts inscribed on door sockets have been preserved; for a photograph of such a stone, see Text 17a below. Such stones were partially underground, and were used to hold a door. In Woolley’s words,

The Sumerian door consisted of a wooden leaf fixed to a pole rather higher than itself; the projecting top end was held by and revolved in a metal ring attached to the lintel, the lower end was shod with metal and went down through a hole in the pavement to rest and turn on the hinge-stone. This was

a boulder of (imported) hard stone, limestone or diorite, in which a cup-shaped hollow had been cut to take the pole-shoe, and generally one part of it had been smoothed and inscribed with the name of the king who dedicated the building and of the god in whose honour he built it. ... Imported stones were valuable and an old stone would often be taken away and re-used for some building other than that for which it had been intended, so that the old inscription no longer applies (1982:160-161).

In some cases, door sockets were re-used for reasons of piety; in other cases, it was purely for reasons of economy.

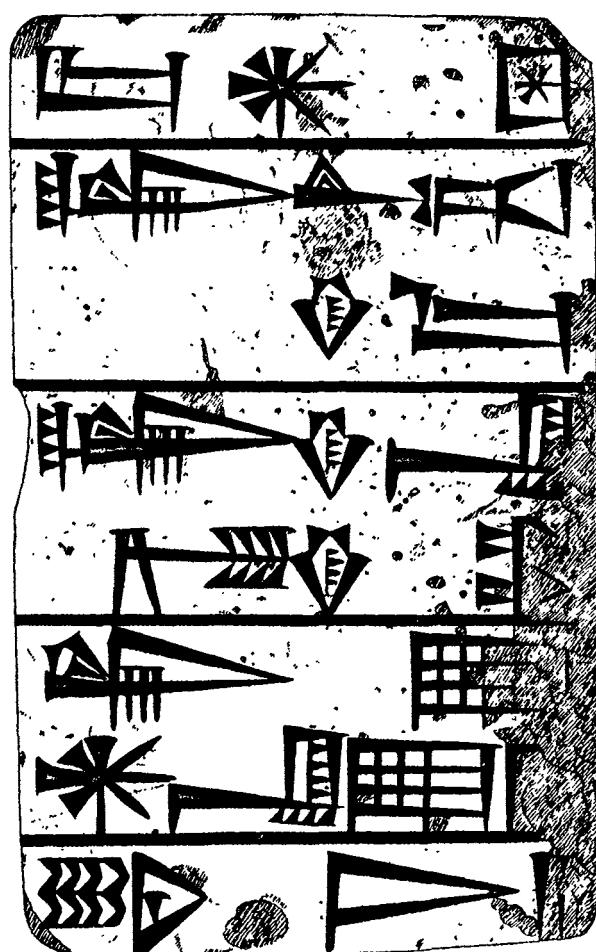
As Woolley's description implies, the building inscription inscribed on the door socket would not normally be exposed to view. Royal inscriptions in general were not meant to be seen by contemporaries of the builder, but rather by future rebuilders.

In Hallo's scheme, door sockets are a subdivision of building inscriptions, which are themselves one of the major divisions of royal inscriptions.

## Text 8a

supplementary

Another brick.





# Lesson 9

This text is another brick.

## Sign-list and vocabulary

 Unug (Unu) Uruk (GN)

 É-temen-ní-guru<sub>3</sub> Etemenniguru (TN)

 dumu son

 sag head

 en lord

 gi<sub>4</sub> to return, to restore

 bi, bé

## Notes

**Unug** One of the most important cities in southern Mesopotamia; it often played a role in political history. Before becoming king, Ur-Nammu had been military governor of Ur (Šakkana-Urim<sub>5</sub>ki-ma) under the control of Utu-Hengal in Uruk.

The etymology of the name is unknown; this is discussed below. The pronunciation of the name as /Unug/ is known from syllabic writings. However, Semitic spellings show /r/: Biblical Erech, modern-day Arabic Warka, etc.; the lexical lists also give the Akkadian equivalent with /r/: Ú-ru-uk. It is not known why the Sumerian form shows /n/ while the Semitic forms show /r/.

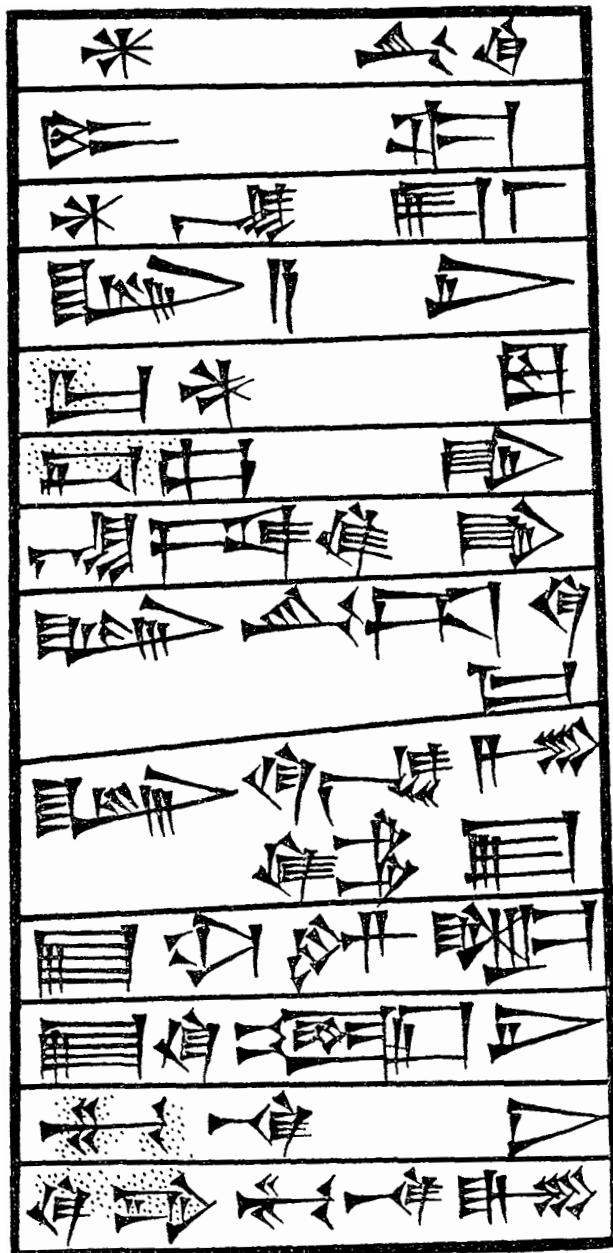
**É-temen-ni-guru<sub>3</sub>** This is the name of Ur-Nammu's ziggurat at Ur, illustrated in Lesson 1. The etymology is uncertain. It is sometimes transliterated as É-temen-ní-ila<sub>2</sub>.

**sag** This is literally “head”. However, it not infrequently forms the second element of noun-noun compounds, where, as in many languages, it can take on metaphorical uses. For example, kaš-sag, “beer-head”, is “top quality beer”; dumu-sag, “son-head”, means “eldest son”.

sag has several Akkadian equivalents: rēšu, “head” and several derived meanings; qaqqadu, also “head” and several derived meanings; amēlu, “man”, etlu, “young man”, etc.

**en** This is normally translated “lord”, a purely conventional translation. The ruler of Uruk is always called an en. Its meaning is further discussed below.

## Text 9



Transliteration	Transcription	Translation
1: <u>d</u> <u>Nanna</u>	Nanna	For Nanna,
2: <u>dumu-sag̃</u>	dumu.sag̃	the eldest son
3: <u>d</u> <u>En-lil-lá</u>	Enlil.a(k)	of Enlil,
4: <u>lugal-a-ni</u>	lugal.ani.(r)	his king –
5: <u>Ur-d</u> <u>Nammu</u>	Urnammu	Ur-Nammu,
6: <u>nitah-kalag-ga</u>	nitah.kalaga	the mighty man,
7: <u>en-Unug<sup>ki</sup>-ga</u>	en.Unug.a(k)	the lord of Uruk,
8: <u>lugal-Urim<sup>ki</sup>-ma</u>	lugal.Urim.a(k)	the king of Ur,
9: <u>lugal-Ki-en-gi-Ki-uri-ke</u> <sub>4</sub>	lugal.Kiengi.Kiuri.k.e	the king of Sumer and Akkad –
10: <u>É-temen-ní-guru</u> <sub>3</sub>	Etemenniguru	the Etemenniguru,
11: <u>é-ki-ág-ğá-ni</u>	e.ki.ağ.a.an.i.Ø	his beloved temple –
12: <u>mu-na-dù</u>	mu.na.(n.)du.Ø	he built;
13: <u>ki-bé mu-na-gi</u> <sub>4</sub>	ki.bi.e mu.na.(n.)gi.Ø	he restored it to its proper place.

### Commentary

13. ki-bé mu-na-gi<sub>4</sub> means “he restored it to its place”, that is, rebuilt the temple at its original location. This entire expression was borrowed into Akkadian as: ana ašrīšu itūr, “he returned (it) to its place”.

.bi is the inanimate possessive-suffix, “its”, referring back to the temple. It is the inanimate equivalent of the animate possessive-suffix .ani.

The most obvious interpretation of the first two words of this line would be to read ki-bi, interpreting it as the direct object (patient) of the verb gi<sub>4</sub>: “he returned its place”. However, there is evidence that ki-bi here is not a direct object (patient), because variations of this formula already include an expressed patient. For example, é-ni ki-bé mu-na-gi<sub>4</sub>, “he restored his temple to its place”; bàd-bi ki-be<sub>4</sub> mu-na-gi<sub>4</sub>, “he restored its wall to its place”.

One interpretation is to read ki-bi, for ki.bi.(ṣè), that is, a terminative nominal phrase. The terminative .ṣè becomes /ṣ/ after a vowel, and since /ṣ/ is an amissable consonant, it would not appear in the script. While it is true that the morphology of the terminative case-marker is not entirely clear, one might expect to find at least one case in early texts of the terminative appearing in this formulaic phrase, but none apparently occur; note that it regularly occurs after a vowel in forms such as nam-til-la-ni-ṣè. It is true that in later texts ki-bi-ṣè occasionally occurs in somewhat similar contexts; however, it is possible that this is due to influence from the Akkadian equivalent.

The second possibility is to read ki-bé, for ki.bi.e. The .e is the marker for a case not yet seen, the “locative-terminative” case. It is difficult to pin down a specific function for this case. It shares some of the characteristics of the locative case, and some of the

characteristics of the terminative case. In this particular fixed expression, the force conveyed by the locative-terminative is: “He returned the temple to its original place”. That is, its meaning here is close to that of the terminative marked by -šè.

The form of the locative-terminative dimensional-prefix is much open to dispute. It is often not cross-referenced at all in the verbal prefix chain. Other times, it seems to use the dimensional-prefix corresponding to that of the locative case, that is, .ni. (According to some Sumerologists, .ni in such contexts is for \*n-e; the .e is the dimensional-prefix of the locative-terminative, and the .n is an optional pronominal-prefix, discussed in Lesson 15.) In this particular case, it is not cross-referenced at all in the verbal chain.

The .Ø cross-references the patient. There is no expressed patient in this sentence; the logical patient is the nominal phrase in line 11. Similarly, the logical antecedent of the dative dimensional-prefix .na is the dative nominal phrase in lines 1-4.

### Discussion: structure

The structure of this text is:

[Nanna, dumu.saḡ.Enlil.a(k), lugal.anī].(r)	benefactive
[Urnammu, nitah.kalaga, en.Unug.a(k),	agent
lugal.Urim.a(k), lugal.Kiengi.Kiuri.k].e	
[Etemenniguru, e.ki.ağā.a.anī].Ø	patient
mu.na.(n.)du.Ø	verb
[ki.bi].e	place
mu.na.(n.)gi.Ø	verb

### – Sign formation

Over time, the Sumerian writing system produced a number of new cuneiform signs; the history of these developments is rarely visible to us. One such process was the addition of short strokes to an already existing cuneiform sign, thereby modifying its meaning. For example, the word sag, “head”, is represented by a sign which was originally the picture of the head and upper torso of a man: . The word ka, “mouth”, is represented by the same sign, but with the addition of short strokes over the region of the mouth: .

Akkadian scribes referred to these extra strokes as gunû. This is an adaptation of a Sumerian word gunu, apparently meaning “colored”. Modern scholars will sometimes refer to, e.g., the ka-sign as “SAĞ+gunû”. This convention is sometimes necessary, when the value of a “gunûfied” sign is not known.

### – Functions of .e

The locative-terminative case is marked in .e, and the agentive-ergative case is marked in .e. An obvious question which springs to mind is, are the two related? It is probably no accident that the two case-endings share the same phonological shape, /e/. The parallel has been made to the English preposition “by”. This can express a locative (“by the river”), an instrumental (“by the hammer”), or an agent (“by the man”). The agentive marker .e may have developed out of this locative-terminative .e. This .e may have started to lose some of its functions, which began to be taken over by the locative case in .a and by the terminative

case in .šè. Haayer has discussed this point, in terms of universal tendencies in language:

One of the most characteristic features found in case marking in ergative languages is that the ergative case is often identical with another case, most often the genitive or instrumental, sometimes the locative or dative. In Sumerian, for instance, the ergative case is marked by the postposition -e, which is identical to the locative-terminative -e, and is in origin a deictic pronoun (1986:80).

Although we understand and translate simple Sumerian sentences such as *lugal.e e.Ø mu.n.du.Ø* as “the king built the house”, it is usually assumed that at some “Proto-Sumerian” stage, the meaning may have been something like “a house got built, connected with the king”, or “there was a building of a house by the king”. That is, to some degree, pre-historic Sumerian (and historic Sumerian?) should be understood as basically “passive” in nature. It has been said that in ergative languages, the patient of the sentence is the “topic” of the sentence (while the agent is the “comment”), but in accusative languages, it is the subject which is the topic (while the patient is the comment).

#### – Noun compounds

dumu-sag is literally “son-head”. This represents a case of noun-noun compounding. This is not a productive method of word formation in historic Sumerian, but a few such cases exist. Several early proper names are noun-noun compounds: <sup>d</sup>En-lil, “lord-wind”; E-kur, “temple-mountain”, etc.; these are not genitive formations.

The element nig, used to form concrete (and occasionally abstract) nouns from verbal roots, is in origin a noun meaning “(some)thing”. The original meaning of nam is less sure, but possibly had a similar origin, or may have meant something like “state-of-being”. Thus, abstract and concrete nouns formed from either nig or nam originally represented noun-noun compounding.

#### – History

The different functions of the en and lugal have been much discussed; they varied to some degree from place to place and from period to period. In Jacobsen’s seminal article on “Early Political Development in Mesopotamia”, he stated that in the earlier periods the en (Akkadian belu) was more of an “administrator” while the lugal (Akkadian sarru) was a “warleader”:

In the case of the en the political side of the office is clearly secondary to the cult function. The en’s basic responsibility is toward fertility and abundance.

... The “king”, lugal, in contrast to the en was from the beginning a purely secular political figure, a “warleader” (1957:375 n.32).

As for the more “original” meanings of the terms,

The Sumerian term en which is generally translated “lord” denotes basically a productive manager, someone with magic gifts to make things thrive (1987:20 n.2; cf. p. 277). ... Under the early political forms ... the king (lugal) was usually a young man whose task it was to lead the army in war (1987:236 n.4).

### – Substrate

The etymology of the name Uruk is unknown. Many of the oldest cities in Sumer have names which are not apparently Sumerian. Such names go back to the language(s) spoken by the people(s) living in southern Mesopotamia before the Sumerians arrived; the name of the city of Ur may be one of these names. Gelb says:

Almost all the Mesopotamian geographical names found in the earliest Sumerian sources are non-Sumerian and non-Akkadian and must be assigned to the proto-population of Mesopotamia. This conclusion is true of the names of rivers and mountains, as well as of cities and countries. Only in the Pre-Sargonic period do we find the first attestation of Sumerian geographical names (1962:49).

(A number of these place-names are discussed in Limet 1975b.)

These substrate peoples, about whom virtually nothing is known, were referred to by Benno Landsberger as “Proto-Euphrateans”; they are also sometimes referred to as “Proto-Tigridians”. The words for certain material objects and certain professions in Sumerian go back to this language, for example, nagar, “carpenter”, which has no obvious Sumerian etymology. Some of these substrate words then passed on to Akkadian, and eventually on to Aramaic, Hebrew, and Arabic.

Scholars disagree in their views as to how much of Sumerian vocabulary is of substrate origin. Some are inclined to see a large number of substrate words in Sumerian, including many place-names and divine-names; other scholars are less convinced. Jacobsen, for instance, has Sumerian etymologies for several city-names, which other scholars regard as substrate names. There is rarely enough evidence to decide any particular case.

### – History

Control of Uruk was important to all the Ur III kings. Hallo says:

Certainly the two cities [Ur and Uruk] had a venerable history of dynastic and administrative union behind them. ... Ur under Ur-Nammu was heir to a long history of dynastic and administrative union with both Uruk and Lagash. ... Nippur is the religious center, Ur the political capital and Uruk, from all indications, the ancestral home of the dynasty (1966:136-138).

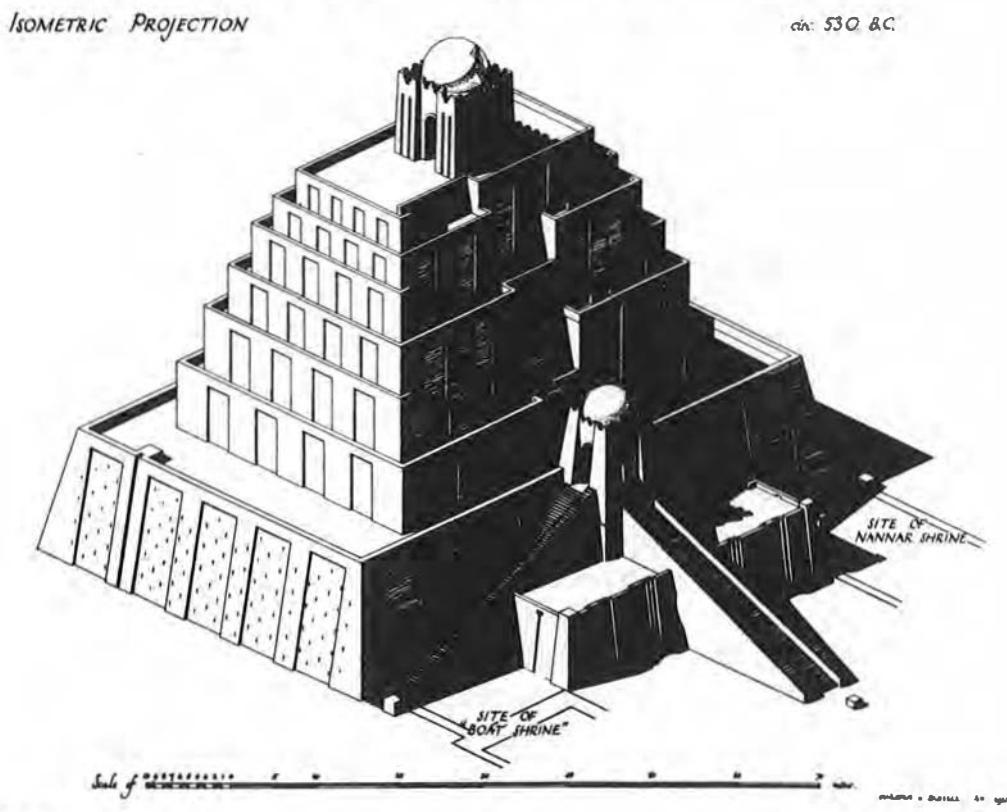
### – History

It is difficult to say how literally the expression “he restored it to its place” should be understood. The Sumerian phrase (and the corresponding Akkadian phrase) is somewhat ambiguous; it can mean either “to restore to a former spot” or “to restore to a former state”. Kings of the Neo-Babylonian period specifically claimed that they took care to rebuild temples exactly on old foundations. Woolley says that

It was customary in Mesopotamia, when rebuilding a temple, to incorporate the earlier one within the core of the platform upon which its successor was to be set. This often meant largely dismantling it (1982:109).

Nabonidus, for example, has left several inscriptions in Ur, in which he claims to have restored the ziggurat of Ur-Nammu (the Etemenniguru). He states, in fact, that Ur-Nammu started the work on the ziggurat, but did not finish it; Ur-Nammu's son and successor Shulgi also worked on the complex, but did not finish it; only he, Nabonidus himself, completely finished and restored it. The following drawing is Woolley's reconstruction of Nabonidus' ziggurat; it is instructive to compare it with Woolley's reconstruction of Ur-Nammu's ziggurat, given in Lesson 1. Ur-Nammu's ziggurat itself was built over an earlier temple, which itself was built over an even earlier temple.

### THE ZIGGURAT OF NABONIDUS RESTORED.



As another example of temple-rebuilding, the Ishtar Temple of Assur was in existence some two thousand years, and was frequently rebuilt. Richard Ellis says that "It was always in about the same place, though sometimes the new version would be placed to one side of the earlier ruins" (1968:12). The temple of Inanna at Nippur had an even longer history. It was built and rebuilt from at least as early as Early Dynastic I to late Parthian times – that is, about 2700 BC to 150 AD. There were at least eleven major building levels. The temple varied in size from period to period, usually getting bigger. The new sanctuaries were normally built over the previous ones.

The principles behind the orientation of Mesopotamian temples are not at all clear, especially in the older periods; some of the evidence seems contradictory. Nor are the means by which the Mesopotamians determined the orientation known. Günther Martiny, writing in 1940, says that

Astronomical orientation is ... especially noticeable in the case of late temples. The direction of orientation should probably be understood as the direction in which the god's statue faced. ... In Neo-Babylonian times orientation based on individual stars assigned to specific deities came into vogue (1940:92).

Sally Dunham, however, writing almost fifty years later, is less sanguine:

Very little is known about how the ancient Mesopotamians oriented and measured off the ground plans and precincts of their temples, although we do know such measuring was important enough to be mentioned in their royal inscriptions and religious texts. ... Still today nothing is known about if and how the ancient Mesopotamians used astronomy to orient their temples (1986:39, and n.37).

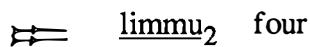
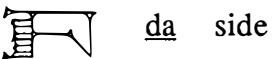
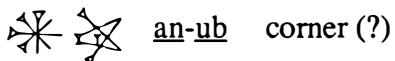
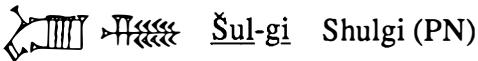
Martiny thinks that the "Gimilsin (i.e., Shu-Sin) Temple" in Eshnunna was oriented toward the city of Ur:

Exactly along the projected axis of the Gimilsin Temple in the direction in which the god's statue faced, at a distance of about 300 km. toward the southeast, lies Ur, the residence of Gimilsin. Is it possible that the deified ruler, in whose honor the temple in Eshnunna was to be built during his lifetime, had demanded orientation of the temple toward Ur? ... The Gimilsin Temple confronts us with what appears to be a case of geographical orientation toward the capital of the overlord (1940:95-96).

# Lesson 10

This is a text of Ur-Nammu's son and successor, Shulgi, who ruled from 2094 to 2047 BC. It is inscribed on a weight, in the shape of a sleeping duck.

## Sign-list and vocabulary



## Notes

**Sul-gi** In older transliterations the name was read as Dun-gi. It is almost always read Sul-gi nowadays, although there is really very little evidence to permit a decision one way or the other. It is usually interpreted as “noble (gir) young man (Sul)”.

The gi-element had an /r/-Auslaut, although the standard sign-lists do not record any value in /gir/. Because of this /r/-Auslaut, he is occasionally referred to as “Shulgir”. This gi-element may be the same gi-element seen in the GN Ki-en-gi.

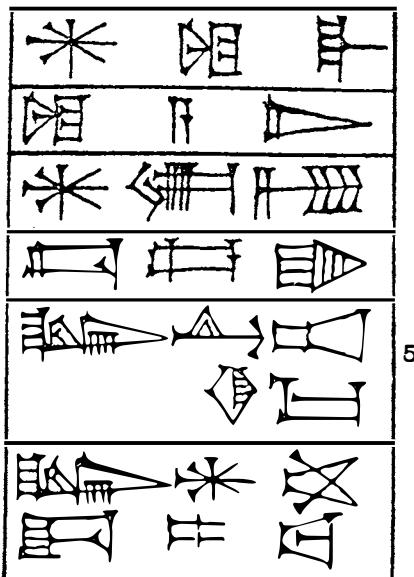
**an-ub** The analysis is not clear. Because this word is occasionally written without the an-sign, some think that the an-sign is the divine determinative, and so it is sometimes transliterated as: d<sub>ub</sub>. Sollberger, for example, explains the word as: “part of the world (as an emanation of the divine, hence the (divine) classifier)”. However, these omissions of the an-sign occur only in relatively late texts. For simplicity sake, it is transliterated here as: an-ub, and transcribed as: anub.

**da** The cuneiform sign is a picture of the head–upper-shoulder–arm. Its meaning was extended to mean “side”. It is equated in lexical texts with the Akkadian idu, glossed by the CAD as: “1. arm, 2. side, edge, border, ... 7. strength”.

**limmu<sub>2</sub>** Numbers can be expressed in two ways in Sumerian: either by a numeral, or by spelling out the number, using a mixture of logographic and syllabic signs. The word for “four” in Sumerian was pronounced /limmu/ (or perhaps /limu/, or /lima/). This number was usually expressed by its numeral: . This numeral can be transliterated as limmu. However, when Sumerian numerals are used strictly for counting, they are usually transliterated by Arabic numerals, e.g., “4”. In certain contexts, when not used strictly for counting, “four” is expressed by limmu<sub>2</sub>, as in Text 10.

Some read the sign as limu<sub>2</sub> instead of limmu<sub>2</sub>. In older transliterations, it is frequently transliterated as tabtab. This is still preferred by some modern-day Sumerologists.

## Text 10



Transliteration	Transcription	Translation
1: d <u>Nin-gal</u>	Ningal	For Ningal,
2: <u>nin-a-ni</u>	nin.an.i.(r)	his lady –
3: d <u>Šul-gi</u>	Šulgi	Shulgi,
4: <u>nitah-kalag-ga</u>	nitah.kalaga	the mighty man,
5: <u>lugal-Urim<sub>5</sub>ki-ma</u>	lugal.Urim.a(k)	the king of Ur,
6: <u>lugal-an-ub-da-limmu<sub>2</sub>-ba</u>	lugal.anub.da.(k) limmu.bi.a(k)	the king of the four quarters.

## Commentary

**1-2.** The text begins with a benefactive to a goddess, even though there is no votive object. The use of the benefactive is due to the formulaic nature of these inscriptions, coupled with the idea that all official activity, including the regulation of weights and measures, was conducted ad maiorem deorum gloriam.

**3.** At some point in the middle of his reign, Shulgi's name begins to appear with the determinative normally reserved for divine names, ✕. This (and other) evidence indicates that Shulgi was deified, both during and after his life-time; this is discussed further below.

**6.** There are two genitive constructions in this line, one of which has not been seen previously: the “anticipatory genitive”. Up to this point, to express “the temple of the king” in Sumerian, one would expect e.lugal.a(k), written é-lugal-la. However, Sumerian has an alternative genitive construction, which puts the noun with the genitive marker first, followed by the second noun with a possessive-suffix. A literal translation of this construction would be: “of the king, his temple”. This would be: lugal.a(k) e.anı, written either lugal-la é-a-ni or lugal-la é-ni.

This particular expression loosely translates as “the four quarters”. A literal translation would be: “of the corner-and-side, its four”: anub.da.(k) limmu.bi. As in the expression “king of Sumer and Akkad”, there is no conjunction between “corner” and “side”. Since these terms are inanimate, the form .bi is used, not .anı.

However, this entire expression is itself the second element of a regular genitive construction: “king (of the four quarters)”. The first element in this genitive phrase is lugal. The second element of this genitive phrase is the entire phrase: anub.da.(k) limmu.bi. The second element is then followed by the genitive marker .ak. The /i/ of the possessive-suffix .bi contracts into the /a/ of .ak, producing /bak/, and the /k/, as is the normal practice, is not written. Thus, a literal translation of this entire expression would be: “king of [of the corner-and-side, its four]”: [lugal].[anub.da.(k) limmu.bi].a(k), producing “king of the four quarters”.

The anticipatory genitive tends to occur in certain fixed expressions (such as in line 6). In theory, it can be used anywhere a regular genitive could be used, but in practice it is less common. Since the expression “king of the four quarters” is quite frequent, it is not a problem to recognize it in context. However, non-idiomatic uses of the anticipatory genitive can be quite difficult to recognize. The two clues for its presence are: an otherwise unexplained /a/-vowel, followed a little later by an otherwise unexpected possessive-suffix. Several instances of the anticipatory genitive occur in the following texts.

## Discussion: numbers

One of the lexical texts found at Ebla is a small tablet giving the names of the Sumerian numerals from one to ten, spelled more-or-less syllabically. This tablet (TM.75.G.2198) was apparently some kind of school or practice text. For “four”, the tablet says: li-mu, presumably for /limmu/.

### – Typology

It is more common for S-O-V languages to have a genitive construction of the type

possessor-possessed then of the type possessed-possessor. The genitive in Turkish, for example, (an S-O-V, agglutinative language) is of the type possessor-possessed. Sumerian is rather unusual in that the most common pattern is possessed-possessor ("the palace of the king"). The anticipatory genitive, however, is of the type possessor-possessed ("of the king, his palace"), and it is possible that it represents the older construction, which perhaps was in the process of becoming limited to certain stock expressions.

#### -Weights

Text 10 is a standard inscription, as was Text 7a/b. However, it is inscribed on a weight. This particular weight does not bear any indication of its value. Text 21a, on the other hand, is a weight inscribed with its value: 5 ma-na gi-na, that is, "5 standard minas".

Weight inscriptions, such as this one, were typically carved of stone in the shape of a sleeping duck. It is not clear why such a shape was used. The following illustration is of a duck-weight from the Neo-Assyrian period.



Although stone was the usual material used for making weights, in Assyria bronze weights were sometimes used instead.

### – History

The first Mesopotamian ruler to use the divine determinative before his name was Narām-Sin, the fourth ruler of the Dynasty of Akkad, who ruled approximately 2254-2218 BC. Gadd says that “no doubt the vast accession of power and width of sway won by such a mighty figure as Narām-Sin helped to make him appear superhuman” (1971:619). The determinative was used by all the Ur III rulers except Ur-Nammu. It was used only sporadically by following rulers.

Occasionally, epithets in the royal inscriptions use the word “god”. In Text 17a, for example, Amar-Sin refers to himself as dīgir-zid <sup>d</sup>Utu-kalam-ma-na, “the effective god, the sun-god of his land”.

There is also a certain amount of literary material which indicates that the Ur III kings were considered, or considered themselves, “deified”. However, it is not really known what this means. The use of the English word “deified” is rather facile; it is very difficult to say what this meant to the Ur III rulers or to their subjects. (Gadd says that “vainglory and popular superstition supported [this policy]” [1971:619].) However, there is a certain amount of evidence from royal tombs of the Ur III period to indicate that offerings were made to the dead Ur III kings, implying that they were worshipped as gods after their death.

Moorey says that

The most common evidence for the worship of the deceased kings of the Ur III Dynasty is provided by economic documents describing deliveries to a place called ki-a-nag, where liquid offerings to the dead were libated. Nothing specific is known of these mortuary shrines (1984:17).

This topic of the deified king has been discussed by Jacobsen:

The deified king is not a “god” generally; he has the specific relation to the country that a personal god has to his ward. ... The king, as leader of the country and originator of policy, is the “personal god” of his realm. The deification of rulers in Mesopotamia is accordingly to be understood not in terms of the qualitative contrast human:divine, mortal:immortal, etc., but in terms of function of the king, he is the “genius” of the country (1957:395 n.108).

Although the divine determinative is never used before Ur-Nammu’s name in any of his royal inscriptions, it is so used in the Prologue to the Law Code usually ascribed to him. But this is probably the work of Shulgi, and in any case the Prologue is a rather late copy, dating from the Old Babylonian period. Also in the Prologue, he is referred to as the son of the goddess Ninsun; he is elsewhere referred to in the same way.

### – Titulature

It was mentioned above that Narām-Sin of Akkad was the first Mesopotamian ruler to use the divine determinative. He was also the first to use the title “king of the four quarters”, in both an Akkadian form and a Sumerian one. The title was not apparently used by other Akkadian kings. It was used once by a Gutian king, and once by Utu-Hengal of Uruk, who was overthrown by Ur-Nammu. Ur-Nammu himself did not use the title,

presumably because of the limited size of his realm; note also that he did not use the divine determinative. The title was used by all the other Ur III kings, and afterwards by various later kings, in an Akkadian or Sumerian form.

### – History

Ur-Nammu was killed on the battlefield, but no specifics of his death are known; the literary work entitled “The Death of Ur-Nammu” is terse and unsure at this spot. Woolley believed that Ur-Nammu and the other Ur III rulers (except the last) were buried at Ur, in a building complex he referred to as the “Mausolea” of the Ur III rulers. Moorey has recently questioned this:

The balance of available information, archaeological and textual ... suggests that if the kings (and queen-mothers) of the IIIrd Dynasty of Ur were buried in that city it was not in Woolley’s “Mausolea”. ... Ur is not the only potential site for these graves, for they might have been in a palace at Uruk, home of the dynasty, or, less probably, even perhaps at Nippur (1984:18).

It was under the rule of Ur-Nammu’s son and successor Shulgi that the Ur III empire reached its greatest extent; Piotr Steinkeller calls him “the true builder of the Ur III state” (1987b:20). There was a great deal of royal building; there was a reform in the calendar, and much bureaucratic reorganization; Gadd says that “visibly under the impulse of the king himself a most meticulous system of bookkeeping was instituted” (1971:617). Daniel Snell also points to “a general economic stability during the middle years of the Ur III state, a stability that seems a likely corollary of the middle kings’ largely successful attempts to maintain the empire their predecessors had bequeathed them” (1982:191).

Steinkeller (1987b:20-21) lists the following among the reforms of Shulgi:

- 1) the deification of Šulgi
- 2) the creation of a standing army
- 3) the reorganization of the system of temple households
- 4) the creation of a unified administrative system for southern and northern Babylonia
- 5) the introduction of the bala taxation system, coupled with the creation of a chain of redistribution centers ... which served to collect, to process, and to distribute the state revenues
- 6) the creation of an enormous bureaucratic apparatus, as well as of a system of scribal schools that provided highly uniform scribal and administrative training for the prospective members of the bureaucracy
- 7) the radical reform of the writing system
- 8) the introduction of new accounting and recording procedures and of new types of archival records
- 9) the reorganization of the system of weights and measures
- 10) the introduction of a new calendar, the so-called Reichskalender, which became the official calendar throughout the Ur III state.

It was about half-way through Shulgi’s rule when he began to conduct many military raids. A number of these were directed towards the East, modern-day Iran. The details of

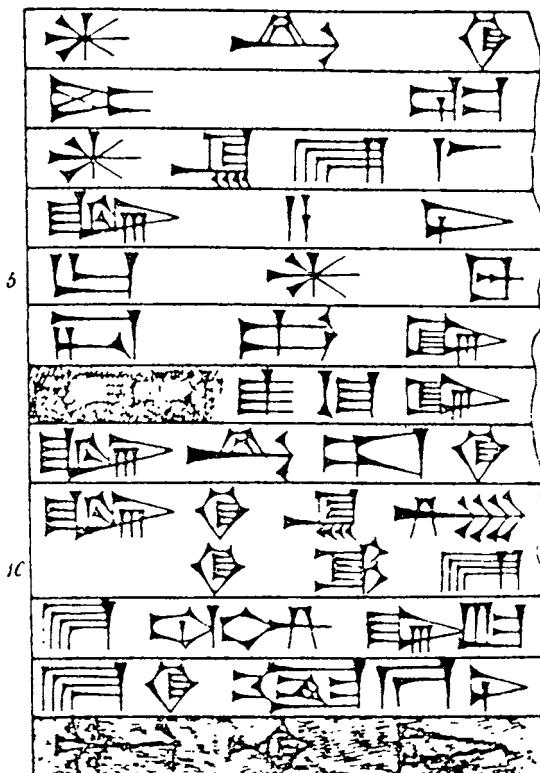
these campaigns are rarely known to us, and in fact it is surprising how little historical information we have about Shulgi, especially considering the fact that he ruled for almost half a century.

Shulgi was also the subject of some thirty hymns, preserved to varying degrees. In “Hymn B”, he boasts: “I learned the art of the scribe from the tablets of Sumer and Akkad”; he also refers to himself as “the scribe of Nisaba”, the goddess of wisdom and writing.

# Text 10a

supplementary

*On a brick from the centre of the Ruins*



## Notes

This autograph is taken from Volume 1 of Sir Henry Rawlinson's The Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia, published in 1861. This volume was one of the earliest collections of cuneiform inscriptions published. At that time, very little was known about Sumerian. In fact, it seems that it was not until the year 1869 that the word "Sumerian" was attached to this language, by Jules Oppert.

It is very difficult to correctly copy texts written in a language which one does not understand. This means that such autographs are sometimes slightly "off". In this particular autograph, some of the signs seem to differ from those in the other texts.

7. en-Unug<sup>ki</sup>-ga: Funny looking Unug-sign!

The shape of the ki-determinative in this line is quite different from the shape of the ki-sign in lines 9 and 11. It is hard to say how much of this variation is due to the original, or how much is due to Rawlinson.

8. There is no expected -ma at the end. This is most unusual, and one suspects that this is an error of Rawlinson, rather than an error of the original scribe.

# Lesson 11

This text was inscribed on a headdress or wig of diorite. D.J. Wiseman has pointed out that this headdress was “scored on the underside to fit the rounded head of a statue”. He concludes that it was “intended to be fitted to an actual statue rather than be used independently as an ex-voto object” (1960:168 n.25).

## Sign-list and vocabulary

 Lamar Lamar (DN, fem)

   Nin-ğir-su Ningirsu (DN, masc)

  Nanše Nanshe (DN, fem)

  Ba-ba<sub>6</sub> Baba (DN, fem)

      <sup>d</sup>Ba-ba<sub>6</sub>-nin-àm Babaninam (PN)

      <sup>Ur-</sup><sup>d</sup>Nin-ğir-su Ur-Ningirsu (PN)

   zabar bronze

   zabar-dab<sub>5</sub> (kind of official)

   hi-li attraction; headdress, wig

 munus woman

 dab<sub>5</sub> to hold

 dím to fashion, form

 ú, ba<sub>6</sub>

 àm

## Notes

**Lamar** The reading of the name in the first line is unclear, since the text is partially broken. There is a commonly attested goddess whose name is usually written with the kal-sign (i.e., the kalag-sign); it is variously read by Sumerologists as Lama<sub>2</sub> (or Lama), Lamma<sub>2</sub> (or Lamma), Lamar, or Lammar. Since this word was apparently borrowed into Akkadian as

**lamassu**, there was probably some kind of /r/-Auslaut; Lieberman reconstructs the original form as: /Lamaṛ/. (The word is further discussed below.)

Virtually everyone who has studied this text has read the first line as <sup>d</sup>Lamar (regardless of the precise transliteration). However, there seems to be present a stroke of another kal-sign, immediately after the divine determinative: <sup>d</sup>[Ka]\_kal. This may be a different writing for the same goddess Lamar, or it may represent an altogether different deity (a god <sup>d</sup>Kal-Kal is elsewhere attested, but seems to be masculine). For simplicity sake, and since only a single stroke remains of the problematic sign, the line will be transliterated as <sup>d</sup>Lamar.

**Nin-gir-su** Etymologically, “Lord of Ĝirsu”. nin is used here in the sense of en, “lord”, as in Text 1.

Girsu was the sacred quarter of the city and state of Lagash (further discussed in Lesson 22); it actually lay some distance outside the city proper. Ningirsu was the tutelary divinity of the state of Lagash. His most famous temple was the É-ninnu (of uncertain meaning, “House 50”?).

Ningirsu seems to have been the local name for the god elsewhere worshipped as Ninurta, a god originally of agriculture and storms, but also of war. The two were probably independent deities who were very early identified with each other.

**Nanše** This name is read by some Sumerologists as Nazi. She was a daughter of Enki, and the goddess of Lagash. She was consulted for the interpretation of dreams. When Gudea, the ruler of Lagash, had an odd dream in which a mysterious figure appeared, it was Nanshe that he turned to for the explanation of the dream.

The cuneiform sign representing her name is the sign for the city of Sirara (one of the places where she was especially worshipped), with an inscribed ku₆-sign. ku₆ means “fish”; the sign is in origin the picture of a fish. This and other evidence indicates that Nanshe may originally have been some kind of fish-goddess.

**Ba-ba<sub>6</sub>** The reading of the last sign is uncertain. The name is variously transliterated as: Ba-ú, Ba-ba<sub>6</sub>, Ba-bu<sub>11</sub> (and Ba-bu<sub>12</sub>), and Ba-wà. She was the wife of Ningirsu, and hence the city-goddess of Lagash. At times, Inanna herself is referred to as “Ba-ba<sub>6</sub>”.

**zabar** In older transliterations, each of the three individual signs forming this compound logogram is separately transliterated: ud-ka-bar. The etymology and writing are discussed below.

**zabar-dab<sub>5</sub>** The etymology is discussed below. The function of this official is not too clear. Jacobsen refers to him as “the official in charge of the bronze (table-wares, cups, knives etc. of a large establishment, and possibly of the bronze weapons as well)” (1957:382 n.55).

The word was borrowed into Akkadian as zabardabbu. The CAD simply translates the Akkadian term as: “an official”. After a long discussion, it concludes with the remark that this official was “(possibly), originally the weapon carrier of the king”.

**hi-li** The basic meaning of hi-li appears to be something like “charm” or “attraction”. (The Akkadian equivalent, kuzbu, is glossed by the CAD as: “luxuriousness, abundance, attractiveness, charm, sexual vigor”.) It also has the derived meaning “headdress” or “wig”. The gudug-priests discussed in Lesson 19 are attested as wearing a hi-li.

**munus** Also transliterated as mí. Particularly in older works, it is transliterated as sal.

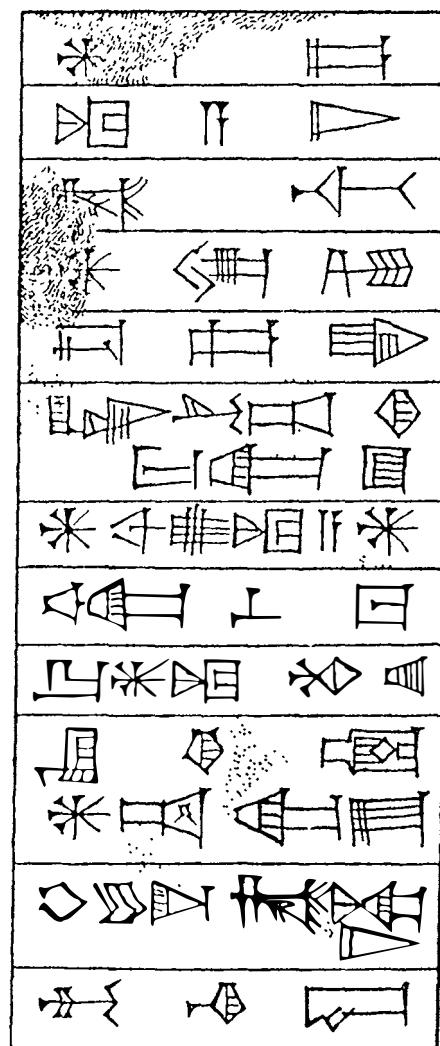
**dab<sub>5</sub>** In older transliterations, dib (and, incorrectly, dib<sub>4</sub>).

**dím** While dù is used for the (re)construction of more solid objects, such as palaces, temples, etc., dím is normally used of smaller, hand-made objects.

The Akkadian equivalents for dù and dím are not neat. dím is normally equated with banû, but dù is equated both with banû and epēšu.

**ám** This sign is composed of two elements:  , which normally has a syllabic reading a, and  , which normally has a syllabic reading an. It is not clear how these two signs came to represent (together) the value /am/.

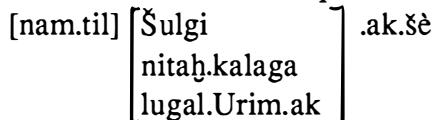
## Text 11



Transliteration	Transcription	Translation
1: <u>d</u> <u>Lamar</u>	Lamar	For Lamar,
2: <u>nin-a-ni</u>	nin.an.i.(r)	his lady –
3: <u>nam-til</u>	nam.til	for the sake of the life
4: <u>d</u> <u>Šul-gi</u>	Šulgi	of Shulgi,
5: <u>nitah-kalag-ga</u>	nitah.kalaga	the mighty man,
6: <u>ugal-Urim</u> <sub>5</sub> <u>ki-ma-ka-šè</u>	ugal.Urim.ak.a(k).šè	the king of Ur –
7: <u>d</u> <u>Ba-ba</u> <sub>6</sub> <u>nin-àm</u>	Babaninam	Babaninam,
8: <u>zabar-dab</u> <sub>5</sub>	zabardab	the <u>zabardab</u>
9: <u>Ur-</u> <sup>d</sup> <u>Nin-ğir-su</u>	Urningirsu	of Ur-Ningirsu,
10: <u>en-ki-ağā</u> <sub>2</sub> - <sup>d</sup> <u>Nanše-ka-ke</u> <sub>4</sub>	en.ki.ağā.a.Nanše.k.ak.e	the beloved lord of Nanshe –
11: <u>hi-li-nam-munus-ka-ni</u>	hi.li.nam.munus.(a)k.an.i.Ø	her “beauty of womanhood” –
12: <u>mu-na-dim</u>	mu.na.(n.)dim.Ø	he fashioned.

### Commentary

3-6. The essence of this line is: “for the life of Shulgi”. This would be expressed by: [nam.til.Šulgi.k].šè. However, this nominal phrase is complicated by the presence of two appositives. The first is the noun-adjective combination, nitah kalag-ga. The second is the genitive phrase “king of Ur”. By itself, this last genitive phrase would be expressed by: ugal.Urim.ak. This nominal phrase may be diagrammed as:



This results in a succession of two genitive markers, followed by the marker for the terminative case: .ak.ak.šè. In the script, this is reflected as: ... Urim<sub>5</sub>ki-ma-ka-šè.

Since the /k/ of the first genitive marker .ak is followed by a vowel, it is pronounced and written in the script. The /k/ of the second genitive marker .ak, however, is syllable-final before a consonant. In such cases, the /k/ does not show up in the script. The problem of the amissible word-final consonants was discussed earlier. To some degree, that same problem is present when these consonants are syllable-final, not just word-final. That is, it is not sure if these consonants were pronounced or not: it is not known if this is an orthographic or phonological problem. The sequence .ak.ak.šè, for instance, is common, but the /k/ of the second genitive marker does not appear to ever be written in any of these occurrences. In general, it seems that the /k/ of the genitive marker does not appear in the script, when it is in syllable-final position followed by a consonant. It is transcribed here within parentheses.

The ka-sign includes the /k/ of the first genitive marker, and the /a/ of the second genitive marker. This is yet another instance where the script does not follow the morphology, but rather approaches the syllabic structure of the spoken language. This

sequence may well have been syllabified something like /u-ri-ma-ka(k)-še/.

<sup>d</sup>Ba-Ba<sub>6</sub>-nin-àm is a personal name, “(the goddess) Baba is a lady”, or perhaps “Baba is queen”. The divine determinative “goes with” the name of the goddess Ba-ba<sub>6</sub>, not with the personal name itself.

Sumerian has two ways to express the copula. The first way, which is in fact relatively uncommon, is to inflect the verbal root meaning “to be” (me); it thus behaves like a regular verb. This is sometimes called the “independent copula”. The second way, which is much more common, is to use a reduced form of this root as a suffix, instead of as an independent verb. This is called the “enclitic copula”. For the third person, this consists of .am (usually written   àm) suffixed to the second element of an equational sentence. Thus, “Nanna is king” is: Nanna.lugal.am, written: <sup>d</sup>Nanna-lugal-àm; “Baba is queen” is: Baba.nin.am, written, <sup>d</sup>Ba-ba<sub>6</sub>-nin-àm. (In pre-Ur III texts, the enclitic copula is regularly written , read as am<sub>6</sub>.)

To judge from previous writings of morphemes beginning with a vowel, one might have expected a writing something like <sup>d</sup>Ba-ba<sub>6</sub>-nin-nam, or <sup>d</sup>Ba-ba<sub>6</sub>-nin-na-am. However, this is a case where the script is morpheme-bound; the one sign àm regularly expresses the morpheme .am, and there is no graphic reduplication of the preceding consonant. (Nor does the writing reflect the presumed syllabic structure.)

In general, names of men in Sumerian are construed with the names of gods, and names of women are construed with the names of goddesses. However, there are exceptions to this rule (“Ur-Nammu”, for example, is construed with the name of the goddess Nammu), and there seems to be no evidence that the zabardab-official was ever a woman. Thus, it cannot be determined whether Babaninam was a man or woman.

8. The word zabar-dab<sub>5</sub> is composed of two elements, zabar, “bronze”, and dab<sub>5</sub>, a verbal root meaning “to grasp”. dab<sub>5</sub> here is probably an active participle. In general, verbal roots in Sumerian have two participles: an active participle in .Ø, and a passive participle in .a (the same nominalizer seen previously). The use of these rather conventional terms is not without problem, but in general the active participle denotes the doer of the action. Thus, dab<sub>5</sub> is “the one who grasps”, “he who grasps”. The passive participle denotes the result of the action, or the one acted upon. From sar, “to write”, the passive participle sar-ra means “something written”.

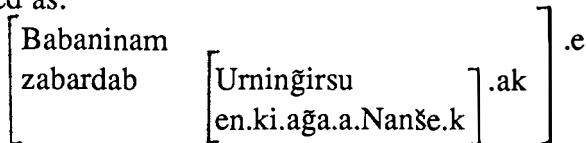
Some Sumerologists refer to adjectives in .Ø (such as mah) as active participles, and adjectives in .a (such as kalag-ga) as passive participles. It is not sure if this is a valid use of these terms; part of the problem is the difficulty in defining the different categories of root in Sumerian: verbal, nominal, etc.

As do participles in English, the participle in Sumerian can take a direct object. In this case, zabar is the direct object of dab<sub>5</sub>. Thus, an etymological translation of zabar-dab<sub>5</sub> would be: “the one who grasps the bronze”, or “he who grasps the bronze” (the object precedes the participle, just as the direct object (patient) precedes a verb). However, this particular phrase may have been felt as one unit, since it was borrowed into Akkadian as one word, zabardabbu.

9. The PN Ur-Ningirsu means “the man of Ningirsu”. The DN Ningirsu itself means “lord of Girsu”. Therefore, the name might be understood as: [Ur].[Nin.ğirsu.k].ak. The

first genitive marker is for [Nin].[Ĝirsu].k; the second is for [Ur].[Ningirsu.k].ak. However, as discussed in Lesson 1 concerning the name Ur-Nammu, there is some indication that the genitive marker in PNs was lost, and so it is not indicated in transcription.

Lines 7-10 form the ergative nominal phrase, expressing the agent of the transitive verb. The ergative case-marker .e appears at the end of line 10. The nominal phrase is complicated by the presence of all the appositives. Line 7 is a PN, Babaninam. Lines 8-9 are an appositive, describing Babaninam as the “zabardab of Ur-Ningirsu”. This would be expressed as: [zabardab].[Urningirsu].k, but Ur-Ningirsu himself is described as “the beloved lord of Nanshe”, an appositive. “Beloved lord of Nanshe” is: [en.ki.ağā.a]-[Nanše].k, a more complicated genitive phrase than any seen up to now: ki.ağā.a modifies en, and the combination is itself the first element of the genitive phrase. Thus, the nominal chain describing Ur-Ningirsu is: Urningirsu, en.ki.ağā.a.Nanše.k. All of this is the second element of a genitive phrase, with zabardab being the first element: [zabardab].[Urningirsu], en.ki.ağā.a.Nanše.k].ak, all of which is an appositive to Babaninam. This may be diagrammed as:



The writing of the end of the nominal phrase is as expected: ... <sup>d</sup>Nanše-ka-ke<sub>4</sub>.

#### 11. munus is “woman”, nam-munus is an abstract, “womanhood”.

This line must mean something like “her beauty of womanhood”, that is, “her woman’s beauty”. If so, then it is a genitive phrase, followed by a possessive-suffix: [hili.nam.-munus.ak.ani].

The basic rule for the genitive marker as presented up to now has been: /ak/ after consonants, /k/ after vowels. Here, however, there occurs: nam-munus-ka-ni; the vowel /a/ of the genitive marker /ak/ does not seem to appear in the writing.

Such writings – where the /a/ of the genitive marker does not appear after a consonant – are not uncommon; the next example is in a formulaic phrase appearing in Text 13. It is difficult to say whether such writings tell us something about Sumerian orthography, or Sumerian phonology, or Sumerian morphology; several interpretations are possible. In order to make the written form fit our understanding of the grammar, one school of thought would read the first sign as munusa, instead of munus. This would produce munusa-ka-ni, accurately reflecting munus.ak.ani. Parallel phenomena occur outside of the Ur III corpus. For example, in the inscriptions of Gudea – inscriptions highly localized to one time and place – “his king” is expressed by both lugal-ni and lugal-a-ni. In order to make lugal-ni fit more accurately our understanding of Sumerian, some scholars would read the two signs as lugala-ni, and not lugal-ni.

This school of thought was particularly adumbrated by Adam Falkenstein, who saw similar phenomena elsewhere in Sumerian grammar. He coined the term “Überhängende Vokale” (in English, “overhanging” or “overlapping” vowels) to describe just such writings. This school would thus see such writings as an orthographic problem. (The standard sign-lists, however do not seem to recognize a reading \*munusa for the sign in

question.)

A different view sees this as a morphological (or phonological) problem. Mamoru Yoshikawa feels that the genitive marker was sometimes /k/ after a consonant, not only after a vowel. However, he cannot posit rules for the distribution of /ak/ and /k/ after consonants. Yoshikawa also believes that there are cases where the genitive marker is /ak/, not /k/, after a vowel.

This is not a problem which can be solved here. But it must always be kept in mind that the writing system of Sumerian never accurately reflected the spoken language. It is possible that although a scribe spoke /lugalani/, he was perfectly happy to write lugal-ni, because with just these two cuneiform characters, he knew what to read. Why bother to write an a-sign if the context makes the presence of a spoken /a/ obvious?

This entire line is the direct object (patient) of the verb dim, and therefore is in the absolute case.

#### Discussion: structure

It is difficult to see the basic structure of this text, because of the presence of so many appositional phrases. Its substance, however, is: “Babaninam fashioned a wig for Lamar, for the sake of the long life of Shulgi”:

[Lamar, nin.an].(r)	benefactive
[nam.til.Šulgi, nitaḥ.kalaga,	purpose
lugal.Urim.ak.a(k)].šè	
[Babaninam, zabardab.Urningirsu,	agent
en.ki.ağā.a.Nanše.k.ak].e	
[hili.nam.munus.(a)k.anı].Ø	patient
mu.na.(n.)dim.Ø	verb

#### – Writing system

The innocuous-looking word zabar illustrates some of the intricacies of the Sumerian writing system. There are no metals native to Sumer; rather, all had to be imported. Thus, zabar is not a native Sumerian word; it was borrowed from some unknown language. Hallo says “in general, it may be supposed that the basic metal names are non-Sumerian ‘Kulturwörter’ or ‘Wanderwörter’ which were adopted together with their referents” (1963:140). In Akkadian, the word for bronze is siparru. Akkadian may have borrowed this word independently from the same language that Sumerian borrowed it from, or, much more likely, borrowed it directly from Sumerian. In either case, the form siparru is a little odd; it would seem to derive from \*/sipar/, not /zabar/.

One way to solve this discrepancy is to assume that in earlier Sumerian the word for “bronze” was, in fact, /sipar/, and that /zabar/ represents an inner-Sumerian development. The change of /p/ > /b/ is not surprising; voicing of inter-vocalic voiceless consonants happens in many languages. The change of initial /s/ > /z/ is less easily explained, but there are other parallels to this change in Sumerian. The difference in vocalization between the two forms is more interesting. As will be discussed in Lesson 20, there is a fair amount

of evidence to show that Sumerian has undergone a rather wide process of vocalic assimilation. In words originally containing two vowels of differing quality, one vowel has assimilated to the quality of the other. In our particular case, an original \*/i-a/ has become /a-a/.

Thus, /zabar/ can be derived from /sipar/, using sound-changes which are elsewhere attested in Sumerian. (Unfortunately, not enough is known to date these sound changes.) This then would represent a case where the Akkadian word has actually preserved a more archaic form of the word than has Sumerian. Presumably Akkadian borrowed it from Sumerian before these changes took place. Similar instances will be discussed in Lesson 20.

The pronunciation of this word in historic Sumerian as /zabar/, and in Akkadian as /siparru/, is known from lexical lists, where these words are spelled out as za-bar and si-par-ru. A next question is, how does the pronunciation /zabar/ “derive” from the three signs ud-ka-bar? In the word nidba, for instance, there was no obvious way to phonetically relate the pronunciations /nindaba/ or /nidba/ to any pronunciation of the individual signs; that is, the word was more than the sum of its parts.

Since one of the three signs forming the word for “bronze” is the bar-sign, it seems reasonable to assume that /zabar/ derives phonetically from these three signs. But how? One possibility might be to read ud-ka as za<sub>x</sub>. This type of approach is favored by many Sumerologists, who try to make the writing system better fit Sumerian pronunciation. However, there does not seem to be any other, independent, evidence which would justify positing a reading za<sub>x</sub> for this sign, and the standard sign-lists do not recognize such a value.

However, a further complication must be introduced. In the earliest Sumerian, the word for “bronze” is not, in fact, written ud-ka-bar. Rather, it is regularly written as KAxUD-bar, that is, with a ka-sign containing an inscribed ud-sign, followed by the bar-sign. For example, in a royal inscription of king Uruinimgina of Lagash, the word for bronze appears as: .

It is difficult to explain such a writing. Some scholars have posited a reading za<sub>6</sub> for KAxUD; this is accepted by some sign-lists, although with reservation. However, Falkenstein has pointed out evidence that KAxUD can be read as si<sub>19</sub>. This reading is accepted by the standard sign-lists. Perhaps, then, the word should be transliterated as: si<sub>19</sub>-bar. Armas Salonen, in fact, transliterates this word as si<sub>19</sub>-bar for the older period, but as zabar for the “nachsumerische” period (1961:108). In this interpretation, which is probably correct, si<sub>19</sub>-bar represents an older pronunciation of the word. But the same cuneiform signs continued to be used, when in spoken Sumerian the word had changed to /zabar/.

#### – Writing system

The traditional interpretation of the nin-sign () is that it represents the sign for “woman” (munus, ), followed by the sign for “clothing” (túg, ). That is, the sign is a woman wearing a (special) kind of clothing, to mark her elevated status. This interpretation has been questioned by Robert Biggs, who says that in the earliest Sumerian texts, the túg-sign is different from the component forming the second half of the nin-sign;

this is true to some degree even in Old Babylonian texts. This leaves the origin of the nin-sign up in the air.

### – Overhanging vowels

The problem of the overhanging vowels has generated a good deal of polemics in the course of Sumerological studies (the latest discussion is Yoshikawa 1980). This overhanging vowel seems to be mostly /a/, although individual cases of overhanging /e/, /i/, and /u/ have been posited. Probably most Sumerologists accept their existence, but there are dissenting opinions.

In Falkenstein's view, the readings in /a/ represent older forms of Sumerian words. That is, at one time these words were pronounced with a final /a/. The word for "king", for example, was originally \*/lugala/. At some (prehistoric) point, these final /a/s were dropped; the word for "king" became /lugal/, but the sign used to represent this word could be used for either the newer value /lugal/ or for the older value \*/lugala/. Since both values co-occurred, a scribe could write "his king" as either lugal-a-ni, or lugala-ni, both representing /lugalani/. (Presumably, the prehistoric form would have been \*/lugalani/ or \*/lugala-ni/.)

Other Sumerologists question their existence; they see varying phonetic factors at work. It was mentioned above, for example, that Yoshikawa believes that the genitive in /k/ occasionally occurred after consonants, not just vowels; thus, "the son of the king" might have been pronounced /dumulugalk/. However, Yoshikawa could not state any general rules for the distribution of /k/ and /ak/ after consonants. For other overhanging vowels (e.g., in the verbal system), he has other explanations.

In writings of the ugal-ni type, it has been posited that the /a/ was dropped: \*/ugalani/ > /ugalni/ (this was Poebel's position). Without going into details, it can be seen that such an explanation raises more questions than it answers, such as the co-occurrence of writings like ugal-ni and ugal-a-ni in the same time and place.

Is there any independent evidence which justifies the view that certain signs contain an overhanging vowel? Here the evidence varies, and is difficult to interpret. The fact that the nominalized forms of the verb "to love" are written both ki-aḡa<sub>2</sub> and ki-áḡ-ḡá might seem to indicate that this one sign can be read as /aḡ/ or /aḡa/. However, it is also possible that -ḡá is here a phonetic complement, and the form should be understood as: ki-aḡa<sub>2</sub>ḡá; or it might be that these writings reflect phonological problems of particular roots ending in a vowel.

The Akkadian lexical tradition is likewise ambiguous. Lexical lists do provide readings with /a/ for some signs, but for the most part they do not (for example, they show no evidence of a reading lugala). And, some of these readings with an overhanging vowel may very well result from the Akkadian scribes encountering the same problems in the writing system that we feel. These scribes may have anticipated some modern Sumerologists, by generating readings in /a/, in order to make the writing system more closely fit the pronunciation.

Part of the problem may result from a misunderstanding of the nature of the Sumerian writing system. Because the expression "malt house" is written é-bappir, for example, and

not written é-bappir-ra (for the assumed e.bappir.a(k)), Falkenstein would say that the second sign should be read as bappira. But it is easier to say that the Sumerian scribe felt no need to write any indication of the genitive marker; such scribes were content to write é-bappir, even if they pronounced it /ebappira(k)/. Falkenstein's school is an attempt to make the writing system more closely resemble a transcription of speech, and this is not how the writing system should be understood.

It is true, however, that there are other problems to be resolved. For example, "in the land of Sumer" is normally written kalam-ma in the Gudea texts, for kalam.a. But once, apparently, this locative phrase is written: kalam. Falkenstein would read this kalama. Similarly, "on the tablet", written just dub, would be read by Falkenstein as duba. These writings raise questions, but they may simply reflect an earlier period in Sumerian orthography, when it was not necessary in general to write case-endings.

#### – Loan words

As just discussed, "bronze" is zabar in Sumerian, siparru in Akkadian. The word for "copper" is urudu in Sumerian, werû in Akkadian; they are usually spelled out in lexical lists as ú-ru-du and e-ru-u. The ultimate origin of the word(s) is unknown. Both urudu and werû may reflect one pre-Sumerian substrate word; they have even been connected with the Indo-European word which ultimately appears in English as the adjective "red". Curiously, in late Akkadian the word for "copper" also appears as urudû. Eduard Kutscher says that "this 'Akkadian' word was artificially coined by Sennacherib's scribes (and used only by them) from Sumerian urudu (= Akkadian werû) 'copper'" (1982:225).

#### – History

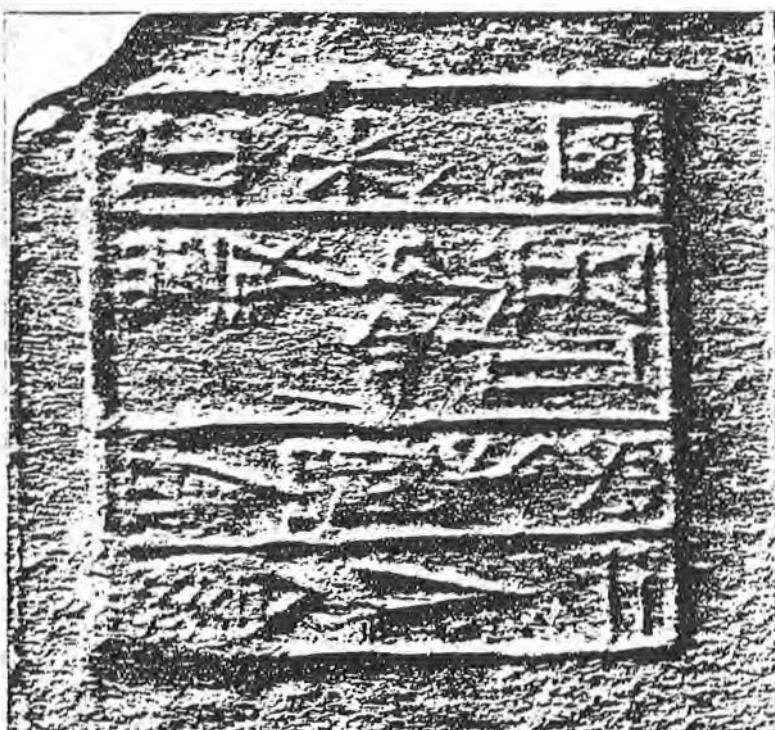
Lamar is well-attested as an intermediary or intercessory goddess. She appears on Ur III and Old Babylonian seals, introducing a worshipper to a higher god or goddess. Because of this function, the name Lamar becomes almost a generic word for "protection". Thus, there occur personal names of the type: Lugal-d Lamar-ğu<sub>10</sub>, the king is my protection". Borrowed into Akkadian, the word lamassu is glossed by the CAD as: "protective spirit". Von Soden, however, has questioned the traditional derivation of lamassu from Lamar.

#### – History

Other wigs have been found at various sites in Mesopotamia, although none of them bear an inscription. For example, a wig of steatite was found at Uruk. Only 2.5 cm. long, it was apparently designed to fit a statue (the dating is uncertain; before Nabonidus). More recently, somewhat similar wigs have been found at Ebla.

# Text 11a

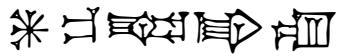
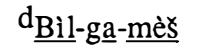
supplementary



# Lesson 12

This text was inscribed on the foot of a vase of marble. No photograph is available.

## Sign-list and vocabulary

   dBil-ga-mèš Gilgamesh (DN, masc) ( = bil)

   En-dím-gig Endimgig (GN ?)

 ud (u<sub>4</sub>) day

   mu-sar-ra inscription

  šu...ùr to erase

   nam...kur<sub>5</sub> (ku<sub>5</sub>) to curse

 bi

 ib

 ha

 da

 e

## Notes

dBil-ga-mèš This is now the preferred reading (or at least the more original reading) of the name more familiarly known as “Gilgamesh”. The apparent meaning of the name is: “the old man (bil-ga) is (now) a young man (mèš)”. It is not known when the change of initial /b/ > /g/ took place; an Old Babylonian omen text has the spelling dGe-el-ga.

Some read the last sign of the name as mes.

mu-sar-ra sar is “to write”. sar-ra = sar.a, the passive participle: “something written”. mu has many meanings (e.g., “name”); mu.sar.a. is something like “a written text”, or “inscription”. It was borrowed into Akkadian as musarû, translated by the CAD as: “1. object bearing an inscription, 2. inscription”.

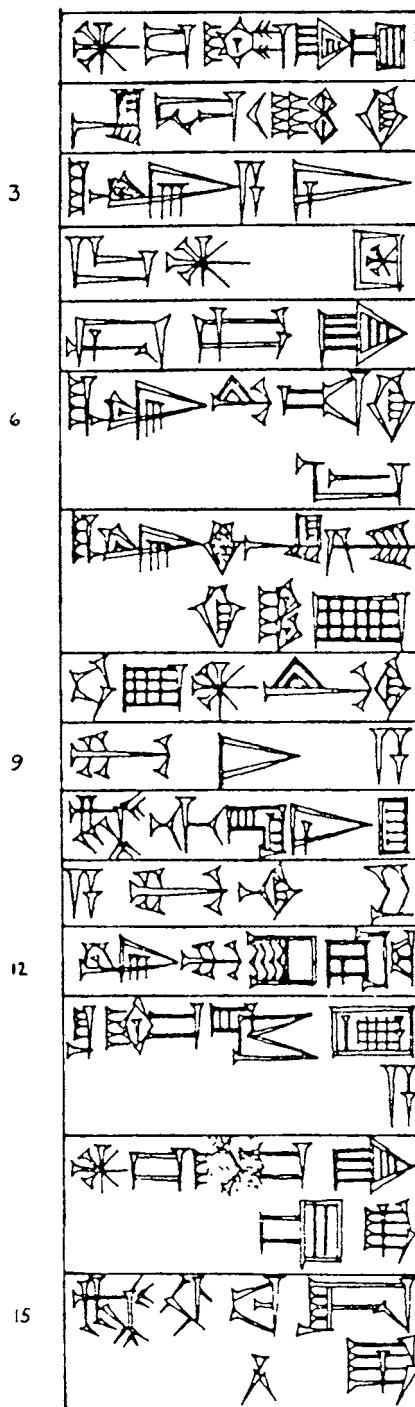
šu...ùr This is a compound verb. šu means “hand”, and ùr means something like: “to move or drag (something)”. šu is thus the historical patient of ùr: “to move the hand over”, i.e., “to erase”. The verb takes its complement in the locative case. (The Akkadian

equivalent is pašātu, glossed by AHw as: “tilgen, auslöschen”.) ùr also enters into the formation of other compounds, for example: giš...ùr, “to harrow” (literally, “to drag wood (over the ground)”).

Some believe that the root ended in /u/, and so it is also transliterated as šu...uru<sub>12</sub>.

**nam...kur<sub>5</sub>** nam is apparently the (historic) direct object (patient) of kur<sub>5</sub>; the meaning is something like “to cut a decision (against)”. It usually takes its complement in the comitative case. The word is further discussed below.

## Text 12



Transliteration	Transcription	Translation
1: <u>d</u> <u>Bil-ga-mèš</u>	Bilgameš	For Gilgamesh
2: <u>En-dím-gig</u> <sup>ki</sup>	Endimgig.(ak?)	of Endimgig,
3: <u>lugal-a-ni</u>	lugal.anı.(r)	his king –
4: <u>Ur-</u> <sup>d</sup> <u>Nammu</u>	Urnammu	Ur-Nammu,
5: <u>nitah-kalag-ga</u>	nitah.kalaga	the mighty man,
6: <u>lugal-Urim</u> <sub>5</sub> <sup>ki</sup> <u>-ma</u>	ugal.Urim.a(k)	the king of Ur,
7: <u>lugal-Ki-en-gi-Ki-uri-ke</u> <sub>4</sub>	ugal.Kiengi.Kiuri.k.e	the king of Sumer and Akkad –
8: <u>ud</u> <u>é</u> <sup>d</sup> <u>Nanna</u>	ud e.Nanna.(k).Ø	when he built the temple of Nanna,
9: <u>mu-dù-a</u>	mu.(n.)du.Ø.a.a	
10: <u>nam-til-la-ni-šè</u>	nam.til.anı.šè	for the sake of his long life
11: <u>a-mu-na-ru</u>	a.mu.na.(n.)ru	he dedicated a votive offering.
12: <u>lú mu-sar-ra-ba</u>	lu musara.bi.a	May Gilgamesh curse
13: <u>šu-bí-ib-ùr-a</u>	šu.bí.b.ur.e.Ø.a.(d)	the man who erases this inscription!
14: <u>d</u> <u>Bil-ga-mèš-e</u>	Bilgameš.e	
15: <u>nam-ha-ba-da-kur</u> <sub>5</sub> <sup>e</sup>	nam.hé.ba.da.kur.e.Ø	

### Commentary

2. The meaning of this line is unclear. The first editor of the text read it as en DÍM.GIG<sup>ki</sup>, “lord of DÍM.GIG”, an otherwise unattested place name. However, the editor added the comment: “I cannot understand Gilgamesh’s epithet in line 2”.

It has been pointed out that there is an apparent GN, En-dím-gig<sup>ki</sup>, which occurs at least twice in Sumerian texts. There, the en-sign is apparently an element of the place-name, not the word “lord”.

Presumably, lines 1-2 form a genitive phrase: “Gilgamesh of Endimgig”. This is, curiously, the same construction found in one of the other occurrences of the GN: dNin-šubura EN.DÍM.GIG<sup>ki</sup>, translated by J. van Dijk as: “Ninšubur von (?) EN.DÍM.GIG<sup>ki</sup>”. A parallel to this construction (DN and GN in a genitive phrase) occurs in Text 17: dNanna Kar-zid-da lugal-ki-ág-ğá-ni-ir, “To Nanna of Karzida, his beloved king”.

In any case, one might have expected a final ga-sign, to express the /a/ of the genitive element.

8. ud introduces a subordinate, temporal clause: “when he built the temple of Nanna”. Sumerian does not have many different kinds of subordinate clause formation. The most common type is a temporal clause. As is frequently the case in Sumerian, it is fairly easy to recognize the surface form of the construction, but it is a little harder to understand the grammar behind the written form.

The simplest temporal clause consists of: (1) a relative marker; (2) a relative clause nominalized in .a, which stands in apposition to the relative marker; (3) a locative case-

marker in .a.

The most common relative marker is the noun ud (literally, “day”); others also occur. Occasionally the relative marker is deleted.

The essence of the relative clause is: “He built the temple of Nanna”. This independent sentence would be: e.Nanna.(k).Ø mu.(n.).du.Ø. To form the relative clause, this independent sentence is nominalized in .a. It is then placed in apposition to the relative marker ud: ud [e.Nanna.(k).Ø mu.(n.).du.Ø].a.

It is instructive to compare this relative clause with the relative clause in Text 7. In that text, “the one who built the temple of Enlil” was expressed as:

lu [e.Enlil.a(k).Ø i.n.du.Ø].a.

The construction here is much the same, but the relative marker is ud instead of lú:

ud [e.Nanna.(k).Ø mu.(n.).du.Ø].a

Finally, the entire complex is put into the locative case, marked by .a (the second .a in the transcription of line 9).

The function of the locative in .a here is “on”: “on the day that”. It is also possible to find other case-markers, such as the ablative case-marker ta (“from, since”), or the terminative case-marker šè (“until”).

A literal translation of this entire clause would be: “on the day that he built”; this captures both the force of the Sumerian locative, and the force of the relative clause. In more idiomatic English, however, one may say “at the time when”, or simply “when”: “when he built the temple of Nanna, he made a votive offering”.

In this temporal clause, the verbal chain uses the conjugation-prefix mu, and the personal-affix .n does not appear in the script. In the relative clause in Text 7, the conjugation-prefix was i, and the personal-affix .n appeared in the script. It is not easy to understand the reasons for such alternations.

Although the transcription indicates both the .a of the nominalizer and the .a of the locative case-marker, it is reasonable to assume that some kind of vocalic contraction took place; one never finds two /a/s in the script in such a construction.

Lines 8-9 form the subordinate clause; lines 10-11 form the main clause. In Sumerian, the subordinate clause regularly precedes the main clause.

**12-15.** These lines express a curse; essentially the same wording occurs in other Sumerian inscriptions.

Lines 12-13 are a relative clause, serving as the complement of the verb in line 15. Its meaning is: “the one who erases this inscription”. The relative marker is lú; the relative clause is marked by the a at the end of line 13.

Šu...ür is a compound verb. bí is another conjugation-prefix, in addition to the mu and i already seen. It is almost always written with the bí-sign. It will be further discussed below.

All the verb forms seen up to this point have been in the hamtu aspect, used to express action in the past. The verb form in this line, however, is being used to express a future value: “whoever will erase”, or “whoever might erase”. Therefore, it is put in the maru aspect.

It is common to speak of the “hamtu-root” and the “maru-root”. The maru-root is

formed from the hamtu-root in several different ways. The formation used for any particular verb is lexical; that is, it is not predictable. It is not clear exactly how many classes of marû formation exist. Yoshikawa has established three different classes:

(1) “Reduplication” class. The marû-root is formed by (graphically) reduplicating the hamtu-root. Thus, “to return”: hamtu, gi<sub>4</sub>; marû, gi<sub>4</sub>-gi<sub>4</sub>.

Roots of the pattern CVC seem always to lose their final consonant when reduplicated. Thus, “to place”: hamtu, gar; marû, gá-gá (always written with the gá-sign).

(2) “Alternation” or “replacement” class. An entirely different root is used for the marû. This root is non-predictable from the hamtu-root. Thus, “to speak”: hamtu, dug<sub>4</sub>; marû, e. dug<sub>4</sub> and e are two entirely different signs. However, there are cases where a hamtu-root and a marû-root will be written with the same sign. Thus, “to go”: hamtu, gin; marû, du. The gin-sign and the du-sign are the same! In such cases, it is only the grammatical context which indicates whether the sign is to be read as the hamtu-root or as the marû-root.

(3) “Affixation” class. This is formed by addition of e to the hamtu-root. This e is variously referred to as the “marû-element”, the “marû-affix”, or the “marû-suffix”. Thus, “to build”: hamtu, dù; marû, dù-e. This class is the most common formation of the marû. It is the formation used with the verb in Text 12, ur: ur.e. Here, however, the marû-suffix has contracted into the nominalizer a, and so it does not show up in the script.

In general, the particular marû formation for any specific verb is not always known. And, some roots fall into two (or even all three) classes. As mentioned above, ur is a member of the affixation class, but reduplicated marû forms also seem to occur. In later Sumerian, combinations of these classes sometimes occur; e.g., a reduplicated root followed by the marû-suffix. These cases have not all been explained.

The use of the marû, instead of the hamtu, entails rather complex changes in Sumerian morphology, particularly in the distribution of the personal-affixes. For a transitive verb: in the hamtu, the personal-affix slot before the verbal root cross-references the agent, and the personal-affix slot after the verbal root cross-references the patient. In the marû, however, it is just the opposite. The personal-affix slot before the verbal root cross-references the patient, and the personal-affix slot after the verbal root cross-references the agent. For example, “The king built the house” is:

(1) lugal.e e.Ø mu.n.du.Ø

But, “The king will build the house” is:

(2) lugal.e e.Ø i.b.du.e.Ø

In (2), the ergative case marked in e is cross-referenced by the .Ø after the marû-suffix. The absolute case marked in .Ø is cross-referenced by the .b before the verbal root. .b is used here to cross-reference inanimate antecedents; .n is used to cross-reference animate antecedents.

That is, the case-markings on the nominal participants in the sentence are the same in both aspects: lugal.e and e.Ø. However, the use of the personal-affixes is quite different.

Thus, in the verb form in this line, šu.bí.b.ur.e.Ø.a.(d), the e is the marû-suffix, and the .Ø cross-references the third-person agent. (This analysis of e.Ø is not universally accepted, and a different view will be mentioned below.) The .b before the root cross-

references the šu, which is the (historic) patient of the verb ür.

Finally, the combination of bí.b. is quite frequent, and usually written with the bí-sign followed by the ib-sign, as in Text 12.

The verb form may be summarized as:

šu . bí . b . ur . e . Ø . a  
 (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7)

- (1) nominal element of compound verb
- (2) conjugation-prefix
- (3) personal-affix cross-referencing patient (šu)
- (4) verbal element of compound verb
- (5) marū-suffix
- (6) personal-affix cross-referencing agent (unexpressed)
- (7) nominalizer, forming relative clause

mu-sar-ra-ba is for musara.bi.a, “on this inscription”. .bi is a demonstrative, meaning “this”. It is suffixed to its noun. It is identical in form (and probably in origin) with the third person inanimate possessive-suffix.

.a is the locative case-marker. /musara.bi/ is in the locative case because it is the complement of the verb šu...ür, which takes its complement in the locative. The /i/ of /bi/ has contracted into the /a/ of the locative.

To sum up, lines 12-13 are a relative clause, meaning, “the one who erases this inscription”. This entire clause functions as the complement of the verb nam...kur<sub>5</sub> in line 15.

The compound verb nam...kur<sub>5</sub> most frequently takes its complement in the “comitative” case. The word comitative comes from the Latin word cum, meaning “with”. It is not easy to define or even to adequately describe all the uses of the comitative case, but it often expresses ideas such as “along with”: lú-da, “with the man”. Besides this use, many verbs in Sumerian take their complements in the comitative case. This usage is not usually predictable, and must be listed in the dictionary.

The basic form of the comitative case-marker is .da, written: da.

There is a problem here, however, because there is no overt marker of the comitative in the script: one would expect to find a da written at the end of line 13. One explanation for its absence is to assume a phonological process similar to that of the dative case-marker .ra. That is, /da/ > /d/ after a vowel, and word-final /d/ is not written. However, in the royal inscriptions of Gudea or Ur III, the comitative case-marker normally appears written as da, even after a vowel; cases where an expected da does not show up in the writing only occur in earlier Sumerian.

The problem of the presence or absence of the comitative case-marker in this line will be further discussed below.

The scope of the assumed comitative case includes all of lines 12 and 13:

[lu muṣara.bi.a šu.bí.b.ur.e.Ø.a].(d).

14. The agent is marked in e. The writing is morphemic; there is no attempt to graphically reduplicate the final /š/ of dBil-ga-mèš. Such morphemic writings are especially common

with proper names; the name was felt as a unit, and the grammatical case-endings added directly to the complete unit.

**15.** ha is a form of the “desiderative” or “precative” modal-prefix. As discussed in Lesson 1, the very first element in the Sumerian verbal chain is an optional modal-prefix; there are several of these.

The desiderative mood expresses wishes and indirect commands in the third person: “Let him/them, may he/they”, etc. The basic form of the desiderative is /he/ (written hé); before the conjugation-prefix ba, it regularly becomes /ha/ (written ha).

One of the more difficult questions in Sumerian morphology is the nature of the root used after particular modal-prefixes. Some modal-prefixes use the hamtu-root, others use the marû-root, and still others use both, under conditions which are not always clear. A second problem is the use of the personal-affixes. In some moods, the pre-verbal root slot cross-references the agent. In others, it cross-references the patient. (This differentiation is apparently irrespective of whether the hamtu-root or the marû-root is used.)

With transitive verbs, hé is regularly construed with the marû-root; with intransitive verbs, it is construed with the hamtu-root. kur<sub>5</sub> is a member of the affixation class, and so the form is: kur<sub>5</sub>-e. The writing is morphemic in this line; in other cases the final consonant of the verbal root may be graphically reduplicated (e.g., kur<sub>5</sub>-re).

In the desiderative, the agent is cross-referenced by  $\emptyset$  after the marû-suffix.

As with all compound verbs, the first element of the compound (here, nam) precedes the entire verbal chain, including the modal-prefix.

ba is a conjugation-prefix not seen previously. It is usually assumed that it is related to the conjugation-prefix bi, an example of which occurred in line 13. It is further discussed below.

da is the dimensional-prefix which cross-references the comitative case. Here it cross-references the comitative case marked by the presumed .da at the end of line 13. The original meaning of this compound verb may have been something like “to cut a decision against”.

To summarize the verb phrase, nam..kur<sub>5</sub> is a compound verb, with nam the (historic) patient. ha is a form of the modal-prefix for the desiderative; with transitive roots, it uses the marû form of the root. ba is a conjugation-prefix. da is a dimensional-prefix, cross-referencing the comitative. The verb form may be diagrammed as:

nam . hé . ba . da . kur . e .  $\emptyset$   
 (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7)

- (1) nominal element of compound verb
- (2) modal-prefix
- (3) conjugation-prefix
- (4) comitative dimensional-prefix
- (5) verbal element of compound verb
- (6) marû-suffix
- (7) personal-affix cross-referencing agent (Gilgamesh).

## Discussion: structure

The structure of this text is:

[Bilgameš.Endimgig.(ak), lugal.anı].(r)	benefactive
[Urnammu, nitah.kalaga, lugal.Urim.a(k), lugal.Kiengi.Kiuri.k].e	agent
[ud e.Nanna.(k).Ø mu.(n.)du.Ø.a].a	time
[nam.til.anı].še	purpose
a.mu.na.(n.)ru	verb
[lu musara.bi.a šu.bí.b.ur.e.Ø.a].(d)	accompaniment
[Bilgameš].e	agent
nam.hé.ba.da.kur.e.Ø	verb

### – Phonology

The second element of the compound verb nam...kur<sub>5</sub> is variously transliterated as ku<sub>5</sub>, kud, and kuru<sub>5</sub> (the latter with an overhanging vowel). The /d/ ~ /r/ alternation helps show that the (amissable) Auslaut of this root was probably some kind of /r/ sound which did not exist in Akkadian. The Akkadian writing system sometimes reproduced it by /r/, and sometimes by /d/. Modern Sumerologists sometimes transliterate it as dr, dr̄, or ṛ. It seems to occur as the last consonant in some dozen or so verbal roots; another instance occurs in Text 17. Its presence as the first consonant or medial consonant of a root is much harder to detect.

The kur<sub>5</sub>-sign can also be read tar. Confusingly enough, there appear to be two different verbs: nam-kur<sub>5</sub>, meaning “to curse”, and nam-tar, “to decide the fate of/for”, “to decree a destiny for”. The boundary between the two expressions is, however, sometimes unclear, and occasionally transliterations are less than precise in differentiating between the two; both expressions are sometimes found transliterated as nam-tar.

### – Moods

The morphology of the moods in Sumerian is quite complex. The single most important work to unravel them is Dietz Otto Edzard 1971ff; this is a series of articles which it pays to keep close at hand. Some of Edzard's conclusions were modified by Burkhardt Kienast (1981b).

### – Conjugation-prefixes

In the paradigms presented in this book, model verbs in the hamtu are generally cited with the conjugation-prefix mu, and those in the marū are generally cited with the conjugation-prefix i. While this does represent the most common distribution (at least in the Ur III royal inscriptions), it is also possible to find verbs in the hamtu with the conjugation-prefix i and verbs in the marū with the conjugation-prefix mu (although this latter is rather rare).

It is sometimes stated that the conjugation-prefix ba “represents” bí with an additional locative marker of some kind. It is difficult to say whether or not such a statement is

correct. It is a fact, however, that when the conjugation-prefix ba is present, there is frequently a locative phrase somewhere in the sentence. In purely synchronic terms, bi and ba occupy the same slot. At least in the Ur III texts, they do not co-occur (that is, they do not appear together in one verbal chain). It has, however, been claimed that there are cases of ba and bi co-occurring in the somewhat earlier Gudea texts.

The conjugation-prefix bi differs from mu, i, and ba in that the only dimensional-prefix which can follow it is the locative dimensional-prefix .ni. The reasons why are unsure.

Some scholars believe that writings such as bi-ni should be read as bi-i, with two conjugation-prefixes. And as was said above, it has been speculated that ba and bi may co-occur in the same one verbal phrase in the Gudea texts. Such interpretations, which state that it is possible for more than one conjugation-prefix to co-occur within one verbal phrase, run counter to the view presented in this book, that only one conjugation-prefix can so occur.

#### – Comitative ~ patient

In the analysis given here, lines 12-13 are in the comitative case. However, the apparent absence of the case-marker da does give one pause. Some people believe that lines 12-13 are the direct object of nam...kur<sub>5</sub>. The comitative dimensional-prefix would represent what Poebel called the “erstarrter Gebrauch des Infixes”, that is, “frozen use of the [dimensional] infix”. In Gragg’s study of the dimensional-prefixes in Sumerian literary texts, he found a large number of instances where a comitative dimensional-prefix occurred, without any corresponding comitative case-relationship.

This is not impossible. However, there is a more general issue here. In the compound verb nam...kur<sub>5</sub>, nam is apparently a (historic) direct object (patient) of kur<sub>5</sub>. Now, it is usually believed that Sumerian does not permit two patients in one sentence. In cases where one might expect two patients, one of them will be expressed through one of the adverbial cases. In the immediately preceding lines, for instance, the English translation was “to erase this inscription”. The direct object (patient) in Sumerian was šu; the direct object in English, “this inscription”, was expressed via a locative: “to move one’s hand over”. If it is true that Sumerian does not tolerate two patients, and if it is also true that this rule applies to historic direct objects (patients) of compound verbs, then lines 12-13 must be marked by another case. Given the presence of the dimensional-prefix da in the verbal chain in line 15, this would most likely be the comitative case.

The argument that Sumerian does not permit more than one patient in a sentence is based on general linguistic theory, and on empirical observations in Sumerian. Some linguists would say that no language has more than one patient (at least in the deep structure); if two seemingly occur, one must be in an adverbial relationship. However, it is not clear if such a constraint would apply to compound verbs. Even though the first element of many compound verbs is historically the patient of the verb, it is not always sure if it functioned as such in historic Sumerian.

### -Conjugation

Following is the paradigm for the marû of the transitive verb in the singular. The model used is sar, which is a member of the affixation class. The conjugation-prefix used here is i.

first person singular	<u>i-sar-re-en</u>	i.sar.e.en
second	<u>i-sar-re-en</u>	i.sar.e.en
third	<u>i-sar-re</u>	i.sar.e.Ø

The first and second persons singular are identical in form. The final /n/ often does not show up in the writing.

If the root ends in a vowel, there is frequent assimilation of the /e/ of the marû-suffix into the vowel of the root.

Some Sumerologists analyze the morphology of these endings as: .e.n, .e.n, .e.Ø. That is, the first and second person markers are .n, not .en. This is a thorny issue, which cannot be resolved here.

For verbs of the reduplicating class (the model is gar, “to place”), the forms are:

first person singular	<u>i-ğá-ğá-en</u>	i.ğaga.en
second	<u>i-ğá-ğá-en</u>	i.ğaga.en
third	<u>i-ğá-ğá</u>	i.ğaga.Ø

This interpretation of the marû of verbs of the reduplicating class is essentially that of Yoshikawa. However, all such reduplicated forms end in a vowel, which is subject to contraction with the /e/ of the ending .en. This means that in texts, such forms as the following are encountered: i-ğá-ğá-e-en, i-ğá-ğá-an, i-ğá-ğá-e, etc. Other Sumerologists have argued that such writings indicate that Yoshikawa’s analysis is incorrect.

The marker .Ø in such marû forms as i.sar.e.Ø has been treated here in two ways. First, it was called a personal-affix, cross-referencing the transitive subject. Second, it was called a marker for the third person. As discussed in Lesson 1, these are not contradictory interpretations, but are rather two ways of saying the same thing.

### -marû formation

It was Yoshikawa who established the three classes of marû formation discussed above. Edzard has expanded this into five classes:

- (1) “Unchanging”: The hamtu-root and the marû-root are the same. This corresponds to Yoshikawa’s “affixation” class; Edzard does not believe that .e is a marû marker.
- (2) “Reduplicating”: Same as Yoshikawa.
- (3) “Root-varying”: The two roots are different, but similar phonetically: “To approach” is te in the hamtu, but tēg in the marû (te and tēg are the same sign).
- (4) “Replacement”: Same as Yoshikawa.
- (5) “Irregular”: These do not seem to fit nicely into the other four categories.

It is not yet clear whether Yoshikawa's or Edzard's classification scheme is to be preferred. As progress in Sumerology is made, it is probable that more classes, and finer subdivisions within these classes, will have to be made. Yoshikawa himself has indicated that his scheme needs to be expanded; Kienast (1981b) has suggested some modifications to the scheme of Yoshikawa and Edzard. In this book, Yoshikawa's system of classification into affixation, reduplication, and alternation classes has been followed, because this classification scheme works well for the Ur III royal inscriptions.

#### – Roots

As may have been inferred above, it is only in the last ten or fifteen years that the morphology of the marû has become somewhat clear, thanks primarily to the work of Yoshikawa and Edzard. Even now, however, there remain thorny problems. Many difficulties are occasioned by the fact that in some cases the same sign stands for two different roots, one for the hamtu-root, and one for the marû-root (such as gin/du, mentioned above). The situation is still more complicated, however; certain roots appear to have separate forms for singular subjects and for plural subjects, in both the hamtu and the marû; this produces at least four different roots. There appear to be cases where certain roots have a hamtu-singular root, a marû-singular root, and a different plural root used for both the hamtu and the marû. In at least one case there appears to be a root which has different forms, depending on whether the *object* is singular or plural.

This complexity is to be expected; other languages of the world show such diversity in morphology. As progress is made, more such cases will be identified.

#### – Moods

There has been much discussion about the precise etymology of the Akkadian grammatical terms hamtu and marû, and even more discussion about the distinctions which are marked by these two terms. The difference in function between the hamtu and the marû has been variously seen as a difference in tense, or a difference in aspect, or a difference in Aktionsart. In the Ur III royal inscriptions, they seem more tense-like than aspect-like; the hamtu is regularly used for past action, and the marû for future action. However, when dealing with more complicated texts, especially literary texts, such a single binary distinction will not work. The fact that certain modal-prefixes require either the hamtu or marû, seemingly regardless of tense, complicates the issue.

#### – Ergativity

The term split ergative has been applied to Sumerian, because the personal-affixes behave in an ergative way in the hamtu, but not in the marû; in the marû, they behave in a nominative-accusative way. Consider the following sentences:

- (1) The king built the house.

lugal.e  $\xrightarrow{\quad}$  e.Q  $\xrightarrow{\quad}$  mu.n.du.Q

- (2) The king went.

lugal.Q  $\xrightarrow{\quad}$  mu.gin.Q

- (3) The king will build the house.

lugal.e  $\downarrow$  e. $\emptyset$  i.b.du.e. $\emptyset$

- (4) The king will go.

lugal. $\emptyset$  i.du. $\emptyset$

In (3), the direct object is cross-referenced by the personal-affix in the pre-verbal root slot. In (4), the subject of the intransitive verb is cross-referenced in the post-verbal root slot. Since the direct object in (3) and the intransitive subject in (4) are not cross-referenced in the same manner, they cannot be considered to function in an ergative way, but rather in a nominative-accusative way.

The case-markers in (3) and (4) – and in (1) and (2) – are the same; the difference is in the way that the case-markers are cross-referenced in the verbal phrase. In ergative languages which lack a case-system, ergativity only shows up in the cross-referencing system. Discussing a Mayan language called Sacapultec, for instance, Du Bois says: “As in all Mayan languages, the ergative patterning of Sacapultec morphology is entirely in the verbal cross-referencing inflection; nouns are not case-marked for grammatical relations” (1985:809).

Split ergative languages help demonstrate that the ergative ~ accusative distinction is more of a continuum than as a simple dichotomy. Du Bois has suggested that split ergativity is motivated by pragmatic or discourse pressures, forcing a re-alignment of the principal constituents of a sentence.

The explicit statement that Sumerian is a split ergative language has been particularly advanced by Michalowski. Not everyone is in agreement with these views; some scholars believe that there are too many apparent exceptions which cannot yet be explained.

### –Reduplication

Reduplication plays many roles in Sumerian. In this Lesson, reduplication is one of the devices used to derive marû-roots from hamtu-roots. A second common use is often referred to as “free” reduplication, or “hamtu” reduplication. This consists of reduplication of the hamtu-root; for example, i-gar-gar. This is not a case of marû reduplication, because the marû of gar is i-gá-gá.

The functions of free reduplication are not all clear. In many ways, it appears to be the functional equivalent of the D-stem (“Intensive”) in Semitic. Just as it is not easy to categorize all the uses of the D-stem in Semitic, so it is not possible to easily categorize all the uses of free reduplication. Edzard’s preliminary classification includes such things as: stressing of plural or totality of subject or object; plurality of occurrences; distributive relations; etc. In bilingual literary texts, reduplication is often translated by the Akkadian Gtn (“Iterative”) stem.

Free reduplication is not uncommon in Sumerian; for example, it occurs frequently in Gudea and in Old Babylonian literary texts. There appear to be no cases among the Ur III royal inscriptions, perhaps simply because of content; plural objects do not appear to be mentioned.

Certain verbs seem to have become lexicalized in the form of a reduplicated root. For

example, ur<sub>4</sub>-ur<sub>4</sub>, “to look for and gather up”, almost always appears this way. Presumably, this is because it is almost always used with a plurality of objects. Such a lexicalization has a parallel in the Semitic languages, where certain roots are lexicalized in certain stems. For example, the Akkadian bu”û, “to look for”, only occurs in the D-stem.

In context, it is often very difficult with certain verbs to decide whether marû reduplication or free reduplication is present. And if it is a case of free reduplication, it is often not easy to see its function.

It is probable that reduplicated forms (of whatever kind) were phonetically reduced in speech. There is evidence for this from texts written in syllabic orthography (Appendix 2) and from unusual occurrences of syllabic writings within normal orthography. For example, an expected biz-biz-e appears once in Gudea as: bi-bi-zé. Few details of such phonetic reduction are understood.

#### – Origin of cases

It has been speculated that the Sumerian case-endings (some of them, at any rate) were originally nouns. In particular, it has been claimed that the comitative case-marker da is in origin the same da meaning “side”, seen in the expression “king of the four quarters”, lugal-an-ub-da-limmu<sub>2</sub>-ba. This is not impossible, but it is harder to find an etymology for the other case-markings.

#### – Research in Sumerian

It is sometimes fairly easy to understand the meaning of a Sumerian text, and even relatively easy to describe, on surface terms, what we see, but it is much more difficult to understand exactly what is happening. For example, based on context and on parallels in Akkadian, Phoenician, and Aramaic texts, all Sumerologists would understand the last lines of this text to mean, “May Gilgamesh curse the man who erases this inscription”, regardless of the presence or absence of a comitative case-marker, regardless of the presence or absence of a dimensional-prefix, regardless of the distribution of the personal-affixes, etc. However, unless such details are well understood, it is much more difficult to figure out the meaning of really complicated passages.

This text also illustrates the problems encountered in doing research in Sumerian. An obvious question which arose when discussing the presence or absence of a comitative .da at the end of line 13 was, “How is this verb construed in its other occurrences? Does it use the comitative or some other construction?” Unfortunately, without an up-to-date Sumerian dictionary, such questions are not easy to answer. One can look at the existing dictionaries, or texts with glossaries, but without a painstaking examination of many sources, it is impossible to be sure that all instances of any particular word have been found.

#### – Curse-formulae

It is not uncommon for votive inscriptions to be provided with a curse-formula. Typically, the first part of an inscription will form a straight-forward text; the curse is tacked-on at the end. In the Ur III texts, only a limited number of curse-formulas occur; the next occurrence is in Text 15.

### – History

The historical Gilgamesh was the fifth king of the First Dynasty of Uruk, which falls within the Early Dynastic II period (about 2700-2500 BC). No inscriptions of his are preserved, or contemporary references to him, but there are a few inscriptions of his approximate contemporaries.

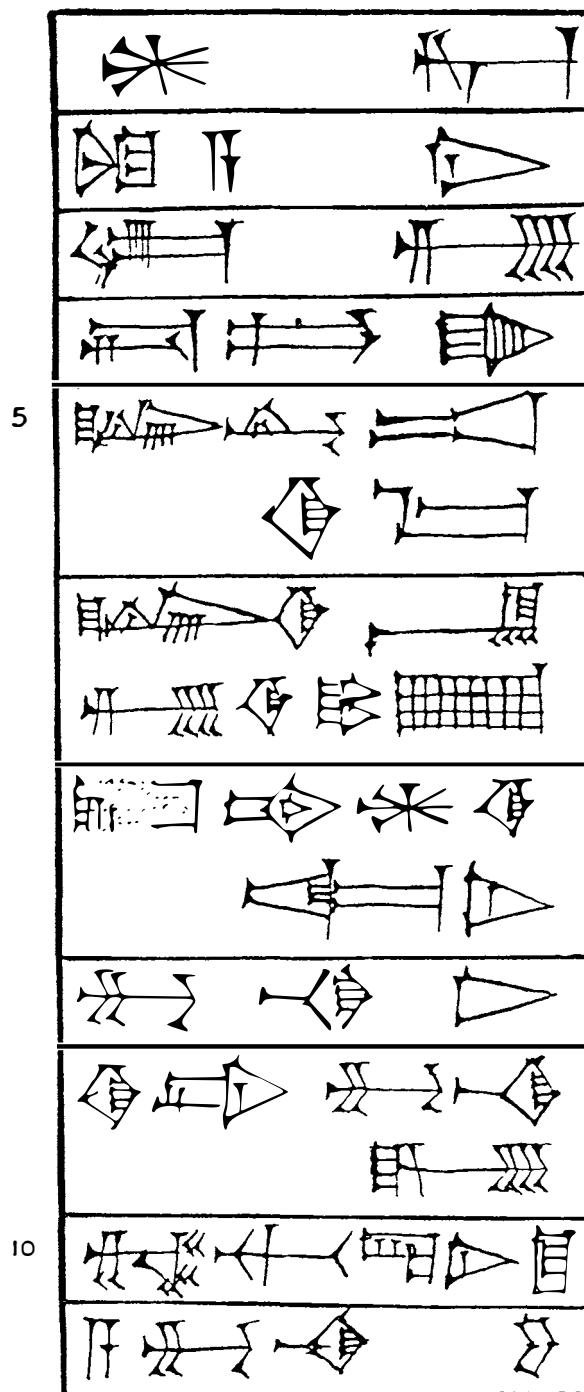
The first attestation of him is in a god-list from Fara, where his name is written: <sup>d</sup>Bil-PAP-ga-mèš. It is difficult to say exactly how these signs represent the name /Bilgameš/; his name is spelled several different ways in the course of Mesopotamian tradition.

Gilgamesh seems to have been very popular with the Ur III kings; according to Jeffrey Tigay, “The kings of Ur III regarded Gilgamesh as something like their personal god” (1982:13 n.50). Michalowski speculates that the “Gilgamesh stories were made part of the school curriculum during the Ur III period” (1987:66). In his hymns, Shulgi refers to Ninsun, the mother of Gilgamesh, as his own mother, and he refers to Gilgamesh as his brother.

# Text 12a

supplementary

Another door socket.



## Notes

**E-dur-an-ki** The name of the ziggurat at Nippur. Etymologically, “the temple, the bond of (= between) heaven and earth”, E dur.[an.ki].k.

Text 12a was found outside of a controlled archaeological context. The following photograph is of a door socket bearing another copy of the same inscription, found in situ:



### THE INSCRIPTION THAT IDENTIFIED THE TEMPLE OF INANNA

A door socket, this granite block bore a door post in its cavity. With the discovery of the thick buttressed wall we had only the outside of a monumental building. To get inside, two pickmen dug a five-yard square shaft beside the inner wall face. Walls and floors were soon located, but the room was larger than the shaft. The few objects found did not identify the building. To learn more about the area with a minimum of effort, we tunneled along one wall for twenty feet, then another for thirty feet to a corner where there was a doorway. We dug through this, first finding a disappointingly uninscribed door socket, then, in a brick box lower down, another with cuneiform wedges. The writing is that of king Shulgi, second ruler of the Third Dynasty of Ur, commemorating his rebuilding of the temple of Inanna. With this, we had the cult spot of Inanna at Nippur.



# Lesson 13

This text is a standard inscription of Amar-Sin, the son and successor of Shulgi; he ruled from 2046 to 2038 BC. The text exists in many copies; Text 13b is a stamped brick.

## Sign-list and vocabulary

 Zuen Zuen (DN, masc)

 Amar-dZuen Amar-Sin (PN)

 Nibru Nippur (GN)

 amar young bull

 sag-ús supporter, sustainer, patron

 pàd (pà) to find, call, reveal

 mu...pàd (pà) to propose

 le

## Notes

**Zuen** This seems to be another name of Nanna, although it is not clear why he had two names. Jacobsen thinks that the term Nanna refers specifically to the god's role as the "full moon", and Zuen refers to his role as the "crescent moon". It has also been suggested that Zuen is the Akkadian equivalent of Sumerian Nanna; that is, they are two different names for the same deity. However, there is no obvious Semitic etymology for Zuen.

The Akkadian equivalent of this DN is usually transcribed as either "Sin" or "Suen". The Sumerian word was also borrowed into Akkadian as a common noun, appearing as sīnu, suenu, sinnu, and šinnu. It is glossed by the CAD as: "1) the moon 2) crescent-shaped or semi-circular object".

The writing is discussed below.

**Amar-dZuen** Etymologically, "young bull of Zuen", amar.Zuen.(ak). The name of this ruler is often transcribed "Amar-Sin" or "Amar-Suen", which are really Akkadianized transcriptions.

Early scholars believed that this PN was Akkadian. The Akkadian equivalent of amar is būru. Therefore, the name appears in some older secondary literature as: "Būr-Sin", or something similar. Almost all modern scholars believe that the name is Sumerian, although there is really not much evidence to prove this.

**Nibrū** One of the more ancient and important cities in Mesopotamia; Kramer has called it the “spiritual and intellectual center of Mesopotamia”. Jacobsen has said:

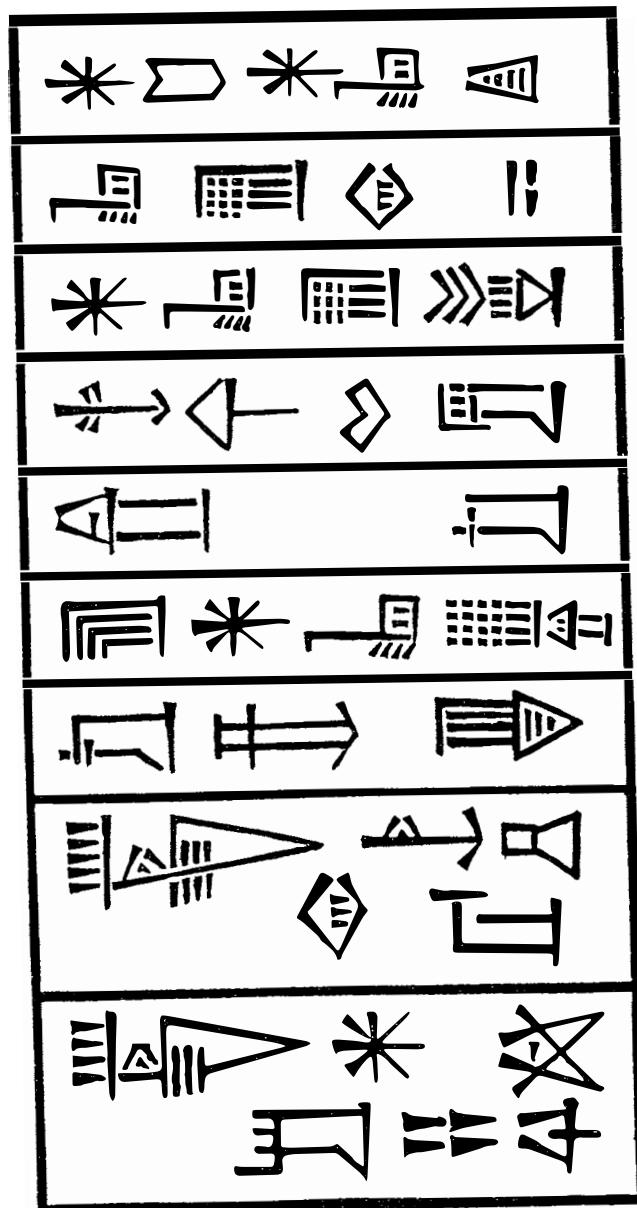
From the very beginning of historical times Nippur and Enlil were recognized as an undisputed source of rule over Sumer as a whole, and kings of Sumer would derive their authority from recognition in Nippur rather than from their own city and its city-god (1957:139).

The modern name of the site is Nuffar. It was the first tell to be excavated by American archaeologists (the University of Pennsylvania, beginning in 1887). Over thirty thousand tablets were found, mostly in Sumerian, ranging from the third to the first millennium BC. Large numbers of these texts are still unpublished. The vast majority of our Sumerian literary texts are Old Babylonian copies found at Nippur.

The etymology and writing of the name are discussed below.

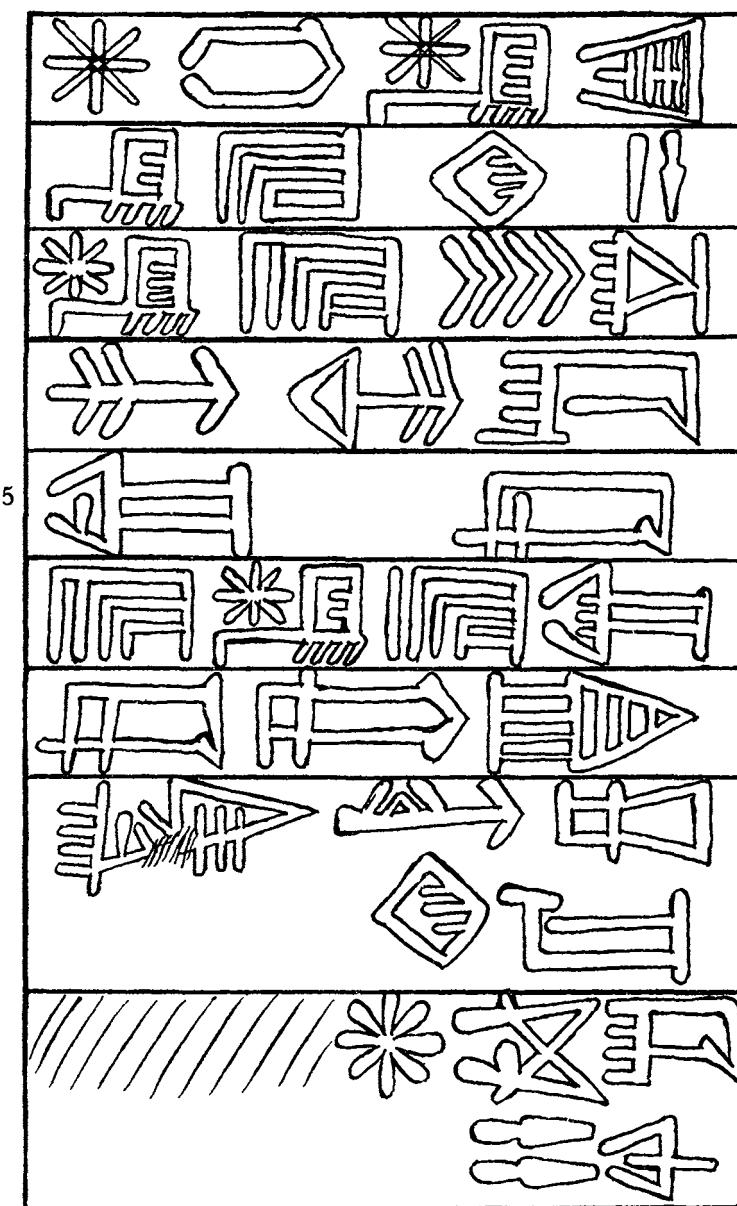
**sag-ús** The exact etymology and meaning are not sure. saḡ, as seen previously, means “head”. ús has several meanings. It often means “to lie against”, “to lean against”. (It is used as a logogram to represent Akkadian emēdu, “to lean against, to reach”.) It may also have a transitive sense, “to lift”, i.e., “to support”. Here it may be an active participle in  $\emptyset$ , with saḡ being its historic patient or incorporated object: “the one who lifts the head”. The usual translation is “supporter, sustainer, champion (of)”. It is translated by Sollberger as: “protector, patron (literally, ‘(he who) supports the head’)”.

## Text 13a



There is a certain amount of variation in the cuneiform signs in this text. The da at the end of line 4 has an initial vertical, not seen in the da in line 9. Similarly, the sign read nitah in line 7 has a vertical not seen in the sign read us in line 5.

## Text 13b



Transliteration	Transcription	Translation
1: <u>d</u> <u>Amar</u> - <u>d</u> <u>Zuen</u>	Amarzuen	Amar-Sin,
2: <u>Nibru</u> <u>ki</u> - <u>a</u>	Nibru.a	proposed by Enlil
3: <u>d</u> <u>En</u> - <u>lil</u> - <u>le</u>	Enlil.e	in Nippur,
4: <u>mu</u> - <u>pàd</u> - <u>da</u>	mu.pad.a	
5: <u>sağ</u> - <u>ús</u>	sağus.	patron of
6: <u>é</u> - <u>d</u> <u>En</u> - <u>lil</u> - <u>ka</u>	e.Enlil.(a)k.a(k)	the temple of Enlil,
7: <u>nitah</u> - <u>kalag</u> - <u>ga</u>	nitah.kalaga	the mighty man,
8: <u>ugal</u> - <u>Urim</u> <sub>5</sub> <u>ki</u> - <u>ma</u>	ugal.Urim.a(k)	the king of Ur,
9: <u>ugal</u> - <u>an</u> - <u>ub</u> - <u>da</u> - <u>limmu</u> <sub>2</sub> <u>ba</u>	ugal.anub.da.(k) limmu.bi.a(k)	the king of the four quarters.

### Commentary

1. As was the case with Shulgi, the name Amar-Sin is preceded by the determinative for divine names. There are thus two divine determinatives in the line: the second is for the DN Zuen, and the first is for the PN Amar-dZuen.

2-4. These lines form a relative clause modifying Amar-Sin of line 1. mu means “name”, and pàd is something like “to reveal”. mu...pàd is a compound verb, meaning approximately “to propose”. The underlying idea is that the name of Amar-Sin was proposed by Enlil in the council of the gods, meeting in Nippur, to be the king of Sumer and Akkad.

Sumerian has two ways of forming relative clauses. The first has occurred several times: it consists of nominalizing a complete independent sentence by .a, and then placing this nominalized sentence in apposition to a relative marker. This is sometimes called the “full” relative clause. For example, “He built the temple of Nanna” is: e.Nanna.(k).Ø mu.n.du.Ø. “The one who built the temple of Nanna” is: lu.[e.Nanna.(k).Ø mu.n.du.Ø].a.

In this example, the relative marker is logically the subject of the verb in the relative clause: “the man who built”, “the man who shall erase”. However, oblique relations are also possible, such as: “the temple which the king built”, “the god for whom the king dedicated a votive offering”.

In a clause such as “the temple which the king built”, “temple” is logically the direct object of the verb. In such relative clauses in Sumerian, there is no overt marker indicating this relationship. This clause could be expressed as: é ugal-le mu-dù-a. The simplest way to understand this construction is to think of it as: “[the temple] [the king built (it)]”. In English, there is no overt marker, except in the distinction between “who” and “whom”: “the man who built”, but “the man whom he saw”. In the classical Semitic languages, a resumptive pronoun is used. For example, the Akkadian equivalent of “the temple which the king built” is: bītu ša šarru ibnūšu. Literally, this is: “the temple which the king built it”. Sumerian uses no relative marker of any kind (unlike the use of English “that, which”, or Akkadian ša), and there is no overt marker for the direct object (unlike the Akkadian šu).

The second way relative clauses are formed in Sumerian is less understood in all its details. It is sometimes called a “reduced” relative clause, and sometimes a “participial

construction". It is formed by deletion of the entire verbal prefix chain, and nominalization of the remaining verbal root in .a (except in certain cases, not discussed here).

To express "Amar-Sin, whom Enlil proposed in Nippur" using the full form of the relative clause, would be approximately: Amarzuen [Enlil.e Nibru.a mu.mu.n.pad.Ø].a. (The first /mu/ is the nominal component of the compound verb mu...pàd; the second /mu/ is the conjugation-prefix.) To express the same idea using the reduced relative clause, the prefix chain is deleted: Amarsin [Enlil.e Nibru.a mu.pad.Ø].a, which is the form in Text 13. The mu which remains is the nominal element of the compound verb, not the conjugation-prefix. Since the nominal component of a compound verb is not part of the prefix chain, it is not deleted.

Several English translations of this construction are possible: "Amar-Sin, whom Enlil proposed in Nippur", "Amar-Sin, proposed by Enlil in Nippur", etc.

Both full and reduced relative clauses are common in Sumerian, but it is not known if there are rules governing their distribution. Certain formulaic expressions tend to prefer one construction, while other formulaic constructions prefer the other. For example, "the man who built ..." always appears in these texts as lú in-dù-a, but "the man proposed by Enlil" always appears in these texts as lú d<sub>E</sub>n-lil-le mu-pàd-da.

5. sag-ús é-d<sub>E</sub>n-lil-ka = sagus.e.Enlil.(a)k.a(k), "patron of the temple of Enlil". The genitive phrases seen till now have consisted of two nouns or nominal phrases. However, it is also possible to have a genitive phrase consisting of three or four elements, such as "the king of the temple of Nanna". Such genitive phrases are formed by the addition of an extra ".ak" for each new element in the genitive phrase. For example, "the temple of Nanna" is: e.Nanna.k; "the king of the temple of Nanna" is: lugal.e.Nanna.k.ak; "patron of the temple of Enlil" is: sagus.e.Enlil.ak.ak. (Sequences of two ".ak"s are sometimes referred to as "doublegenitives".)

Sequences of four nouns or nominal phrases (therefore, with three ".aks"), although permissible, are uncommon. Sumerian does not seem to tolerate a sequence of more than three ".ak"s; if such a situation would arise, no more than three are used. More commonly, a periphrasis of some kind is used instead.

The genitive phrase in this line is written sag-ús-é-d<sub>E</sub>n-lil-ka. The expected /a/ of the first genitive marker does not appear in the writing. One might have expected a writing such as sag-ús-é-d<sub>E</sub>n-lil-la-ka, or some such. A similar writing occurred in Text 11: hi-li-nam-munus-ka-ni, for hili.nam.munus.(a)k.an. As discussed at length in that Lesson, it is not known whether the problem is at the orthographic, phonological, or morphological level. Falkenstein's school, for example, would read the lil-sign here as lila<sub>2</sub>: sag-ús-é-d<sub>E</sub>n-lila<sub>2</sub>-ka.

#### Discussion: structure

Text 13 is a standard inscription, similar to Text 7. It consists entirely of a series of appositives, serving as epithets to the name Amar-Sin in line 1; there is no finite verb form:

Amar-Sin,  
proposed by Enlil in Nippur,

patron of the temple of Enlil,  
 the mighty man,  
 the king of Ur,  
 the king of the four quarters.

### – Orthography

The name Zuen is composed of two signs, the en-sign and the zu-sign. The two signs are always written in this order. However, there is a fair amount of evidence which shows that the zu-sign was actually pronounced before the en-sign; that is, this name was pronounced something like /zuen/. For example, the Akkadian word sīnu (discussed above) is a loan-word from Zuen. In the bilingual texts from Ebla, the Sumerian version of this divine name appears once as En-zu, but twice as En-zi. In all three cases, the Eblaite equivalent is Zu-i-nu (read by some as Sú-i-nu). Also, there are Akkadian personal names formed with the Akkadian version of the name, which appear in Hebrew, Greek, Latin and later English transcriptions; thus, the name Sin-ahhē-erība (“Sin has replaced my [dead] brothers”) appears ultimately in English as “Sennacherib”. There are, however, some unusual spellings in later Sumerian texts which may indicate that at times the name Zuen was “read as written”, that is, read as /enzu/ and not as /zuen/. These late writings may result from misunderstandings of scribes.

It is not known why this order of signs is used; a similar phenomenon is discussed in Lesson 14. In very early Sumerian, it was possible for signs within a line or case to be written in a rather free order, not always corresponding to the order of signs as they were read or pronounced. It is possible that writings such as En-zu represent survivals from this period.

It is difficult to decide how to transliterate such spellings. Some Sumerologists transliterate sign-by-sign; thus, En-zu in this case. This practice is not common in modern-day transliterations, and is regarded as somewhat old-fashioned. Other Sumerologists follow a convention whereby the transliteration gives the signs in the order-as-read, separated by a colon: Zu:en. Some Sumerologists will then follow this with the transliteration of the signs in their order-as-written, usually in caps, within parentheses: Zu:en(EN-ZU). The colon is sometimes used in this way when transliterating very early Sumerian, when the order of signs in the line or case does not correspond to the presumed order of pronunciation.

### – Writing system

The Sumerian pronunciation of the name of the city of Nippur is known from lexical lists, where En-lí<sub>1</sub>ki is spelled out as Ni-ib-ru. Similarly, the Akkadian pronunciation of the city name is also known from lexical lists, where it is spelled out as Ni-ip-pu-ru.

The Sumerian writing of the place name represents a not uncommon instance where the writing system tells us nothing about the pronunciation of the place-name. The etymology of Nibru is unknown; it is presumably a pre-Sumerian substrate word. However, the city eventually became especially associated with the god Enlil. Therefore, the name of the city was written with the same two signs as in the god’s name, but followed

by the determinative for place: En-lil<sup>ki</sup>. That is, the writing does not attempt at all to reproduce the phonetic sequence /Nibrū/. Rather, the Sumerian reader would understand the written signs as standing for “the place associated with the god Enlil”, that is, Nibrū.

Transliterations of such place names (and of similar common nouns) vary. Older practice tends to reproduce the basic value of the signs forming the word: En-lil<sup>ki</sup>. More current practice is to use the name of the GN (assuming it is known): Nibrū<sup>ki</sup>.

#### –Relative clauses

The term “participial construction” has been used to describe constructions such as in lines 2-4, because a reduced verbal form with a nominalizer is formally identical with what has been called here a passive participle; a reduced mu-n-dù, becoming dù-a, is formally identical with the passive participle dù-a. In origin, in fact, passive participles are all probably reduced relative clauses, in special syntactic environments.

The construction called here “reduced relative clause” is often referred to as the “Mesanepada (or Mesannepadda) construction”. (This name for the construction apparently goes back to Falkenstein.) Mèš-an-né-pàd-da was the founder of the First Dynasty of Ur (“Ur I”) sometime around 2550 BC. His name means “the young man whom An chose”, or “the young man chosen by An”: Mèš.an.e pad.a. This is the minimal form of the construction: a head noun (mèš); an agentive marked in .e (An-né); a verbal root (pàd); a nominalizer. (A few other names of the type “X-an-né-pàd-da are also known.) Lines 1-4 of Text 13 are only slightly more complicated; Text 13 includes a locative phrase, and also uses a compound verb (mu...pàd) instead of just pàd.

Other examples of this construction occur in Gudea. A temple is referred to as: É-ninnu An-né ki-ğar-ra, “the Eninnu temple, which An established (literally, ‘placed on the ground’, ki.a)”, or “the Eninnu temple established by An”.

The only study that deals specifically with relative clauses in Sumerian is by Gragg (1972a). It was written for a non-Sumerological audience, and is by design short and schematic, but has several useful observations. He points out that the syntax of relative clauses, particularly reduced relative clauses, is not completely understood. Henri Limet (1975a) has studied the parallel use of .a in participial and relative sentences.

#### – Standard inscriptions

Copies of this text have been found at several different sites, including Adab, Bad-Tibira, Eridu, Girsu, Isin, Kisurra, Sippar, Tell el-Lahm, Ur, and Uruk. All copies were inscribed on bricks. This situation is not uncommon with standard inscriptions, which can be found anywhere the ruler held sway, or where building-activity was conducted under his aegis.

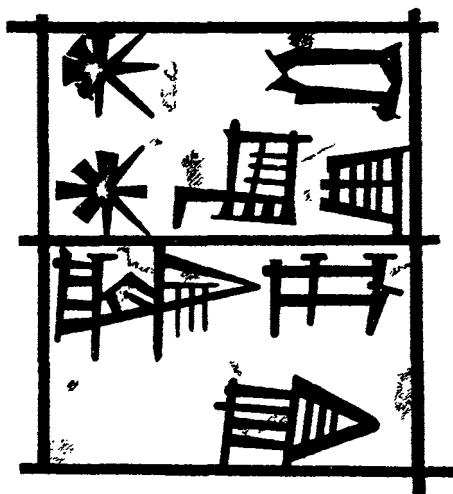
#### – History

Shulgi apparently died of old age; he had ruled for some 47 years. His son, Amar-Sin, ruled only nine years, and not much is known of his activities.

## Text 13c

supplementary

Another brick.



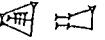


# Lesson 14

This text is a brick building inscription of Amar-Sin; it is essentially an expansion of Text 13.

## Sign-list and vocabulary

  En-ki Enki (DN, masc)

  abzu “apsû”, water basin

 ir

## Notes

**En-ki** The god of the subterranean waters, and also the god of wisdom. He was a son of Nammu. His name apparently means “lord of the earth”, en.ki.(k). There are spellings which show that this name is a genitive phrase, not a noun-noun compound.

Why a god whose name means “lord of the earth” became associated with water is not entirely clear; Jacobsen has spoken of “the role of water in fructifying the earth”. It has also been speculated that the element /ki/ appearing in this name is a different word than the word /ki/ meaning “earth”, perhaps the same ki appearing in the compound verb ki...aḡa₂.

The Sumerian god Enki was equated with the Akkadian god Ea (É-a). The name of the latter is of uncertain etymology; it does not inflect for case. In the bilingual lists from Ebla, the Ebaite equivalent of Enki is written É-u₉. This would appear to be an inflected form of the name, with the nominative case-marker. It has also been speculated that the Akkadian writing É-a and the Eblaite writing É-u₉ are actually phonetic spellings representing a Semitic form something like /ḥayyu/, “the living one”. This idea is explicitly developed by Cyrus Gordon (1987:19-20).

**abzu** This is composed of two signs, the zu-sign followed by the ab-sign. However, it is known that the ab-sign was read before the zu-sign. That is, the word was pronounced something like /abzu/. The phenomenon is similar to that of the DN Zuen, which was pronounced /zuen/, although written en-zu. In older transliterations it may appear as zu-ab.

The original use of this term was mythological. It referred to the subterranean fresh waters, which the Sumerians believed lay below the surface of the earth. These waters fed the wells, streams, rivers, marshes, etc. These waters were the special purview of Enki.

The term abzu was also used as the name of a large temple in Eridu, built to honor Enki. Most of the work on this temple was done by Amar-Sin, although it was his father who actually began the construction. This temple apparently stood over a fresh-water lagoon.

The term was later applied to a cultic object, presumably some kind of water-basin

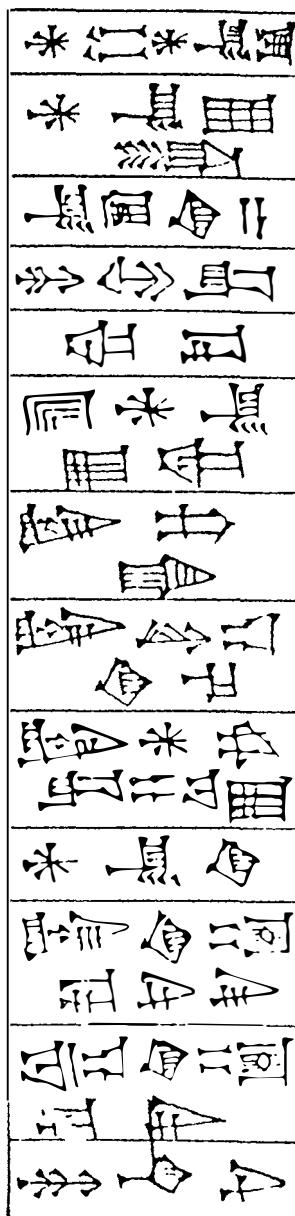
used in the temple. At a number of sites in Mesopotamia, objects have been found which archaeologists have identified with the term abzu. Several such objects have recently been found at Ebla.

This word was borrowed into Akkadian as apsû, glossed by the CAD as: “1) deep water, sea, cosmic subterranean water, 2) (a personified mythological figure), 3) water-basin in the temple”.

It is possible that the Eblaite equivalent of Sumerian abzu and Akkadian apsû appears as a-ba-si (Fales 1984:184), but the interpretation is somewhat uncertain.

The English word “abyss” is thought to derive from this Sumerian word, via Akkadian and Greek. It has been speculated that the word is not native Sumerian, but rather derives from a substrate language.

## Text 14



Transliteration	Transcription	Translation
1: <u>d_Amar-d_Zuen</u>	Amarzuen	Amarsin,
2: <u>d_En-lil-le</u>	Enlil.e	proposed by Enlil
3: <u>Nibrû_ki-a</u>	Nibrû.a	in Nippur,
4: <u>mu-pâd-da</u>	mu.pad.a	
5: <u>sağ-ús</u>	sağus	patron of
6: <u>é-d_En-lil-ka</u>	e.Enlil.(a)k.a(k)	the temple of Enlil,
7: <u>lugal-kalag-ga</u>	lugal.kalaga	the mighty king,
8: <u>lugal-Urim<sub>5</sub>ki-ma</u>	lugal.Urim.a(k)	the king of Ur,
9: <u>lugal-an-ub-da-limmu<sub>2</sub>-ba-ke<sub>4</sub></u>	lugal.anub.da.(k) limmu.bi.ak.e	the king of the four quarters –
10: <u>d_En-ki</u>	Enki	for Enki,
11: <u>lugal-ki-áğ-ğá-ni-ir</u>	lugal.ki.ağ.a.a.ni.r	his beloved king –
12: <u>abzu ki-áğ-ğá-ni</u>	abzuki.ağ.a.a.ni.Ø	his beloved <u>apsû</u> –
13: <u>mu-na-dù</u>	mu.na.(n.)du.Ø	he built.

### Commentary

9. lugal-an-ub-da-limmu<sub>2</sub>-ba-ke<sub>4</sub>. Cf. line 9 of Text 13: lugal-an-ub-da-limmu<sub>2</sub>-ba. The difference between the two is the presence of the ergative case-marker in Text 14. It was not present in Text 13, because there was no finite verb form in that text; rather, Text 13 consisted of a string of appositives. But in Text 14, all the appositives are part of the nominal phrase expressing the agent of the transitive verb in line 13. As stated in Lesson 1, the nominal phrase to which the case-markers are attached in Sumerian can vary considerably in size – all the way from a single noun, to long complexes such as this one: a nine-line nominal phrase.

11. The dative case-marker /r/ is here expressed. Its occurrence in the royal inscriptions of Ur-Nammu is unsure, and it does not appear in the inscriptions of Shulgi. At some point in the reign of Amar-Sin, there was apparently a change in orthography, although the motivation for this full writing is unknown. During the time of Amar-Sin there are writings with the dative case-marker /r/ expressed in the writing, such as here, but there are also texts where it is not expressed.

The problem cannot be described simply in chronological terms. Even in the Gudea texts, there are isolated instances of the /r/ appearing in the script. For example, “to the king” is normally written either lugal-a-ni or lugal-ni in Gudea, but lugal-ni-ir occurs at least once. “For Gudea” is written: Gù-dé-a, the spelling Gù-dé-a-ar is also attested. Falkenstein, in his study of the Gudea inscriptions, could find no rules governing either the morphology or the orthography of the dative.

It has been argued that the problem here is phonological, not orthographic. Poebel and Falkenstein have suggested that in a writing such as lugal-a-ni for the dative, the original

/r/ of the dative case-marker was completely lost, producing /lugalni/ for the dative. However, adoption of such a view entails rather baroque convolutions in explaining such forms as lugal-a-ni-ir. Falkenstein, in fact, speaks of “eine sekundäre Restitution” of the dative case-marker /r/, reflecting a period when Sumerian was beginning to fall out of use as a spoken language. This would mean that the original form was /r/, but then the /r/ was lost, and later it was “restored”. However, such an explanation encounters strong linguistic objections, and also historical objections. Also, it does not account for the rise of explicitness seen in other areas of the grammar. In Text 16, for example, there occurs mu-na-an-dù, the first occurrence in the body of texts studied here where the personal-affix cross-referencing the hamtu-agent is actually written.

12. Because of the ambiguity of the term abzu, it is not clear what the patient in this line refers to: the temple built by Amar-Sin and his father, or to a cultic object within this temple.

#### Discussion: structure

The structure of this text is:

[Amarzuen, Enlil.e Nibru.a mu.pad.a,	agent
sağus.e.Enlil.(a)k.a(k),	
lugal.kalaga, lugal.Urim.a(k),	
lugal.anub.da.(k) limmu.bi.ak].e	
[Enki, lugal.ki.ağā.a.anı].r	benefactive
[abzu ki.ağā.a.anı].Ø	patient
mu.na.(n.)du.Ø	verb

The first nine lines are essentially the same standard inscription seen in Text 13. The rest is a straight-forward building inscription. The result is that this inscription begins with the name of the king (the agent) instead of with the name of the deity (the benefactive). It is as if the scribe began with a stock standard inscription, then tacked on a building inscription.

There are two differences between Text 13 and Text 14. The first is in the order of lines 2 and 3. In Text 13, the locative phrase within the reduced relative clause precedes the agentive phrase, but in Text 14, the agentive phrase precedes the locative phrase. Text 14 uses the more usual syntax. In Text 13, there is presumably some emphasis on the word “Nippur”. The second difference is in line 7. Text 13 uses a title which occurred in several other texts: nitah kalag-ga. Text 14 uses lugal kalag-ga.

#### –Orthography

On the one hand, writings which explicitly represent the dative case-marker /r/ may be viewed as part of the general process of the Sumerian writing system becoming more and more explicit in its representation of phonological and morphological features. On the other hand, it is hard to understand exactly how such a practice appeared – what motivated a scribe, practicing by its nature a conservative craft, to write the /r/?

It is not known when Sumerian began to die out as a spoken language; many scholars

believe that such a process was already on-going during the Ur III period. If so, the increase in explicitness in the texts – such as the writing of the dative case-marker /r/ – may be correlated with an increased need of the scribes for help in reading and writing Sumerian. That is, as the scribes' knowledge grew more and more "shaky", there was a need to write the morphemes down in an unambiguous way. At the same time, there may have been felt a scholastic tendency to write all morphemes down. Similarly, in our own scholastic tradition of transcribing Sumerian, we are prone to write down full underlying forms of morphemes.

#### –Ergativity

There are two ergative case-markers in this sentence: the .e in line 9, marking the agent of the main verb in line 13, and the .e in line 2, marking the agent of the verb in line 4 (embedded in a relative clause). Potentially, this could cause a certain amount of confusion. If one thought that the .e in line 2 marked the agent of the verb coming up in line 13, the text would start to become rather confused. In practice, however, the formulaic nature of these texts helps to prevent such confusion. In the spoken language, there were probably features such as stress and intonation which helped obviate such problems.

#### –Textual problems

At the end of line 9, the autograph reads ke<sub>4</sub>; the ke<sub>4</sub>-sign combines the /k/ of the genitive marker with the /e/ of the ergative case-marker. This particular use of the ke<sub>4</sub>-sign has occurred in several of the previous texts.

However, at least two of the three other published exemplars of this text read a ka-sign, not a ke<sub>4</sub>-sign, at the end of line 9. This is hard to explain. There is no evidence for a (phonological) change of /e/ > /a/ at this period; sporadic cases do occur in later Sumerian, but under different conditions.

One possibility is to see a long anticipatory genitive, of a kind not seen previously. The essence of the sentence would be:

"Of Amar-Sin ... , to Enki his beloved lord" >

"To Enki, the beloved lord of Amar-Sin".

Although somewhat similar anticipatory genitives do occur in Sumerian, there seem to be no exact parallels to this construction. Also, such an interpretation would not leave any overt agent for the finite verb.

It is difficult to find a satisfactory explanation for the writing with the ka-sign. It is not simply a scribal error, since the ke<sub>4</sub>-sign seems to occur in only one exemplar; two exemplars clearly have the ka-sign, and one exemplar is slightly damaged at the crucial point.

The fact that the ke<sub>4</sub>-sign is apparent in only one copy is in itself suspicious. It is possible that this writing represents an (unconscious) attempt by the scribe to bring the text into line with more common Sumerian morphology and orthography. (This assumes, in fact, that the ke<sub>4</sub>-sign is indeed present, and that it is not an error on the part of the modern-day editor of the text; there is no photograph available of the text.)

### –Titulature

Texts 13c and 14 use the title lugal-kalag-ga, in place of nitah-kalag-ga. According to Hallo, Amar-Sin was the first king of the Ur III Dynasty to adopt this title. He and his successors used it “to the virtual exclusion of the older title”.

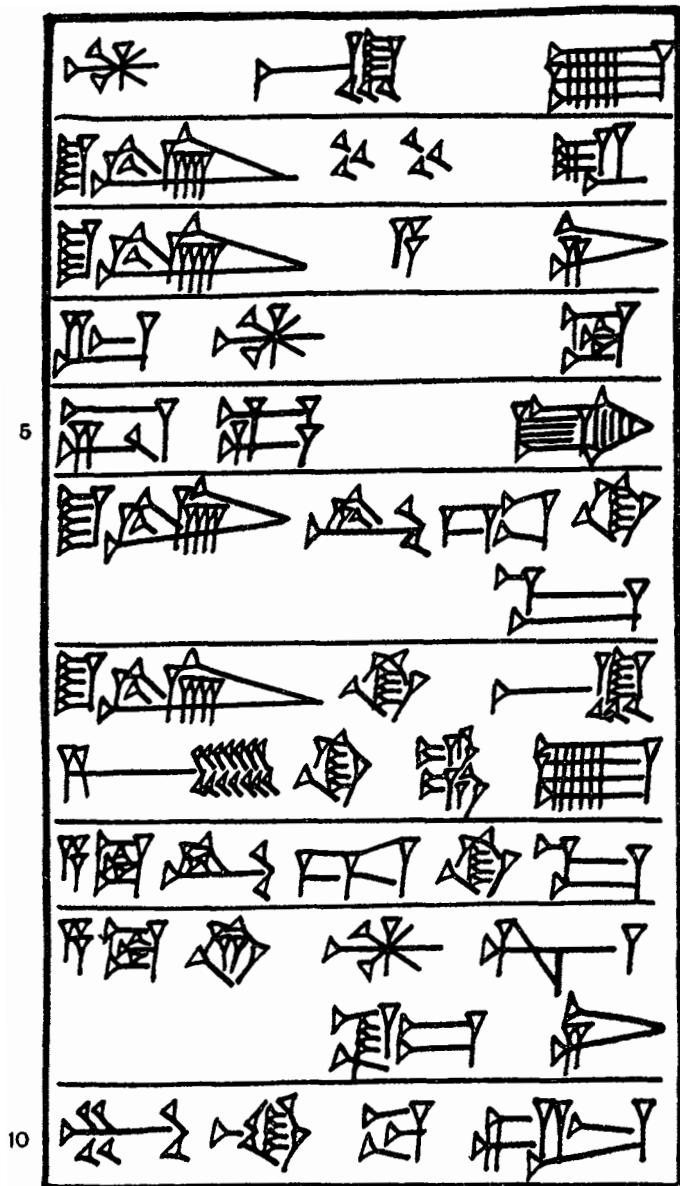
### –Terminology

Occasionally, Sumerologists and Assyriologists will informally use an Akkadian word, even when referring to its Sumerian counterpart. For example, even when discussing the abzu, in a Sumerian context, Sumerologists will not infrequently refer to “the apsû”. There is no theoretical or ideological reason for such practice; it reflects the fact that Sumerologists learn Akkadian before they learn Sumerian, and also the fact that more is usually known about the Akkadian word and its referent than about the Sumerian word.

## Text 14a

supplementary

This was inscribed on a cone.



# Lesson 15

This is another standard inscription of Amar-Sin. It may have been inscribed on the pedestal of a statue.

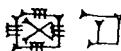
## Sign-list and vocabulary



alam statue



mu name



barag-sig<sub>9</sub>-ga pedestal



ama mother



numun seed; offspring, progeny



sig<sub>9</sub> (si) to be narrow



kúr to change



bu<sub>6</sub> to tear out, to uproot



til to put an end to



me



im



hé



eb

## Notes

**alam** Transliterated by some as alam, and by others as alan. Some Sumerologists believe that alan is the older, and alam the later form. On the other hand, Lieberman reconstructs the original form as /alaḡ/; he believes that nasals in word-final position were neutralized with respect to point of articulation. Others have postulated some kind of connection with the word appearing in Akkadian as šalmu, in Hebrew as šelem, “image”.

**barag-sig<sub>9</sub> -ga** The exact meaning is unsure. It may mean “narrow dais”, barag.sig.a. It is translated by the PSD as “socle (of a statue)”. It was borrowed into Akkadian as barasigû, translated by the CAD as: “low socle for cultic purposes”.

**kúr** This was equated with Akkadian šanû and nakāru. Both have many meanings. For nakāru in the D-stem, the CAD lists, among others, "... 8. to discard an object (tablet, stela, etc.), to remove an inscription ... 9. to clear away rubble, etc., to discard, remove from a container, to demolish a building ... 11. ... to place an object in a new location ...".

Most frequently, kúr governs a direct object (patient).

**bu<sub>6</sub>** This is translated by the PSD as “to tear out”, “to pull out”, “to uproot”, “to extirpate”.

Although the meaning is clear, the precise reading is not. The sign is a ka-sign with an inscribed kár-sign. This is most clearly seen in the Neo-Assyrian form of the sign: . Sumerologists often transliterate such inscribed signs with an “x”: KAxKAR.

Older works transliterate the ka-sign as bu<sub>5</sub> (when necessary), KAxKAR as bu<sub>6</sub> and KAxŠU as bù. Recent works, however, transliterate both KAxKAR and KAxŠU as bù, and add the fuller transliteration in parentheses: bù(KAxKAR); bù(KAxŠU). However, such a system can lead to confusion, because it is easy for the forms in parentheses to be accidentally dropped in the mechanical process of printing. And, since the entire function of transliteration is to provide a one-to-one correspondence of a specific cuneiform sign with a specific transliteration, it seems counter-purposeful to use bù for two different signs. Therefore, the older procedure is followed here, and the sign is transliterated as bu<sub>6</sub>.

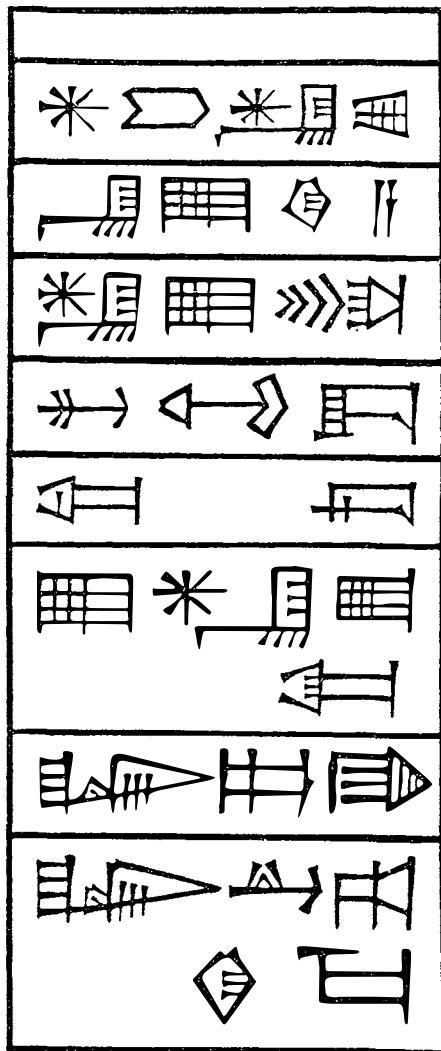
It is probable that the root of this word ended in some kind of /r/-Auslaut; in Text 15 it appears in a verb form written ₁-bu<sub>6</sub>-re-a. However, no /bur/ value for this sign is recognized by the standard sign lists. A possible reading buzur<sub>5</sub> is recorded, but this may be some other use. The problem deserves further study.

bu<sub>6</sub> usually governs a direct object (patient).

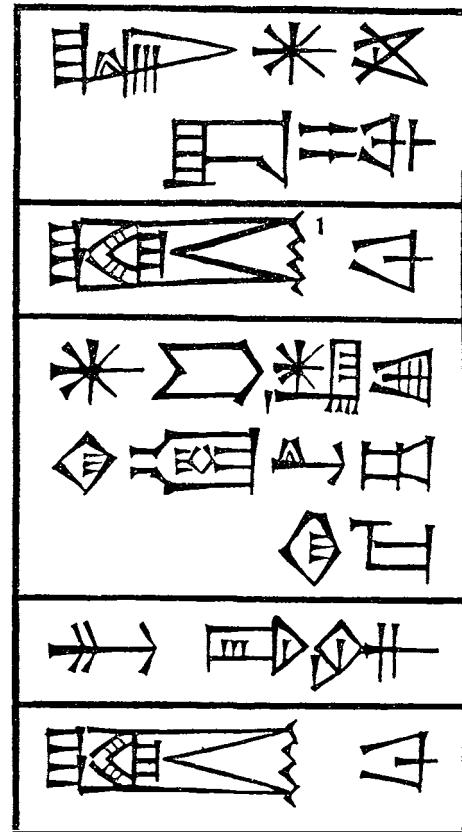
**til** This sign has several meanings in Sumerian. In its reading as til, it is equated with Akkadian gamāru, laqātu, and qatū. The CAD glosses qatū as “1. to come to an end, to be used up, 2. to perish, 3. to become completed, finished, settled”. In the causative stem, šuqtū is glossed as “to bring to an end”.

# Text 15

Column I

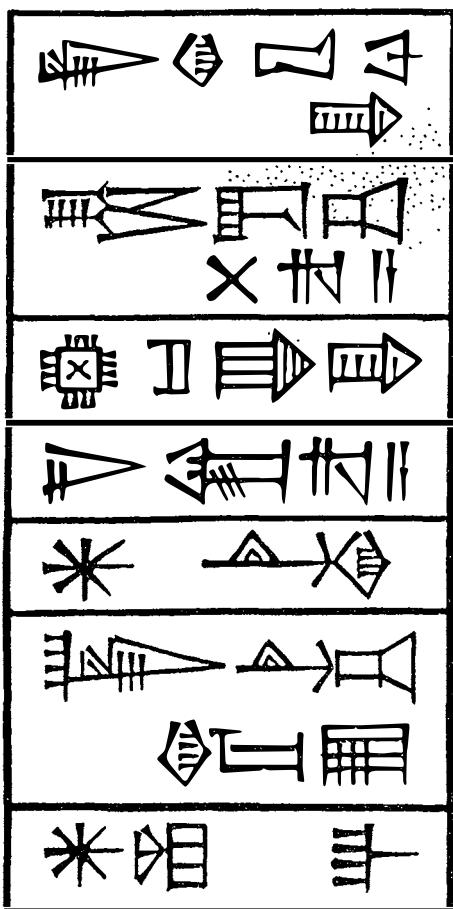


Column I (continued)

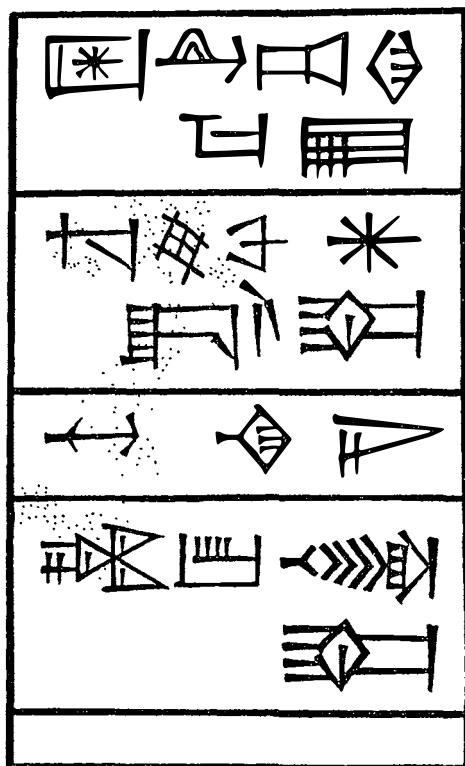


1. The sign is partly restored from the duplicate, No. 90039.

Column II



Column II (continued)



## Notes

II 9: The nam-sign and the ḥa-sign are either partly effaced or poorly drawn on the original. Not all scholars, in fact, believe that there even is a ḥa-sign in this particular text. But since this curse-formula occurs in several other texts, its restoration is relatively certain.

	Transliteration	Transcription
I 1:	<u>d</u> <u>Amar</u> - <u>d</u> <u>Zuen</u>	Amarzuen
2:	<u>Nibru</u> <sup>ki</sup> - <u>a</u>	Nibru.a
3:	<u>d</u> <u>En</u> - <u>lil</u> - <u>le</u>	Enlil.e
4:	<u>mu</u> - <u>pàd</u> - <u>da</u>	mu.pad.a
5:	<u>sağ</u> - <u>ús</u>	sağus
6:	<u>é</u> - <u>d</u> <u>En</u> - <u>lil</u> - <u>ka</u>	e.Enlil.(a)k.a(k)
7:	<u>lugal</u> - <u>kalag</u> - <u>ga</u>	lugal.kalaga
8:	<u>lugal</u> - <u>Urim</u> <sub>5</sub> <sup>ki</sup> - <u>ma</u>	lugal.Urim.a(k)
9:	<u>lugal</u> - <u>an</u> - <u>ub</u> - <u>da</u> - <u>limmu</u> <sub>2</sub> <u>ba</u> - <u>me</u>	lugal.anub.da.(k) limmu.bi.a(k).me.(en)
10:	<u>alam</u> - <u>ba</u>	alam.bi.a(k)
11:	<u>d</u> <u>Amar</u> - <u>d</u> <u>Zuen</u> <u>ki</u> - <u>ağa</u> <sub>2</sub> <u>Urim</u> <sub>5</sub> <sup>ki</sup> - <u>ma</u>	Amarzuen ki.ağa.a.Urim.a(k)
12:	<u>mu</u> - <u>bi</u> - <u>im</u>	mu.bi.m
13:	<u>alam</u> - <u>ba</u>	alam.bi.a(k)
II 1:	<u>lú</u> <u>ki</u> - <u>gub</u> - <u>ba</u> - <u>bi</u>	lu ki.gub.a.bi.Ø
2:	<u>ib</u> - <u>da</u> - <u>ab</u> - <u>kúr</u> - <u>re</u> - <u>a</u>	i.b.da.b.kur.e.Ø.a
3:	<u>barag</u> - <u>sig</u> <sub>9</sub> - <u>ga</u> - <u>bi</u>	baragsiga.bi.Ø
4:	<u>i</u> - <u>bu</u> <sub>6</sub> - <u>re</u> - <u>a</u>	i.(b.)bur.e.Ø.a.(d)
5:	<u>d</u> <u>Nanna</u>	Nanna
6:	<u>lugal</u> - <u>Urim</u> <sub>5</sub> <sup>ki</sup> - <u>ma</u> - <u>ke</u> <sub>4</sub>	lugal.Urim.ak.e
7:	<u>d</u> <u>Nin</u> - <u>gal</u>	Ningal
8:	<u>ama</u> - <u>Urim</u> <sub>5</sub> <sup>ki</sup> - <u>ma</u> - <u>ke</u> <sub>4</sub>	ama.Urim.ak.e
9:	<u>nam</u> - <u>ḥa</u> - <u>ba</u> - <u>an</u> - <u>da</u> - <u>kur</u> <sub>5</sub> - <u>ne</u>	nam.ḥé.ba.n.da.kur.(e.e)ne.Ø
10:	<u>numun</u> - <u>na</u> - <u>ni</u>	numun.ani.Ø
11:	<u>ḥé</u> - <u>eb</u> - <u>til</u> - <u>le</u> - <u>ne</u>	ḥé.(i.)b.til.e.ene.Ø

## Translation

- I 1: I am Amar-Sin,  
 2-4: proposed in Nippur by Enlil,

5-6: patron of the temple of Enlil,

7 the mighty king,

8 the king of Ur,

9: the king of the four quarters.

10,12: The name of this statue is:

11: “Amar-Sin is the beloved of Ur”.

II 5-6: May Nanna, the king of Ur,

7-8: and Ningal, the mother of Ur,

9: curse

13-2: the man who changes the place of this statue

3: and the man who tears down its pedestal,

10-11: and may they put an end to his offspring!

### **Commentary**

1. The first nine lines of this inscription are the same as in Text 13, except for the later form of the royal title in line 7.

9. me is the first person singular enclitic copula, “I am”. In older Sumerian, it is usually written -me-en. The form of the second person singular is also -me-en. The third person singular is -àm. Thus, the paradigm for the singular of the enclitic copula is:

first person singular	<u>-me-(en)</u>
second	<u>-me-(en)</u>
third	<u>-àm</u> (after a consonant) <u>-m</u> (after a vowel)

The distribution of -me ~ -me-en does not exactly correspond to a difference in time. In older Sumerian, -me-en is the norm, but in Ur III, both -me and -me-en occur, with -me predominating. However, both also occur in later texts. It is not sure if this should be regarded as an orthographic or as a phonological problem; it is discussed further below.

The regular form of the enclitic copula for the third person singular is /am/, written with the àm-sign. After a vowel, the enclitic copula appears as /m/, as in line 10 of Text 15.

10. The next three lines give the actual name of the statue. The construction is an anticipatory genitive, with an enclitic copula: “of this statue, its name is ...”. Thus, the bi of mu-bi resumes alam: alam.bi.a(k)...mu.bi.m.

11. The actual name of the statue is: “Amar-Sin is the beloved of Ur”. This is an equational sentence, and so one might have expected to find an enclitic copula. However, it is not uncommon to find simple equational sentences without a copula, and this name may be such an instance. It is also possible that the name is not a complete sentence, but rather is a noun phrase with an appositive: “Amar-Sin, the beloved of Ur”; this is discussed

further below.

The next few lines are rather complicated. Lines I: 13 through II: 4 are all the comitative complement of the verb in II: 9. This complement includes a relative marker (lú) governing two relative clauses. The first is marked by the -a at the end of line II: 2. The second is marked by the -a at the end of line II: 4. All of this is embedded inside an anticipatory genitive:

“of this statue, the man who changes its position and tears down its pedestal”›

“the man who changes the position of this statue and tears down its pedestal”.

The anticipatory genitive in I: 13 is resumed by the -bi in II: 1 and II: 3.

II - 1. ki-gub-ba = ki.gub.a, “standing place” or something similar. Presumably, gub-ba is a passive participle in .a.a.

2. Since the sense being conveyed is future, the verb is put into the marû. kúr is a member of the affixation class, so forms its marû with the marû-suffix .e, hence kur.e, written kúr-re.

The initial /i/ of the ib-sign represents the conjugation-prefix i.

There are two /b/s in this particular prefix chain; it is easier to look at the second /b/ first. Since this is a marû form of the verb, the /b/ in the slot immediately preceding the verbal root cross-references the direct object, kiguba.bi.Ø.

The da is the dimensional-prefix which cross-references a nominal phrase in the comitative case. The /b/ before the da is an element not yet seen. Before the dimensional-prefixes .da (cross-referencing the comitative .da), .ši (cross-referencing the terminative .šè), and .ta (cross-referencing the ablative), it is possible for an “optional pronominal-prefix” to appear. For the third person, these prefixes are: .n for the animate, and .b for the inanimate (forms for first and second person are discussed below). These prefixes help cross-reference the nominal phrases occurring in the sentence; they do not convey any new information. Here, the /b/ refers back to alam of line 10. The use of these pronominal-prefixes appears to be purely optional (at least, no-one has figured out any rules for their distribution); they did not appear in any of the previous texts used in this book, and only show up sporadically in the remaining texts. This is not apparently a problem in orthography. That is, unlike the personal-affixes appearing immediately before the root, one should not assume that these pronominal-prefixes were always present.

Thus, .bda represents the comitative dimensional-prefix, with an optional pronominal-prefix.

An obvious problem here is that there is no comitative nominal phrase in the sentence for the dimensional-prefix to cross-reference. In fact, in this verbal prefix chain there occurs both a dimensional-prefix (.bda) and a personal-affix (.b). However, there is only one noun phrase that these could cross-reference, ki-gub-ba-bi. Furthermore, this particular verb seems to normally be construed with a direct object. Therefore, the personal-affix .b cross-references the direct object, and the dimensional-prefix .bda does not refer back to any particular nominal phrase.

As was mentioned in Lesson 12, there are numerous cases where a comitative dimensional-prefix appears in the verbal prefix chain, but with no corresponding comitative nominal phrase in the sentence. There is probably not just one single rule governing the

appearance or non-appearance of the comitative dimensional-prefix. More likely, there are several different factors at work, which have not yet been unraveled.

To summarize the verb form:

i . b . da . b . kur . e . Ø . a  
 (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8)

- (1) conjugation-prefix
- (2) optional pronominal-prefix
- (3) comitative dimensional-prefix
- (4) personal-affix cross-referencing patient
- (5) verbal root
- (6) marû-suffix
- (7) personal-affix cross-referencing agent
- (8) nominalizer

The entire clause, nominalized in -a, stands in apposition to lú, forming a relative clause.

4. i-bu<sub>6</sub>-re-a = i.(b).bur.e.a. i is the conjugation-prefix. However, the verb has no dimensional-prefix, nor (on the surface) does it have any personal-affix cross-referencing the apparent direct object, baragsiga.bi.Ø. Since the verb form is in the marû, one might have expected to find /b/ immediately preceding the verbal root. There are at least two possible reasons for its apparent absence. Lines 3-4 are roughly parallel in form and content to lines 1-2. It is possible that its use in the verb form in line 4 would have been felt as redundant; that is, the parallelism in construction permitted deletion of the personal-affix .b. Some scholars have suggested that personal-affixes are only present (and therefore only written) in ambiguous contexts.

However, there may be an entirely different reason for its absence. Perhaps there was a phonetic reduction of /ibburea/ > /iburea/. That is, the problem may be phonological, not morphological. As is often the case in Sumerian, it can be difficult to determine whether a problem is orthographic, phonological, or morphological in nature.

4. The assumed comitative case-marker .(d) at the end of this line marks lines I: 13 through II: 4 as the comitative complement of the verb nam..kur<sub>5</sub> in line II: 9. The same use of the assumed comitative with this verb occurred in Text 12.

6-8. The two agents of the verb forms in lines 9 and 11 are both marked by the ergative case-marker .e.

9. .nda is the comitative dimensional-prefix plus the optional pronominal-prefix .n. Here the animate form is used, because it refers back (essentially) to “the man who ...”.

All the verb forms seen up to this point have been singular. Here, there is a plural agent (“Nanna and Ningal”), and so the verb must be put into the plural (Sumerian has no dual). The plural third person of a marû verb is usually written with a suffixed -e-ne. Sumerologists have different understandings about the morphology implied by this writing. One analysis sees this writing as reflecting: e.ene.Ø. The .e is the marû-suffix; .ene is the plural marker; and .Ø is the personal-affix cross-referencing the agent. Another analysis is

to isolate the morphemes of this ending as: e.Ø.ene. A third analysis is to read the ne-sign as dè, reflecting quite a different understanding of the morphology. This is a very difficult issue to resolve. Here, the first analysis has been followed.

A problem in this particular verbal form is the fact that only -ne is written, not -e-ne. How should this writing be understood?

The Falkenstein school would read the first sign with an overhanging vowel, that is, kure<sub>2</sub>. A variant of this solution is to read the kúr-sign as kuru<sub>5</sub>: kuru<sub>5</sub>-ne would represent kur.e.ene.Ø. The second /u/ in the sign kuru<sub>5</sub> would represent the assimilation of the underlying /e/ to the first /u/. There are numerous other cases where the marû-suffix .e is assimilated to an /u/-vowel of a verbal root.

But has been stated several times, the mnemonic nature of the script may have meant that there was no need for the scribes to write down the full forms of the morphemes.

To summarize the verb form:

nam .	ḥé .	ba .	n .	da .	kur .	e .	ene .	Ø
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)

- (1) nominal component of compound verb
- (2) modal-prefix
- (3) conjugation-prefix
- (4) optional pronominal-prefix
- (5) comitative dimensional-prefix
- (6) verbal root
- (7) marû-suffix
- (8) plural marker
- (9) personal-affix cross-referencing agent

This line is essentially the same curse-formula which occurred in Text 12. It is instructive to compare the verb forms of the two texts:

Text 12      nam-ḥa-ba-da-kur<sub>5</sub>-e

Text 15      nam-ḥa-ba-an-da-kur<sub>5</sub>-ne

The first difference is the presence in Text 15 of the animate optional pronominal-prefix .n before the comitative dimensional-prefix. It is precisely cases such as this – two texts with a minimum of variation – which seem to show that such pronominal prefixes are indeed optional.

The second difference is in the number of the verb. In Text 12, the agent of the verb is singular (“Gilgamesh”); in Text 15, the agent of the verb is plural (“Nanna and Ningal”).

11. ḥé is the regular form of the desiderative modal-prefix. In its two previous occurrences, /ḥe/ > /ḥa/ before the conjugation-prefix /ba/.

The next slot in the verbal prefix chain should be the obligatory conjugation-prefix. In this particular case, the conjugation-prefix 1 has contracted into the /e/ of the modal-prefix.

.b cross-references the direct object, numun.ani.Ø. Since numun refers to “future descendants, progeny”, it might seem a little surprising to see numun.ani.Ø cross-referenced by .b (normally used for inanimates) instead of by .n (normally used for animates). However, .b is frequently used for what might be considered “collectives” (both

of animates and inanimates), and here *numun* was probably felt as a collective.

Since til is a transitive verb, hé is used with the marû form of the root. til is a member of the affixation class, so its marû-root is til.e. The verb is written as expected, til-le-ne.

To summarize the verb form:

h	é	.	i	.	b	.	til	.	e	.	ene	.	Ø
(1)	(2)		(3)		(4)		(5)		(6)		(7)		

(1)	modal-prefix
(2)	conjugation-prefix
(3)	personal-affix cross-referencing patient
(4)	verbal root
(5)	<u>marû</u> -suffix
(6)	plural marker
(7)	personal-affix cross-referencing agent

### Discussion: structure

This text is composed of three sentences:

I: 1-9	nominal sentence
I: 10-12	nominal sentence
I: 13-II: 11	verbal sentence

The structure of the verbal sentence, in essence, is:

I: 13-II: 4	accompaniment
II: 5-6	agent <sub>1</sub>
II: 7-8	agent <sub>2</sub>
II: 9	verb
II: 10	patient
II: 11	verb

In a famous monograph entitled Das appositionell bestimmte Pronomen (1932), Poebel tried to show that the copula in Semitic and in Sumerian could also be used to express apposition. In Text 15, the translation of the beginning of the inscription would be: "I, Amar-Sin, the one nominated ...". That is, the first nine lines would not form a complete sentence, but rather would form a kind of casus pendens or fronting for emphasis. Similarly, the name of the statue in line 11 may be a noun and appositive, and not an equational sentence.

### – Sign formation

In Lesson 3, it was pointed out that some cuneiform signs are in origin combinations of a pictographic sign with an inscribed phonetic indicator of some kind. The ama-sign is thought to be one of these. It has an inscribed digir-sign, one of whose phonetic readings is am<sub>6</sub>. Therefore, it has been suggested that this component of the sign is a clue to the

pronunciation. Unfortunately, it is difficult to make this square with the fact that the rest of the sign appears to be the pisan-sign, which basically means “box” of some kind. It has also been proposed that there is some obscure symbolism involved, “mother” being represented as a “divinity” within a “box”!

#### – Loan words

In Text 6, the word barag occurred; this term was borrowed into Akkadian as parakku. The amissable /g/-Auslaut shows up in Akkadian as a geminated voiceless consonant. barag-sig<sub>9</sub>-ga, however, was borrowed into Akkadian as barasigû. The amissable /g/-Auslaut of the barag element, here in syllable-final position, does not appear. However, the intervocalic /g/ of sig-ga (sig.a) remains. The word-initial /b/ of barag is treated differently in each loan word. In parakku it is reflected as /p/, but in barasigû it is reflected as /b/. This shows that barasigû is a later borrowing into Akkadian than parakku. It is usually assumed that in relatively older loan words from Sumerian, Sumerian voiced stops are reflected in Akkadian as voiceless stops. In relatively later loan words, the same Sumerian voiced stops are reflected as voiced stops. Needless to say, not enough is known about the phonetics of either Sumerian or Akkadian to explain exactly what has happened. However, such differences are one way that the entry of loan words into another language can be dated relative to each other.

#### – Conjugation-prefixes

In the model of the Sumerian prefix chain used throughout this book, the use of the conjugation-prefix is obligatory; a conjugation-prefix is present in every finite verbal form. Therefore, in line II: 1 of Text 15, it is assumed that a conjugation-prefix i has assimilated into the modal-prefix hé. Similarly, in Text 22, this view assumes the presence of a conjugation-prefix i after the cohortative modal-prefix ga, although the verb form in Text 22 is written ga-an-ti-il.

Although both the desiderative modal-prefix hé and the cohortative modal-prefix ga are frequently followed by such conjugation-prefixes as mu and ba, there appear to be no instances of writings of the type \*hé-i or \*ga-i. If the i is in fact present, one might expect to find at least a few occurrences of it being written (to judge by similar phenomena in the script). However, none apparently occur. This means that the assumption that the attested spellings all represent assimilation may not, in fact, be correct.

Jacobsen, for example, believes that the conjugation-prefix i is “incompatible” with the cohortative modal-prefix ga. That is, the semantic information conveyed by i does not permit it to co-occur with ga. This may mean that at times the modal-prefix ga is followed by no conjugation-prefix. The up-shot is that not every finite verbal form contains a conjugation-prefix.

This problem cannot be resolved here. However, it should be kept in mind that the general principle stated in this book – that conjugation-prefixes are obligatory – may need modification, particularly in the case of certain modal-prefixes.

### -Pronominal-prefixes

The use of pronominal-prefixes before certain dimensional-prefixes is not uncommon. In the singular, the basic forms of these prefixes appear to be:

first person singular	.Ø
second	.e
third animate	.n
inanimate	.b

The form of the first person singular was probably not simply .Ø. Some irregular writings have led scholars to speculate that the first person singular marker had either a vocalic component (perhaps /e/, similar to that of the second person), or a consonantal component (perhaps a semi-vowel or glottal consonant). The forms of the plural are much less clear.

If more than one dimensional-prefix occurs in a verbal prefix-chain, it appears that only the first dimensional-prefix can have an optional pronominal-prefix.

An older view of these pronominal-prefixes was that they were obligatory, and that their relative infrequency in texts is due to vagaries of orthography. In this view, for example, every .da dimensional-prefix which cross-references a third person should be understood as: (n.)da. Thus, the verb form in Text 12, nam-ha-ba-da-kur5-e, should be understood as: nam.hé.ba.(n.)da.kur.e.Ø, instead of: nam.hé.ba.da.kur.e.Ø. However, this view is not as widely accepted today, because the actual number of cases where an .n or .b appears before an appropriate dimensional-prefix is much less than the number of cases where they do not appear.

### -Dimensional-prefixes

In line 2, the verb kúr was used with the dimensional-prefix -da, although the sentence contains no nominal phrase in the comitative case. In some cases, verbs have become lexicalized with certain dimensional-prefixes; that is, the verb will frequently (sometimes always) have a certain dimensional-prefix, even if no corresponding nominal phrase occurs.

Occasionally a noun phrase will be marked with a certain case-ending, but the dimensional-prefix used in the corresponding verbal phrase will be different than expected. For example, a nominal phrase in -šè (the terminative) may be resumed by the dimensional-prefix normally used for the locative (-ni-). In some cases, this may have happened because of a historical change in the rection of a noun phrase. That is, at one time a noun phrase may have been marked by one particular case, but in time the case which was used changed. However, the dimensional-prefix, being more closely bound, did not change. This can lead to such cases as a terminative being cross-referenced by a locative. In the case of kúr, for example, its complement may originally have been in the comitative case (or perhaps the ablative case), but it eventually shifted to the absolute case. However, it carried along its dimensional-prefix, resulting in such cases as line II: 2, where the verbal prefix-chain has both a dimensional-prefix and a personal-affix, yet there is only one nominal

phrase for both of them to govern.

Similarly, the rection of the first element of a compound verb may change. In earlier texts, it may be in one of the adverbial cases; in later texts, it may be construed as a patient. Sometimes this change may be due to Akkadian influence. Unfortunately, there is rarely enough data to prove such hypotheses for any particular verb.

The analysis of II: 1-2 presented here is not the only one possible. II: 1 was explained as the patient of the verb, and the da in the verbal prefix chain as a frozen use of the comitative dimensional-prefix. However, it is known that the verb kúr sometimes takes its complement in the ablative case. Therefore, it has been proposed to understand line 1 as: ki.gub.a.bi.(ta), with the ablative case-marker not expressed in writing. The dimensional-prefix which cross-references the ablative is /ta/, normally written ta. Therefore, the verb form in line 2 would have to be understood as: i.b.ta.b.kur.e.Ø.a. The fact that the text clearly shows a da-sign, and not a ta-sign, would seem to mitigate against such an interpretation. However, other cases of the ablative dimensional-prefix appearing on the surface as da instead of ta are known; the reasons why are unclear. In our particular text, there could have been assimilation of voice: /bta/ > /bda/. However, other such cases of an apparent da for ta are less amenable to phonetic explanations of this sort.

#### –Enclitic copula

The fact that the first and second persons of the enclitic copula occur both as -me and -me-en admits of several possible interpretations. The problem may have been orthographic: word and syllable-final nasals often seem not to be written in Sumerian (cf. mu-na-dù for mu.na.(n.)du). It may reflect the phonetic process of Sumerian dropping word-final nasals; in this case, the forms written with -en are to be regarded simply as morphographemic or archaic writings. It has also been posited that the writings -me and -me-en represent one pronunciation, /mē/. The original word-final nasal was lost, producing a nasalized vowel, which the script could not well represent.

#### – Proper names

Votive objects of all kinds were often given names. This has been studied by Gelb, who points out that such names are often complicated sentences in their own right. For example, a statue of Gudea dedicated to Ningirsu was given the name (Gelb's translation): "Ningirsu,-the-king(=god)-whose-heavy-might-the-world-cannot-bear,-has-decided-good-destiny-for-Gudea,-who-built-this-temple" (1956:66).

#### – History

In addition to the copy of the text reproduced above, a late, Neo-Babylonian copy from the seventh century BC is also preserved. It was inscribed on what was apparently a model pedestal. This copy is interesting because of the presence of several errors in the Sumerian. Also, it has a colophon written in Akkadian, which seems to say that the model was to be used in an "exhibition" (tāmartu) of some kind. The page following is a photograph of two sides of this Neo-Babylonian version of the inscription.

The following quotation from Woolley describes this object, and also says something

about the tenor of the times which produced it:

A little way apart lay a small drum-shaped clay object on which were four columns of writing; the first three columns were in the old Sumerian language, and the contents of one at least were familiar to us, for we had found it on bricks of Amar-Sin, king of Ur 2046-2038 B.C., and the other two were fairly similar; the fourth column was in the late Semitic speech. "These", it said, "are copies from bricks found in the ruins of Ur, the work of Amar-Sin king of Ur, which while searching for the ground-plan [of the temple] the Governor of Ur found, and I saw and wrote out for the marvel of beholders". The scribe, alas!, was not so learned as he wished to appear, for his copies are so full of blunders as to be almost unintelligible, but he had doubtless done his best, and he certainly had given us the explanation we wanted. The room was a museum of local antiquities maintained by the princess Ennigaldi-Nanna (who in this took after her father, a keen antiquarian), and in the collection was this clay drum, the earliest museum label known, drawn up a hundred years before and kept, presumably together with the original bricks, as a record of the first scientific excavations at Ur. ... We shall see further examples of the archaeological spirit that prevailed in the latter days of Babylon, but undoubtedly it was reinforced by a pathetic superstition that looked back across the uncounted ages to the fabulous beginnings of things when men and gods were scarcely to be distinguished and "there were giants in the land in those days" (1982:252, 231).



1 2



# Lesson 16

This is another door socket of Amar-Sin.

## Sign-list and vocabulary

 lāl honey

 i oil, fat

 i-nun prince, noble

  i-nun butter

 geštin vine, wine

  siskur<sub>2</sub> sacrifice

 šilīg to cease

 u and

 nu not

 ge

## Notes

**lāl** It is thought that the bee is native to Syria, but not to Mesopotamia. So lāl (and its Akkadian equivalent dišpu) may be a Syrian import. It has also been speculated that lāl and dišpu were actually a kind of syrup made from fruits.

**i-nun** Literally, “oil of the prince”. Some scholars interpret this as “butter”, others as “ghee” (that is, clarified butter). The latest discussion (K. Butz, 1973-74:37) interprets it as “Butterschmalz” (“butterfat”). The Akkadian equivalent of i-nun is himētu; this is translated by the CAD as “ghee”.

On the surface, i-nun would appear to be a noun-noun compound, of the type discussed in Lesson 9. However, there are spellings in other texts which show that this is a genitive phrase, “oil of the prince”, i.nun.a(k). For example, in Gudea this expression is written both i-nun and i-nun-na. The term i-dùg-nun-na, = i.dug.nun.a(k), “good oil of the prince”, also occurs, but it is not sure what this means.

In older works, the word for “oil, fat” is transliterated as iā, instead of i.

**geštin** The word for “wine” also appears as tin. geštin, therefore, may originally have

meant “wine-tree, vine, grape”, etc.; the meaning then became extended to “wine”. The Akkadian equivalent, karānu, is glossed by the CAD as: “1. wine, 2. grapewine, 3. grapes”.

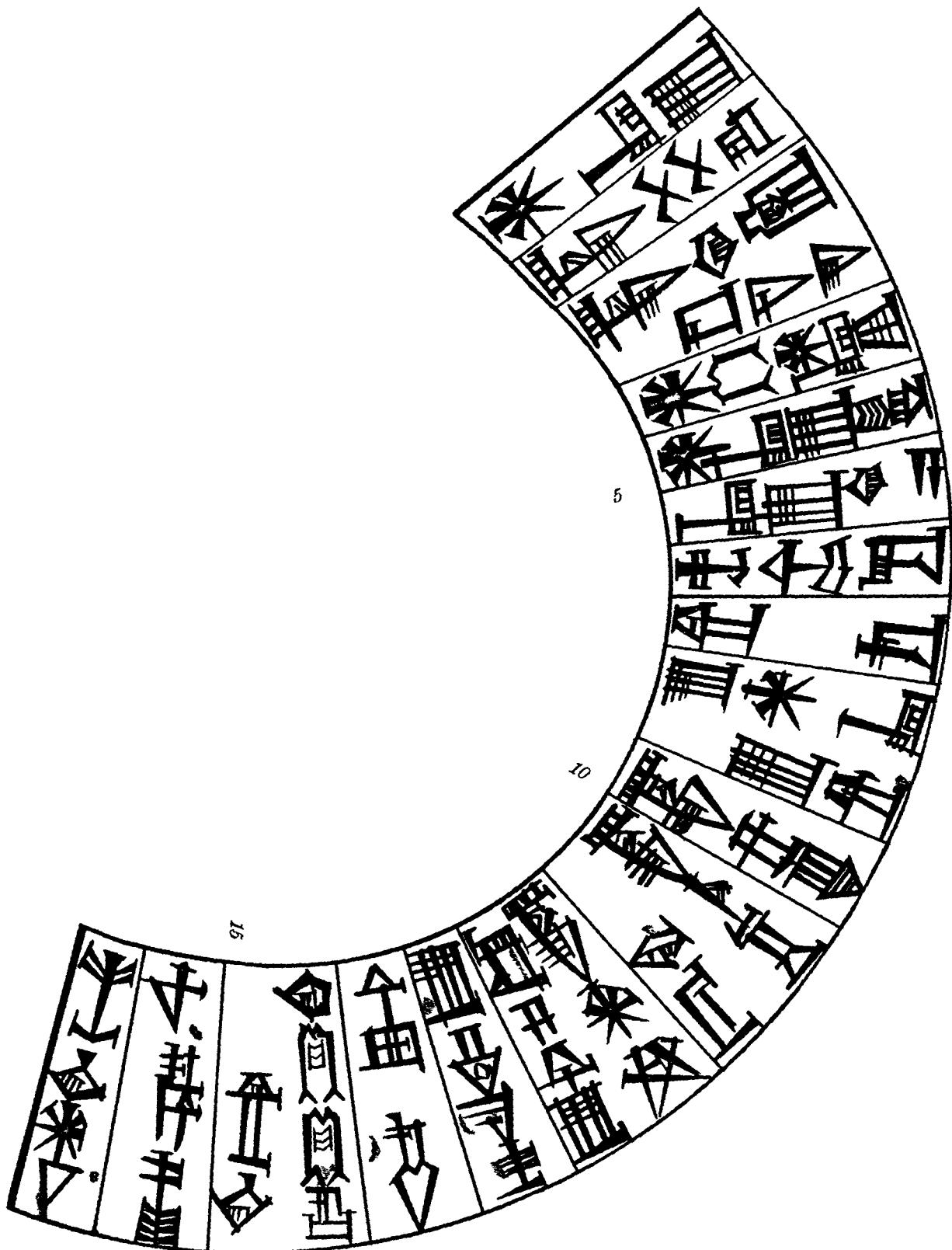
**siskur<sub>2</sub>** This word is normally written just as it appears here, by graphic reduplication of one sign. This sign appears to be the amar-sign inside of which is the barley-sign, še. Thus, the original, pictorial significance of the sign may have been “grain-fed cattle”, or something similar.

Sometimes the word /siskur/ is written with only one, instead of two, signs. In this case it is transliterated as siskur. Earlier Sumerologists thought that the writing with one sign was a singular, and the writing with two signs was a plural; this means that the writing with two signs was sometimes transliterated as siskur-siskur. The word is further discussed in Lesson 19.

The pronunciation of the sibilants is unsure, and so it is also transliterated as siskur<sub>2</sub>, sizkur<sub>2</sub>, šiskur<sub>2</sub>, etc.

**šilīg** Or, siliq. This root is very uncommon in verbal forms; it is mostly used in participial or infinitival constructions.

# Text 16



	Transliteration	Transcription
1:	<u>d</u> <u>En-líl</u>	Enlil
2:	<u>lugal-kur-kur-ra</u>	lugal.kur.kur.a(k)
3:	<u>lugal-ki-áğ-ğá-ni-ir</u>	lugal.ki.ağ.a.an.i.r
4:	<u>d</u> <u>Amar-d</u> <u>Zuen</u>	Amarzuen
5:	<u>d</u> <u>En-líl-le</u>	Enlil.e
6:	<u>Nibru</u> <sup>ki</sup> <u>-a</u>	Nibru.a
7:	<u>mu-pàd-da</u>	mu.pad.a
8:	<u>sağ-ús</u>	sağus
9:	<u>é-d</u> <u>En-líl-ka</u>	e.Enlil.(a)k.a(k)
10:	<u>ugal-kalag-ga</u>	ugal.kalaga
11:	<u>ugal-Urim</u> <sup>ki</sup> <u>-ma</u>	ugal.Urim.a(k)
12:	<u>ugal-an-ub-da-limmu₂-ba-ke₄</u>	ugal.anub.da.(k) limmu.bi.ak.e
13:	<u>é lál i-nun</u>	e lal inun
14:	<u>ù ğeštin</u>	u ğeštin
15:	<u>ki-siskur₂-ra-ka-na</u>	ki.siskur.ak.an.i.a
16:	<u>nu-šilig-ge</u>	nu.şilig.e(d).Ø.Ø
17:	<u>mu-na-an-dù</u>	mu.na.n.du.Ø
	Translation	
1:	For Enlil,	
2:	king of the lands,	
3:	his beloved king –	
4:	Amar-Sin,	
5:	proposed by Enlil in Nippur,	
8:	patron of the temple of Enlil,	
10:	the mighty king,	
11:	the king of Ur,	
12:	the king of the four quarters –	
17:	built –	
13:	the temple (where) honey, butter	
14:	and wine	
15:	in his place of sacrifice	

16: shall not cease.

### Commentary

12. The .e marks the agent, which spans lines 4 through 12.

13-16. These lines are the direct object (patient) of the verb in line 17; they are marked as such by the final .Ø at the end of line 16.

é means “temple”; the rest of the text is apparently a relative clause modifying é. Up to this point, all the relative clauses which have occurred have been verbal sentences. Here, however, the relative clause is a nominal, equational sentence: “honey, butter and wine in his place of sacrifice are a non-ceasing thing”. The syntax of nominal relative clauses is little understood. They consist of a nominal element as subject and a nominal element as predicate; the enclitic copula is not used. Unlike the case with verbal relative clauses, no nominalizer is used. Also, no relative marker is used. This entire equational sentence is in apposition to the noun é.

Although Sumerian does not use any relative marker, English needs a relative adverb of some kind, such as “where”.

14. Sumerian does not normally use any conjunction between nouns; instead, it prefers to conjoin them directly. However, Sumerian also has an option of using the conjunction ù between nouns or nominal phrases (rarely between verbs). Here, it is used between the second and third nouns of a list: “honey, butter and wine”.

ù is not a native Sumerian word; it is borrowed from Akkadian. It is not common for languages to borrow such syntactic devices as conjunctions. This is an indication of the Sumerian language giving up some ground before the onslaught of Akkadian. ù turns up as early as the Tell Abu Salabikh tablets (2600 BC). According to the editor of these tablets, Robert Biggs, “even at this early date Sumerian may have been under a heavy Semitic influence” (1974:32). (Post Ur III texts also occasionally use the Akkadian conjunction -ma.)

15. The final .a is the locative case-marker. It is not resumed by any dimensional-prefix.

16. nu is the general, all-purpose negative marker in Sumerian. It can appear before verbal forms and before nominal forms.

When used with verbal forms, nu falls into the category of modal-prefix. Thus, it never co-occurs with any other modal-prefix. It is followed instead by a conjugation-prefix. (The conjugation-prefix i often assimilates into the /u/ of nu.)

Šilig is apparently an active participle from the verbal root “to cease”.

.ed is an element not seen before. It is one of the most puzzling of all Sumerian morphemes. It normally follows marû-forms of the verb; its use with hamtu-forms is very rare. It is also used with both active and passive participles. With active participles, it occurs as: du.ed.Ø. With passive participles (much rarer), it occurs as: du.ed.a. The form in Text 16 is: Šilig.ed.Ø.

The meaning of .ed has been much discussed. It must have something to do with the “future”, although the exact nuance being conveyed is unsure. In its very rare occurrences with the hamtu, it appears to have a future-perfect sense. According to Jeremy Black,

Its reference seems to be to future events, although its use in descriptive

passages suggests a connotation of vividness. More important, it marks an action as *not yet begun at the moment of observation* (which can be a moment in the past) (1984:118).

According to Jacobsen, .ed is the

mark of pre-actional aspect indicating prospectiveness of the action as present at the point in time the speaker has in mind. Attention is thus not on the action as future but on its prospectiveness as present (1965:267).

Because /d/ is an amissable consonant, it often does not show up in the script. This can make it very difficult to recognize.

Line 16 forms the predicate of the nominal relative sentence. This predicate is a nominal form: “something which will not cease in the future”, Šilige.ed.Ø. Thus, the first Ø in transcription marks Šilige.ed as an active participle. The second Ø marks the entire complex as the patient of the verb in line 17.

At first glance, it might seem possible to interpret nu-šilige as a verbal, not a nominal form. However, this analysis would seem to be precluded, because of the lack of a final -a in line 16. If it were a verbal form, it would need to be nominalized in -a to serve as a relative clause.

17. mu-na-an-dù = mu.na.n.du. This is the first time in this body of texts where the animate personal-affix .n, cross-referencing the agent in the hamtu, appears explicitly in the script.

There is no dimensional-prefix cross-referencing the locative nominal phrase in line 15.

#### Discussion: structure

The structure of this text is:

[Enlil, lugal.kur.kur.a(k), lugal.ki.ağā.a.anı].r	benefactive
[Amarzuen, Enlil.e Nibru.a mu.pad.a,	agent
sağus.e.Enlil.(a)k.a(k), lugal.kalaga,	
lugal.Urim.a(k),	
lugal.anub.da.(k)limmu.bi.ak].e	
[e lal inun u ğeštin ki.siskur.ak.anı.a	patient
nu.Şilige.e(d).Ø].Ø	
mu.na.n.du.Ø	verb

Relative clauses consisting of a nominal sentence, such as lines 13-16, are not common in Sumerian, and so there is some question about the analysis. It is possible that these lines should be understood as the name of the temple: “Amar-Sin built a temple (whose name is) ‘honey, butter and wine in his place of sacrifice shall not cease’”. In such constructions, Sumerian does not always use the word for “name” (mu); instead, it conjoins the name directly, as an appositive. An example occurs in Text 19: bàd-Mar-tu Mu-ri-iq-Ti-id-ni-im, “the Martu-wall (whose name is) Muriq-Tidnim”.

## – .ed

There is no standard term used to refer to .ed. It can appear both on finite verbal forms, and on nominal forms derived from verbal roots. On finite verbal forms, it occurs with both marû-roots and hamtu-roots (although there has been much argument about this). It seems to occur with both transitive and intransitive-passive forms. On nominal forms, it occurs on the “infinitive”, the active participle, and the passive participle.

Because the /d/ is amissable, and because the /e/ can assimilate into other vowels, it is not always easy to determine even if it is present or not. The assumed /d/ does not show up in Text 16, and it is therefore also possible that some other interpretation of line 16 is to be preferred. In spite of several recent attempts to unlock its morphology and syntax (the most recent is that of Gerd Steiner [1980]), it remains elusive.

## – Participles

The traditional view of Sumerian is that it has two participles, an active and a passive-intransitive (Poebel used the terms nomen agentis and nomen actionis). The active ends in .Ø, and the passive-intransitive in .a. Each participle can also appear with the element .ed. This yields four possibilities:

X.Ø	X.a
X.ed.Ø	X.ed.a

However, a fair number of exceptions seem to occur. There are cases of participles in .Ø which seem to have a passive meaning, and participles in .a which seem to have an active meaning. For example, the form in Text 16 is šilige, presumably for šilige.ed.Ø. Here it is being used intransitively, and therefore one might have expected a participle in .a. The situation was undoubtedly more complex than the above table would indicate. Most discussion of non-verbal forms in Sumerian has applied Indo-European or Semitic grammatical categories and terms to the Sumerian forms.

The most recent, full-scale, study of the participles is that of I.T. Kaneva (1970). She analyzes the forms differently:

X.Ø	“transitive participle of the imperfect aspect”
X.a	“transitive participle of the perfective aspect”
X.a	“intransitive participle”

However, she does not apparently recognize the existence of reduced relative clauses, whose existence complicates the picture.

## – Personal-affixes

This text marks the first time that the personal-affix .n cross-referencing the hamtu-agent appears in the writing in the body of texts studied here. As discussed in Lesson 14, this is part of the on-going process of the Sumerian writing system becoming more and more explicit.

### –Conjunctions

The native Sumerian conjunction meaning “and”, linking nouns and nominal phrases, is -bi-da, suffixed to the second noun: an-ki-bi-da, “heaven and earth”. It is thought that bi here is the possessive-suffix, and da is the comitative case-marker. Thus, this originally meant “the heavens along with its earth”.

Sumerian also has a conjunction meaning “and”, linking verbs: -in-ga, occurring on the last verb of a series of two or more, in the position after the modal-prefixes but before the conjugation-prefixes. No examples seem to occur in the Ur III royal inscriptions. A late example is: ... zá-e in-ga-e-zu, “you also know”, for: inga.i.e.zu. Because in-ga is used so infrequently, it may have had some emphatic value, instead of straight co-ordination.

### – History

This door socket (along with another, having a different inscription) was found in what has been described as the “small shrine” in Nippur, part of a large temple complex dedicated to Enlil. The door socket bears traces of an inscription of Lugal-kiginne-dudu, who ruled in Uruk approximately 2400 BC (that is, some three hundred years before Amar-Sin); this early inscription was also dedicated to Enlil. Thus, Amar-Sin’s builders did not fashion a new door socket – rather, they engraved their inscription upon this already-extant door socket, which presumably they had uncovered in their work of rebuilding the Enlil temple.

### –Literary parallels

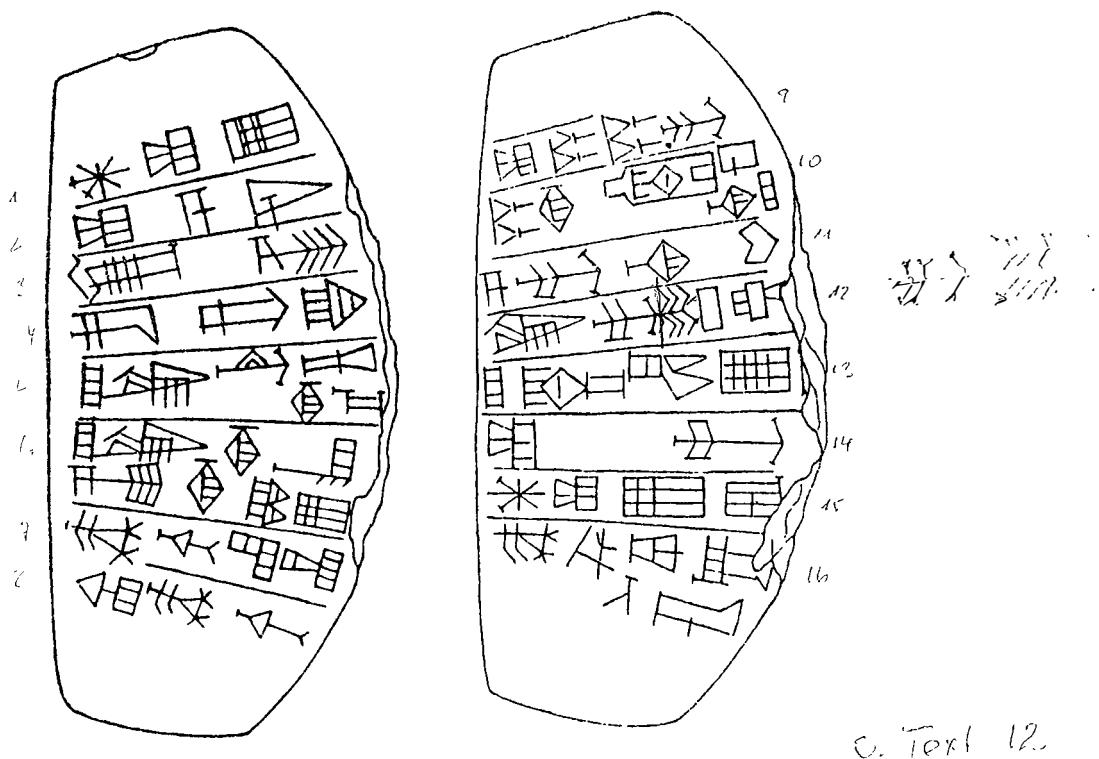
The combination “honey, butter and wine” occurs in other Sumerian texts. Sometimes the three elements are listed in the same order as in this inscription; sometimes the order varies. For example, in a literary text entitled “Nanna-Sin’s Journey to Nippur”, there occurs: “May Nanna-Sin make butter, honey, and wine (l-nun l-l ñeštin) abundant”; this particular line is repeated verbatim five times.

The expression l-nun has recently been found in one of the Sumerian-Eblaite vocabulary lists. Unfortunately, only the Sumerian for this particular expression is given, not its Eblaite equivalent. One of the other entries in this vocabulary list, however, is for “good oil”. The Sumerian column is l-dùg; the Eblaite equivalent is sa-ma-nu ta-bù.

## Text 16a

supplementary

This inscription was engraved on a small bead of agate, used as a votive object. Because of its small size and somewhat irregular surface, the signs are less than elegant. No photograph is available.



## Notes

 re<sub>6</sub>

## Commentary

8. ù serves as a conjunction between two nominal phrases.
9. Nin-tur-dumu-ğu<sub>10</sub>. This appears to be a personal name, although there do not seem to be any parallels to such a formation (“Nintur is my child”?).
10. Both here and in line 7, the nominal phrases are marked by the terminative case-marker -ṣe.
16. It may be useful to compare the different forms of the standard curse-formula which have occurred:

Text 12	<u>nam-ha-ba-da-kur</u> <sub>5</sub> -e
16a	<u>nam-ha-ba-da-kur</u> <sub>5</sub> <u>re</u> <sub>6</sub>
15	<u>nam-ha-ba-an-da-kur</u> <sub>5</sub> -ne (plural)

The difference between Text 12 and Text 16a is in the orthography of the marū-suffix. In Text 12, a morphemic spelling is used. In Text 16a, the spelling follows the more usual rules of Sumerian orthography.

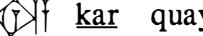
## Lesson 17

This is a large door socket of Amar-Sin.



## Sign-list and vocabulary

 Kar-zid-da Karzida (GN)

 kar quay, pier; market-place

 utu sun

 kalam land

 gi<sub>6</sub>-pär gipāru (part of temple complex)

 en priest, priestess

 zid (zi) effective, true

 ul remote, distant

 kug (kü) bright, pure, holy

 kur<sub>9</sub> (ku<sub>4</sub>) to enter

 sud<sub>4</sub> (su<sub>13</sub>) to be long

 li

 ta

 un

 ab

### Notes

**Kar-zid-da** The name means “the effective quay”, kar.zid.a. Karzida was apparently a quay at Gaesh (written Ga-eš<sub>ki</sub> and Ga-eš<sub>5 ki</sub>). The latter was close to Ur, and evidently had some kind of cultic connection with it; it had its own Nanna-temple. Neither the site of Karzida nor of Gaesh has been identified.

**kalam** This word is apparently only used to refer to Sumer itself. It only occurs in the singular, and is especially common with a possessive-suffix. The original pictographic value of the sign is unknown. This word is further discussed in Lesson 19.

**gi<sub>6</sub>-pär** This was a section of the temple complex; it was where the en-priest or en-

priestess lived. It was borrowed into Akkadian as gipāru. It is discussed further below.

**en** Besides its use in political contexts (where the conventional translation is “lord”), en can also be used to refer to a specific kind of priest or priestess.

**zid** It is difficult to pin down a precise meaning for zid; it can mean something like “someone (or something) that does what he/it should be doing”. The Akkadian equivalent is kīnu, glossed by the CAD as: “1. true, reliable, just, 2. honest, decent, loyal, 3. correct, normal, regular, sound, legitimate”.

**ul** This sometimes appears as ul, as in, for instance, uru-ul, “the primeval city”. However, sometimes an /i/ follows, resulting in graphic reduplication: ul-li. And sometimes ul or ul-li is followed by /a/, presumably the same nominalizer seen in such adjectives as kalag-ga. In Text 17, it is written: ul-li-a.

It is probably related to ul meaning “bud” of a flower.

**kur<sub>9</sub>** In older works, usually transliterated as tu; some modern-day Sumerologists still prefer this reading.

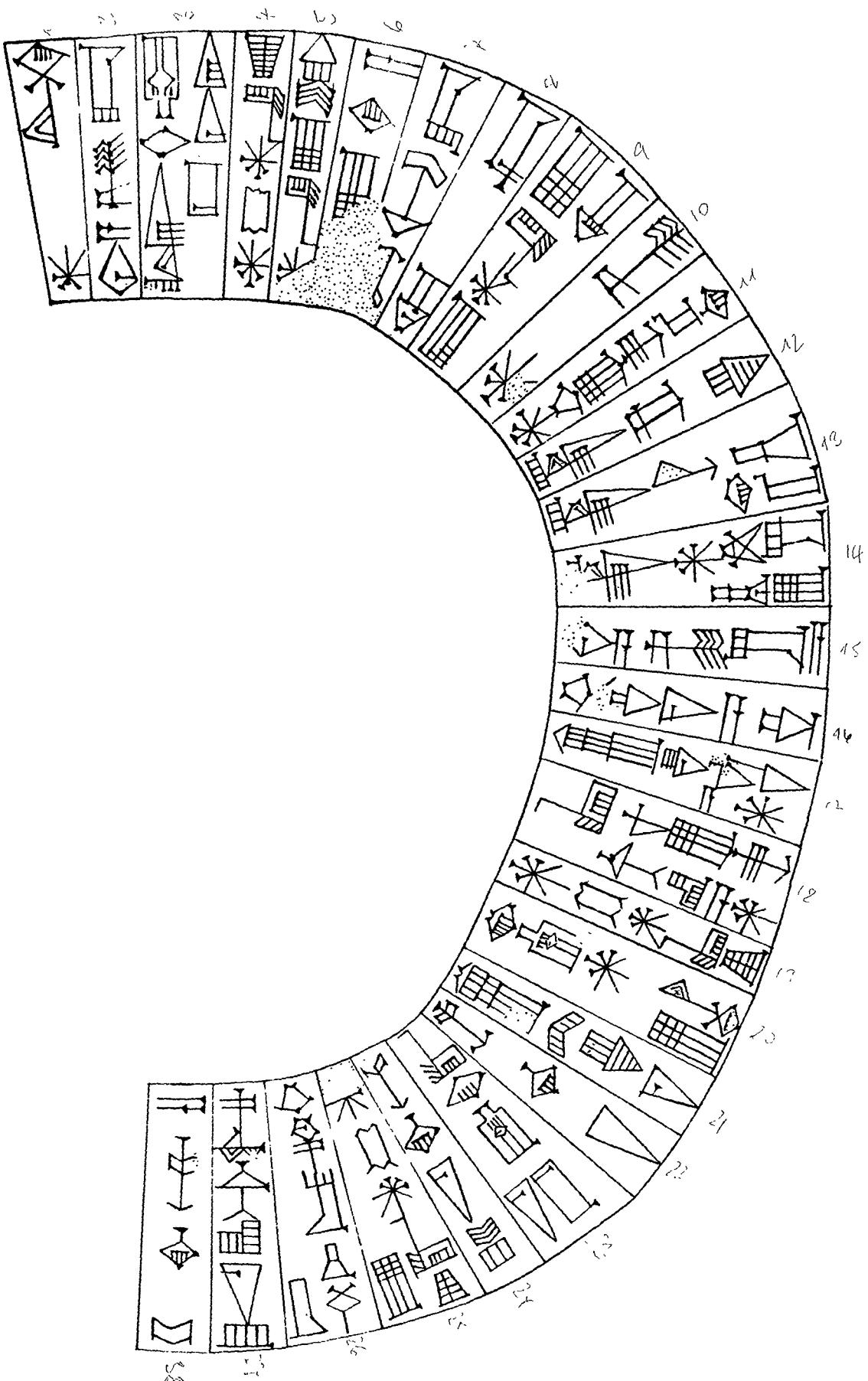
**sud<sub>4</sub>** The verbal root meaning “to be long” can be written in two different ways in Sumerian. The most common writing is:  , read as sud (or sù). However, it can also be written (as in Text 17) as:  . Older works tended to understand this last sign as gid, but most scholars now read it as sud<sub>4</sub> (or su<sub>13</sub>).

It can be seen that the sud<sub>4</sub>-sign is basically just a non-günified version of the sud-sign. In general, it is always possible to use a non-günified sign in place of a gunüified sign. For example, the gi-sign is frequently found in place of an expected gi<sub>4</sub>. In Lesson 1, it was mentioned that the name of the city of Ur is usually spelled Šeš-ab, but also Šeš-unug. It is possible that the unug-sign is a gunüified ab-sign.

This is why  is now read sud<sub>4</sub> instead of gid. At one time, it was thought that /gid/ and /sud/ were two different roots for “to be long”, but now it is assumed that they are just variant writings of the same root /sud/.

The final consonant of the root was probably the /dr/-phoneme discussed in Text 12. In Text 17 it is followed by the re<sub>6</sub>-sign (with its initial /r/).

## Text 17



## Notes

11,18. In this text, the kalam-sign and the un-sign are very similar in shape. The historical relationship between the two signs is complex. It is usually assumed that in origin they were formally distinct. In carefully executed texts, they are still distinguished through the Old Babylonian period. For example, in the Code of Hammurapi, the kalam-sign appears as:  , and the un-sign appears as:  .

However, the un-sign (more properly, úg; its value was either /uḡ/ or /uḡu/) means “people”, and there is a close semantic connection between “people” and “land”. This might mean that the signs were not formally distinct in origin, but perhaps became secondarily differentiated.

By the Neo-Assyrian period, the two signs fall together into one sign. There are several Neo-Assyrian signs which represent the conflation of two or more signs which in origin were different signs. For example, the Neo-Assyrian ku-sign is a continuation of several different box-shaped signs, which have all fallen together in shape.

17. The nu-sign is poorly drawn; a better drawn version appears in line 18. There appears to be an extra horizontal stroke, running into the top of the dù-sign.

Transliteration	Transcription
1: <u>d_Nanna</u>	Nanna
2: <u>Kar-zid-da</u>	Karzida.(k)
3: <u>lugal-ki-áḡ-ḡá-ni-ir</u>	lugal.ki.aḡa.a.an.i.r
4: <u>d_Amar-d_Zuen</u>	Amarzuen
5: <u>d_En-lil-le</u>	Enlil.e
6: <u>Nibru<sup>ki</sup>-a</u>	Nibru.a
7: <u>mu-pàd-da</u>	mu.pad.a
8: <u>saḡ-ús</u>	saḡus
9: <u>é-d_En-lil-ka</u>	e.Enlil.(a)k.a(k)
10: <u>diḡir-zid</u>	diḡir.zid
11: <u>d_Utu-kalam-ma-na</u>	Utu.kalam.an.i.a(k)
12: <u>lugal-kalag-ga</u>	lugal.kalaga
13: <u>lugal-Urim<sup>ki</sup>-ma</u>	lugal.Urim.a(k)
14: <u>lugal-an-ub-da-limmu₂ba-ke₄</u>	lugal.anub.da.(k) limmu.bi.ak.e
15: <u>Kar-zid-da-a</u>	Karzida.a
16: <u>ud-ul-li-a-ta</u>	ud.ul.i.a.ta
17: <u>ḡi₆-pàr-bi nu-dù-àm</u>	ḡipar.bi.Ø nu.(i.)du.Ø.a.àm
18: <u>en nu-un-til-la-àm</u>	en.Ø nu.(i.)n.til.Ø.a.àm

19:	<u>d_Amar-d_Zuen</u>	Amarzuen
20:	<u>ki-aḡa</u> <sub>2</sub> - <u>d_Nanna-ke</u> <sub>4</sub>	ki.aḡa.a.Nanna.k.e
21:	<u>ḡi</u> <sub>6</sub> - <u>pār-kug-ga-ni</u>	ḡipar.kug.ani.Ø
22:	<u>mu-na-dù</u>	mu.na.(n.)du.Ø
23:	<u>en-ki-áḡ-ḡá-ni</u>	en.ki.aḡa.a.an.i.Ø
24:	<u>mu-na-ni-kur</u> <sub>9</sub>	mu.na.ni.(n.)kur.Ø
25:	<u>d_Amar-d_Zuen-ke</u> <sub>4</sub>	Amarzuen.(a)k.e
26:	<u>ud im-da-ab-sud</u> <sub>4</sub> - <u>re</u> <sub>6</sub>	ud.Ø i.b.da.b.sud.e.Ø
27:	<u>nam-tīl-la-ni-šē</u>	nam.til.an.i.šē
28:	<u>a-mu-na-ru</u>	a.mu.na.(n.)ru

### Translation

- 1: For Nanna  
 2: of Karzida,  
 3: his beloved king –  
 4: Amar-Sin,  
 5-7: proposed by Enlil in Nippur,  
 8-9: patron of the temple of Enlil,  
 10: the effective god,  
 11: the sun-god of his land,  
 12: the mighty king,  
 13: the king of Ur,  
 14: the king of the four quarters –  
 15: in Karzida –  
 16: from of old –  
 17: – its gipāru not yet having been built –  
 18: – and no en having taken up residence in it –  
 19: Amar-Sin,  
 20: the beloved of Nanna –  
 22: built  
 21: his pure gipāru.  
 23-24: He made his beloved en-priestess enter it.  
 25-26: Amar-Sin will prolong (its) days.  
 27: For the sake of his long life

28: he made a votive offering.

### Commentary

1-2. Presumably this is a genitive phrase. A parallel construction occurred in Text 12: d-Bil-ga-mèš En-dím-gig-ki lugal-a-ni, “for Gilgamesh of Endimgig, his king”.

10-11. These two epithets did not occur in the previous inscriptions of Amar-Sin. Amar-Sin is not just content with the use of the divine determinative before his name; he must also refer to himself as “effective god” and as “sun-god of his land”. (Shulgi is also referred to as dīgir kalam-ma-na.)

14. The .e at the end is the ergative case-marker.

15. The writing in -a is ambiguous. The original editor of this inscription interpreted it as an anticipatory genitive: “of Karzida, its gipāru” > “the gipāru of Karzida”. However, it may also represent a locative case-marker: “in Karzida”. The .n in line 18 below would seem to favor this latter interpretation.

16. Literally, “from a distant day”, that is, something like “from of old”, “since time primeval”. ta is the marker of the “ablative” case. This case can usually be translated as “from”, e.g., lugal-ta, “from the king”. It is very common in the formation of adverbial phrases.

The ablative is usually cross-referenced in the verbal prefix chain by the ablative dimensional-prefix ta. However, in formulaic adverbial constructions such as this one, it is not normally cross-referenced.

This particular expression is not uncommon. Outside of Ur III, for example, it occurs in a Gudea inscription: ud-ul-li-a-ta numun-è-a-ta, “from of old, from when seed (first) came forth” (è, “to go out”, Akkadian waṣū). ud-ul is also used in the formation of other adverbial phrases, e.g., ud-ul-la-ṣè = ud.ul.a.ṣè, “for a long time”, “forever”.

17. All the verb forms seen up to this point have been in what we would call in English the “active voice”. There has been a long discussion about whether or not Sumerian has a “passive voice”. Some Sumerologists say that Sumerian has no passive voice. Others say that Sumerian is basically passival in nature.

To some degree this is a question of linguistic theory, and not of Sumerian. It is a question of the definition and nature of active and passive, of the contrast between passive and intransitive, and of the way such distinctions are marked in the morphology and in the syntax. The problem is exacerbated by a tendency in the past to transfer categories found in Indo-European or Semitic to Sumerian.

Some linguists would say, for instance, that the contrast active ~ passive does not exist in ergative languages. Karl Oberhuber, for example, in his examination of the Sumerian passive, has said that: “Ein eigentliches ‘Passivum’ ist dem Sumerischen als einer Ergativesprache von Haus aus Fremd” (1982:133). Earlier, Diakonoff said that ergative languages “have no grammatical direct object, from which follows that (1) no Accusative can exist; (2) no Passive and Active voice can exist” (1965:18). However, Sumerian is only split ergative; this means that such theoretical constraints may not apply equally to the marû and to the hamtu (although not everyone agrees about the degree to which Sumerian

is split-ergative).

The question also hinges on the nature of the Sumerian verbal root. Most Sumerologists now say that the Sumerian root is unmarked for voice or transitivity; that is, dù can be active or passive, transitive or intransitive. These categories are not marked at all in the root; rather, they are determined by the syntax and semantics of the entire sentence within which they occur. The parallel has been made with English sentences of the type “he is cooking”. This sentence, on the surface, can either mean “the man is cooking-up”, because of the temperature, or “the man is cooking some food”.

In any case, it seems that the two constructions which are differentiated in English as “intransitive” and “passive” are expressed by one construction in Sumerian. (This is one reason why some Sumerologists say that Sumerian has no passive.) Therefore, some Sumerologists use the compound term “intransitive-passive” (or “passive-intransitive”) to refer to both constructions. Other Sumerologists use the terms “passive” or “intransitive”, based on how the corresponding construction in English (or German) comes out.

The difference between transitive and intransitive verbs can be illustrated using dù, “to build”, and giñ, “to go”. In the hamtu, these are:

- (1) The king went.  
lugal.Ø i.giñ.Ø
- (2) The king built the house.  
lugal.e e.Ø mu.n.du.Ø

In the intransitive sentence, the subject of the intransitive verb (the patient) is marked by .Ø. This is cross-referenced by the .Ø at the end of the verb. To express “the house was built”, which in English would be called a passive, Sumerian uses a construction identical with sentence (1):

- (3) The house was built.  
e.Ø i.du.Ø

The .Ø case-marker of the subject of the passive verb is cross-referenced by the .Ø at the end of the verb.

Sentence (3) is essentially the construction seen in line 17, although with the negative:

- (4) giñpar.bi.Ø nu.(i.)du.Ø

nu is the same negative marker seen in Text 16. There, it occurred before a nominal form (an active participle). Here it occurs before a verbal form. As stated in Lesson 16, nu fits into the category of modal-prefix. As such, it is regularly followed by one of the conjugation-prefixes. Here the conjugation-prefix (.i) has assimilated into the /u/ of nu.

The enclitic copula has occurred several times, e.g., in the PN d<sub>Ba</sub>-ba<sub>6</sub>-nin-àm, “Baba is queen”. In addition to being used in such equational sentences, àm can also be used to express circumstantial clauses. These can usually be translated into English as: “it being that”, “it being the case that”, or by a participial phrase in -ing. When àm is used in such a construction, it must follow a nominalized sentence. Hence the verb form is to be understood as: [nu.(i.)du.Ø].a.àm, meaning “it being the case that its gipāru had not (yet) been built”.

To sum up, àm is the enclitic copula, used here to express a circumstantial clause. .a nominalizes the preceding sentence. The underlying sentence which has been nominalized

is: *gipar.bi.Ø nu.(i).du.Ø*.

18. The syntax of lines 17 and 18 is the same: àm, following a nominalized sentence, forming a circumstantial clause. In line 18, til (intransitive in English) is construed just like the verb dù (passive in English) in line 17:

[*gipar.bi.Ø      nu.(i.)du.Ø*].a.àm  
[*en.Ø            nu.(i).n(i).til.Ø*].a.àm

The writing is slightly different: ...-dù-àm vs. ...-til-la-àm. This is presumably because dù ends in a vowel, but til in a consonant.

The verb form in line 18 differs in the presence of .n immediately before the verbal root. This .n is somewhat difficult to explain. It cannot be the personal-affix .n, because til “to live” is intransitive here: “no en-priestess had yet taken up residence” in the gipāru.

More likely, this .n is a reduced form of the dimensional-prefix which cross-references the locative case. The usual form of this dimensional-prefix is ni. However, sporadic instances of /n/ instead of /ni/ are attested; a possible case also occurs in Text 22. It has not yet been possible to determine any phonological or morphological rules governing the distribution of /ni/ and /n/. It has been speculated that it has something to do with word-stress.

Just as the comitative dimensional-prefix da often occurs in a verbal prefix chain without any corresponding comitative noun phrase for it to cross-reference, the locative dimensional-prefix ni can also occur in verbal forms, without any corresponding locative noun phrase. According to the studies of Gragg, such a use of ni often conveys a vaguely adverbial force, and it can be translated simply as “there”. It can refer loosely back to some noun mentioned earlier, even if that noun is not in a locative case. In line 18, the reference is to the gipāru, the residence of the en-priestess, even though *gipar.bi* is not in a locative phrase (and, in fact, is more closely connected syntactically with the verb form of line 17 than with the verb form of line 18).

20. The .e is the ergative case-marker. In line 14, an ergative case-marker .e already appeared. Since in general in Sumerian, case-markers appear at the end of a nominal phrase, no matter how long the phrase may be, the presence of the ergative case-marker in line 20 makes the presence of the ergative case-marker in line 14 “ungrammatical”. However, it is very easy to see how this situation arose: lines 4-14 form a logical unit, consisting of nothing but epithets of Amar-Sin. Lines 15-18 are circumstantial clauses, setting the background for Amar-Sin’s activities. Lines 19-20 are almost a parenthetical addition, a sudden shift of topic back to the agent of the sentence, repeating Amar-Sin’s name. Once these lines were “inserted”, it was only natural (and perhaps necessary?) to again add the ergative case-marker .e. In fact, some copies of this inscription also have an ergative case-marker .e at the end of line 9. The scribe may have unconsciously been influenced by the fact that lines 1-14 form a complete unit by themselves. In several royal inscriptions, the phrase lugal-an-ub-da-limmu₂-ba-ke₄ marks the end of an agentive nominal phrase. In fact, if lines 15-20 were omitted, the remaining lines 1-14, 21-22 would have formed a complete text by themselves.

21. This is the direct object (patient) of the verb in line 22, “his (Nanna’s) pure gipāru”.

22. This is the main verb governing lines 1-21. The essence of these first 22 lines is:

(1)	For Nanna	benefactive
(4)	Amar-Sin	agent
(15)	—nothing having been built—	circumstance
(19)	Amar-Sin	agent
(21)	his <u>gipāru</u>	patient
(22)	built.	verb

24. As discussed above, the verbal root in Sumerian is not marked for transitivity; that is, it can be used either transitively or intransitively, with no morphological change of the root itself. For example, gub (Text 6) can mean “to stand”, or “to plant (a garden)”. Thus, kur<sub>9</sub> can either mean “to enter”, or, as in this particular sentence, “to cause someone to enter”, “to bring in”. The sense here is of installing the en-priestess in the gipāru.

na is the dimensional-prefix which cross-references the dative, although no dative phrase occurs. It is probably a kind of ethical dative or benefactive, loosely referring back to Nanna, who is mentioned in lines 1 and 20.

ni is the full form of the dimensional-prefix cross-referencing the locative. Just as in line 18, there is no locative noun phrase for it to cross-reference. It can be translated as “there”, referring loosely back to “his pure gipāru” of line 21.

In a sequence of two (or more) dimensional-prefixes, the dative dimensional-prefix always comes first.

25. It is writings such as these which show that a personal name of the type “Amar-Sin” is indeed a genitive phrase. The writing presumably stands for amar.Zuen.ak.e. As discussed in Lesson 1, there is evidence that in certain (undetermined) conditions the .ak of personal names was lost, and so the name was transcribed as “Amarzuen”. Jacobsen, on the other hand, even in his historical and literary publications, refers to this ruler as “Amarsuenak”.

26. The four most common conjugation-prefixes in Sumerian are mu, i, ba, and bi; examples of all of them have occurred. Besides these four, there are a certain number of others, all with a /m/. The two most common are: im-ma and im-mi, with reduplicated /m/. Others are written with one /m/: i-mi and i-ma. Others occur with different initial or final vowels: àm-ma.

The relationship among these forms is unclear. It is not sure if these variations are (mostly) orthographic (im-mi ~ i-mi), mostly phonological (im-ma ~ àm-ma), or correspond to a difference in meaning. These forms will be discussed further below.

In addition to these bi-syllabic forms, a form written im also occurs; this is what is written in line 26. Some Sumerologists believe that im is a reduced form of im-ma or im-mi (although the conditions governing such reduction are unknown). However, most Sumerologists think that a form such as im-da derives phonologically from /ibda/ = i.b.da; this is the analysis followed here. In Text 17, for example, there occurs: im-da-ab-sud<sub>4</sub> - re<sub>6</sub>. Under this assumption, this would derive from: i.b.da.b.sud.e.Ø. i is the conjugation-prefix, and .b is the optional pronominal-prefix which appears before the comitative dimensional-prefix; here the reference is loosely ud, which is inanimate. The phonological change may have been along the lines of /ibda/ > /idda/ > /imda/.

This explanation of im is plausible, because it is indeed normally followed by da or ta.

If correct, then it should be understood as basically the conjugation-prefix i. There are cases, however, where im is not followed by da or ta, and where some other explanation may be necessary.

da is the comitative dimensional-prefix. It often occurs with no corresponding comitative nominal phrase. Here it loosely refers back to ud, even though the latter is actually cross-referenced as a patient.

Since the verb form is marû, the .b before the verbal root cross-references the direct object ud. The Ø after the marû-suffix cross-references the subject Amarsin.ak.e:

Amarsin.ak.e    ud.Ø    i.b.da.b.sud.e.Ø

As was just said above, the ud is directly cross-referenced by the .b before the verbal root, but it is also loosely cross-referenced by the comitative dimensional-prefix da, with its (assumed) inanimate pronominal-prefix .b.

sud<sub>4</sub> is a member of the affixation class, forming its marû by addition of the marû-suffix .e.

To summarize the verb form:

i . b . da . b . sud . e . Ø  
 (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7)

- (1) conjugation-prefix
- (2) optional pronominal-prefix
- (3) comitative dimensional-prefix
- (4) personal-affix cross-referencing patient
- (5) verbal root
- (6) marû-suffix
- (7) personal-affix cross-referencing agent

#### Discussion: structure

The bare-bones structure of this text is:

1-3	For Nanna	benefactive
4-14	Amar-Sin	agent
15	in Karzida	place
16	from of old	time
17	no <u>gipāru</u> having been built	circumstance
18	no <u>en</u> having lived	circumstance
19-20	Amar-Sin	agent
21	his <u>gipāru</u>	patient
22	built.	verb
23	His <u>en</u>	patient
24	he made enter.	verb
25	Amar-Sin	agent
26	its days	patient
26	will prolong.	verb

27	For his life	purpose
28	he dedicated.	verb

### - Passive

Ergativity is defined by the way the relationships among the primary participants in a sentence are marked. In the hamtu, which functions on an ergative basis, the subject of a transitive verb is marked by .e. The subject of an intransitive or passive verb, and the direct object of an active verb, are marked by .Ø. (The maru of intransitive-passive verbs will be discussed later.)

In Sumerian, there is no difference in construction between an intransitive sentence and a passive sentence in the hamtu:

lugal.Ø    i.gin.Ø  
e.Ø       i.du.Ø

Perhaps the most cautious statement about the passive in Sumerian is that of Jacobsen:

The external criteria determining whether a Sumerian form is active or passive in meaning are as yet far from clear and the whole question whether in actual fact this distinction may be considered germane to the Sumerian verb is yet to be decided (1956:49\*).

Similarly, Viktor Christian, many of whose ideas about Sumerian grammar are outside the main-stream, says:

In Sumerian, we do not find the categories “transitive” and “intransitive”, or “active” and “passive”. The fact that we are often forced to translate as active or passive, transitive or intransitive, only results from the inadequacies of our own language to correctly reproduce Sumerian (1961:13).

That is, the contrasts active ~ passive, and transitive ~ intransitive, may not be the most fitting way to describe Sumerian. Some Sumerologists have stated that an analysis in terms of action ~ state would more fittingly describe Sumerian. In practice, however, people sometimes tend to be less than rigid in their use of such linguistic terms.

Traditionally, Sumerian grammars present two paradigms: one for the active, and one for the intransitive-passive. There is no difference in the structure of the root; rather, the differences lie in the function of the personal-affixes, and in the way that the case-endings of the primary participants are cross-referenced. It may be useful to summarize the hamtu forms in the singular.

	active	intransitive-passive
first person	mu.Ø.sar	mu.sar.en
second	mu.e.sar	mu.sar.en
third animate	mu.n.sar	mu.sar.Ø
inanimate	mu.b.sar	mu.sar.Ø

### - Conjugation-prefixes

The relationship of the conjugation-prefixes im-mi, im-ma, im, and other rarer forms is unsure. It is usually assumed that these are not unanalyzable, unitary morphemes. Rather,

many Sumerologists assume that the two conjugation-prefixes im-mi and im-ma somehow derive from bi and ba (although it is not always made clear if this derivation is to be understood in synchronic or diachronic terms). Falkenstein, for example, who has a different understanding of the conjugation-prefixes than that presented in this book, derives im-mi from \*i-bi. Others, however, have argued for the existence of a morpheme /m/ in all these forms. It would roughly correspond in function to the Akkadian ventive (which is normally used with verbs of motion, marking movement towards the speaker).

Such historical developments are unproven, and perhaps unprovable; Falkenstein, for example, had to posit a number of apparently unmotivated phonetic changes to get his forms to work. In general, some Sumerologists (such as Falkenstein) are inclined to see variation in Sumerian as due to phonetic reasons, even if the rules governing the phonetic changes cannot be determined; others (such as Jacobsen) are inclined to believe that Sumerian grammar is more complex than usually believed, and that the variation we see is due to our ignorance of the morphology, not to unexplained phonetic accidents. In any case, in synchronic terms im-ma and im-mi (and im) pattern the same as the other conjugation-prefixes; that is, they all occupy the same position in the verbal prefix chain, and their presence is mutually exclusive. More work remains to be done on the synchronic distribution of these conjugation-prefixes. Krecher (1985) is the latest attempt to isolate the morphology and the semantics of the various conjugation-prefixes in /m/. He posits a rather wide range of functions, which need to be more fully investigated.

#### – Case-markers

The presence of the two ergative case-markers (lines 14 and 20) has parallels in other agglutinative languages. If a construction starts to become very long or convoluted, the speaker (or writer) will occasionally “get lost” in the construction, and may occasionally back-track, changing the topic, and will have to repeat a previous case-marker.

#### – History

The gipāru at Ur was the “official” dwelling-place of the en-priestess (who is sometimes referred to by the Akkadianized term “entu-priestess”). It was a large structure, composed of many rooms. The first such structure at Ur may go back to Early Dynastic times; it was built and rebuilt right through the Neo-Babylonian period.

The en-priestess was always of royal blood. Perhaps the most famous was Enheduanna, the daughter of Sargon of Akkad. She is well-known as the author of two well-preserved poems, written in good Sumerian. In the Neo-Babylonian period, Nabonidus installed his daughter in the position.

The en-priestess “represented” the goddess Ningal, in some way. In particular, she represented the goddess Ningal, while the reigning monarch represented the god Nanna (the husband of Ningal) in some kind of “divine marriage ceremony”. This ritual may have originated as an end-of-harvest-time festival. It has often been discussed among Sumerologists, and there has been much disagreement about what the sacred marriage was meant to represent.

Penelope Weadock has summarized the functions of the gipāru:

Three separate units emerge from the Ur III--Isin-Larsa gipāru building: the Ningal temple which is the locale in which the entu-priestess, as the incarnation of the goddess Ningal, carried out her most important function as a participant in the rite of the sacred marriage; the gipāru proper which was the official dwelling of the entu-priestess, with its annexe, the cemetery for the former entus; and the sanctuary in which the entu prayed for the life of the king, her father or brother, in the hope that the gods would bestow prosperity upon the land through the king, their human regent. (1975:124).

It has been argued that the “institution” of the gipāru existed in other cities, for example, in Uruk. This is probably true, but the evidence is not conclusive. However, Tex<sup>17</sup> evidently refers to a gipāru in Karzida, not to the gipāru in Ur. This implies a Nanna-temple in Gaesh. Nothing is known of this temple or this gipāru.

The original meaning of the term gi<sub>6</sub>-pār is unknown; it may have been “storehouse” of some kind.

# Lesson 18

This is a door socket of Shu-Sin, the brother and successor of Amar-Sin. He ruled from 2037 to 2029 BC.

## Sign-list and vocabulary

 An-nu-ni-tum Annunitum (DN, masc)

 Šu-dZuen Shu-Sin (PN)

 dam wife, consort

 šag<sub>4</sub> (šà) heart

## Notes

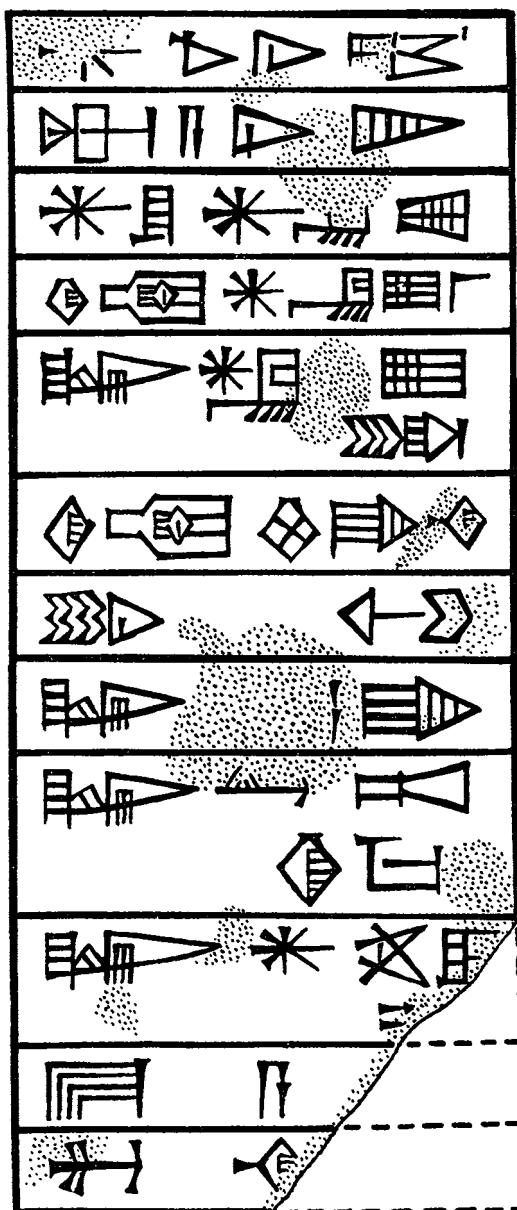
**An-nu-ni-tum** This may originally have been an epithet of Inanna. In Sargonic texts, the divine name <sup>d</sup>Inanna-An-nu-ni-tum is occasionally attested. But after the Old Akkadian period, this compound term does not occur, only the individual term An-nu-ni-tum. According to Jack Roberts, this pattern of attestation “suggests that the epithet split off and became an independent deity” (1972:147).

Gelb has pointed out “the tremendous number of compound divine names in the Ur III period” (1987:125). The name <sup>d</sup>Inanna-An-nu-ni-tum belongs to the class of names characterized by Gelb as “DN plus description”.

The etymology is unknown. It is possible that the -itum ending is an Akkadian feminine gentilic: /i-t-um/. However, the meaning of “anun” or “annun” is unknown; it is not sure if it is Akkadian or Sumerian.

**Šu-dZuen** The name is Akkadian, meaning “the one of Sin”, or “the one belonging to Sin”. It was formerly read as “Gimil-Sin”.

## Text 18



1. The name of the goddess is clearly An-nu-ni-tum.

## Notes

Many objects containing inscriptions have been damaged, either in ancient times or in modern times. This means that part of the inscription may be completely broken away, as in the bottom right-hand corner of Text 17, or part of it may be effaced, as is the top left-hand corner, and as in case 8.

It is important that transliterations reflect such damage, especially when the text is completely broken. Unfortunately, there is no one system in use by Sumerologists (or Assyriologists) to indicate such breaks. The most common system is to use brackets. These are used to include signs completely broken away. Thus, line 11 is best transliterated: é-a-[ni]. Brackets can also be used to indicate partially broken signs. For example, line 8 can be transliterated: lugal-[kala]g-ga, and the last line as: mu-n[a-dù].

Brackets are imprecise, however, in such cases as the partially effaced An-sign in line 1. To resolve this problem, some scholars (not all) use half-brackets to indicate partially-broken signs. Thus, the first sign of line 1 can be transliterated 'An'.

Instead of half-brackets, some scholars use dots under vowels, to indicate that the sign is partially broken or effaced. Thus, this An-sign might be transliterated as An. Some scholars use different combinations of full brackets, half-brackets, and dots, in sometimes rather idiosyncratic combinations.

The decision about whether or not to use brackets (or half-brackets) is not always clear-cut. For example, what about the tum-sign in line 1, or the first part of the Urim<sub>5</sub>-sign in line 9? In practice, such damage to the text is often ignored, if the context and the remaining traces of the sign make the sign unambiguous.

Similarly, it is difficult to decide how breaks should be reflected in translation. Some Sumerologists use brackets in translation, reflecting the breaks in the text. However, since English and Sumerian are of such different grammatical structures (particularly in word-order), this procedure can be cumbersome and tiresome. Many scholars, therefore, omit brackets in translation, especially when writing for a professional audience, because such an audience will be able to follow or control the transliteration or autograph.

Occasionally, scholars may be suspicious of a published transliteration, or even an autograph, of a cuneiform text. Or, they may wish further information about a partially effaced sign. In such cases, they may collate the text, that is, physically examine the cuneiform document. If the text is not easily accessible, they may ask another scholar to perform such a collation.

The system used here is the simplest. Full brackets are used only to indicate significant breaks. They are omitted from transcription and from translation.

Transliteration	Transcription	Translation
1: <u>An-nu-ni-tum</u>	Annunitum	For Annunitum,
2: <u>dam-a-ni-ir</u>	dam.an.i.r	his wife –
3: <u>dŠu-dZuen</u>	Šusin	Shu-Sin,
4: <u>ki-aḡa₂-dEn-lil-lá</u>	ki.aḡa.a.Enlil.a(k)	the beloved of Enlil,

5: <u>lugal</u> - <sup>d</sup> <u>En</u> - <u>lil</u> - <u>le</u>	lugal Enlil.e	the king whom Enlil selected in his
6: <u>ki-ağ</u> <sub>2</sub> - <u>šag</u> <sub>4</sub> - <u>ga</u> - <u>na</u>	ki.ağ.a.Ø.šag.an.i.a	loving heart,
7: <u>in-pàd</u>	i.n.pad	
8: <u>lugal</u> -[ <u>kala</u> ]g-ga	lugal.kalaga	the mighty king,
9: <u>lugal-Urim</u> <sub>5</sub> <u>ki</u> - <u>ma</u>	lugal.Urim.a(k)	the king of Ur,
10: <u>lugal-an-ub-da-limmu</u> <sub>2</sub> <u>ba-ke</u> <sub>4</sub>	lugal.anub.da.(k) limmu.bi.ak.e	the king of the four quarters –
11: <u>é-a-[ni]</u>	e.an.i.Ø	her temple –
12: <u>mu-n[a-dù]</u>	mu.na.(n.)du.Ø	he built.

### Commentary

1. Lines 5-7 are an epithet of Shu-Sin, which occurs in virtually all of his inscriptions. It was not used by his predecessors, nor by any subsequent ruler.

Although this epithet is very common, and its basic meaning is fairly transparent, the syntax underlying it is not clear.

In particular, the grammatical relationship of ki-ağ<sub>2</sub> to šag<sub>4</sub>-ga-na is not sure. One interpretation of these lines is: “the king whom Enlil has elected as the beloved of his heart”, that is, ki.ağ.a. šag.an.i.a(k). However, Sumerian would probably use -šè to express the complement introduced in English by “as”; cf. Text 19, where -šè is used in a (roughly) parallel context.

Another interpretation is to see ki-ağ<sub>2</sub> as an active participle modifying šag<sub>4</sub>, with the entire noun phrase being in the locative: “in his loving heart”, that is, [ki.ağ.a.Ø.šag.an.i].a. The problem with this interpretation is that modifiers of nouns almost always follow their nouns, not precede them; one would not expect ki.ağ.a.Ø to precede šag.an.i. However, there are exceptions to this rule, and there are even occurrences where simple adjectives precede their nouns (although these occurrences are mostly of a formulaic nature). There is probably some stylistic emphasis present.

Lines 5-7 consist of the noun ugal and a relative clause. Since this is a relative clause, one would expect to find a sentence nominalized in .a, as was the case in all other relative clauses with a verb. However, this common epithet is always written in-pàd, with no nominalizing .a. This is difficult to explain. It is not simply a problem of orthography. A follower of the Falkenstein school might wonder about the possibility of a reading /pada/ for the pàd-sign. However, no such value is recognized by the standard sign-lists, and in any case, one would expect it to be written in-pàd-da (as in Amar-Sin’s epithet, Enlil.e Nibru.a mu.pàd.a, always written mu-pàd-da).

Somewhat similar instances of relative clauses without an expected nominalizer occur elsewhere in Sumerian, sometimes of a formulaic nature. They need further investigation.

7. i is the conjugation-prefix. n. is the personal-affix cross-referencing the hamtu-agent, Enlil.e.

## Discussion: structure

The structure of this text is:

[Annunitum, dam.an].r	benefactive
[Šusin, ki.ağ.a.a.Enlil.a(k),	agent
ugal Enlil.e ki.ağ.a.Ø.šag.an.i.a i.n.pad,	
ugal.kalaga, ugal.Urim.a(k),	
ugal.anub.da.(k) limmu.bi.ak].e	
[e.an].Ø	patient
mu.na.(n.)du.Ø	verb

It thus follows the pattern of most royal inscriptions. This basic pattern, however, is somewhat difficult to recognize, because of the length and the complexity of the appositional phrases in lines 4 through 10.

### – Relative clauses

The interpretation of lines 5-7 given above follows Jacobsen, who translates this formulaic phrase as “the king whom Enlil envisaged in his loving heart”. He considers it to be a clause nominalized “in zero”; however, he cannot find many close parallels. These lines illustrate a problem encountered several times before: a construction occurring frequently, its meaning relatively transparent, but its syntax dubious. There are still several problems in the understanding of Sumerian relative clauses.

### – Adjectives

There are a few cases in Sumerian where adjectives (or other modifiers) precede their head noun, instead of following it. For example, the adjective kug, meaning “pure”, quite frequently precedes the names of gods and goddesses: kug-d<sup>1</sup>Inanna, “pure Inanna”. It appears to be the only adjective to be used so regularly in this position.

Other languages whose order is basically noun-adjective, such as French, also permit a certain number of cases of adjective-noun constructions. These cases are usually limited to a fixed number of adjectives or expressions. In general, it seems that languages of the noun-adjective type permit more exceptions than do languages of the adjective-noun type.

### – History

The circumstances of Amar-Sin’s death are unclear. A late omen text says that he died of an infection caused by a foot bite of some kind. Shu-Sin was his son and successor (although it has been said that he was his brother, not his son). It was during the latter’s reign that trouble began to be felt in the empire: the Sumerians began to feel the pressure of the Amorites.

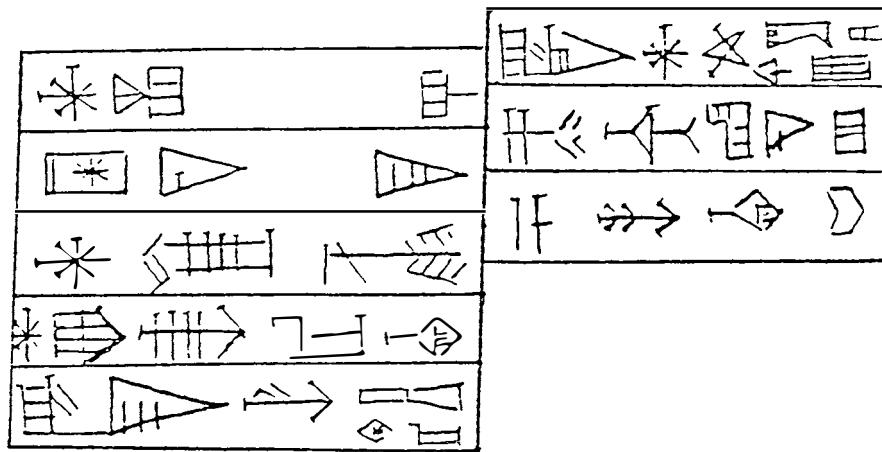
Curiously, a number of “love poems” (to use Jacobsen’s term) have been preserved, most of which are directed to the fourth king of the dynasty, Shu-Suen. One guesses that this king, or perhaps more likely his queen, had in his entourage a woman poet who enjoyed singing about love and lovemaking, and whose

works, since they were cast in the form of praise for the king's beauty and virile prowess, were favorably received and carefully preserved in writing (1987:85).

## Text 18a

supplementary

This is a votive bead of carnelian, found at Susa. It has been speculated that this bead was carried off to Susa as booty by the Elamites when they sacked Ur in 2004 BC, putting an end to the Ur III Dynasty.



# Lesson 19

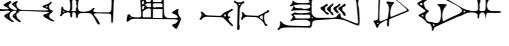
This door socket of Shu-Sin records one of the more significant events of his reign.

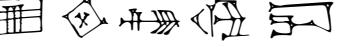
## Sign-list and vocabulary

 Šara<sub>2</sub> Shara (DN, masc)

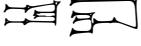
 Nin-lil Ninlil (DN, fem)

 Mar-tu the Amorites; the West

 Mu-ri-iq Ti-id-ni-im Muriq-Tidnim (GN)

 E-šag<sub>4</sub>-ge-pàd-da Eshagepada (TN)

 nir-ğál prince

 ad-da father

 išib (kind of priest)

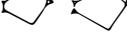
 gudug (gudu<sub>4</sub>) (kind of priest)

 šu hand

 sipad (sipa) shepherd

 nè forces, troops

 ma-da land

 dadag to be clean, pure

 gal great

## Notes

Šara<sub>2</sub> God of the city of Umma; son of Inanna. Not much is known of him; he did not rank very high in the Sumerian pantheon.

Nin-lil According to Sumerian mythology, Ninlil was raped by Enlil, and later became his wife (dam). Nanna was their child. She was especially worshipped in Nippur.

**Mar-tu** This term was used by the Sumerians in two ways. In an “ethnic” sense, it refers to the (West-Semitic) Amorites, who dwelt in the Syrian desert west of Mesopotamia. It is also used in a rather vague geographical sense, meaning “west” in general.

The etymology is unknown. Some now read it as Mar-dú.

**Mu-ri-iq Ti-id-ni-im** The name is Akkadian, Murīq Tidnim, meaning “that which keeps Tidnum away”. murīq is the D-stem active participle in the construct state, from rēqu, “to be far away”. Tidnum (or “Didnum”) is probably the name of a particular Amorite tribe, although here it refers to the Amorites in general. In late lexical texts, “Tidnum” is equated with the Akkadian word used for the Amorites: ti-id-nu = a-mur-ru-ú. The original form and etymology of the name are unsure. In the various Semitic languages, several variant spellings of the name Tidnum occur: Ti-da-nu-um and Di-ta-nu-um in Akkadian, Ddn and Ttn in Ugaritic, etc. It is not always sure if such terms refer to the same people.

**E-šag<sub>4</sub>-ge-pād-da** The principal temple of Shara in Umma. The name means “the temple chosen in (his) heart”, that is, e.šag.e.pad.a. The .e is the mark of the locative-terminative case.

**nir-ḡál** It is difficult to determine the precise meaning of such a word; it is conventionally translated into English as “prince” or “hero”. The Akkadian equivalent is etellu, glossed by the CAD as: “prince, lord”.

In origin, this is probably an active participle with an incorporated object. ḡál normally means “to be”, but can also mean “to have”. The combination nir-ḡál would mean “the one who has nir”. Unfortunately, it is not known what nir means.

**ad-da** Sumerian has three words for father: a-a, ab-ba, and ad-da. Lambert (1957) studied the distribution of the three terms on (primarily) geographical and class lines, but could not come to any definite conclusions about their usage.

**išib** This is a very old loan-word into Sumerian from Akkadian wāšipu. This Akkadian term is usually translated “exorcist”. išib was then loaned back into Akkadian as išippu, glossed by the CAD as “purification priest”. išib itself is often translated as “incantation priest”.

It is never easy to determine the exact function of any priestly office. Johannes Renger (1967f) has studied the Old Babylonian priesthood, and exhaustively discussed the Akkadian words for the different kinds of priests.

**gudug** The equivalent Akkadian priest is the pašāšu, from the root pašāšu, meaning “to anoint”. The gudug-priest seems to be especially involved in certain kinds of ritual activities, which it is not yet possible to define exactly. He was of a lower rank than the išib-priest (at least in the Old Babylonian period); temples could have several gudug-priests, but apparently no more than one išib-priest.

This word is often transliterated as guda<sub>4</sub>, with the second vowel as /a/, not as /u/.

**sipad** The cuneiform sign used to represent this word is actually a combination of two

signs: the pa-sign ( 卌 ) and the udu-sign ( 𠮩 ). The pa-sign was originally a picture of a staff or sceptre of some kind; in this meaning, it is read as gidri. It was also used to represent the word for “overseer”, i.e., a man holding a staff of authority; in this meaning, it is read as ugula. The udu-sign means “sheep”. Thus, the sipad-sign graphically represents approximately “the overseer in charge of sheep”.

It is reasonably sure that this word has a /d/-Auslaut. However, it is much more common to find it transliterated as sipa.

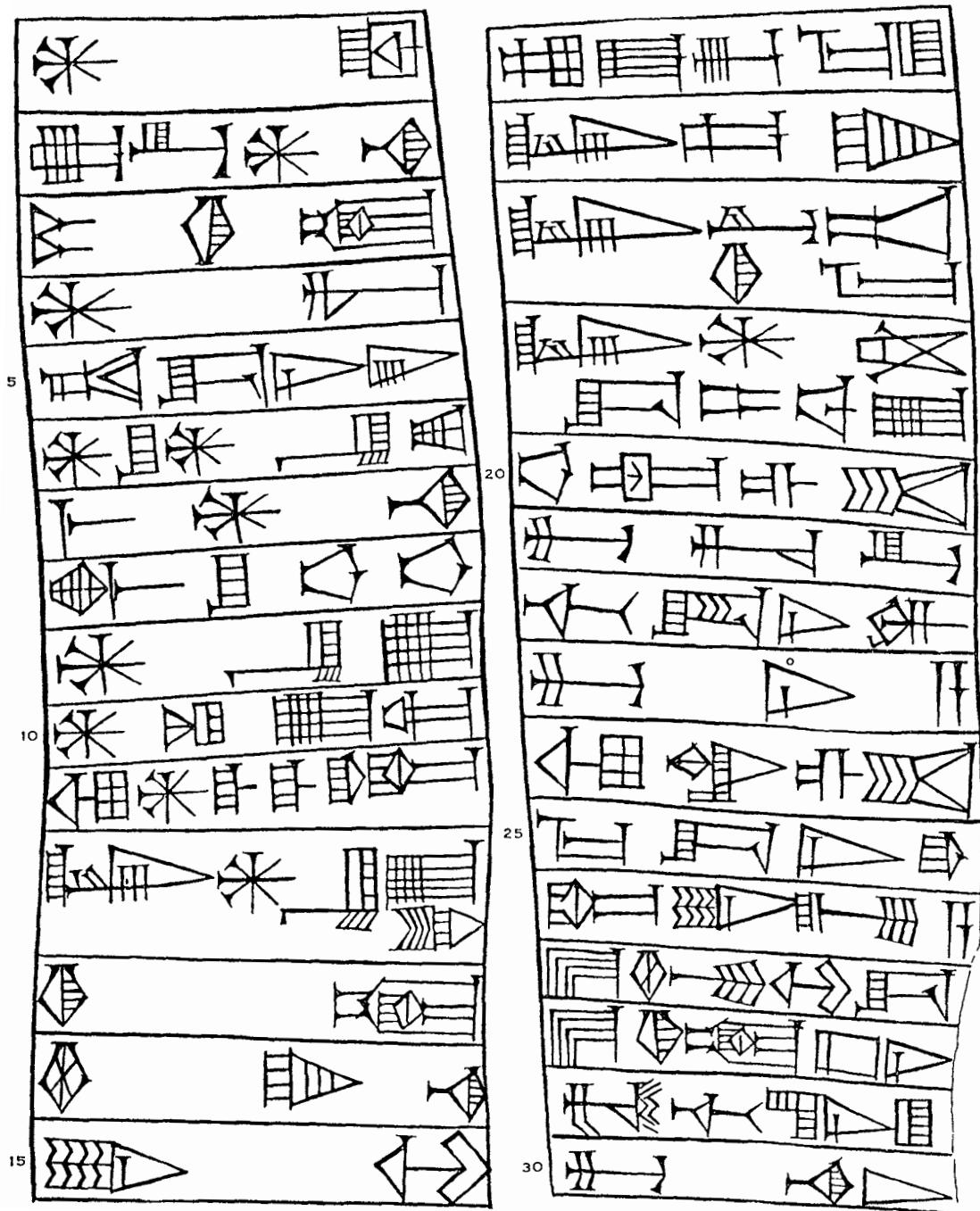
**ma-da** This is usually assumed to be a very early loan into Sumerian from Akkadian mātu (although the latter is itself of dubious etymology; the only other Semitic language it occurs in is Aramaic). The three terms kalam, ma-da, and kur are often translated into English as “land”, but they are not synonymous. Limet (1978) has studied their distribution, especially in documents from the Ur III period. kalam is used exclusively to refer to Sumer. kur originally meant “mountain”. It then came to mean “foreign land”; it is never used to refer to the land of Sumer. ma-da is more problematical; the sense is approximately “territory”. It is used mostly for foreign lands, but in certain uses it can refer to Sumer. Jacobsen believes that in contexts such as Text 19 ma-da means “steppe”. The opposition between kalam and kur has also been studied by Steiner (1978) on a number of levels: historical, legal, etc.

Because the term kalam is restricted to the land of Sumer, Poebel has speculated that the word Ki-en-gi was a dialectal form of kalam. ka-na-ág is used as the Emesal equivalent of both Ki-en-gi and kalam. However, in earlier texts kalam may have had a more general meaning. Raphael Kutscher says that “Although the literal meaning of kalam is ‘country’ (mātum), it narrowed its scope to ‘The Country’ par excellence, namely, Sumer, and eventually, to ‘the nation’, i.e., the Sumerians” (1975:68).

**dadag** The reading is not certain; it is variously read as: da<sub>7</sub>-dàg, dàg-dàg, zalag-zalag, zalzalag, and babbar<sub>2</sub>. The reading as /dadag/ seems established by late lexical texts, which give the syllabic writing da-da-ag as the equivalent of the Akkadian word for “pure”, ebbu.

The dadag-sign is formed by the writing of two ◇ signs; the situation is similar to that of the siskur<sub>2</sub>-sign. The word /dadag/ is probably a reduction of something like \*/dagdag/, a reduplicated form. The reduplication may have had some kind of intensive value in its origin. This explains why there are two signs. Originally, one sign stood for /dag/; two signs stood for /dagdag/. Later, \*/dagdag/ was reduced to /dadag/, but the original two signs continued to be written. Similarly, it has been speculated that the word /siskur/ was originally a reduplicated form, perhaps \*/sikur-sikur/; this explains why it was written with two signs. One would then have to assume a development along the lines of \*/sikursikur/ > \*/sisikur/ > /siskur/, or something similar.

## Text 19



▫ Rest mistake of scribe.

## Notes

Line 23: As the editors point out, the scribe has drawn a ni-sign, instead of the expected dù-sign. He may have been unconsciously influenced by the ni-sign directly above, in line 22.

	Transliteration	Transcription
1:	<u>d</u> <u>Šara</u> <sub>2</sub>	Šara
2:	<u>nir</u> - <u>ḡál</u> - <u>An</u> - <u>na</u>	nirḡal.An.a(k)
3:	<u>dumu</u> - <u>ki</u> - <u>aḡa</u> <sub>2</sub>	dumu.ki.aḡa.a
4:	<u>d</u> <u>Inanna</u>	Inanna.(k)
5:	<u>ad</u> - <u>da</u> - <u>ni</u> - <u>ir</u>	adda.ani.r
6:	<u>d</u> <u>Šu</u> - <u>d</u> <u>Zuen</u>	Šusin
7:	<u>išib</u> - <u>An</u> - <u>na</u>	išib.An.a(k)
8:	<u>gudug</u> - <u>šu</u> - <u>dadag</u>	gudug.šu.dadag
9:	<u>d</u> <u>En</u> - <u>lil</u>	Enlil
10:	<u>d</u> <u>Nin</u> - <u>lil</u> - <u>ka</u>	Ninlil.(a)k.a(k)
11:	<u>u</u> <u>diḡir</u> - <u>gal</u> - <u>gal</u> - <u>e</u> - <u>ne</u>	u diḡir.gal.gal.ene.(k)
12:	<u>lugal</u> <u>d</u> <u>En</u> - <u>lil</u> - <u>le</u>	lugal Enlil.e
13:	<u>ki</u> - <u>aḡa</u> <sub>2</sub>	ki.aḡa.Ø
14:	<u>šag</u> <sub>4</sub> - <u>ga</u> - <u>na</u>	šag.ani.a
15:	<u>in</u> - <u>pàd</u>	i.n.pad
16:	<u>sipad</u> - <u>kalam</u> - <u>ma</u> - <u>šè</u>	sipad.kalam.a(k).šè
17:	<u>lugal</u> - <u>kalag</u> - <u>ga</u>	lugal.kalaga
18:	<u>lugal</u> - <u>Urim</u> <sub>5</sub> <sup>ki</sup> - <u>ma</u>	lugal.Urim.a(k)
19:	<u>lugal</u> - <u>an</u> - <u>ub</u> - <u>da</u> - <u>limmu</u> <sub>2</sub> - <u>ba</u> - <u>ke</u> <sub>4</sub>	lugal.anub.da.(k)limmu.bi.ak.e
20:	<u>ud</u> <u>bàd</u> - <u>Mar</u> - <u>tu</u>	ud bad.Martu.(k)
21:	<u>Mu</u> - <u>ri</u> - <u>iq</u>	Muriq
22:	<u>Ti</u> - <u>id</u> - <u>ni</u> - <u>im</u>	Tidnim.Ø
23:	<u>mu</u> - <u>dù</u> - <u>a</u>	mu.(n.)du.Ø.a.a
24:	<u>u</u> <u>nè</u> - <u>Mar</u> - <u>tu</u>	u ne.Martu.(k.)Ø
25:	<u>ma</u> - <u>da</u> - <u>né</u> - <u>e</u>	mada.ani.e
26:	<u>bí</u> - <u>in</u> - <u>gi</u> <sub>4</sub> - <u>a</u>	bí.n.gi.Ø.a.a
27:	<u>É</u> - <u>šag</u> <sub>4</sub> - <u>ge</u> - <u>pàd</u> - <u>da</u>	Ešagepada

28:	<u>é-ki-áğ-ğá-ni</u>	e.ki.ağ.a.aní.Ø
29:	<u>nam-til-la-ni-šè</u>	nam.til.aní.še
30:	<u>mu-na-dù</u>	mu.na.(n.)du.Ø

**Translation**

- 1: For Shara,  
 2: the prince of An,  
 3: the beloved son of Inanna,  
 5: his father –  
 6: Shu-Sin,  
 7: the išib-priest of An,  
 8: the gudug-priest with the pure hands  
 9: of Enlil and Ninlil  
 11: and of the great gods,  
 12: the king whom Enlil selected in his loving heart  
 16: to be shepherd of the land,  
 17: the mighty king,  
 18: the king of Ur,  
 19: the king of the four quarters –  
 23: when he built  
 20: the Martu-wall  
 21: (whose name is) Muriq-Tidnim,  
 26: and when he drove back  
 24: the forces of the Martu  
 25: to their own land –  
 30: he built –  
 27: the Eshagepada,  
 28: his beloved temple –  
 29: for the sake of his life.

**Commentary**

8. dadag is an adjective from the root “to be pure”.

The presence of the ka-sign in line 10 means that the construction is a double genitive: “the gudug-priest of the pure hand(s) of Enlil and Ninlil, and of the great gods”. It is difficult to say exactly what this means. However, the “clean hands” of the pašišu-priest

are explicitly mentioned several times in Akkadian texts. The sense of the sentence is probably: “the gudug-priest with the pure hands, in the service of Enlil and Ninlil, and in the service of the great gods”.

9-11. Enlil and Ninlil are conjoined, without any conjunction. These two deities are set off from the more vague “great gods” by the conjunction ù.

The two plural formations of nouns seen so far are the morpheme .ene (for animate nouns), and reduplication (for inanimate nouns). Another common plural formation, used when a noun is followed by an adjective, is to reduplicate the adjective: diğir-gal-gal. This type of formation is most common with animate nouns, but a few examples occur with inanimate nouns: inim-gal-gal, “the great words”. In addition, it is possible to tack on the plural marker .ene: diğir.gal.gal.ene, which is the form in Text 19.

Plural formations such as diğir-gal-gal and diğir-gal-gal-e-ne are usually thought to be superlatives of some type: “the most great gods”. This is very hard to prove. It is especially hard to determine if there is any difference between the reduplicated forms with .ene and the reduplicated forms without it. Only a few adjectives seem to occur in such plural formations; by far the most common is gal.

In Text 6, the plural “king of the gods” was written lugal-diğir-re-ne, with reduplication of the final /r/ of diğir. Line 11 of Text 19 uses a more morphemic writing; this is the regular writing of this particular expression.

16. One of the functions of the terminative case in -šè is to express the purpose of certain verbs. Here the sense is: “selected to be the shepherd of the land”. Expressions of this type are not infrequent in the royal inscriptions. In them, the nominal phrase marked in -šè regularly follows the verbal form in-pàd, instead of preceding it.

This deviation from standard Sumerian syntax is presumably to give some degree of emphasis to this last constituent. There are instances where adverbial phrases, and even patients, are placed after the verb phrase, instead of before it.

19. The .e marks the end of the ergative agent phrase, spanning lines 6 through 19.

20. Lines 20-26 form two when-clauses, governed by the ud of line 20:

- 20: when he built ...
- 24: and when he drove back ...
- 30: (then) he built ... .

The two when-clauses are linked by the conjunction ù in line 24. The syntax of these clauses is the same as that seen in Text 12. ud is the relative marker; it is followed by two clauses, each of which is nominalized in .a, and each of which is in the locative case. A more literal translation would thus be: “on (= the locative .a) the day that (= the nominalizer .a) ...”:

ud [bad.Martu ... mu.(n.)du.Ø.a].a  
u [ne.Martu ... bí.n.gi.Ø.a].a

bàd-Mar-tu is presumably a genitive phrase, “the wall of Martu”. Since Mar-tu can also mean “the West”, this is sometimes translated as “the Western Wall”. What follows is the actual name of the wall. Instead of using a construction with the word for “name” (mu), the name is expressed through an appositive. Such formulations are quite common.

24. ù links the two temporal clauses, each dependent on the relative marker ud:

- ud: 1) ... mu-dù-a  
 2) ... bí-in-gi<sub>4</sub>-a

25. .ani is somewhat ambiguous. It could refer back (loosely) to Shu-Sin, or it could refer back to the nè-Mar-tu of line 24, treating the term as a singular or a collective.

.e is the marker of the locative-terminative case. As discussed in Lesson 9, this case shares some of the characteristics of the locative case marked in -a, and some of the characteristics of the terminative case marked in -še. This can lead to a certain amount of ambiguity. For example, this particular line has been interpreted in two ways. One interpretation is to understand .e here in the sense of -še. The meaning would then be: "he drove the Amorites back to their own territory". However, it is also possible to understand .e in the sense of -a; the meaning then is: "in his own territory, he drove out the Amorites".

As was also the case in Text 9, the locative-terminative is not cross-referenced by any dimensional-prefix in the verbal chain.

Line 25 has been transliterated here as ma-da-né-e. This assumes that the /i/ of /ani/ has contracted into the /e/ of the locative-terminative case-marker, producing a pronunciation something like /madane/. Other scholars have transliterated the line as ma-da-ni-e. Some Sumerologists do this, because they do not believe that such a contraction took place. Others do it, because they are consciously being morphemic in their transliteration. This problem is further discussed in Lesson 21.

26. In the verb in line 23, the personal-affix .n for the hamtu-agent is not expressed in the writing. However, in line 26 it is so expressed:

- 23: mu-dù-a  
 26: bí-in-gi<sub>4</sub>-a.

It is also not expressed in the verb in line 30:

- 30: mu-na-dù.

From this one text, a facile generalization would be: The personal-affix .n is not used when the conjugation-prefix mu is present, but it is used when the conjugation-prefix bí is present. However, in other texts the writing mu-na-an-dù occurred. It is such varying formulations which makes it very difficult to determine the rules governing the presence or absence of the personal-affix.

#### Discussion: structure

Although this inscription is thirty lines long, it consists of only one sentence. The one finite verb form is in line 30. It may help to summarize the structure of the text:

1	For Shara,	benefactive
6	Shu-Sin,	agent
20	– when he built ... –	circumstance
30	he built	verb
27	the Eshagepada	patient
29	for the sake of his life.	purpose

– bí

It is not uncommon to find a verb with a bí conjugation-prefix co-occurring with a nominal phrase in the locative-terminative case. In Text 19, line 26 uses the conjugation-prefix bí, and line 25 has a nominal phrase in the locative-terminative. Earlier it was mentioned that it is also not uncommon to find a verb with a ba conjugation-prefix co-occurring with a nominal phrase in the locative case. The significance of these facts still remains to be integrated into a coherent theory of Sumerian grammar.

## – Loan words

Both išib and ma-da are early loan words from Akkadian. One, however, ends in /a/, and one doesn't. Gelb has speculated that such very early loans reflect a stage of Akkadian when the case-system was not as fully developed as it was during the Classical periods. However, it has also been suggested that the /a/ is the Sumerian nominalizer.

## – Chronology

As the name of this wall implies, its function was to keep away the nomadic Amorites. Individual Amorites, or small groups, had been entering into southern Mesopotamia from the North-west for many years, but during the reign of Shu-Sin they began to enter in force.

The building of this wall is also mentioned in a “year-date” of Shu-Sin. Until the Seleucid period, there was no chronological system in Mesopotamia based on a fixed date. Dating systems varied from place to place and from time to time. Beginning at least as early as the Old Akkadian period, individual years in a king's rule were given their own names. For example, the first year of the rule of Shu-Sin was named: “(the year when) Shu-Sin became king”; his third year was named: “(the year when) Simānum was destroyed”. That is, the name given to the year referred to some important event in the rule of the king. These year-names were gathered into lists. Without these ordered lists, it would be impossible to know which particular chronological year a given year-name referred to.

Year 4 of Shu-Sin's rule is named dŠu-dZuen lugal Urim<sub>5</sub> ki-ma-ke<sub>4</sub> bād-Mar-tu Mu-ri-iq-Ti-id-ni-im mu-dù, that is, “(the year when) Shu-Sin, king of Ur, built the wall against the Amorites, (named) Muriq-Tidnim”. The wording of this year-name is similar to the wording in lines 20 through 23 of Text 19. Douglas Frayne has said: “It can be demonstrated that temporal clauses in royal inscriptions of the Ur III through Old Babylonian periods often allude to year formulae of the king” (1983:745); this is apparently such an instance.

In a similar vein, Hallo has pointed out:

The correlation between neo-Sumerian regnal years on the one hand and royal hymns on the other is a high one both in terms of numbers and in terms of content. ... Is it too daring to suggest that each date formula was formally introduced together with a new hymn? (1966:139, and n.82).

The year-formula just cited is the “long” form of the year-name; there is also a “short” form: bād-Mar-tu ba-dù, “(the year when) the wall of Martu was built”. This latter is a

passive construction, bad.Martu.(k).Ø ba.du.Ø.

Year-dates often occur in both a long form and a short form. The long form has an agent marked in .e, and a verb with conjugation-prefix mu. The short form is without agent, and has a verb with conjugation-prefix ba. For example, there are several year-dates of the type: mu PN.e GN mu-hul, “the year when PN destroyed GN”, and mu GN ba-hul, “the year when GN was destroyed”. In each case, the verbal sentence is in apposition with the noun mu “year”.

The conjugation-prefix ba frequently occurs with verb forms in passive sentences, such as the short form of year-dates. In the Old Babylonian Grammatical Texts, Sumerian verbal forms with the conjugation-prefix ba are usually translated by the Akkadian stems with infix /t/, that is, stems with separative, reflexive, and passive meanings. However, Malcolm Horsnell (1977) has questioned the standard interpretation of the short form of year-dates as passives, arguing that they should be translated as agentless active sentences.

It has also been speculated that there is not just one conjugation-prefix ba, but rather there are two; that is, they are homonyms. One is seen chiefly in passive sentences, the other in less definable contexts. Needless to say, it is very hard to prove such an assertion.

#### –Literary parallels

Other references to this wall have been preserved. One is in a letter by Sharrum-bani, the official in charge of its construction; he writes to Shu-Sin complaining of his troubles. Shu-Sin’s own reply to Sharrum-bani, in which he berates him for neglecting his duties, is also preserved.

At first blush, it might strike one as rather astounding that such letters just happen to be preserved. But the reason is because these (and other) letters came to be considered literary texts, and were used for scribal practice. According to the definition of Michalowski, “royal literary letters are thus simply letters to and from kings which were recopied in the scribal academy as part of the instruction in learning the Sumerian language” (1980b:52). Similarly, K.R. Veenhof says:

A number of letters of kings of the Third Dynasty of Ur and some of their successors were studied and copied in the Old Babylonian schools and became part of the standard curriculum of that period (1986:6).

Most of these royal literary letters are products of the Ur III period. They are only known from Old Babylonian copies; fragments of at least four copies of the letter from Sharrum-bani to Shu-Sin are preserved.

#### – History

It is possible that Shu-Sin’s activities did not consist of the building of a “wall” de novo; it may have been the rebuilding of defensive fortifications started by Shulgi. According to one letter (unfortunately, somewhat fragmentary), this wall was designed to be “26 double-hours” long, that is, about 170 miles! Attempts have been made to relate this wall to defensive lines mentioned in other texts, and even in Classical sources, and to determine the location of the wall, but such attempts have lacked conviction.

The wall was ultimately unsuccessful. C.J. Gadd says:

As for his great wall, it proved even more ineffectual than such barriers have always been in the end. No more is heard of this vast and vain work, even if, as seems likely, it furnished a line or a foundation for similar works in later ages. Babylonia has no natural defences, and they were not to be provided by an artificial rampart so long that it could have hardly been effectually garrisoned (1971: 611).

It seems curious that this wall was given an Akkadian name, instead of a Sumerian one. This may attest to the growing importance of Akkadian as the spoken language during the Ur III period. Possibly it was chosen because its meaning would have been more-or-less understandable to Amorite speakers.

#### – History

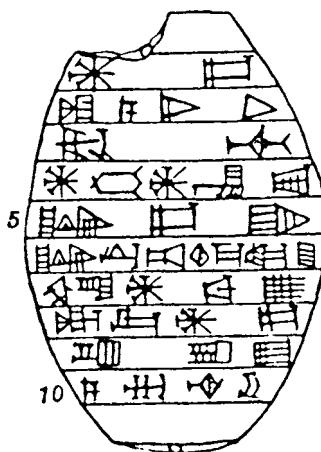
The ninth year of Shu-Sin commemorates the building of the temple mentioned in this inscription: mu ē-dŠara₂-Umma<sup>ki</sup>-ka ba-dù, “the year when the temple of Shara of Umma was built”.

Such year-dates, as laconic as they are, actually comprise one of the principal sources of information about the history of the Ur III period.

## Text 19a

supplementary

This text was inscribed on a votive amulet of agate.



## Sign-list and vocabulary

 Ha-la-<sup>d</sup>Ba-ba<sub>6</sub> Hala-Baba (PN, = “the share of Baba”)

 Ur-<sup>d</sup>Lamar Ur-Lamar (PN)

 dub-sar scribe

## Commentary

2. The last sign must be a poorly-drawn ir-sign.

8. The Akkadian equivalent of ha-la is zittu, from the root zâzu, “to divide”. It is glossed by the CAD as: “1. share of an inheritance ...”. Names of the pattern Ha-la-DN are common in Sumerian. Similar Akkadian names include HA-LA-i-lí and zi-it-DIĞIR, “the inheritance of god”.

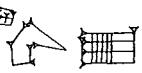
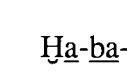
9. dub means “tablet”, and sar means “to write”. The formation of the word dub-sar is the same as that of zabar-dab<sub>5</sub>: sar.Ø is an active participle, and dub is its incorporated object. The meaning is thus, “he who writes a tablet”. The word was borrowed into Akkadian as tupšarru (transcribed by some as tupšarru). It is further discussed in Lesson 21.

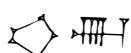
In historic Sumerian, sar means “to write”. It is not known what its original meaning may have been. In its earliest attestations (Fara and Tell Abu Salabikh), it does not occur as an independent verb, but only as part of the nominal compound dub-sar. dub-sar also occurs in the bilingual Eblaite texts, but unfortunately without an Eblaite equivalent.

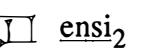
# Lesson 20

This is a brick building inscription of Shu-Sin.

## Sign-list and vocabulary

   Ha-ba-lu<sub>5</sub>-gé Habaluge (PN)

  Adab Adab (GN)

  ensi<sub>2</sub> ensi (city governor, local ruler)

 arad servant

## Notes

Ha-ba-lu<sub>5</sub>-gé The etymology of the name is unsure; it is discussed below.

**Adab** This is the name both of a city and of a kind of bird. The modern name of the city is Bismaya. A number of third millennium (and later) texts have been found there.

The etymology of the name is unknown; it is not sure if the word is originally Sumerian. Lexical lists, and rare syllabic spellings, most often show the initial consonant to be /d/, but spellings with /r/ and /s/ also occur. Akkadian spellings also show similar variation. Such oscillation in spelling shows that the consonant was probably not a simple /d/, but something more complex, perhaps the /dr/ phoneme discussed earlier (Lieberman reconstructs the original name of the city and the bird as /ořab/).

There is also some oscillation in the vowels of the name. The canonical spellings show /a-a/, but most earlier spellings seem to show /u-a/. The form /adab/ is presumably a result of vocalic assimilation: /u-a/ > /a-a/. The Akkadian spellings most often show /u-a/; that is, they reflect the Sumerian pronunciation of a period when the vocalic assimilation had not yet taken place.

The name of the city and of the bird is written by what appear to be two cuneiform signs, the ud-sign followed by the nun-sign. The situation is probably more complex, however. According to Jacobsen,

Early occurrences show a strong tendency to combine the two later signs UD and NUN into a ligature as if they originally formed but one single larger sign. ... The sign is not a ligature but an original pictograph representing a disc placed on top of a pole or stake. ... It thus becomes likely that the writing of the city-name Adab was originally a picture of a symbol, a disc affixed to a stake for carrying, and since that picture served also to designate the usabu bird one may assume that the symbol represented an usabu bird and had a picture of that bird on its disc. Symbols of this kind are well known (1968:101).

**ensi<sub>2</sub>** The function of this official has been much discussed; it changed over time.

According to Hallo, the term means “titular head of a city and its dependent territories”. Jacobsen says:

The title ensik ... seems to denote specifically the ruler of a single major city with its surrounding lands and villages, whereas both “lord” (en) and “king” (lugal) imply ruler over a region with more than one important city. As for the origins of the office, the ensik seems to have been originally the leader of the seasonal organization of the townspeople for work on the fields: irrigation, ploughing, and sowing (1957:384 n.71).

But later, during the Ur III period,

The top provincial civil administrators, the ensiks, became proper governors, entirely dependent on the king, and were moved at will from one post to another to minimize the dangers inherent in too strong local ties. Military affairs were out of their hands entirely (1957:155).

During the Ur III period, the ensi<sub>2</sub> was the highest-ranking civilian authority; the corresponding military officer was the šakkana (often translated “military governor”). Many of the latter were sons of the king. Occasionally, one and the same person served as both ensi<sub>2</sub> and šakkana. The names of many ensi<sub>2</sub>s of the Ur III period have been preserved.

ensi<sub>2</sub> was loaned into Akkadian, appearing as išši'akku and iššakku. It is glossed by the CAD as: “territorial ruler (of cities, countries, etc)”.

The etymology and writing of the word are discussed below.

arad The original form of this sign was the nitah-sign (meaning “man”) followed by the kur-sign (meaning “mountain”). Presumably, the Sumerians derived some of their slaves from foreign, mountainous areas. The shape of the arad-sign, however, tends to become simpler, and even as early as the Ur III texts, the nitah-sign and the arad-sign can look quite similar.

The Akkadian word for “slave” is wardu. This would seem to derive from the verbal root warādu, meaning “to go down to”; this root occurs in other Semitic languages. Therefore, most scholars assume that the Sumerian word arad was borrowed from the Akkadian wardu. A minority view, however, says that wardu has nothing to do with the verbal root warādu, and that wardu is a borrowing from Sumerian.

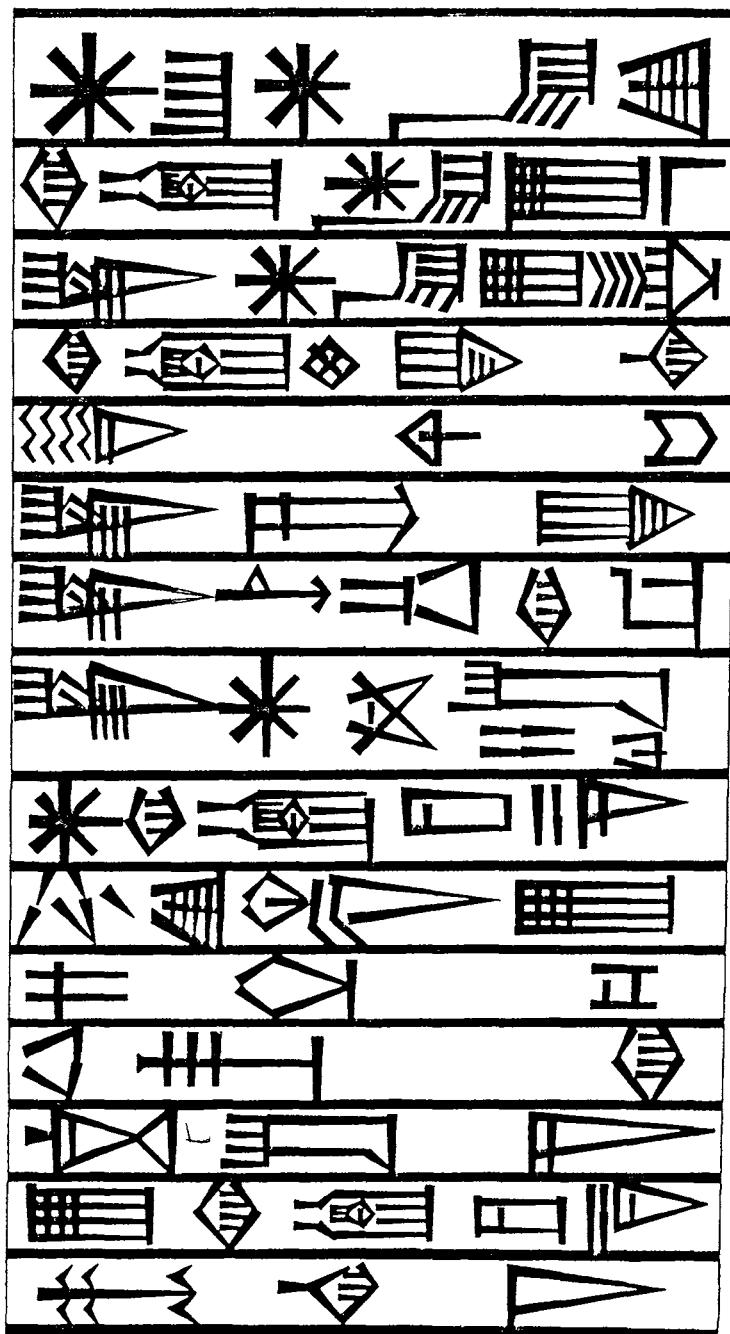
A complicating factor is the fact that the reading of the sign is uncertain; some read it as arad, and others read it as ir. The Sumerian evidence is ambiguous. According to Gelb, “generally, the form ending in -d is younger than the form ending in -r” (1982:86). Thus, in pre-Sargonic Lagash there occurs: (NITAHxKUR)-ra-ni, “his slave”, but in Sargonic and Ur III texts there occurs: (NITAHxKUR)-da-ni, “his slave”.

Most scholars, however, seem to derive the form in /r/ from that in /d/. For example, Falkenstein assumes a development along the lines of: \*/ward-a/ > \*/urd-a/ > \*/ird-a/ > \*/ird/ > /ir/. Gelb, on the other hand, believes that there were originally two different words for slave: a native Sumerian word, written ir<sub>11</sub> (ARADxKUR), and also a borrowed word, written arad (NITAHxKUR).

There has been much recent discussion about slavery in the Ancient Near East. The term arad is variously translated as “servant” or “slave”. But as Sollberger (and others)

have pointed out, “The usual translation ‘slave’ is a misnomer because its legal implications do not fit the Sumero-Akkadian social context” (1966:137). In a similar vein, Gelb has said, “Freedom is relative and the terms for ‘slave’ are quite ambiguous in the Ancient Near East, as they are in the Classical World, or for that matter anywhere else” (1979a:284).

## Text 20



## Notes

Line 5: The pàd-sign is here split into two parts. This is a common scribal practice with this sign. It is presumably done for aesthetic reasons; otherwise there would be too much empty space in the line.

	Transliteration	Transcription	Translation
1:	d <u>Š</u> u-d <u>Z</u> uen	Šusin	For Shu-Sin,
2:	<u>ki-a</u> ḡa₂- <sup>d</sup> <u>E</u> n-lil-lá	ki.aḡa.a.Enlil.a(k)	the beloved of Enlil,
3:	<u>lu</u> gal <sup>d</sup> <u>E</u> n-lil-le	ugal Enlil.e	the king whom Enlil selected
4:	<u>ki-a</u> ḡa₂- <u>š</u> ag₄-ga-na	ki.aḡa.Ø ſag.an.i.a	in his loving heart,
5:	<u>i</u> .n-pàd	i.n.pad	
6:	<u>lu</u> gal-kalag-ga	ugal.kalaga	the mighty king,
7:	<u>lu</u> gal-Urim₅ <u>ki</u> -ma	ugal.Urim.a(k)	the king of Ur,
8:	<u>lu</u> gal-an-ub-da-limmu₂ <u>ba</u>	ugal.anub.da.(k)limmu.bi.a(k)	the king of the four quarters,
9:	<u>di</u> ḡir- <u>ki</u> -áḡ-ḡá-a-ni	diḡir.ki.aḡa.a.an.i.(r)	his beloved god –
10:	<u>H</u> a-ba-lu₅-gé	Habaluge	Habaluge,
11:	<u>ensi</u> ₂	ensi.	the <u>ensi</u> of Adab,
12:	<u>Adab</u> ki	Adab.(ak)	
13:	<u>arad</u> -da-né	arad.an.i.e	his servant –
14:	é- <u>ki</u> -áḡ-ḡá-a-ni	e.ki.aḡa.a.an.i.Ø	his beloved temple –
15:	<u>mu</u> -na-dù	mu.na.(n.)du.Ø	built.

## Commentary

1-7. These lines are identical to lines 3-9 of Text 18.

9,14. Line 9 is written: diḡir-ki-áḡ-ḡá-a-ni; line 14 is written: é-ki-áḡ-ḡá-a-ni. In the previous inscriptions, such expressions were spelled: ...-ḡá-ni. In Text 17, for instance, lugal-ki-áḡ-ḡá-ni-ir and en-ki-áḡ-ḡá-ni occur; in Text 19 é-ki-áḡ-ḡá-ni occurs. Text 20 thus uses a fuller writing. It is very difficult to understand the motivation behind such variation in spelling.

11-12. Presumably a genitive phrase, ensi.Adab.(ak). As in other inscriptions, there is no graphic expression of the genitive when the second element of a genitive phrase is a geographical name.

13. Since this is the agentive nominal phrase, there must be an ergative marker .e present. In other inscriptions, in fact, this line is spelled: arad-da-ni-e. In line 13, the /i/ of the possessive-suffix .ani has contracted into the /e/ of the ergative case-marker. This contraction is indicated in the transliteration by: arad-da-né. However, the né-sign is the ni-sign. Some Sumerologists would transliterate line 13 as: arad-da-ni, because they wish

to avoid a possible prejudging of the written form. The latter view would regard transliterations of the type “arad-da-né” as an attempt to jiggle the script to fit our views of Sumerian grammar. A similar instance was seen in Text 19, where ma-da-né-e occurred; others would read this as ma-da-ni-e. It is also possible to interpret writings of the type arad-da-ni-e as historical or morpho-graphemic spellings. It is such ambiguities in the writing system that make it difficult to establish rules governing Sumerian phonology, especially those governing vocalic contraction.

### Discussion: structure

The bare-bones structure of this text is:

1-9	For Shu-Sin	benefactive
10-13	Habaluge	agent
14	his beloved temple	patient
15	built.	verb

In all the inscriptions in the body of texts seen up to this point, the initial dative phrase referred to a god or goddess, the deity for whom something was done or built. However, it is also possible to find inscriptions recording actions performed by a subordinate of some kind, in order to curry favor with the king. Hallo considers these to be royal inscriptions, because there is a fair amount of latitude in his definition of royal inscriptions: inscriptions which are dedicated either “by, or to, or on behalf of the king”.

There are not many such inscriptions. Hallo lists only five building inscriptions of this type. Curiously, they all come from the reign of Shu-Sin. king.

### – Phonology

There are other cases of /d/ ~ /s/ alternation in Sumerian. Sometimes this alternation shows up in different syllabic writings of Sumerian, sometimes it shows up in differing Akkadian versions of loan-words or of proper names. The goddess of the scribal art, for instance, variously appears as Nidaba or Nisaba. Some Sumerologists think that this alternation means that Sumerian had a voiced interdental fricative, /ð/, which it was difficult for the script to represent.

There are several cases of bisyllabic (or polysyllabic) Sumerian words which show vowels of only one quality, but whose Akkadian equivalent shows vowels of two different qualities. For example, there is a tree usually spelled za-ba-lam in Sumerian. The word appears in Akkadian as supālu. Most probably, this is a pre-Sumerian substrate word, which passed into Sumerian. It then passed into Akkadian, presumably through Sumerian (or conceivably by a different route). The Akkadian preserves the older vocalization; the Sumerian form shows that at some time Sumerian underwent a rather extensive process of vocalic assimilation, a process of which only traces can be seen. Assuming that Akkadian borrowed the word from Sumerian, it must have borrowed the word before the Sumerian vocalic assimilation had taken place. This same process was seen in Lesson 11, where the word zabar was discussed; the pronunciation /zabar/ is the result of vocalic assimilation from some earlier form of the word like /sibar/; Akkadian again preserves the more

original vocalization.

### – ensi<sub>2</sub>

There is no unanimity among scholars about the etymology and the writing of the term ensi<sub>2</sub>. (The latest summary is in Dunham 1986:51-52.)

The word probably had a /k/-Auslaut. When it is followed by a vocalic ending of some kind, a /k/ usually appears; note also the Akkadian iššipakku. It has frequently been proposed that the /k/ is the genitive marker; the word may originally have been a genitive phrase, en.si.(k), “the lord of si”. Unfortunately, it is not sure what si means here. Jacobsen thinks that si means “arable land”; the title would originally have meant “manager of the arable lands”. But it has also been argued that the word has a pre-Sumerian substrate etymology, and that the interpretation “lord of si” is a Sumerian folk-etymology.

Some Sumerologists now transliterate this word as en<sub>5</sub>-si. This interpretation is partially based on the understanding of the word as a genitive construction, even though the spelling with en<sub>5</sub> (instead of simple en) is weird.

The problem of understanding the writing is complicated by the fact that although normally written PA-TE-SI, the word is also occasionally written PA-SI, and even just PA; other bizarre spellings are attested. These writings make it difficult to understand how the cuneiform signs are meant to reflect the language (should they be regarded as abbreviations?). Such writings cause numerous problems in transliteration.

### – Genitive

One of the pieces of evidence which indicates that the final /k/ of the genitive morpheme was actually pronounced in spoken Sumerian is the fact that it occasionally turns up in words loaned into Akkadian. For instance, the Sumerian god Amar-Utu, “young bull of Utu”, appears in Akkadian as Marduk, presumably from amar.utu.(k). If the Sumerian ensi<sub>2</sub> is indeed a genitive phrase, then the Akkadian iššipakku also shows the genitive marker /k/. It has, however, also been argued that “Marduk” is not of Sumerian or of Akkadian origin, and has nothing to do with “Amar-Utu”.

### – Proper names

The personal name “Habaluge” occurring in this inscription is presumably of Sumerian origin, although the exact etymology is not known. When a name is of uncertain etymology, it is often difficult to determine the precise reading of the signs. For example, the third sign in this name can be read lu<sub>5</sub>, lul, lab, nar, etc. The fourth sign is also graphically ambiguous; several different signs share approximately this same shape. For example, the é-sign and the ke<sub>4</sub>-sign, even though distinct signs, look very similar in several of these royal inscriptions. And if it is the ke<sub>4</sub>-sign, it has several different readings: ke<sub>4</sub>, gé, lil, etc.

One way such ambiguities can be resolved is to identify different spellings of the same name. For example, this particular name is not uncommon in Sumerian texts. It is most commonly transliterated as: Ha-ba-lu<sub>5</sub>-ke<sub>4</sub>, with the proviso that the reading of the third and fourth signs is not certain. There are also spellings where the third sign appears as lu,

and not as the lu<sub>5</sub>-lul-lab-nar-sign: Ha-ba-lu-ge and Ha-ba-lu-ge<sub>18</sub>. This shows that the third sign is probably to be understood as /lu/, and so to be read as lu, and not as lul, lab, or nar. The fourth sign is spelled as ge, gé, and ge<sub>18</sub>: Ha-ba-lu<sub>5</sub>-ge, Ha-ba-lu-gé, and Ha-ba-lu-ge<sub>18</sub>. This shows that the last sign is a gé/ke<sub>4</sub>-sign, and not the graphically similar é-sign; it also shows that the reading was probably /ge/. Therefore, the most likely reading of the name in Text 20 is: Ha-ba-lu<sub>5</sub>-gé.

The latest discussion of this name is by Steinkeller (1984:9); he reads the third sign as lug<sub>x</sub>, that is, with a /g/-Auslaut. He believes that the meaning of the name “cannot be gauged with confidence”, but it is undoubtedly a Sumerian verbal form with the modal-prefix ha; it may mean “May-he-pasture/take-care-of”.

# Lesson 21

The three texts in this Lesson do not offer very much new in the way of grammar, but they illustrate common types of royal inscriptions. The first is a weight of Shu-Sin. The next two are seals of Ibbi-Sin, the son and successor of Shu-Sin; he was the last ruler of the Ur III Dynasty.

## Sign-list and vocabulary

ώ “5”

↷ ↶ ↶ ↶ ↶ ma-na “mina” (measure of weight, about 505 grams)

↷ ↶ ↶ ↶ ↶ gi-na true, correct; standard, certified

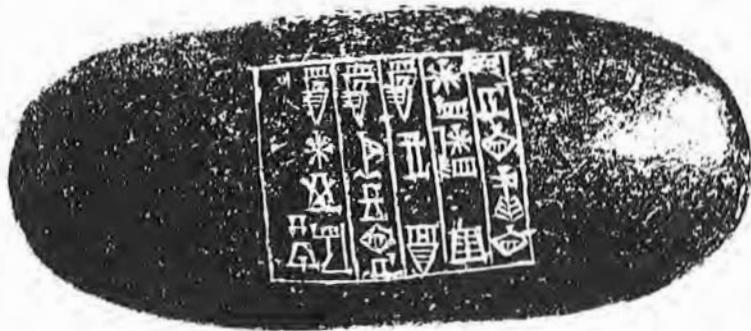
## Notes

5 When Sumerian numerals are used strictly for counting, they are normally transliterated by Arabic numerals. The word for “five” was ia.

ma-na Its etymology and value are discussed below.

gi-na This is a loan from Akkadian kīnu.

## Text 21a



Transliteration	Transcription	Translation
1: 5 <u>ma-na</u> gi-na	5 mana gina	5 standard minas.
2: d <u>Šu</u> -d <u>Zuen</u>	Šusin	Shu-Sin,
3: <u>ugal-kalag-ga</u>	ugal.kalaga	the mighty king,
4: <u>ugal-Urim</u> <sub>5</sub> <u>ki-ma</u>	ugal.Urim.a(k)	the king of Ur,
5: <u>ugal-an-ub-da-limmu</u> <sub>2</sub> <u>ba</u>	ugal.anub.da.(k) limmu.bi.a(k)	the king of the four quarters.

### Commentary

1. In simple enumerations, the numeral is followed by a singular, not a plural. In many languages, the noun appearing after a numeral assumes special forms, in number or in case. Sumerian shows no outward evidence of this; in general, agglutinative languages show no special forms after numerals.

2-5. There is no verb form.

### Discussion: weights

This is a typical weight inscription. Unlike the weight inscription seen in Lesson 10, this one actually gives the weight. It is difficult to say exactly what gi-na means in such contexts; it is usually understood as “standard”, or perhaps “certified”. One of the more important functions of Mesopotamian rulers (throughout all periods of history) was the regulation of the system of weights and measures, but not much is known about how such weights were actually managed by the crown. Gadd points out that Shulgi “rearranged the calendar, set up a bureau of standards, and issued accurate weights which were preserved and imitated to the latest days of Babylonian history” (1971:618). In the prologue to Ur-Nammu’s Law Code, there is a section referring to the “standardization” of the mina; this is usually interpreted as referring to some kind of reform of the royal weight system. Recently, Irving Finkel has published a text dated to Amar-Sin’s first year, which is a “receipt for two differing sets of weights”:

The implication of the text ... is that an official issue of correct weights was made at the beginning of Amar-Sin’s reign, and that this document reflects a deliberate attempt to ensure that government offices were using uniform weights (1987:192-193).

### – Metrology

All the Classical Semitic languages except Ethiopic have a verbal root \*mnw/y, meaning “to count, to reckon”. Therefore, Sumerian ma-na is probably a loan from the Akkadian manû (which is also the ultimate source for the English word “mina”).

The value of the ma-na and the manû varied to some degree from time to time and from place to place (Powell refers to “a multiplicity of standards which defies reduction to one or more ‘common’ norms”). In Sumer proper, the most common value of the ma-na was about 505 grams. In Mesopotamia, the manû was the same. But in most of Syria, the

manû was a little less, from 470 to 480 grams. At Ebla, it was also about 470 grams. (The theoretical value of weights is determined simply by averaging out the actual weights of weights inscribed with their values.) Since this particular weight is a 5 ma-na weight, it should weigh about 2525 grams. It actually weighs a little less, 2511 grams.

The Sumerian ma-na was divided into 60 gin; the Akkadian manû into 60 šiqlu. 60 ma-na formed a gun; 60 manû formed a biltu:

$$\begin{array}{ll} 1 \text{ gun} & = 60 \text{ ma-na} \\ 1 \text{ ma-na} & = 60 \text{ gin} \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{ll} 1 \text{ biltu} & = 60 \text{ manû} \\ 1 \text{ manû} & = 60 \text{ šiqlu} \end{array}$$

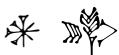
### – Numbers

The pronunciation of the numeral for “five” as /ia/ is known from mathematical cuneiform texts, where it is occasionally spelled out. The Ebla school-text mentioned in Lesson 10, which spells out the Sumerian numerals from one to ten, simply gives i for “5”. Unfortunately, not enough is known yet about the nature of the Eblaite syllabary to say what values the i-sign could have had at Ebla; however, there is some evidence to show that one of its values was /ya/. Pettinato, in fact (1981:143) reads the sign on TM.75.G.2198 as ia<sub>9</sub>, but this is perhaps somewhat adventuresome.

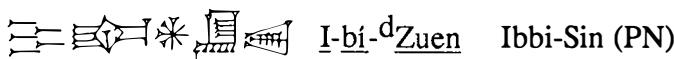
It is also significant that the i-sign is composed of five strokes: .

••••• ••••• •••••

### Sign-list and vocabulary



Nanibgal Nanibgal (DN)



I-bi-dZuen Ibbi-Sin (PN)



Da-da Dada (PN)



Ur-dNanibgal Ur-Nanibgal (PN)



zu your

### Notes

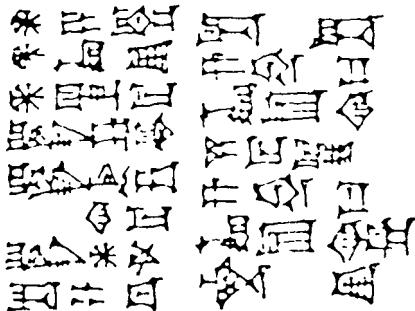
**I-bi-dZuen** The name is good Akkadian, meaning “Sin has called”; ibbi is the preterite from nabû, “to call”.

**Da-da** The etymology of the name is unsure; it is discussed further below.

**Nanibgal** Very little is known about this deity. The reading of the name is somewhat uncertain, as is the etymology. The cuneiform character appears to be the an-sign followed by the nisaba-sign. Therefore, the name is sometimes transliterated as AN.NISABA, or as

DIĞIR.NISABA (Nanibgal is not infrequently mentioned alongside Nisaba). In the writing in Text 21b, the determinative and the an-component of the sign are written on top of each other, instead of following each other. This is for the sake of graphic symmetry; other times the two components are written after each other.

## Text 21b



### Notes

The name of Dada's father, occurring in line 11 of this text, illustrates the difficulties of working from autographs. The autograph seems to show the name as Ur-ṣag<sub>5</sub>. ṣag<sub>5</sub> (or ṣa<sub>6</sub>) means "good". The name would then be a variant of Ur-ṣag<sub>5</sub>-ga, a relatively common personal name meaning "the good man". However, the photograph of the text is more ambiguous. The sign in question is actually somewhat damaged, and the remaining traces can be made to fit either ṣag<sub>5</sub> or <sup>d</sup>Nanibgal.

The reason for preferring the reading <sup>d</sup>Nanibgal over ṣag<sub>5</sub> is because other seal impressions have been preserved of this same individual, Dada, in which the sign for the name of his father is more distinct, and in these the sign is clearly Nanibgal.

One cannot always accept a modern-day editor's transliteration of a text. An autograph carries more evidential value, but even then cannot always be accepted at face value. This is especially true for autographs which were drawn when knowledge of Sumerian was weak. Better than a transliteration or an autograph is a photograph. However, for many published texts no photographs are available, and for others the photographs are reproduced in such poor quality that they are almost useless. For any significant passage, there is no alternative to a close examination of the original cuneiform document.

<b>Transliteration</b>	<b>Transcription</b>	<b>Translation</b>
1: <u>d</u> <u>I</u> - <u>bí</u> -	Ibbisin	Oh Ibbi-Sin,
2: <u>d</u> <u>Zuen</u>		
3: <u>diğir</u> - <u>kalam</u> - <u>ma</u>	diğir.kalam.a(k)	god of the land,
4: <u>ugal</u> - <u>kalag</u> - <u>ga</u>	ugal.kalaga	mighty king,
5: <u>ugal</u> - <u>Urim</u> <sub>5</sub> <u>ki</u> - <u>ma</u>	ugal.Urim.a(k)	king of Ur,
6: <u>ugal</u> - <u>an</u> - <u>ub</u> -	ugal.anub.da.(k) limmu.bi.a(k)	king of the four quarters –
7: <u>da</u> - <u>limmu</u> <sub>2</sub> - <u>ba</u>		
8: <u>Da</u> - <u>da</u>	Dada	Dada,
9: <u>ensi</u> <sub>2</sub>	ensi	the ensi of Nippur,
10: <u>Nibru</u> <sup>ki</sup>	Nibru.(k)	
11: <u>dumu</u> <u>Ur</u> - <u>d</u> <u>Nanibgal</u>	dumu.Urnani <sup>g</sup> bal	the son of Ur-Nanibgal
12: <u>ensi</u> <sub>2</sub>	ensi	the ensi of Nippur –
13: <u>Nibru</u> <sup>ki</sup> - <u>ka</u>	Nibru.k.a(k)	
14: <u>arad</u> - <u>zu</u>	arad.zu	is your servant.

### Commentary

1. It is usually assumed that in seal inscriptions the initial nominal phrase contains the name of the king in a vocative. The vocative normally has no formal marking in Sumerian. Another example occurs in Text 22. There are a few cases where the vocative is marked by .e. This is presumably an extension in use of the locative-terminative.

The essence of this seal is: “Oh Ibbi-Sin, Dada is your servant”.

13. A double genitive is contained here:

Dada,  
ensi.Nibru.(k)  
dumu.Urnanibgal  
[ensi.Nibru.k].a(k)

14. zu is the second person possessive-suffix, “your”. It is difficult to say whether this is a nominal sentence without the copula (“Dada is your servant”), or an appositive (“Dada, your servant”).

### Discussion: possessive-suffixes

The possessive-suffixes for the singular are:

first person	- <u>gu</u> <sub>10</sub> ( <u>mu</u> , <u>gu</u> <sub>10</sub> )
second	- <u>zu</u>
third animate	- <u>a-ni</u>
inanimate	- <u>bi</u>

The initial consonant of the marker for the first-person singular is the velar nasal discussed under Phonology, conventionally transliterated by Sumerologists as g. Therefore, gu<sub>10</sub> is the most up-to-date reading of this sign in this usage. However, it is also transliterated as gu<sub>10</sub>, and (especially in older works) as mu.

#### – Proper names

The name Da-da occurs very frequently in cuneiform texts. It is not very easy to determine the etymology of a name of such a simple structure, what appears to be a reduplicated CV syllable. The name has variously been considered to be Sumerian, Akkadian, or “other”. In an article on “Ethnicity and Onomastics in Sargonic Mesopotamia” (1982), Benjamin Foster divided personal names into four groups: Sumerian; Akkadian; Reduplicated; Unsure. He purposely omitted the name Da-da from discussion, because of the difficulty in determining its etymology.

Such reduplicated personal names are sometimes referred to by the German term “Lallnamen” or “Lallwörter”; another example is Du-du.

#### – Seals

Seals were used by officials in Mesopotamia (and elsewhere) to stamp their “seal of approval” upon documents of all kinds. The act of sealing could perform several functions, such as acknowledgment, authorization, guarantee, etc. Mesopotamian seals usually consist of two components: a pictorial scene of some kind, and a short inscription. Many seals have only a pictorial scene, and lack an inscription. There are only a few seals which have just an inscription, but lack a pictorial scene. The pictorial representation on the seal frequently has a mythological significance, as in the example given below. Or, it may be a “presentation scene”, usually thought to represent the possessor of the seal paying homage to his ruler, the king. The following is a picture of a (non-royal) seal, from the Old Akkadian period. (This particular seal has often been reproduced.) The inscription reads: Ad-da dub-sar, “Adda the scribe”. The photograph is actually of the impression of the seal, not the seal itself. This is because the text on seals is inscribed in reverse (that is, mirror-imaged), so that when impressed, the text comes out in the right direction.



It is not easy to determine what language such a short inscription is written in. It may be perfectly good Sumerian. However, according to the criteria used by art historians, the seal in the photograph dates to the Old Akkadian period. Therefore, the language is probably Akkadian, and dub-sar should be read as a logogram for tupṣarru.

### – Scribes

Scribes occupied a central role in all of Mesopotamian civilization. Many modern scholars have written about them, but there is still much that is not known; for example, to what degree was their job hereditary; what was the extent of their influence at the royal court; did they have non-scribal work at the court or elsewhere, etc. Writing on the “social position of Neo-Babylonian scribes”, Muhammad Dandameyev has said:

Our information about the social position of the Mesopotamian scribe, his activity as bureaucrat and in the service of the community for recording of contracts is very scanty. We have no direct data on the economic situation and the social origin of scribes. We also do not know if the scribal profession was the chief source of income or if the scribes were busy with their craft along with handicraft, tilling of land and so on (1982:35).

C. B. F. Walker points out that

The scribes, like any craftsmen, had to undergo training, and having completed their training and become entitled to call themselves dubsar “scribe”, they were members of a privileged élite who might look with contempt on their fellow citizens (1987:33).

Specifically discussing seal-practice in the Ur III period, Steinkeller says:

The term dub-sar, apart from its basic meaning “scribe” is an honorific title which merely indicates the graduation of the individual in question from a scribal school. ... It is tempting to speculate that the “dub-sar seal” was a kind of “diploma”, which may have been presented to a graduate of a scribal school at the conclusion of his studies. The possession of such a seal would have constituted proof that its owner was eligible and entitled to be employed in the state or temple administrative apparatus or to sell his services to private individuals (1977:47-48).

In a similar vein, Veenhof mentions the role of scribes

in the administration and their position in society, which may range from that of a simple clerk or a paid letter writer on the market to that of a chief-accountant or secretary of a chancery or king (1986:21).

The rather automatic translation of dub-sar as “scribe” paints a rather simplistic picture. Michalowski says that “In Ur III times dub-sar was a general term for low and middle level bureaucrats”(1987:62).

And to quote Walker again,

[Most scribes,] after all their technical training, spent their lives writing lists of deliveries of sheep or issues of barley rations and occasionally taking a letter by dictation. The more successful scribes would end up as senior administrators in the state bureaucracy, but most of their colleagues would

have been happy simply with their status as educated men and the knowledge that their training guaranteed them employment (1987:39).

In a thought-provoking article about what we *don't* know about Ur III society, Sollberger asks:

We know roughly what the professional scribe's jobs consisted of, but how did he work, and where did he work, and how did he make himself known as a professional scribe and his services available? And there is of course the nagging question which is usually politely glossed over: where did the scribes get the enormous amount of clay they needed? Were there clay stationers? Did one have to buy clay or did one just go to the canal bank and help oneself ...? (1972:188).

#### – Engravers

When dealing with “monumental” inscriptions, it is necessary to distinguish between “scribe” and “engravers” (or, “lapidaries”). The latter were the persons who actually chiselled the inscriptions into the stone. They were not always literate, but simply copied a design or plan, which may have been drawn onto the stone. Presumably, the engraver worked under the supervision of a scribe. In other cases, the scribe and the engraver may have been the same person.

The standard word for “engraver” was zadim. This word apparently derives from za, “stone”, and dím, “to fashion”; dím is an active participle, and za is an incorporated direct object.

In the case of seals, the situation was probably a little more complicated. The inscription and the pictorial scene were sometimes engraved by different individuals. W. G. Lambert (discussing seals of the Cassité period) asks:

A basic question which needs answering is, who carved these inscriptions? Did one man carve both glyptic and inscription, or were separate craftsmen employed for the artistic and scribal parts? In some cases it is clear that the glyptic was carved first, because not enough room was left for the inscription, so that the last line had to be spread out among the glyptic. But in other cases where the inscription covers virtually the whole area, and the glyptic is reduced to a row of insects for example, then one may suspect that the inscription was carved first and the glyptic was a second thought, serving merely in *fugam vacui*. ... One may wonder if two quite separate guilds of craftsmen were in existence, and such a division of labour seems very probable in the contemporary boundary stones. ... On general grounds too such a differentiation is likely, since the artist and the scribe needed very different training. Yet one need not suppose that this demarcation was always completely enforced (1975:220).

#### – Seals

Many seals from the Ancient Near East have been preserved. Even more common than the seals themselves are seal impressions, that is, the impression of a seal upon a

cuneiform document. Text 21b is a seal-impression found on a record of official appointments of individuals to sundry governmental offices.

Seal impressions are necessarily rather small, being squeezed onto a small seal. This accounts for some of the odd division of names and epithets put onto more than one line. This small size often makes it difficult to read autographs or photographs of seal-impressions, even if reproduced full-size. Occasionally, the script used on the seals is archaicizing, compounding the problems of reading.

When publishing editions of cuneiform texts, Sumerologists do not usually present a drawing of a complete seal as it appears on a document; they will usually only reproduce the impression left by the inscription. This is primarily because of the mechanical effort it takes to adequately reproduce (and even just to describe) the scene carved on the seal, and linguists are not artists or art-historians. Sometimes the seal impressions will be briefly described, and occasionally published in a separate volume, distinct from the texts themselves.

The practice of only reproducing the inscription, and not the pictorial scene, is unfortunate. While linguists may only be interested in the inscription, art historians, anthropologists, and historians, among others, are just as interested in the scene itself. Seal impressions are also important for scholars studying groups of documents, and archival relationships.

#### – arad-zu seals

Texts 21b and 21c may be called royal seal-impressions, again following Hallo's definition of "royal" as: "by, or to, or on behalf of the king". Many non-royal seals and seal-impressions (such as that in the photo above) have also been preserved.

There are two principal types of Ur III seals. Text 21b is an "arad-zu" seal. This type, which is very common, has a specific structure. First, there is the name of the ruling monarch. This is a nominal phrase, in the vocative. Second, there is the name of an official, with various epithets or filial relationships as appositives. Third, the term "your servant" concludes the seal.

The usual interpretation of arad-zu seals is that an official had it cut, out of homage or respect for the king. However, it has been speculated by Richard Zettler that "the flow of these seals was from king to official and not from official to king" (1977:33).

A few seal-inscriptions have been preserved where the last line reads arad-ni, not arad-zu. Presumably arad-ni is for arad.anī, "his servant". (This is another instance of the overhanging vowel problem.) Not enough is known about such seals to characterize them differently from the arad-zu seals.

Although arad-zu seals have traditionally been classified as "Sumerian", with a Sumerian inscription, it has been proposed to read seals of this type from the Akkadian period as Akkadian. That is, arad-zu is to be read as ARAD-sú, for warassu, "his servant". (This is the usual Akkadian form, resulting from the regular assimilation of \*/dš/ > /ss/: \*/warad-šu/ > /warassu/.) The rest of the text would then be understood as logograms, to be read in Akkadian.

The reason for this possibility is because of a seal where the last word is written arad-

za, presumably ARAD-sà, for /warassa/, “her servant”, and another seal written geme₂-za, possibly GEME₂-sà, for /amassa/, “her servant (fem)”.

While this may be true for seals of the Akkadian period, it is hard to say whether it might be true for Ur III (and other) seals. There is really no evidence to decide one way or the other, and so the question is still open. Barring explicit evidence to the contrary, it is probably best to assume that for the Ur III period, at least, the text is Sumerian.

### – Seals

Both Text 21b and 21c may be called functional, in the sense discussed in Lesson 4. There are also a certain number of votive seals. These are known primarily from the seals themselves; only a few of the actual impressions are preserved. Text 22, below, is such a votive cylinder seal.

••••• ••••• •••••

### Sign-list and vocabulary

 Sag-<sup>d</sup>Nanna-zu    Sagnannazu (PN)

    saḡa    (kind of priest)

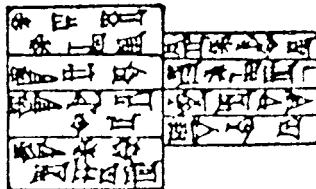
    ba    to give as a gift

### Notes

**Sag-dNanna-zu** saḡ means “head”, but can also have the meaning “slave”. zu is a verbal root meaning “to know”. Names of this type are usually interpreted as some kind of reduced relative or participial clause, “the slave who knows Nanna”, or “the slave whom Nanna knows”.

**saḡa** This priest was high up in the temple hierarchy, although very little is known of his priestly duties. He seems to have been mostly concerned with running the administrative side of the temple. While the conventional translation is “sanga-priest”, Gelb points out that “In his capacity as the head of a household, the word sanga may be interpreted as the chief administrator of a temple household” (1979b:16); Snell translates the title as “economic director of a temple”. The same cuneiform sign, in fact, can be read as ṣita₅, “to count” (Akkadian manū); Aage Westenholz, among others, says that the sign “depicts an abacus or a countingboard” (1985:296).

## Text 21c



Transliteration	Transcription	Translation
1: <u>dI-bí-dZuen</u>	Ibbisin	Ibbi-Sin,
2: <u>lugal-kalag-ga</u>	lugal.kalaga	the mighty king,
3: <u>lugal-Urim<sub>5</sub><sup>ki</sup>-ma</u>	lugal.Urim.a(k)	the king of Ur,
4: <u>lugal-an-ub-da-limmu<sub>2</sub> ba-ke<sub>4</sub></u>	lugal.anub.da.(k) limmu.bi.ak.e	the king of the four quarters –
5: <u>Saḡ-dNanna-zu</u>	Saḡnannazu	to Sagnannazu,
6: <u>saḡa-dEn-lil-lá</u>	saḡa.Enlil.a(k)	the <u>sanga</u> -priest of Enlil,
7: <u>arad-da-ni-ir</u>	arad.ani.r	his servant –
8: <u>in-na-ba</u>	i.na.(n.)ba	gave (this seal).

### Commentary

8. The verb form is almost always written this way. The in-sign contains the conjugation-prefix .i and the initial /n/ of the dative dimensional-prefix.

### Discussion: arad-da-ni-ir seals

This type of seal is known as an arad-da-ni-ir seal, or as an in-na-ba seal. Its most common structure is: First, the name of the king, with the ergative case-marker; second, the name of an official, with various epithets; third, the appositive arad.ani, with the dative case-marker; fourth, the verb form in-na-ba. This results in the dative noun phrase following the subject, and immediately preceding the verb. In most of the texts seen earlier, the dative noun phrase occurred at the beginning of the text.

The understood direct object in this type of seal is the seal itself. The king gave such seals to his officials (and family members), presumably as a reward for some kind of service. For this reason, they are sometimes referred to as “presentation seals”. It is also possible that the king gave the seal to an official upon his appointment to an office. Fewer such seals are preserved than arad-zu seals.

arad-zu seals are found under all five kings of the Ur III Dynasty. arad-da-ni-ir seals, on the other hand, are only attested for the reigns of Shu-Sin and Ibbi-Sin. This may (or may not) be due to accidents of preservation. It is also possible that there was some kind of change in administrative practice.

### – History

Shu-Sin apparently died a natural death. He was succeeded by his son, Ibbi-Sin. Early in the latter's reign, the eastern territories under the control of Ur broke away, then other parts of the empire began to fall away. For most of his reign, Ibbi-Sin's control extended no further than the city of Ur itself. The economy collapsed, and a vicious inflationary spiral ensued. Very little is known of the details of the twenty-four or twenty-five years of Ibbi-Sin's "reign". Jacobsen has said:

How an empire like that of the Third Dynasty of Ur – to judge by our sources the most efficiently organized structure of its kind before Assyrian times – could so quickly and so completely collapse without pressure from any enemy state or states of comparable magnitude is really quite puzzling (1953: 173).

Jacobsen wrote this over thirty years ago, but his puzzlement still largely stands; Steinkeller says that "the phenomenal rise of this empire was matched only by the suddenness and completeness of its demise; in less than a century after its creation, no trace of it remained" (1987b:19).

Finally, there came invasions by the Amorites, against whom Shu-Sin had built the wall mentioned in Text 19, and the Elamites. The Elamites, aided by a somewhat obscure group of people from the Zagros mountains known as the "Su" or "Sua" (recently identified by Steinkeller [1988] with Shimaski in Iran) sacked Ur, then withdrew back to Elam, carrying Ibbi-Sin back with them; he died in Anshan. Gadd says: "Ibbi-Sin became the typical figure of an ill-starred king, remembered only for his captivity and death in a strange land" (1971:617).

During their sack, the Elamites destroyed every temple standing in Ur, and all of its fortifications. One of the most well-known Sumerian literary compositions is a long poem entitled "The Lament over the Destruction of Ur", which bemoans its destruction.

This was not the only time that Ur was sacked; Samsu-Iluna of Babylon also levelled the city, in 1740 BC. The year-date for the eleventh year of his rule is: "The year in which, at the pleasure of Anu and Enlil, he destroyed the walls of Ur and Uruk". Woolley describes the destruction:

The ruins bear eloquent testimony to the thoroughness of that destruction. The fortifications were dismantled – this indeed one might expect; every temple that we found had been plundered, cast down, and burned; every house had been consumed with fire; the whole of the great city ceased to exist (1982:214).

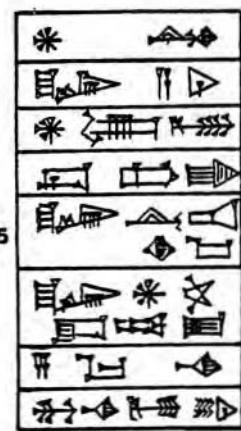
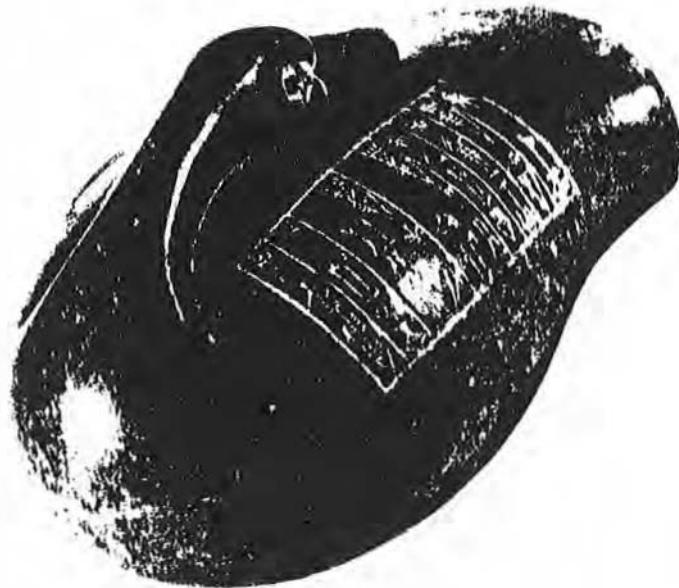
However, the city was rebuilt almost as often as it was sacked. Most kings of the Isin-Larsa period rebuilt old temples and built new ones. Such construction took place right through the Neo-Babylonian period. Although Ur never regained the political importance it enjoyed under the Ur III Dynasty, there were times when it must still have been an imposing city.

Ur was occupied – at least, to some degree – into the Persian period. It began to completely fade out about the fourth century BC, through the effects of changing trade

patterns, the shifting of the course of the Euphrates and the concomitant loss of agriculture, etc.

## Text 21d

supplementary



### Notes

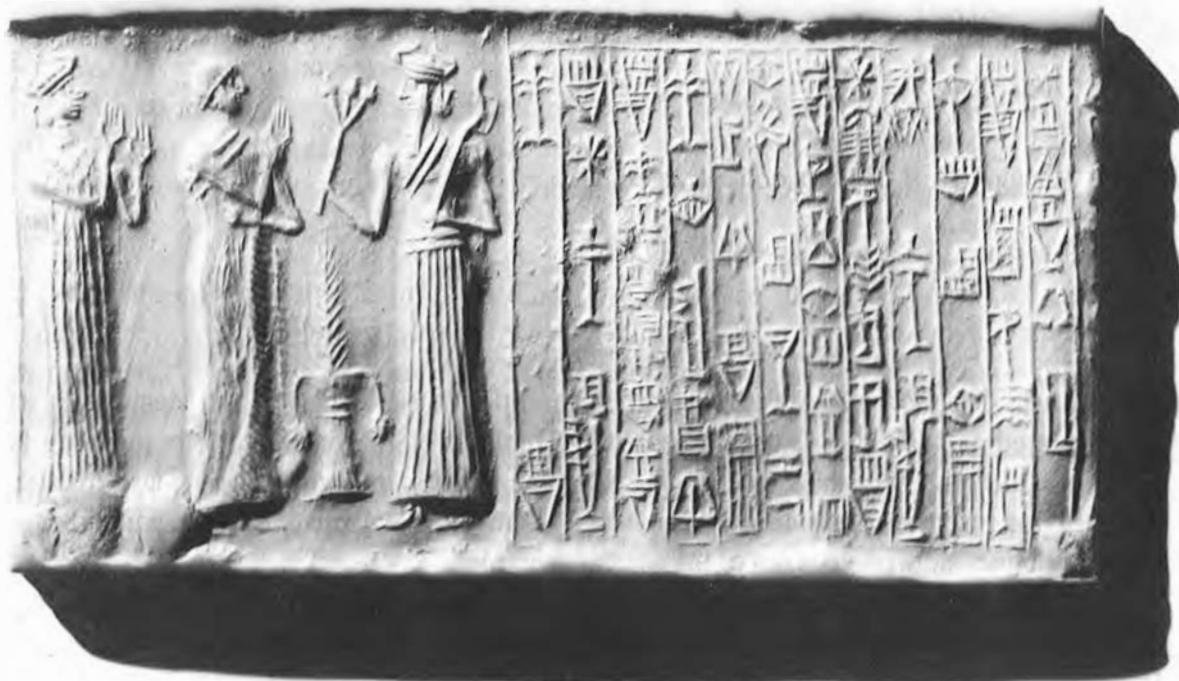
Line 8. In Text 21a, gi-na (a borrowing from Akkadian) was used as an adjective. However, it can also be used as a verb: mu-na-gi-in. It is usually translated as “he standardized”, or perhaps here “he certified”. As discussed above, the exact significance of the term is not clear.

The actual weight of this weight is 2478 grams.



# Lesson 22

This is a votive cylinder seal, made of limestone, dedicated to the life of Shulgi.



## Sign-list and vocabulary

 Mes-lam-ta-è-a Meslamtaea (DN, masc)

 Ki-lul-la Kilula (PN)

 Ur-ba-? Urba-x (PN)

 Lagaš (ŠIR.BUR.LA) Lagash (GN)

 ā arm, strength

  gu-za throne

   gu-za-lá (kind of official)

  kišib cylinder-seal

   geštug<sub>3</sub> ear; intelligence

  níg (ní) thing

  lá to hold, to lift, to carry

   šag<sub>5</sub> (sa<sub>6</sub>) to be good, pleasant, nice

 il

## Notes

**Mes-lam-ta-è-a** God of the Netherworld, apparently the same as Nergal. Mes-lam (also transliterated as Mès-lam) is the name of the temple of Nergal in Kutha. Its meaning is unknown (although gišmes is well known as a type of tree). ta is the ablative case-marker. è  is a verbal root, meaning “to go out”. a is the nominalizer. Thus, the name means something like “he who goes out of the Meslam-temple”.

Meslamtaea himself does not occur frequently in texts, but Nergal was widely worshipped in Mesopotamia. He shared the rule of the Netherworld with Queen Ereshkigal.

**Ki-lul-la** This not uncommon name is presumably Sumerian, although the etymology is unsure. It is variously spelled as: Ki-lul-la, Ki-lul-lá, and Ki-lul-lá-a.

**Ur-ba-?** The reading of the third sign is uncertain. Both the autograph and the photo show a sign which looks closely like the last sign in the inscription, which must be bi. The reading bi for this sign is also the reading preferred by Gadd, who says that upon a “fresh examination” of the seal, “the engraver certainly traced, and doubtless intended, the same sign as in the last place of the whole inscription”, that is, bi. However, there seem to be no parallels to a putative name Ur-ba-bi. (Gadd speculates that Ba-bi may be a variant of the name of the goddess seen in Lesson 11, spelled as <sup>d</sup>Ba-ba<sub>6</sub>, which earlier Sumerologists read as <sup>d</sup>Ba-ú.)

Most Sumerologists have interpreted the sign as a poorly drawn ga-sign (if not a simple mistake). The ga-sign here would be read as gara<sub>9</sub>. Ba-gara<sub>9</sub> is the name of a well-attested temple of Ningirsu at Lagash (the etymology of Ba-gara<sub>9</sub> is unsure). The personal name would then mean, “the man of (the temple) Bagara”. This name is attested elsewhere. Also, other names composed of Ur and the name of a temple are attested.

**Lagash** “Lagash” is used in two senses in Sumerian (and in English). Strictly speaking, it refers to a city proper (whose modern name is el-Hibbe). But it can also be used to refer to the territory controlled from the city of Lagash. This larger entity is sometimes referred to as “Lagash-state”, as opposed to “Lagash-city”. This included Lagash-city; the adjacent Girsu (whose modern Arabic name is Telloh, meaning “mound of the tablet”), and Nina (modern Surghul). Because of this ambiguity, the term “Lagash” is sometimes used when referring to Girsu.

This was the site of the first important excavation of a Sumerian tell, begun by the French in 1877. Thousands of tablets were found, including a number of royal inscriptions from the First Dynasty of Lagash, and from the time of Gudea. These are one of the prime sources of Sumerian for the period.

The etymology of the name is unknown. It is not known how the three signs ŠIR-BUR-LA came to represent the name of this city. One would guess that the la-component is some kind of phonetic complement. The name is, in fact, occasionally written LA-BUR-ŠIR.

á This originally meant “arm”, and then “strength”. In this latter sense, its Akkadian equivalent is emūqu, glossed by the CAD as: “1. strength (in physical sense as localized in the arm), ...”. á-zid-da is something like “the effective arm”. It can be approximately rendered in English as “right arm” or “right-hand-man”.

In Text 17, the expression dīgir-zid occurred, translated as “the effective god”. There, zid appeared without the nominalizer -a. But here, the same adjective occurs with the nominalizer -a: zid-da.

gu-za-lá gu-za means “throne”. lá is a verbal root meaning “to hold, to lift, to carry”. Here, lá is an active participle, and gu-za is its incorporated object: “he who holds the throne”, or “throne-holder”.

gu-za-lá was borrowed into Akkadian as guzalû, explained by the CAD as: “an official, lit. chair-bearer, originally a servant carrying a chair after his master”.

gu-za is thought to be the ultimate source of the word for “chair, throne” appearing in many Semitic languages: Akkadian kussû, Hebrew kissē, Arabic kursîy, etc. But since the pattern of the Sumerian form is a little strange, it has more recently been speculated that gu-za is a borrowing from Akkadian. This situation illustrates the difficulty of evaluating the evidence of loan words; it is not always easy to establish the direction of a borrowing.

**kišib** It has been speculated that this is a pre-Sumerian substrate word.

**geštug<sub>3</sub>** This can be spelled in a variety of ways. The simplest was originally the picture of a donkey’s ear (KANJI), transliterated as geštug. It can also be written with the signs geš and túg functioning as phonetic complements; the combination of these three individual signs can appear in varying orders:

geš-túggeštug (= geštug<sub>2</sub>)  
gešgeštugtúg (= geštug<sub>3</sub>)

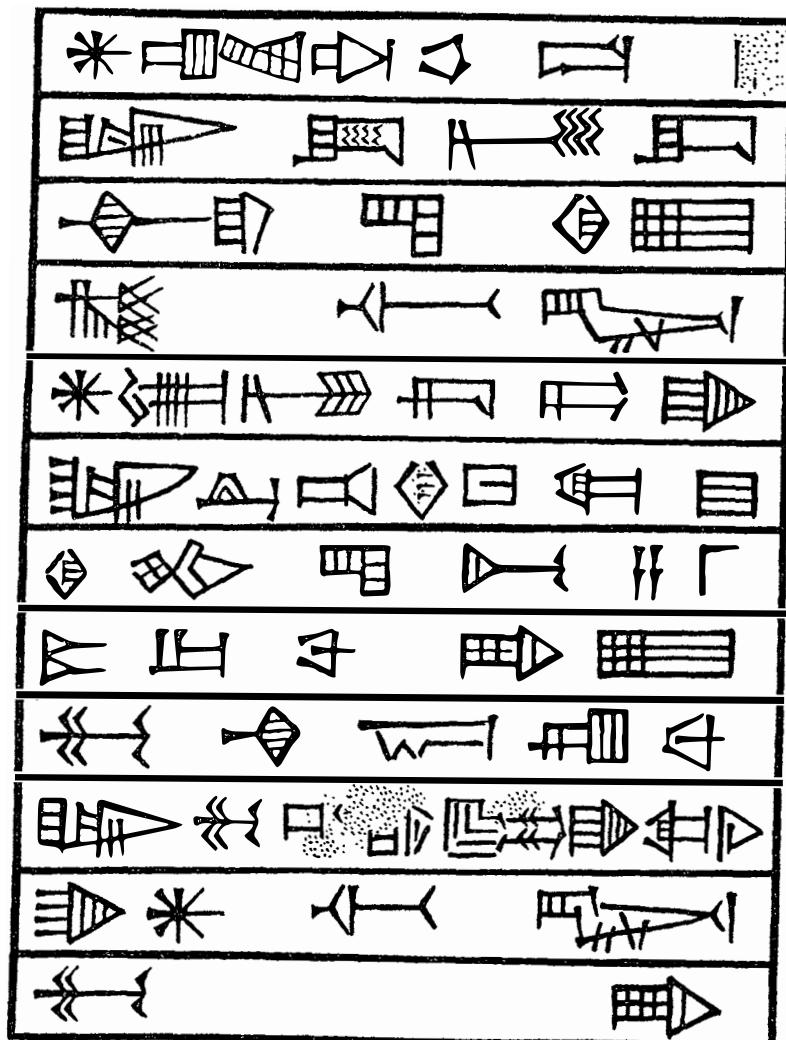
Although it is clear (now) that geš and túg in this particular use are phonetic

complements, they are not usually transliterated as such. Since the simplest (at least, phonetically) reading of the geštug-sign is pi, Sumerologists often refer to this sign as the “pi-sign”, and transliterate this word as: geš-túg-pi, or (as here): geš-pi-túg.

In its concrete meaning as “ear”, the Akkadian equivalent of geštug is uznu. However, it is also equated with has̄su, glossed by the CAD as: “(1) aperture of the ear, ear, (2) (faculty of) hearing, (3) understanding”. Jacobsen says that “the Mesopotamians believed the ear, not the brain, to be the seat of intelligence”.

**šag<sub>5</sub>** Variously transliterated as: šag<sub>5</sub>, ša<sub>6</sub>, sag<sub>9</sub>, sa<sub>6</sub>, sig<sub>6</sub>, etc. The most common Akkadian equivalent is damāqu. The verbal adjective damqu is glossed by the CAD as: “1. good, fine, pleasant, 2. beautiful, handsome, 3. of good family, well-to-do, 4. expert, well-trained, 5. of good quality, in good condition, 6. gracious, favorable, 7. propitious, 8. effective, 9. canonical”.

## Text 22



## Notes

Line 9. Assyriologists use a superscript exclamation mark (!) to indicate that the cuneiform sign so marked in transliteration is written in a deviant or aberrant fashion on the tablet. For example, the proper name in this text might be transliterated as: Ur-ba-gara<sub>9</sub>!. This transliteration means that in the opinion of the modern editor, the sign is a poorly drawn gara<sub>9</sub>-sign.

Another convention is to employ the superscript exclamation point to mark the correct value in transliteration (that is, what the editor thinks it should be), and to follow this with “what is actually written”, in caps within parentheses. Thus, a transliteration such as: Ur-ba-gara<sub>9</sub>!(BI) would mean that in the opinion of the editor, the sign drawn on the tablet is bi, but the editor believes that this bi-sign is a mistake for gara<sub>9</sub> – the scribe made an error.

As can be imagined, these conventions can be misleading or confusing. They illustrate the importance of working directly from the texts, from photographs when possible, or from autographs, and not just from transliterations.

Line 10. Because of damage to the cylinder seal, this line is somewhat difficult to read. Of the geštug<sub>3</sub>-sign, the geš-component (☒) is clear. The pi (or geštug)-component (☒) is virtually completely effaced. Of the tūg-component (☒), only the bottom shows. In addition, the following nīg-sign (☒) is scrunched up.

Transliteration	Transcription	Translation
1: d <u>Mes-lam-ta-è-a</u>	Meslamtaea	For Meslamtaea,
2: <u>ugal á-zid-da</u>	ugal a.zid.a	the king, the right-hand man
3: <u>Lagaš<sub>ki</sub>-ke<sub>4</sub></u>	Lagaš.(a)k.e	of Lagash –
4: <u>nam-til-il</u>	nam.til	for the life of
5: d <u>Šul-gi nitah-kalag-ga</u>	Šulgi nitah.kalaga	Shulgi, the mighty man,
6: <u>ugal-Urim<sub>ki</sub>-ma-ka-še</u>	ugal.Urim.ak.a(k).še	the king of Ur –
7: <u>Ki-lul-la gu-za-lá</u>	Kilula guzala	Kilula, the <u>guzala</u> -official,
8: <u>dumu Ur-ba?-ke<sub>4</sub></u>	dumu Urba?.ak.e	the son of Ur-ba? –
9: <u>mu-na-dím kišib-ba</u>	mu.na.(n.)dim kišib.bi.a(k)	fashioned (this). The name of this cylinder seal is:
10: <u>ugal-ğu<sub>10</sub> geštug<sub>3</sub>-nīg-šag<sub>5</sub>-ga-ka-né</u>	ugal.ğu geštug.nig.šag. ak.an.i.e	“O my king, let me keep him alive at his ear of favor”.
11: <u>ga-an-til-il</u>	ga.(i.)n.til	
12: <u>mu-bi</u>	mu.bi	

## Commentary

3. Lagaš.ak.e, written Lagaš<sub>ki</sub>-ke<sub>4</sub>. The followers of the Falkenstein school would read the first sign as Lagaša.

The .e at the end is the marker of the locative-terminative case. In all the previous

instances of indirect objects and benefactives, the nominal phrase used the dative case, marked in .ra. Occasionally, however, the locative-terminative case, marked in .e, is used instead. This reflects a further spread of the usage of the locative-terminative; such a use of the locative-terminative for the dative does not appear in earlier Sumerian.

The combination of the /k/ of the genitive marker with the /e/ of the locative-terminative is written with the ke₄-sign, just as is the combination of the /k/ of the genitive marker with the /e/ of the ergative. (This ambiguity of the ke₄-sign can lead to confusion.)

4. Here and in line 11, the root for “to live” is written ti-il, not til. That is, the root is written syllabically, and not logographically. The spelling nam-ti-il also occurs in the Gudea inscriptions. Such spellings show us that the final /l/ of the root was indeed pronounced in word-final position.

Lines 4ff. are a complicated genitive:

nam.til.	<u>Š</u> ulgi	.ak.e
	nitah.kalaga	
	lugal.Urim.ak	

9. Because the locative-terminative is used in line 3 in the sense of the dative, it is resumed by na, the dimensional-prefix properly belonging to the dative. In its more usual uses, the locative-terminative is either not resumed at all, or else it is resumed by ni – properly the dimensional-prefix belonging to the locative.

There is no expressed direct object (patient); the votive cylinder-seal itself is the direct object.

The last word in the line is an anticipatory genitive, beginning a new sentence: “of this cylinder-seal, its name is ...”, that is, “the name of this cylinder-seal is ...”. This use of the anticipatory genitive is similar to that seen in Text 15: alam-ba ... mu-bi-im, “the name of this statue is ...”.

Line 9 includes the final word of one sentence, and the beginning word of the following sentence. It is unusual in Sumerian orthography for one line to contain elements of two different sentences. However, the space constraints in cylinder-seals occasionally cause odd placement of signs within a line or case.

10-11. These lines express the actual name of the votive cylinder seal.

10. lugal-gu₁₀ is probably a vocative. As in Text 21, the vocative is unmarked.

The use of nam to form abstracts has occurred several times. However, some abstracts are formed with níg, instead of nam: níg-šag₅, “goodness, favor”. The original meaning of níg is “thing”, “something”. It is relatively uncommon for níg to form such abstract nouns. More commonly, it forms concrete nouns from verbal roots: gu₇, “to eat”; níg-gu₇, “food”. Therefore, it might perhaps be best to regard the níg-šag₅ in Text 22 as concrete, rather than as abstract. Sollberger, in fact, translates this expression (in another text) as: “grace, favour (in a concrete sense, ‘good things’)” (1966:158).

Unlike nam, níg is not used with nominal roots. That is, such forms as \*níg-lugal do not occur.

The transliteration né assumes the interpretation as .ani.e, the possessive-suffix followed by the locative-terminative case-marker, here with its more original meaning of “at, by, through”. A similar case occurred in Text 20, where the writing né represented the

possessive-suffix followed by the ergative case-marker .e. As discussed there, some Sumerologists would prefer to transliterate such phrases by ni: geštug<sub>3</sub>-níg-šag<sub>5</sub>-ga-ka-ni.

11. ga is the modal-prefix of the cohortative mood. This is used for positive wish for first person, both singular and plural: “let me/us, may I/we”. It is thus the first-person equivalent of the third-person desiderative modal-prefix hé.

The view of Sumerian grammar presented in this book assumes the presence here of a conjugation-prefix l, which has assimilated into the modal-prefix ga. However, since a writing such as \*ga-l seems never to occur, the assumption of such assimilation may be simplistic. Therefore, the idea that a conjugation-prefix must be present in every finite verbal form may need modifying.

One of the thornier problems in Sumerian morphology is the form of the root appearing after the different modal-prefixes. In the singular, the cohortative ga is always used with the hamtu-root, whether the root is being used transitively or intransitively. (The plural is unsure.) When the cohortative is used in the singular, there is no overt marking for person; that is, the subject (or agent) is not marked. But the direct object (patient), however, is expressed by a personal-affix immediately preceding the verbal root. Thus, the .n before the verbal root here marks the patient, and hence the root ti-il must be interpreted as transitive: “let me keep him alive/well”.

The syntax of the personal-affixes of the cohortative (and of other moods) differs from that of the indicative. In the indicative, the pre-verbal-root slot marks the agent in the hamtu, but the patient in the marū. But in the cohortative, the agent is unmarked; the pre-verbal-root slot marks the patient, and the root is always in the hamtu.

12. The enclitic copula is not used, although it was so used in the parallel expression in Text 9: alam-ba ... mu-bi-im.

#### Discussion: sign formation

In Lesson 9, the use of gunû-strokes to form new signs was discussed. A similar device was the addition of šešsig-strokes to a sign. Whereas gunû-strokes consist of short lines, šešsig-strokes look more like a kind of cross-hatching. For example, the da-sign is originally a picture of a hand–upper-shoulder–arm: . The word has such meanings as “forearm, side”, etc. To indicate á, meaning specifically “arm” (and then, by extension, “strength”), šešsig-strokes appear on the part of the da-sign which approximately represents the arm, yielding: .

The etymology of šešsig is unknown, but it must be connected with the word še, “barley”, whose cuneiform sign resembles these cross-hatchings.

#### – Syllabic writings

Syllabic writings of words usually written logographically (such as nam-ti-il for nam-ti-il) are not common in the Ur III royal inscriptions; it is not sure why they occur. By way of contrast, they are not uncommon in the two very large Gudea inscriptions.

Falkenstein believes that the relatively high frequency of such spellings in these two Gudea texts shows that they were written down on the basis of a dictated text. That is, the scribe(s) did not work from a written, already-prepared source, but rather the scribe(s)

listened to the text being read, and wrote down the text as they went along. This idea does seem like the best explanation for certain kinds of error which occur in the Gudea texts. There is also some other evidence to support this view.

#### –Textual interpretation

The interpretation given above of the verb form in line 11 rests on the assumption that the .n in the prefix chain refers to the patient. This view would probably be accepted by most Sumerologists. However, other Sumerologists are less categorical in their thinking, and would say that at our present state of knowledge, other possibilities cannot be excluded. Therefore, this particular line has been translated as: “let me live by his ear of favor”, or even “let me make well his ear of favor”. These translations reflect different possibilities of understanding the .n: marker of the first-person intransitive verb, or marker of the first-person transitive verb, or marker of the third-person patient, or reduced form of the dimensional-prefix cross-referencing the locative.

#### – ga and gæe

The cohortative modal-prefix is /ga/, and the first person independent pronoun is /gæe/. Since one begins with /g/ and the other with /ѓ/, it does not seem that they are directly related to each other. On the other hand, the similarity in form, and the fact that both are used for functions involving the first person, makes one pause. It is less easy, however, to see such surface-level etymologies with the other modal-prefixes.

#### – Noun formation

The term zabar-dab<sub>5</sub> originally meant something like “one who holds the bronze”. The word for “scribe”, dub-sar, originally meant “one who writes a tablet”. In Text 22, gu-za-lá, “chair-bearer”, occurs. A number of names of officials in Sumerian are composed of an active participle and an incorporated direct object. Many were borrowed into Akkadian as simple nouns: zabardabbu, tupšarru, guzalû, etc.

#### – Seals

It is usually assumed that Kilula was the person who had this cylinder-seal fashioned. He dedicated it to Meslamtaea, to bring life to Shulgi. Presumably Kilula gave it to Shulgi, who then gave it to the temple. Thus, the cylinder-seal was designed to curry favor with the king.

It is hard to say why the particular god Meslamtaea was invoked on this seal. Hallo points out that “in private ex-votos inscribed on behalf of the king, it is not always certain whether the deity involved is the personal god of the king or his donor” (1966:137 n.53).

Without more precise knowledge of how such dealings took place, it is difficult to say exactly what the name of the seal does mean. lugal, to illustrate part of the problem, can mean “king, lord”, referring to the god Meslamtaea. It can mean “king”, referring to Shulgi. It can even mean “owner”, referring to the owner (which one?) of the cylinder-seal. And, the locative-terminative (presumed!) at the end of the nominal phrase can have several different values: “at, by, through”, etc. A somewhat materialistic interpretation of the name

would be: “let me make him well at his ear of favor”, that is, “at his ear which hears and grants favors”. The sense is, “let him listen favorably to me”, “make him accessible to me”.

However, one can't help wondering whether Shulgi had an ear-ache.

#### – Votive seals

Votive-seals were basically non-functional, in the sense that they were not primarily designed to be actually impressed upon written documents, as were the functional seals. Rather, they were votive objects, in the form of a seal. There are very few examples of votive seals actually being used (although it is always possible that this is an accident of discovery).

Gelb says:

The main characteristic of the votive seals is that while they identified the donor of the seal, they were not used by the donor but by the divinity to whom they were offered. Certain seals can be used for purely ornamental purposes but nothing would prevent the temple from employing them in identifying and legal purposes (1977:112).

Votive seals are also generally larger than functional seals. And, whereas functional seals are inscribed in reverse – so that the impression comes out correctly – votive seals are not; they are meant to be looked at, not to be used.

# Text 22a

supplementary



1 2

𠂔	𠂔	𠂔
𠂔	𠂔	𠂔
𠂔	𠂔	𠂔

### Sign-list and vocabulary

**Ha-āš-ḥa-me-er** PN. The etymology is unsure, but it is probably Akkadian. Landsberger has interpreted it as /haših-amir/, “he was wanted (and then) was seen”, two verbal adjectives in the predicative state.

**Iš-ku-un-dZuen** The name is Akkadian, “Sin has placed/established”, Iškun Sin. Its location is unknown; it may have been close to Ishchali.

### Commentary

6. The ki-sign is not in its expected place. Presumably, the scribe wanted to keep the en-sign and the zu-sign together. This particular writing may be regarded as a reflection of the practice of earlier periods in Sumerian, when the order of signs within a line or case was not as fixed nor as linear as in later times.

### Discussion

According to Hallo, “This is presumably the first Ur III text ever published. It was first copied by Charles Bellino in 1820”.

# Lesson 23

This lesson reviews and summarizes certain main points of Sumerian grammar, so that its broad structure will not have become obscured by all the details presented in the previous lessons. Secondly, specific areas of disagreement among Sumerologists will be pointed out.

## A. General structure

### 1. Word-order

Sumerian is basically S-O-V in word order:

NP<sub>1</sub>-case marker   NP<sub>2</sub>-case marker   NP<sub>3</sub>-case marker   VP  
(1)                    (2)                    (3)                    (4)

The NP marking the agent usually comes first. The constituents after the agentive NP are more free; adverbial cases may precede the patient, or the patient may precede the adverbial cases. Deviations from this standard syntax (for example, a benefactive at the beginning of a sentence) are for emphasis.

### 2. NP structure

An NP can be of any length, and can be composed of many different structures: noun; noun-noun compound; noun+adjective; genitive phrase; noun+possessive-suffix; etc. These can be combined in different ways. A typical example of a complicated nominal phrase is: šeš-gal-zu-ù-ne, for šeš.gal.zu.ene, “your older brothers”.

### 3. VP structure

The basic structure (omitting some rare optional elements) is:

modal-prefix   conjugation-prefix   dimensional-prefixes   personal-affix  
(1)                    (2)                    (3)                    (4)  
ROOT      personal-affix  
(5)                    (6)

### 4. Ergativity

It is difficult to see all the manifestations of ergativity in the Ur III royal inscriptions, because very few intransitive verb forms occur, especially in the marû. Here ergativity will be summarized, even if some of the constructions do not occur in this corpus.

The following four sentences will illustrate: (1) the hamtu-transitive; (2) the marû-transitive; (3) the hamtu-intransitive/passive; (4) the marû-intransitive/passive.

hamtu-transitive:

(1)      The king built the house.

lugal.e   e.Ø   mu.n.du.Ø

marû-transitive:

- (2) The king will build the house.  
 lugal.e e.Ø i.b.du.e.Ø

hamtu-intransitive/passive:

- (3) The king went.  
 lugal.Ø mu.ḡin.Ø

marû-intransitive/passive:

- (4) The king will go.  
 lugal.Ø i.du.Ø

In both the hamtu and the marû, in both the transitive and the intransitive/passive, the nominal participants are marked in the same manner: the agent is marked in .e (the ergative case-marker) and the patient is marked in .Ø (the absolute case-marker).

Thus, looking at the manner in which the nominal participants in the sentence are marked, Sumerian is an ergative language: the agent is marked in one manner (.e), and the patient in another (.Ø).

In terms of cross-referencing by the personal-affixes, however, the situation is different. With a transitive verb, in the hamtu the agent is cross-referenced by the personal-affix slot before the root. In the marû the agent is cross-referenced by the personal-affix slot after the root. In the hamtu the patient is cross-referenced by the personal-affix slot after the root. In the marû the patient is cross-referenced by the personal-affix slot before the root.

With an intransitive/passive verb, the hamtu and the marû behave the same way: the patient is cross-referenced by the personal-affix slot after the root.

This means that the cross-referencing system used in the marû behaves differently in the transitive than it does in the intransitive/passive. Repeating the previous sentences in a different order,

- (5) The king built the house.  
 lugal.e e.Ø mu.n.du.Ø
- (6) The king went.  
 lugal.Ø mu.ḡin.Ø
- (7) The king will build the house.  
 lugal.e e.Ø i.b.du.e.Ø
- (8) The king will go.  
 lugal.Ø i.du.Ø

In the hamtu, the patients in (5) and (6) are cross-referenced in the same manner: by the personal-affix .Ø after the root. But in the marû, the patient is cross-referenced in two

different ways: In (7), the patient is cross-referenced by the personal-affix slot before the root. In (8), the patient is cross-referenced by the personal-affix slot after the root.

Thus, the patient in (7) (the direct object of the transitive verb) and the patient in (8) (the subject of the intransitive/passive verb) are not treated the same. Therefore, the system cannot be considered ergative, since the definition of ergativity is that these two patients be treated the same.

This argument hinges on the definition of ergativity. In the hamtu and the marû, the nominal participants are marked in an ergative manner. It is only in the system of cross-referencing that the two patients in (7) and (8) are treated differently from each other. If one accepts the idea that ergativity does not just refer to the nominal markers, then we are forced to say that the marû does not behave in an ergative manner. But since the hamtu does behave in an ergative manner, Sumerian must be called a split ergative language, split along an aspectual axis. However, if we look only at the nominal markers and not at the system of cross-referencing, we can say that Sumerian is ergative, and not have to refine this term (at least, in terms of an aspectual axis; there is some indication that Sumerian is split along a nominal ~ pronominal axis).

### (5) Personal-affixes

The interpretation of the personal-affixes presented here has been basically known since Poebel. This interpretation was made much more explicit, and placed in an ergative framework, by Michalowski (1982). While this interpretation seems to work for most verbs, it is clear that it does not work for all of them. For example, a commonly occurring sentence is: kišib PN.ak ib-ra, "the seal of PN was rolled". The verb apparently is intransitive/passive, as shown by the lack of an ergative case-marker .e, yet the .b in the pre-root slot seems to cross-reference it. The proper analysis of such forms is still unclear to us; it may be much more complicated than it first appears. More work remains to be done on explaining and categorizing the exceptions which seem to occur with the personal-affixes.

### (6) Root

Sumerian roots can be divided into two classes: nominal roots, such as lú, and verbal roots, such as sar; there is no morphologically distinct class of adjectival roots. Adjectives are to be regarded as participles (or something similar) of verbal roots. For example, gibil can be used as an adjective meaning "new", from the verbal root meaning "to be new".

There is no canonical shape of the verbal root. Most of the verbal roots occurring in the texts in this book are of the type CV (dù, gi₄), or of the type CVC (gub, pàd). However, there has been one CVCVC root (šilig), one of the type VCV (ağa), one unsure (ba-al), and one borrowed from Akkadian (gi-in). Similarly, there is a fairly wide variation in the shape of the nominal root. They have taken the form V (á); CV (da); VC (ur); CVC (sag); VCV (utu); CVCV (dumu); VCVC (alam); CVCVC (temen); etc.

The root is unmarked for such categories as active ~ passive, transitive ~ intransitive, causative ~ passive; etc. For example, til can mean "to live" or "to let live"; kur₉ can mean "to enter" or "to make enter", "to bring in". In Text 15, gub is used in the meaning "to stand"; in Text 6, it is used in the sense of "to plant" a garden.

## B. Areas of disagreement

There are a number of disagreements and alternate explanations about certain features of Sumerian grammar. Because a knowledge of these alternate views is presupposed by Sumerologists, it is important to be at least familiar with the main differences from the views presented here.

### 1. Verbal phrase

The interpretation of the Sumerian verbal phrase presented in this book owes much to the ideas of Gene Gragg (briefly sketched in [1968]). Two principal differing views are those of Falkenstein and Jacobsen. Yoshikawa's views also differ considerably, but he has not yet published a complete synthesis of his views.

#### (a) Falkenstein

His views are sketched in (1959), and particularly adumbrated for the Gudea texts in (1978<sup>2</sup>). His interpretation of the prefix chain is as follows:

Präformative	Konjugationspräfixe	Präfixe	Verbalinfixe	Wurzel
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

Präformative: Correspond to the modal-prefixes.

Konjugationspräfixe: Include only the following: i, mu, and al.

Präfixe: Correspond to the dimensional-prefix na, and the conjugation-prefixes ba and bí.

The conjugation-prefixes /immi/, /imma/, etc., are considered by Falkenstein to represent \*i-bi-i and \*i-bi-a respectively; that is, they contain both a Konjugationspräfix and a Präfix.

Verbalinfixe: Include the dimensional-prefixes except na, and the personal-affixes.

Falkenstein's views of Sumerian grammar have been criticized on two basic grounds: a mixing of synchronic and diachronic description, especially in the categories of Konjugationspräfixe and Präfixe, and a regular use of terms and concepts proper to the Indo-European and Semitic languages, but which do not necessarily apply to Sumerian, or to languages which are typologically similar to it.

#### (b) Jacobsen

His views are spelled out most explicitly in (1965); some important comments occur in his review of Thomsen (1988). His terminology for the prefix chain is based on formal criteria:

Prefixes	Prefixes	Inflectional Prefixes	Root
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)

Prefixes: Correspond to the modal-prefixes.

Prefixes: Correspond to the conjugation-prefixes. However, Jacobsen has definite and specific views on the meaning and function of the conjugation-prefixes. He believes that they can be analyzed into two morphemes: “a pronominal-adverbial element denoting a region (m, b) and a relater or case-mark (u for tangentive, a for illative, i/a for allative).” This analysis is very detailed.

Infixes: Correspond to the dimensional-prefixes and personal-affixes, in a rather complicated way.

In general, Jacobsen’s analysis tends to be much finer than that of other Sumerologists. In some cases, vocalic (or consonantal) alternations which most Sumerologists would regard as phonetic or morphophonemic alternation are regarded by Jacobsen as representing different morphemes. He has been criticized for producing much too detailed a segmentation of the morphology. On the other hand, Jacobsen’s interpretations are based on a close empathy for the texts; perhaps more so than any other living Sumerologist, Jacobsen has a feeling for and understanding of the content of Sumerian texts, especially literary texts.

### (c) Yoshikawa

Yoshikawa has published a number of articles in an attempt to define the functions of the conjugation-prefixes. In some of the later articles, he has tried to use phenomena from other ergative languages, especially Georgian, to elucidate Sumerian. In his 1981 article, he says:

We can tentatively specify the function of the respective Sumerian verbal prefixes as follows:

- I.     bi-: Ientive locative/superessive prefix  
im-mi-: Ventive locative/superessive prefix  
ba-: Ientive reflexive (/subjective) prefix  
im-ma-: Ventive reflexive (/subjective) prefix
- II.    mu-: Topical agentive (/objective) prefix  
i-: Non-topical agentive (/objective) prefix
- III.   al-: Neutral prefix.

### 2. Marû-inflection

marû-forms such as i-sar-re have been analyzed here as i.sar.e.Ø. The root is sar, which is a member of the affixation-class of marû-formation; .e is the marû-suffix; Ø is the personal-affix cross-referencing the agent, that is, the third person marker.

Edzard believes that i-sar-re is to be analyzed as i.sar.e. sar is a member of the invariable class of marû-formation, and .e is the third person marker.

The first analysis sees two morphemes after the root; the second sees one. It is not easy to resolve this issue. The problem is partially the result of a lack of evidence. Far fewer intransitive/passive verbal forms are preserved than transitive forms. Far fewer present-future forms are preserved than past. And, fewer first and second persons are

preserved than third, and fewer plural forms than singulars.

Many of the examples preserved which show the greatest amount of grammatical variation are attested in relatively late copies of literary texts. In these texts one must always guard against misunderstandings by the Akkadian-speaking scribes who copied down these texts. Similarly, the Akkadian-speaking scribes who drew up the grammatical texts discussed in Appendix 2 sometimes include transitional or analogical forms, which cannot be regarded as conforming to the standards of earlier Sumerian.

The problem is also caused by ambiguities in the writing system. Types of ambiguities include: (1) The writing system cannot distinguish between a form such as i.sar.en or i.sar.e.en; they would both be written as i-sar-re-en. Isolated writings of the type i-sar-re-e-en do not resolve such ambiguities, because there are several possible explanations for the full writing. (2) /d/ is an amissable consonant. Therefore, a writing such as i-sar-re can stand for i.sar.e, i.sar.ed, or i.sar.e.ed. (3) The dè-sign is ambiguous; it can stand for dè or for ne. This means that a writing such as i-sar-re-e-dè can represent several different possibilities: i.sar.ed.e, i.sar.e.ed, i.sar.ene, i.sar.e.ene, etc. It is ambiguities such as these which make it difficult to correctly analyze the morphology of the marû.

### 3. Marû classes

The number of different types of formation of the marû from the hamtu is unsure. Yoshikawa's initial formulation showed three classes: (1) affixation (2) reduplication (3) alternation. This scheme works well for the Ur III royal inscriptions, but this is partially because only a very limited number of marû forms occur in these texts. Yoshikawa himself has said that his classification system will need expansion and revision.

Edzard modified and extended the system into five classes: (1) unchanging. Since Edzard considers .e to be a third person subject marker, not a marker of the marû, this is actually the same as Yoshikawa's affixation group. (2) reduplication (3) root-varying. This is a sub-class of Yoshikawa's alternation class; the two roots are different, but phonetically similar in some way. (4) alternation (5) irregular. These last do not seem to fit into the first four classes.

As more progress is made in Sumerology, the last class will be further refined. Some of the verbs which now seem irregular will eventually be shown to follow rules which are not yet known. Whenever linguists study an unknown language, they are apt to see more irregular forms than when they have been able to examine the data more thoroughly.

### 4. Normalform

There has been some discussion about the conjugation of the intransitive/passive verb in Sumerian. Poebel believed that there was one conjugation for the hamtu intransitive/passive, and a different conjugation for the marû intransitive/passive. Most modern Sumerologists, however, believe that there is only one conjugation for both the hamtu and the marû (that is, there is only one set of endings), although the particular root used (i.e., either hamtu or marû) will differ. This one conjugation is usually called the "Normalform" (even though this is a rather meaningless term). What follows is Poebel's reconstruction of the hamtu intransitive/passive and the marû intransitive/passive.

For Classical Sumerian, Poebel reconstructs the intransitive/passive form of the hamtu as:

first person singular	<u>i-sar-en</u>	i.sar.en
second	<u>i-sar-en</u>	i.sar.en
third	<u>i-sar</u>	i.sar.Ø
first plural	<u>i-sar-re-en-dè-en</u>	i.sar.enden
second	<u>i-sar-re-en-zé-en</u>	i.sar.enzen
third	<u>i-sar-re-eš</u>	i.sar.eš

He reconstructs the intransitive/passive of the maru as:

first person singular	<u>i-sar-re-dè-en</u>	i.sar.ed.en
second	<u>i-sar-re-dè-en</u>	i.sar.ed.en
third	<u>i-sar-re</u>	i.sar.ed.Ø
first plural	<u>i-sar-re-dè-en-dè-en</u>	i.sar.ed.enden
second	<u>i-sar-re-dè-en-zé-en</u>	i.sar.ed.enzen
third	<u>i-sar-re-dè-eš</u>	i.sar.ed.eš

That is, the maru intransitive/passive differs from the hamtu intransitive/passive solely in the presence of the element .ed. Poebel believed, however, that this system worked only for Classical Sumerian. Under the influence of Akkadian, several analogical changes took place in the system of the maru intransitive/passive, eventually yielding a completely new paradigm:

first person singular	<u>i-sar-re-en</u>	i.sar.en
second	<u>i-sar-re-en</u>	i.sar.en
third	<u>i-sar-re</u>	i.sar.e
first person plural	<u>i-sar-re-en-dè-en</u>	i.sar.enden
second	<u>i-sar-re-en-zé-en</u>	i.sar.enzen
third	<u>i-sar-re-ne</u>	i.sar.ene

The .ed element has disappeared; the third person singular is now marked by .e; and the third person plural is now marked by .ene. Thus, the endings have been assimilated to those of the maru transitive.

From the period between the time of the paradigm of the more classical period and the time of the newer paradigm, several transitional forms are attested (for example, i-sar-re-dè, i.sar.ed.e) for the maru intransitive.



## PART THREE: APPENDICES

# Appendix 1

## History

The periodization of Sumerian, like the periodization of Akkadian, is to some extent based on non-linguistic criteria, such as political and historical events. The essence of this periodization is:

- |      |                    |                  |
|------|--------------------|------------------|
| I.   | Archaic Texts      | (3100 BC)        |
| II.  | Archaic Sumerian   | (3100-2600 BC)   |
| III. | Classical Sumerian | (2600-2300 BC)   |
| IV.  | Neo-Sumerian       | (2300-2000 BC)   |
| V.   | Post-Sumerian      | (2000 BC-100 AD) |

### I. Archaic Texts (3100 BC)

The earliest known tablets containing writing come mostly from Uruk (whose modern name is Warka). They come from a stratum usually designated as Uruk IVa, commonly dated to about 3100 BC. They were first assigned to “Uruk IVb”, but then redated to “Uruk IVa” (later than Uruk IVb). Secondary literature often confuses this, and so some accounts speak of Uruk IV, some of Uruk IVa, and some of Uruk IVb.

Almost all of the tablets were found in a “dump” inside the Eanna temple complex. This means that it is very difficult to date the tablets, either in terms of relative chronology, or in terms of absolute chronology. According to Eva Strommenger, a further complication is the fact that to some degree, the architectural levels and building phases at Uruk have been dated on the basis of the tablets found, not vice-versa. (This is also true of some tablets found later than Uruk IV.) She says that

The phases of writing are everywhere used in order to date the level in which the specific tablets were found. This leads to the conclusion that the possibility of the existence of tablets prior to IVa ... has not been recognized, but that deposits in which a few tablets were found have been dated to IVa on that basis alone (1980:481).

Other scholars, however, are less willing to agree with her implicit criticism of the reconstruction of the archaeological history of the site.

The first of these texts were excavated by the German archaeologists of Uruk during 1928-1931. In 1936, Falkenstein published his Archäische Texte aus Uruk, a seminal work. In it he treated the first 620 tablets found. By now, upwards of four thousand of these texts are known, found during subsequent excavations. The majority of these (mostly fragmentary) tablets have not yet been published.

There are a few similar tablets from other sites, mostly in northern Syria. In addition, both from Uruk and especially from Syria (and elsewhere, including Iran) there are a number of what are commonly called “numerical” tablets. It was at first thought that these

tablets represented numbers, but more likely they indicate items being counted; their precise interpretation is unsure. Two from Tell Brak in northern Syria, found in 1984, in particular are quite archaic looking. Based on archaeological criteria, these numerical tablets do not seem to be any older than the pictographic tablets discussed above; rather, both numerical and pictographic tablets occur in Uruk IVa.

A very archaic-looking tablet comes from Kish. Unfortunately, it is from an uncontrolled context, and so it cannot be dated archaeologically. This tablet is frequently referred to in popular literature about the Ancient Near East as being one of the very earliest tablets known (if not the earliest tablet), but it has a fairly elaborate division into cases, which makes it more likely that it is later than Uruk IV.

These early texts are undeciphered, and perhaps to some degree undecipherable. Therefore, it is impossible to be certain about what language they are written in. There are several reasons why these texts cannot yet be read:

- Even at this early date, the supposedly pictographic nature of the signs is not always obvious. Most of the signs are already abstract; it cannot be determined what they were originally meant to depict.
- Some of the abstract signs can be understood on the basis of knowledge of later Sumerian. However, a fair number of the signs (perhaps 30%-50%) cannot be read or understood. These are signs which eventually passed out of use, so that there is no later grammatical tradition to provide information about their meaning.
- Most of the signs which can be understood are logographic; in theory, these can be read in any language. A sign which is a picture of a mountain, for instance, could be read as “mountain”, “Berg”, šadû, kur, etc.
- There do not appear to be any syllabic signs. This means that no grammatical features can be seen; for example, there are not any case-markings on nouns. There do not appear to be any verbs at all. Writing at this stage was a highly mnemonic device.
- These are mostly administrative records, sometimes very short – occasionally, just a few signs long. It is very difficult to understand such texts out of context, that is, without knowledge of the administrative framework which produced these texts.

In spite of these problems, most scholars think that these texts are written in Sumerian. The main reason is because texts have been preserved from the later Uruk III stratum, which is known to be Sumerian. Since archaeologists see a cultural continuum between Uruk IV and Uruk III, it is reasonable to assume that the same language is present in both strata. In addition, Powell has argued that the system of metrology used in these early texts seems to be the same system used in clearly Sumerian texts:

The system of numeration deducible from the notation present on Uruk IVa/III tablets makes it virtually certain that these tablets are written in Sumerian and, ipso facto, highly probable that the inventor of the pictorial writing system was also a Sumerian (1981:423).

These tablets are being studied by Margaret Green and Hans Nissen (a student of Falkenstein), and are in the course of publication (preliminary discussions Nissen 1985, 1986; first major publication Green and Nissen 1987). Although most earlier scholars differentiate between Uruk IVa and Uruk III, Nissen subsumes both into one category,

“Archaic Texts”. (The figure of “4000 texts” cited above therefore includes tablets from both Uruk IVa and Uruk III.) Nissen estimates that about 85% of the texts are economic records, and about 15% are lexical lists. He is more optimistic than most scholars about the possible decipherment of these texts, believing that he can identify about 700 of 1000 different signs, and that the texts are “possibly” written in Sumerian. He bases his arguments partially on the continuity between the early lexical lists (unknown at the time of Falkenstein’s publication) and later, well-understood lexical texts.

Nissen thinks that the texts from Uruk can be divided roughly into two classes, one representing an “early stage of the script”, and one a “younger stage of the script” (these two divisions do not exactly correspond to the traditional Uruk IVa/Uruk III divisions). The latter, consisting of most of the tablets found since Falkenstein’s publication, are more amenable to analysis.

The fact that many of the signs in these early tablets are already abstract has led many scholars to assume that there was some previous development behind the signs. That is, these tablets do not represent mankind’s first attempt at writing. Several different hypotheses have been proposed:

- The Sumerians may have borrowed their writing system from some other people, perhaps some distance away from Mesopotamia. This is not impossible. It has often been argued that the Sumerian writing system does not fit the Sumerian phonological system very well; this might imply that the writing system was created for a different language. This particular theory has been around for many years; it is obviously very difficult to prove.
- Earlier writing may have been on perishable material, such as wood, or animal skins, or palm leaves, etc. There are parallels to such practice from later Mesopotamia, and from Arabia around the time of Muhammad. This is also a rather old theory, but it is also virtually impossible to prove.
- In a series of articles beginning in 1977, Denise Schmandt-Besserat has argued that the earliest “precursor” of writing was clay “tokens”, which have been found at various sites throughout the Ancient Near East, starting from the early Neolithic. Writing originated in a conceptual leap, from the use of physical tokens, to the use of symbols to represent these tokens: “The substitution of signs for tokens was no less than the invention of writing” (1986:37). She envisages the following stages (1986:35):

- (1) 8000 BC appearance of tokens
- (2) 3250 BC clay envelopes hold tokens of particular transactions
- (3) 3200 BC signs are impressed on the surface of envelopes
- (4) 3100 BC clay tablets appear with impressed and incised signs

Powell agrees:

Cuneiform was invented in a short period of time around 3000BC by a citizen of the Sumerian city of Uruk. ... It arises conceptually out of the token system described by D. Schmandt-Besserat. ... The pictorial ancestor to cuneiform writing was invented as a conceptual whole during the time period represented by the Uruk IV-III archaeological strata (1981:419-420).

Contrast this with the more “evolutionary” thinking of Walker:

Thus it is beginning to look as if we should think in terms of the invention of writing as being a gradual process, accomplished over a wide area, rather than the product of a single Sumerian genius (1986:9).

Nissen hints at the complexity of the developing of writing: “Writing was developed at the end of the fourth millennium B.C. by a mixed language group in which Sumerian was apparently the main component” (1988:14).

The most vocal critic of Schmandt-Besserat’s view has been Lieberman (1978, 1980). However, probably the majority of Sumerologists agree with her overall interpretation of the development of writing from tokens.

## II. Archaic Sumerian (3100-2600 BC)

Tablets from this stage are found at several sites. The oldest are from Jemdet Nasr; others are from Uruk III, Uruk II, Ur, Fara (ancient Shuruppak), and Tell Abu Salabikh (2600 BC). These dates are not exact, and, as discussed above, Nissen includes both Uruk IVa/Uruk III together; the ramifications of this revised relative chronology are still to be worked out.

In the Jemdet Nasr texts, there is a personal name written: <sup>d</sup>En-lil-ti. The word for “arrow” in Sumerian was /ti/; the sign used to represent this word was originally a picture of an arrow. It is doubtful, however, if this name means something like “Enlil is an arrow”. But, the root /ti/ in Sumerian also means “to live”. Thus, the name <sup>d</sup>En-lil-ti means “Enlil lives”, or more likely “May Enlil give life”, “May Enlil keep alive”. That is, in this name a cuneiform sign is being used syllabically: The ti-sign is being used strictly for its phonetic value, not for its logographic value. This writing shows that the script is being used for a language where the words for “arrow” and “to live” are homophonous.

This interpretation of the personal name <sup>d</sup>En-lil-ti goes back to Falkenstein, in 1936. It gained immediate acceptance by Assyriologists and Sumerologists, who believe that the writing: (1) shows the existence of phoneticization; (2) shows the personal name to be Sumerian; and (3) shows the language of the texts in which the personal name occurs to be Sumerian. (The same name may also occur in the later phase of Nissen’s “Archaic Texts”.) In 1974, however, A.A. Vaiman suggested that the name should be read as É.EN.TI; he is followed by Lieberman.

It is possible that there are other instances of phoneticization in the texts from Jemdet Nasr, but the evidence is not unequivocal. Texts from the later stages of this period show increasing phoneticization, and are clearly Sumerian.

Up until the 1960s, virtually all of the texts which were known from this period were the usual administrative and economic texts. These are not always easy to understand, again because of the lack of any context. This situation was changed in 1963. In that year, the University of Chicago began excavations at a site called Tell Abu Salabikh, near Nippur. It turned out that the majority of tablets and fragments found were literary texts. Some were compositions which were known from later times. For example, there is a text known as the “Kesh Temple Hymn”, preserved in numerous Old Babylonian copies dating to about 1800 BC. Fragments turned up at Tell Abu Salabikh – some eight hundred years

earlier. Other texts turned out to be previously unknown compositions. For example, one is a collection of temple hymns. Most of these texts are scarcely intelligible; not much is known about literary Sumerian of this period.

Thus, the primary importance of Tell Abu Salabikh lies in the existence of literary texts from the middle of the third millennium BC. Since these discoveries, scholars have recognized fragments of literary texts among some tablets which have been known for many years. For instance, some of the Fara texts are fragments of proverbs which are known from later proverb collections.

The texts from Tell Abu Salabikh are also important, because a number of the literary texts (and lexical texts) have colophons of the sort: "so-and-so wrote". It is not known what the word "wrote" means here exactly: Does it mean that the scribe "composed" the composition, or that the scribe "copied" the text from a master tablet, etc. However, what is interesting is that a number of these scribes have demonstrably Semitic personal names.

It is difficult to date the intrusion of Semitic-speaking peoples into Mesopotamia, on linguistic or other grounds. The first evidence is usually thought to be the presence of Akkadian loan words in early Sumerian. These loan words are difficult to evaluate, however, because it is not always certain which way the borrowing went, or whether a third language may have mediated a word, etc.

The Semitic names in these colophons are thought to be the first real evidence of Semitic-speakers in Mesopotamia. If the Fara texts and the Tell Abu Salabikh texts are dated to about 2600 BC, that gives a terminus ante quem for the arrival of Semitic speakers, but it does not say anything about how long they might have been present in Mesopotamia. If they had already become scribes, they must have been there for some time, since they had worked themselves into the intellectual life of the community.

### III. Classical (or Old) Sumerian (2600-2300 BC)

Most of the texts of this stage come from Lagash, from a period known as the "First Dynasty of Lagash". Besides the usual administrative, economic, and legal texts, there are a fair number of royal and private inscriptions. There are also some letters, and even a few literary fragments are now known. Royal inscriptions are also known from other sites.

The end of this period corresponds to the rise to power of the Semitic-speaking Dynasty of Akkad (2334-2154 BC). As mentioned above, Semitic-speaking peoples must have been present in Mesopotamia for centuries before the time of Sargon, the founder of the dynasty (ruled 2334-2278 BC). It must be presumed that Mesopotamia was bilingual during this time, at least to some degree. However, with a Semitic-speaking dynasty in power, Sumerian gradually started to move into second place.

A recent addition to the corpus of texts known from this period are the texts from Ebla (in northern Syria, therefore from outside of the Sumerian-speaking heartland). To date, upwards of ten thousand texts and fragments have been discovered. The texts are in both Sumerian and Eblaite; until the material is better studied, it is not sure which language predominates. Early accounts said that perhaps ninety percent of the texts were written in Sumerian; this is probably much too high a figure. The problem is that the texts written in Eblaite are couched in a Sumerian orthography, utilizing a large number of Sumerian

logograms.

Most of the texts found at Ebla are administrative or economic, chiefly concerned with the metal and textile industries. However, there are also lexical lists; some are Sumerian lists known from later periods, others are bilingual Eblaite-Sumerian texts. There are a few literary texts in Eblaite (mostly incantations); these are extremely difficult to understand. The existence of possible literary fragments in Sumerian is disputed.

It is still too early to assess the Sumerian texts from Ebla. It is clear, however, that much new information is present. For example, the bilingual lexical texts include Sumerian words and expressions not elsewhere attested.

#### **IV. Neo (or New) Sumerian (2300-2000 BC)**

Although Sumerian was on the defensive in the face of Akkadian, it enjoyed a strong – albeit brief – revival under the kings of the Ur III Dynasty (2112-2004 BC). This is the period from which the most tablets of all have been preserved. There are texts from many sites, including Ur itself, Drehem, Lagash, Larsa, Nippur, and Umma. There are literally thousands and thousands of mostly economic documents, as well as inscriptions, letters, and other types of texts. Also, more and more tablets with literary texts are being dated to this period.

From some time before the reign of Ur-Nammu (the founder of the Dynasty), there are a fair number of inscriptions from the reign of Gudea, the local ruler of Lagash. Many of these are inscribed on statues of Gudea himself. There are also two large cylinders of his, inscribed with a very long building hymn. The largest (“Cylinder A”) is almost one thousand lines long; it is apparently the longest connected Sumerian inscription.

The dynasty of Gudea is referred to as “Lagash II”. The chronology of Lagash II is unsure; some see it as roughly contemporaneous with Ur III, but most view it as following immediately upon the Old Akkadian period. In any case, the language of the Gudea texts is more or less the same as that of the Ur III texts.

It is not known when Sumerian ceased to be a spoken language; this is a current topic of discussion among Sumerologists and Assyriologists. Usually assumed to be spoken during the Ur III period, it was under the greatly increasing influence of Akkadian. Some scholars use the figure 2000 BC, others 1900 BC, for the date when Sumerian ceased to be spoken, but this figure is rather arbitrary. The language continued to be spoken by ever-smaller groups of speakers, and it is impossible to say when the last speaker of Sumerian died. What is usually meant by the question “When did Sumerian die out?” is “When did the native language of the people who produced the texts we have cease to be Sumerian?” Pockets of native speakers of Sumerian may have continued for some time, but without producing any texts.

Other scholars have argued for an earlier death. Jerrold Cooper has said that “Sumerian as a spoken language was in all probability dead or nearly so in Ur III” (1973:241). His argument is based on the types of documents preserved during the Ur III period. Both Kienast (1981a) and Michalowski (1987) essentially agree.

Jacobsen, on the other hand, says “We therefore assume that Sumerian was still spoken as everyday language in the south in the Ur III period and a major part of the Isin-

Larsa period as well (1988:124). Lieberman has stated that there is some evidence to show that “Sumerian was spoken during the Old-Babylonian period” (1979:27).

## V. Post-Sumerian (2000 BC-100 AD)

This is occasionally divided into the following subdivisions:

Early Old Babylonian	2000-1800 BC
Later Old Babylonian	1800-1600 BC
Post Old Babylonian	1600-

After the Early Old Babylonian period, Sumerian was essentially dead as a living language. However, it continued to be taught in the schools as a language of culture, and as a language of religious importance. The parallel has frequently been made with the rôle of Latin in the Roman Catholic Church: Latin is still written, and even to some degree spoken; hence, it is “living”, even though it is not spoken as a native language of anyone.

Recently, Vanstiphout has used the term “Standard Sumerian” to mean the language used in the literary documents of the Ur III and Old Babylonian periods. ... This language is a literary and therefore written form, taught in school for educational and literary purposes (1985:1).

The majority of Sumerian literary tablets which have been preserved are from the Early Old Babylonian period. However, there are also original texts written in Sumerian from this period; examples include royal inscriptions (alongside those written in Akkadian), and hymns written in honor of some of the Old Babylonian rulers.

Although the original composition of most Sumerian literary texts was in Sumerian, by native speakers of Sumerian, the native language of the scribes who copied down the literary texts during this period was Akkadian, not Sumerian. This led to a strong linguistic influence of Akkadian upon Sumerian, to the extent that the literary texts contain features which would appear to be “wrong” by the rules of Classical Sumerian grammar. Michalowski, for example, has spoken of the “profound changes in grammar evident in the Old Babylonian literary texts” (1980a:91); “during the Old Babylonian period Mesopotamian scribes wrote Sumerian utilizing a profoundly different grammar, much influenced by Akkadian” (1980a:86 n.3). The extent of deviation from the norm varies from one particular text to another. Inanna's Descent, for example, is pretty good Sumerian, with only a few “wrong” verbal forms. In Gilgamesh and Agga, on the other hand, there are more “wrong” verbal forms than “right” ones.

It is, of course, always possible that forms which we regard as “wrong” are in fact “right”, but our understanding of Sumerian grammar is not yet sophisticated enough to correctly interpret such forms. Jacobsen has emphasized this methodological point:

Once it has been decided that our sources are generally suspect it becomes natural to see all unexpected and difficult features as due to corruption, without seriously considering the possibility that our own limited and rough knowledge might be at fault and need revision. ... The essential thing is to be slow to dismiss difficulties with the easy assumption of mistakes by the Ancients (1988:125-126).

Sumerian continued to be written right down to the Christian era. These very late texts are either cultic or astronomical. There are even a few Sumerian texts (including portions of canonical lexical lists) written in Greek characters. The very latest cuneiform texts preserved are several astronomical almanacs, written in Akkadian with a great number of Sumerian logograms for technical terms. The latest of these can be dated by internal criteria to the year 385 of the Seleucid Era, corresponding to 74/75 AD.

As mentioned above, this periodization (and most others) is to some degree based on external (historical and political) criteria, not on purely linguistic criteria. Jacobsen has proposed a different scheme, based on linguistic criteria (without yet assigning precise dates), while emphasizing the fact that the paucity of the data prevents overly-fine subdivisions:

- I Archaic
- II Old Sumerian
- III Standard Sumerian (beginning with Narām-Sin of Akkad)
- IV Late Sumerian

# Appendix 2

## Mesopotamian Sources

Much of our knowledge of Sumerian derives from the intellectual activity of the Mesopotamian scribes themselves. This section describes some of these Mesopotamian sources.

### Lexical lists

It is especially in the area of lexicography that modern Sumerological studies depend on native sources. From a very early period, the Sumerians began to compile “lexical lists”. These early texts were monolingual, consisting simply of lists, usually of words for semantically related things: lists of names of fishes, of professions, of stones, etc. Although most lexical lists are loosely arranged according to subject, others are organized according to graphic shape, or even according to phonological shape. Fragments of such lists occur among the very earliest Sumerian texts which have been preserved.

These early texts were the product of Sumerian scholars, originating in the Sumerian scribal school system. Lexical lists become more and more common, however, beginning about with the Old Babylonian period. At that time, Sumerian was in the process of completely dying out as a spoken language – if it had not already done so. By the end of the Old Babylonian period, if not earlier, Sumerian was only spoken in the schools. These later lexical lists are a product of the Mesopotamian scribal schools; their purpose was to aid the Akkadian-speaking scribes in their study of Sumerian.

By the late Old Babylonian period, many lexical lists assumed what is often called “canonical” status; that is, they became standardized in content and in form. There are about a dozen such “canonical series”. Some are monolingual in Sumerian, like the earlier texts, but most are bilingual; they have a Sumerian word in the left-hand column, and an Akkadian equivalent in the right-hand column. Some have three columns: a phonetic spelling of the sign; the Sumerian logogram; and the Akkadian meaning.

Many of these series are quite extensive. One of the largest and best-preserved is known (both to us and to the ancient Mesopotamian scribes) as “ur5-ra = hubullu”, after its first entry. In its canonical form, this series occupied 24 large tablets, totalling about 10,000 entries. Civil has called it an “inventory of material culture” (1976:125). He describes its contents as:

- (tablets 1 and 2): legal and administrative terminology.
- (3-7): trees and wooden artifacts.
- (8-9): reeds and reed artifacts.
- (10): pottery.
- (11): hides and copper.
- (12): other metals.
- (13): domestic animals.
- (14): wild animals.

- (15): parts of the body.
- (16): stones.
- (17): plants.
- (18): birds and fish.
- (19): textiles.
- (20-22): geographic terms.
- (23-24): food and drinks.

The first entry of this series has ur<sub>5</sub>-ra (the Sumerian word for “interest-bearing loan”) in the left-hand column, and the Akkadian hubullu (with the same meaning) in the right-hand column.

Lexical lists such as these help us to determine the meaning of Sumerian words. Some of the lexical lists go even further, and enable us to determine the reading (that is, the approximate phonetic rendering) of a certain sign. For example, there is a relatively late lexical series known as “diri”, which in its canonical form occupied seven tablets, with more than 2,000 entries. This series was used to give the pronunciation of compound logograms, that is, logograms whose reading cannot be inferred from the individual parts (such as zabar, written with the UD-KA-BAR signs; without lexical lists, it would be virtually impossible to deduce that the pronunciation of these three signs was /zabar/). For this reason, such compound logograms are often referred to as “diri-compounds”.

In diri, the pronunciation of the logogram under discussion is given in the far left-hand column, using a restricted number of syllabic signs. Then comes the logogram in question. Then comes the name of the sign (at least as early as the Old Babylonian period, the Akkadian scribes gave names to the individual signs). Finally, the last column gives the meaning of the sign, in Akkadian. A typical entry reads:

di-ri   diri   si-ya-ku   wa-at-su

This tells us that the sign  is read /di-ri/. Graphically, this sign “looks like” the si-sign () followed by the a-sign (). (At least, in this period of cuneiform writing. Originally, the diri-sign may have had no connection at all with either the si-sign or the a-sign. However, by the Old Babylonian period, when signs were becoming more linear, it happened to assume a shape looking like the si-sign followed by the a-sign.) Because of this external similarity, the Akkadians named this sign “the si of a”, that is, si.a.(k). Finally, the last column gives the Akkadian translation, “excess” or “extra”.

Copies of these canonical texts have been found all over the Near East, not just in Mesopotamia. There are also somewhat similar texts, but not of any canonical status, both from Mesopotamia and from outside of Mesopotamia. Their function was the same, to aid local scribes in their mastery of Sumerian (or of some other language).

Some of these non-canonical texts are bilingual, some are trilingual, and some even quadrilingual. For example, from Boghazköy in Asia Minor there are several Sumerian-Akkadian-Hittite trilingual vocabularies. The native language in Boghazköy was Hittite; these texts were designed to help Hittite scribes in learning both Sumerian and Akkadian. From Ugarit, there is a quadrilingual “vocabulary”. It has entries in Sumerian, Akkadian,

Hurrian, and then Ugaritic (written syllabically).

The finds at Ebla have produced a new, important source of lexical texts of different kinds. Some are related to the later Mesopotamian tradition; some are independent creations. Many are monolingual in Sumerian (less frequently in Eblaite). Others are bilingual, with the Sumerian again on the left and the Eblaite on the right. In some cases, the pronunciation of the Sumerian is given, using a reduced number of syllabic signs.

Lexical lists occur among the oldest tablets known. Nissen estimated that some 15% of the Archaic Texts from Uruk are lexical texts. One, the "Standard Professions List", is well-known from later copies; the Uruk version lists some 100 different professions and titles.

Lexical lists continued to be used up to the very last stages of cuneiform. Copies of some of the canonical lexical series are known from as late as Seleucid times, when Akkadian itself was no longer a spoken language, having been replaced by Aramaic.

The Mesopotamian lexical lists are not always easy to use. Alongside errors of various kinds which have crept in – some due to the normal accidents of textual transmission, some due to Akkadian scribes not understanding their originals – there are several conventions and abbreviations used by the scribes, which make it difficult to understand the texts. Also, these lists should be thought of as a kind of "bare bones" text; there was undoubtedly a tremendous amount of oral information passed on in the Mesopotamia schools, fleshing out these texts. Unfortunately, there are only hints of such oral teaching.

In addition, it is not always easy to recognize the order of entries in the lexical texts. As Civil has said,

When they attempted to make an inventory of Sumerian words, the native Mesopotamian scribes faced a problem familiar to any lexicographer in the first stages of planning a dictionary: should the entries be organized thematically, by subjects, or should they be arranged in a serial order based on graphic or phonological characteristics of the words? One can hardly speak of planning in the compilation of the Mesopotamian lexical lists as a whole, since they were the result of a slow process, which lasted for centuries and answered many different kinds of needs: scribal training, interpretation of traditional texts, composition of new texts, and, undoubtedly, a certain amount of simple philological curiosity, spurred on by the desire of salvaging the words of an extinct language. Nevertheless, the compilers of each new addition to the traditional lexicographic corpus had to decide how the entries should be arranged (MSL XIII [1971] 3).

Civil (1976) has written a most useful article listing and discussing the most important Sumerian lexical texts. He also discusses the modern editions of these texts, and the theoretical principles which need to be observed when attempting to write a Sumerian dictionary or glossary based on these native sources.

Lexical texts (and the grammatical texts discussed immediately below) were among the first cuneiform tablets to be found and published; their importance for the reconstruction of Sumerian was early recognized. These texts are being systematically published in a series entitled Materialien zum Sumerischen Lexikon (MSL). Volume 1, edited by Benno Landsberger, appeared in 1937; volume 16 appeared in 1976, and several other volumes are still

in the process of being prepared.

The rôle of the lexical lists is usually described as essentially a learning device in the schools. Mogens Trolle Larsen has discussed the “place of the lexical tradition in the cognitive scheme of the ancient Mesopotamians”:

There is no doubt that the lists did function within the scribal world as part of the basic curriculum in all periods of Mesopotamian history, but it is likewise possible to understand the lists as serving another purpose, to present a systematic and ordered picture of the world (1987:208-209).

Westenholz says somewhat the same thing:

In many illiterate cultures, an enormously detailed vocabulary of plants, animals, trees, etc. functions as the skeleton of an integrated classification and taxonomy of the known world; and we may see the Sumerian lists of everything from gods to milk-pots in a similar light as an itemized statement on the world order, the origin and functioning of which mythology describes in literary terms (1985:295).

### Grammatical texts

The Sumerian language differs from Akkadian not only in vocabulary, but also in morphology and syntax. These differences led the Akkadian scribes to produce a series of grammatical texts, in addition to the lexical texts just discussed. The earliest of these are known as the “Old Babylonian Grammatical Texts”, or OBGT. Dating from about 1700-1600 BC, these are in the form of paradigms: paradigms of verbs, nominal forms, particles, etc. The Sumerian is on the left, and the Akkadian (if present) on the right. OBGT VI, for example, lists over 200 forms of the verb gar, “to place”. Lines 124-125 read as follows:

<u>mu-un-</u> <u>gar</u>	<u>iš-ku-un</u>
<u>mu-</u> <u>gar</u>	

This seems to be saying that for the Akkadian scribes, the forms mu-un-gar and mu-gar have the same meaning. This is how modern Sumerologists interpret the two forms, as a difference in orthography, not in morphology.

Lines 142-143 of the same tablet read:

<u>ba-an-</u> <u>gar</u>	<u>iš-ta-ka-an</u>
<u>ba-</u> <u>gar</u>	

The Akkadian scribes interpreted the difference in the Sumerian conjugation-prefix as a difference in the Akkadian stem: mu-un-gar was translated by the B-preterite iškun, but ba-an-gar by the Bt-preterite ištakan (there is some reason to assume that ištakan is a Bt-preterite, not a B-perfect).

A later series, the “Neo-Babylonian Grammatical Texts” (NBGT), dates from about the sixth century BC. These texts are organized according to morpheme: A Sumerian morpheme is glossed by an Akkadian equivalent. For example, NBGT I, line 153, reads:

<u>da</u>	<u>qá-du</u>
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The tablet is equating the Sumerian comitative case-marker da with the Akkadian preposition qadu, meaning “with”.

Lines 405-408 of the same tablet read:

<u>ga</u>	<u>lu-ú</u>
<u>hu</u>	
<u>ha</u>	
<u>hé</u>	

The Sumerian cohortative modal-prefix ga, and three morphophonemic alternants of the desiderative modal-prefix hé, are all “translated” as the Akkadian desiderative-marker lu.

The NBGT texts occasionally add scribal comments or annotations, in both Sumerian and Akkadian. Examples include the Sumerian word AN-TA, “prefix”, and the Akkadian expression ša ištēn, “singular”. These kinds of annotations do not appear in OBGT.

OBGT and NBGT are rather extensive. One might think that these texts could furnish a key to Sumerian morphology. Unfortunately, it is not so. These texts are all relatively late. They represent Akkadian-speakers’ understanding of Sumerian. However, these Akkadian-speaking scribes did not always understand Sumerian grammatical categories and distinctions. For example, in the passages from OBGT cited above, a difference in Sumerian conjugation-prefix was equated with a distinction in Akkadian stem. It is difficult to say how accurate an equation this is. Or, Black has pointed out that OBGT V makes a consistent distinction between the first person suffix /en/, written -en, and the second person suffix /en/, written -e-en (1984:7). Black thinks that this might indicate a difference in pronunciation, but more likely it is a purely graphic distinction.

Regarding the Sumerian and Akkadian grammatical terms which sometimes occur as annotations, Black has also said that there is

a growing body of evidence that the scribes responsible for introducing the grammatical terms into the grammatical analysis texts sometimes misunderstood their meaning (or misunderstood the texts into which they were introducing them) (1984:90).

There is also a certain amount of systematization and schematization in these tablets. But at the same time, there is no unified method of organizing the data. As mentioned above, OBGT has over 200 lines of gar, but it is not always easy to follow the principles by which these forms are organized. Other OBGT texts follow their own organization.

Like the lexical lists, there also occur mechanical errors due to problems of text transmission. There are also scribal conventions and abbreviations. And as mentioned earlier, there was undoubtedly a large oral component which accompanied the study of these texts, a component which is no longer accessible. These problems (and others) mean that although these grammatical texts are a font of useful information, this information cannot be used uncritically. These texts cannot be viewed as an exact reflection of Sumerian of the Ur III or earlier periods. Black has said that “in some cases it seems that we know Sumerian better than the compilers, or copyists, of our texts” (1984:7). This is especially true regarding the Sumerian aspectual differences, and also regarding Sumerian

causative sentences, a type of sentence heavily dealt with in OBGT. (Similarly, Black believes that certain Akkadian forms seen in OBGT were “especially concocted to set against certain Sumerian forms” [1984:29].)

Thus, although Jacobsen is undoubtedly correct in saying that the OBGT constitute without question the most important single group of sources both for the history of grammatical studies generally and for our understanding of Sumerian grammar specifically so far known (1956:1\*),

these texts must be approached with caution. Jacobsen adds that “the immensity of the number of problems raised, and the relative insufficiency of our present knowledge of Sumerian becomes only too clear as one approaches the texts in earnest” (1956:2\*).

As the above quotes exemplify, scholars vary in their estimation of the worth of these texts in reconstructing Sumerian grammar. Jacobsen, for example, sees them as extremely important; Krecher, on the other hand, in his study of the conjugation-prefixes containing an /m/ element, found them to be of little value (1985:34).

Finally, Civil has pointed out:

To my knowledge, the fundamental question: are the grammatical texts *descriptive* or *prescriptive*? has never been formulated ... at least in print, although there is widespread skepticism about their descriptive adequacy (1986:72).

For a long time, it was believed that OBGT texts represented mankind’s first attempt to formulate “paradigms”; these texts antedate the grammatical studies of the Indians by over a millennium. However, what may well represent the first attempt known to organize verbal forms into a paradigm is now found among the Ebla tablets. From a rather variegated monolingual lexical text (TM.75.G.2260), the following lines appear:

(line 12):      in-na-sum  
ì-na-sum  
nu-i-na-sum  
hi-na-sum  
ba-til  
nu-til  
in-til  
hi-til

For several reasons, one might be hesitant about considering these lines to be a “paradigm”. But they do seem to indicate that the “mind” of the scribe(s) was heading in that direction. And this tablet antedates the OBGT texts by some 500 years.

The function of the lexical texts (and the smattering of what might be called a “grammatical text” just discussed) at Ebla was similar to the function of the lexical and grammatical texts found throughout Mesopotamia and the Ancient Near East in general: to enable scribes to master Sumerian. For the Eblaite scribes, however, Sumerian was a language still being spoken. For the Akkadian scribes of the Old Babylonian period, Sumerian had virtually ceased to exist as a spoken language, and was only a language of the schools.

OBGT and NBGT were published in MSL IV (1956). These texts were prefaced by Jacobsen with a discussion of the Sumerian verbal system as reflected in these texts. Jacobsen has also written a very interesting article intended for a more general linguistic audience, discussing the system of paradigms seen in OBGT and NBGT (1974). Black (1984) has written a book especially on these grammatical texts, and on the philosophy of language which they represent; this work also has much incidental discussion of various aspects of Sumerian morphology.

Very recently, Civil *et al* have published some “Middle Babylonian Grammatical Texts” (1986). These have not yet been fully studied.

### Syllabic Sumerian

In addition to the “standard” or “normal” orthography and spelling of Sumerian, there is a certain amount of what is called “syllabic Sumerian” or “phonetic Sumerian”. Standard Sumerian is written using a combination of logographic and syllabic signs. Syllabic Sumerian, however, is written using only syllabic signs. For example, the standard Sumerian orthography for a locative phrase, kalam-ma, is written in syllabic Sumerian as ka-la-ma.

There are not a great deal of texts in syllabic Sumerian; they are all relatively late. Interestingly, not many syllabic texts come from the Mesopotamian heartland; they are mostly from northern Babylonia, or farther afield. The practice probably originated in the scribal school system as a device for the scribes to cope with the difficulties of standard Sumerian orthography. In the case of syllabically-written incantations and liturgical texts, the purpose was probably to aid in correct recitation.

Unlike the lexical and grammatical texts discussed above, there is no standard or canonical system of writing syllabic Sumerian; it varies to some degree from text to text. Much of it was probably produced on an ad-hoc basis, to deal with particular texts.

Since syllabic Sumerian is an attempt to reproduce spoken Sumerian, it should reveal some of the features not shown in the normal orthography. Thus, one might think of it as another key to unlocking Sumerian morphology. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to understand syllabic Sumerian, even more difficult than it is to understand Sumerian in standard orthography. The reason is precisely because standard Sumerian masks certain phonetic problems, such as morphophonemic alternation, contraction, assimilation, etc. When such phenomena actually show up in syllabic Sumerian, it is often difficult to untangle the forms. Even in cases where the same text is preserved once in standard orthography and once in syllabic orthography, the phonetic relationship between the two is not always easy to see.

A relatively simple case is the writing at-ta, for standard an-ta, “from the sky”, or “from above”. Should it be assumed that the standard Sumerian was also pronounced /atta/, and that the written form an-ta is a morphographemic or historical writing? If so, should the an-sign be transliterated by an at-value? Perhaps in early Sumerian, the word was indeed pronounced /anta/, but an assimilation took place in later Sumerian, producing /atta/. How can this change be dated? On the other hand, perhaps such a writing as at-ta reflects the Akkadian assimilation of nasals, and doesn’t say anything about Sumerian.

Even in this one simple instance, one can think of several variables which must be taken into account. But consider an even more complicated case. From the root bir, meaning “to be confused”, there appears a marû form in standard orthography as ba-bir-bir-re (this shows formation of the marû by means of both reduplication and the marû-suffix .e). This appears in syllabic orthography as ba-bi-ib-re, presumably representing /babibre/. Does this mean that the writing in standard orthography, ba-bir-bir-re, should also be understood as representing /babibre/, and that this is a morphographemic or historical spelling? How should it be transliterated?

Such examples illustrate the extent to which phonetic processes are masked by standard orthography, and they show the difficulty in interpreting the syllabic forms. And since syllabic Sumerian varies to some degree from text to text, it is difficult to generalize about what is seen. All syllabic texts are rather late, from the Old Babylonian period or after. They thus reflect a stage when Sumerian was no longer a spoken language, so to some degree the phonetic differences that appear may be conditioned by the Akkadian language of the scribes.

Very recently, however, there have been found at Ebla syllabically-written versions of lexical lists. Civil has called their existence “a most unexpected surprise which opens a new chapter in the understanding of the earliest lexical compilations and provides phonological data for the oldest stages of Sumerian” (1982:1). These syllabically-written lexical texts are very difficult to interpret, and only preliminary work has been accomplished.

Much more work, in general, remains to be done on syllabic Sumerian. The two examples given above show the kinds of information which such texts can provide. A more thorough investigation might help in solving some of the perplexing problems encountered in the Sumerian writing system.

The Emesal dialect of Sumerian is written in a mixture of standard (i.e., mostly logographic) Sumerian and of syllabic Sumerian. For example, the word for “lady” in Emesal is gašan, corresponding to Main Dialect nin. Sometimes Emesal texts simply use the same nin-sign; it is assumed that the “reader” will know enough to render the nin-sign as the Emesal equivalent gašan. More frequently, however (at least, with this particular word), the word is spelled syllabically, ga-ša-an.

An Emesal vocabulary has also been preserved, some 177 lines long. It gives the Emesal form in the far left-hand column; the Main Dialect form; and an Akkadian translation in the far-right column. A typical example is line 96:

da-ma-al      dagal      rap-šu

This tells us that the adjective “wide”, Akkadian rapšu, which is written with the dagal-sign in Main Dialect, is /damal/ in Emesal.

### Bilinguals

A certain number of “bilingual” texts have come down to us. These are of two main types. In “interlinear” texts, a line of Sumerian is followed by a line of Akkadian. There are many incantations of this type. Other texts are written in “parallel columns”, with the

Sumerian on the left of a tablet, and the Akkadian on the right.

Bilingual texts are of many different genres. They include incantations, rituals, hymns, proverbs, letters, and even a few royal inscriptions. Sometimes even more than two languages are involved. For example, among the texts found at Boghazköy (a Hittite-speaking area), there is a trilingual poem to the god Ishkur. The text is divided into groups of four lines. The first line is Sumerian in standard orthography; the second line is the same in syllabic Sumerian; the third line is an Akkadian translation; the fourth line is a Hittite translation. This text illustrates how syllabic Sumerian was used to help the Hittite-speaking scribes in trying to figure out the standard Sumerian version.

Most bilinguals are rather late, from the later Old Babylonian period on. Some may be earlier; for example, there are a couple of Old Babylonian copies of Old Akkadian bilingual royal inscriptions. One is a bilingual inscription of Sargon, written in parallel columns on the back of a statue of Sargon; this was re-copied in Old Babylonian times.

Such terms as “bilingual” or “trilingual” are mostly used to refer to single tablets which have writing in more than one language. There are other cases where a Sumerian version of a text is present on one tablet, and an Akkadian translation on another tablet. (Without both versions, it might never be known that the Akkadian was a translation.) The term “bilingual” is occasionally used to refer to such “parallel versions”.

One of Shulgi’s royal inscriptions has been preserved in both a Sumerian version and an Akkadian version. But neither appears to be a translation of the other; rather, they seem to be independent compositions commemorating the same event, the building of a temple. Such texts (there are few) are helpful in elucidating the relationship between Sumerian and Akkadian during the Ur III period.

### Other sources

There are a few other sources to aid in reconstructing Sumerian. For instance, there are Akkadian commentaries to certain genres of text, such as medical texts and omens. None of these are as extensive or as helpful as the four groups outlined above.



# Appendix 3

## Glossary

There is no standard sign-list for Sumerian. However, the sign-lists of Borger and Labat, even though based on Akkadian values, are still useful for Sumerian. Labat is especially helpful for the study of the palaeography of the signs, that is, the variation in their basic shape throughout time. Borger provides some information about Sumerian grammar, and also a certain amount of bibliographic material. The two volumes of Ellermeier which have appeared to date are useful in sorting out inconsistencies in published transliterations.

At the moment, there is no up-to-date dictionary of Sumerian. For a number of years, the University of Pennsylvania has been preparing just such a project, the Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary (PSD; cited in the Bibliography under Sjöberg [1984]). As of this writing, the only volume which has appeared so far is for the letter “B”. The glossary of Delitzsch, although dating to 1914, is still one of the most useful single-volume dictionaries, although not the easiest to use. There are a few glossaries to specialized bodies of texts. One of the more recent is Behrens and Steible (1983). Unfortunately, even semi-serious lexicographical work usually means looking at the glossaries and indices of many different text editions. For the beginning student, perhaps the most useful of these is Sollberger (1966). Professional Sumerologists keep very large and detailed files on Sumerian words. The core of the PSD, for example, is Åke Sjöberg’s collection of over 500,000 dictionary entries, which he started in 1949.

- a (Text 1)
- á arm, strength (Text 22)
- a...ru to dedicate a votive object (Text 4)
- ab (Text 17)
- abzu apsû (Text 14)
- ad (Text 19)
- ad-da father (Text 19)
- Adab Adab (GN) (Text 20)
- ág (Text 8)
- ága<sub>2</sub> (Text 8)
- alam statue (Text 15)
- ám (Text 11)
- ama mother (Text 15)
- amar young bull (Text 13)
- Amar-dZuen Amar-Sin (PN) (Text 13)
- an (Text 18)
- An An (DN) (Text 6)
- an heaven (Text 1)

- An-nu-ni-tum Annunitum (DN) (Text 18)
- an-ub corner (Text 10)
- arad servant (Text 20)
- áš (Text 22a)
- ba (Text 10)
- ba to give as a gift (Text 21c)
- ba<sub>6</sub> (Text 11)
- ba-al to dredge (Text 5)
- Ba-ba<sub>6</sub> Baba (DN) (Text 11)
- Ba-ba<sub>6</sub>-nin-àm Babaninam (PN) (Text 11)
- bàd city wall, rampart, fortification (Text 3)
- barag (bara<sub>2</sub>) dais (Text 6; Discussion, Lesson 15)
- barag-sigg-ga pedestal (Text 15)
- bé (Text 9)
- bi (Text 9)
- bi (Text 12)
- bil (Text 12)
- Bil-ga-mèš Gilgamesh (DN) (Text 12)
- bu<sub>6</sub> to tear out, to uproot (Text 15)
- da (Text 12)
- da side (Text 10; Discussion, Lesson 12)
- Da-da Dada (PN) (Text 21b)
- dab<sub>5</sub> to hold (Text 11)
- dadag to be clean, pure (Text 19)
- dam wife, consort (Text 18)
- diğir god (Text 6)
- dim (Text 12)
- dim to fashion, form (Text 11)
- dù to build (Text 1; Text 11)
- dub tablet (Text 19a)
- dub-sar scribe (Text 19a; Discussion, Lesson 21b)
- dumu son (Text 9)
- dur bond (Text 12a)
- e (Text 12)
- é house (Text 1)
- é (Text 22)
- É-dur-an-ki Eduranki (TN) (Text 12a)
- É-kur Ekur (TN) (Text 8)
- É-šag<sub>4</sub>-ge-pàd-da Eshagepada (TN) (Text 19)
- É-temen-ní-guru<sub>3</sub> Etemenniguru (TN) (Text 9)
- eb (Text 15)
- en (Text 2)
- en lord (Text 9)

- en priest, priestess (Text 17)
- En-dim-gig Endimgig (GN) (Text 12)
- En-erin<sub>2</sub>-nun Enerinnun (GN) (Text 5)
- En-ki Enki (DN) (Text 14)
- En-lil Enlil (DN) (Text 5)
- ensi<sub>2</sub> city governor, local ruler (Text 20)
- er (Text 22a)
- erin<sub>2</sub> (Text 5)
- ga (Text 2)
- gal great (Text 19; Discussion, Lesson 7)
- ge (Text 16)
- gé (Text 20)
- gi (Text 2)
- gi<sub>4</sub> to return, to restore (Text 9)
- gi-na true, correct; standard, certified (Text 21a)
- gi-na to standardize, to certify (Text 21d)
- gig (Text 12)
- gu (Text 22)
- gu-za throne (Text 22)
- gu-za-lá (kind of official) (Text 22)
- gub to stand; to make stand, to plant (Text 6)
- gudug (gudu<sub>4</sub>) (kind of priest) (Text 19; Text 11)
- guru<sub>3</sub> (Text 9)
- gó (Text 8)
- góal (Text 19)
- geštin vine, wine (Text 16)
- geštug<sub>3</sub> ear, intelligence (Text 22)
- gi<sub>6</sub> (Text 17)
- gi<sub>6</sub>-pár gipáru (Text 17)
- gír (Text 11)
- giš (determinative preceding objects of wood) (Text 6)
- ha (Text 12)
- Ha-áš-ha-me-er Hashamer (PN) (Text 22a)
- Ha-ba-lu<sub>5</sub>-gé Habaluge (PN) (Text 20)
- Ha-la-<sup>d</sup>Ba-ba<sub>6</sub> Halababa (PN) (Text 19a)
- hé (Text 15)
- hi (Text 11)
- hi-li attraction; headdress, wig (Text 11)
- i (Text 21b)
- i oil, fat (Text 16)
- I-bí-<sup>d</sup>Zuen Ibbi-Sin (PN) (Text 21b)
- i-nun butter (Text 16)
- ib (Text 12)

- id (Text 19)  
id (i<sub>7</sub>) river, canal (Text 5)  
il (Text 22)  
im (Text 15)  
in (Text 7)  
Inanna Inanna (DN) (Text 2)  
iq (Text 19)  
ir (Text 14)  
iš (Text 22a)  
Iš-ku-un-dZuen Ishkun-Sin (GN) (Text 22a)  
išib (kind of priest) (Text 19)  
ka (Text 5)  
kalag (kala) to be mighty (Text 2)  
kalam land (Text 17)  
kar quay, pier; market place (Text 17)  
Kar-zid-da Karzida (GN) (Text 17)  
ke<sub>4</sub> (Text 1; Discussion, Lesson 1)  
ki (determinative following GNs) (Text 1)  
ki place, earth (Text 6; Text 12a; Text 14)  
ki...ağā<sub>2</sub> to love (Text 8)  
Ki-en-gi Sumer (GN) (Text 2)  
Ki-lul-la Kilula (PN) (Text 22)  
Ki-uri Akkad (GN) (Text 2)  
kiri<sub>6</sub> garden (Text 6)  
kišib cylinder-seal (Text 22)  
ku (Text 22a)  
kug (kù) bright, pure, holy (Text 17; Discussion, Lesson 18)  
kur mountain; highland; foreign land (Text 5)  
kúr to change (Text 15)  
kur<sub>5</sub> (ku<sub>5</sub>) (Text 12)  
kur<sub>9</sub> (ku<sub>4</sub>) to enter (Text 17)  
la (Text 4)  
lá (Text 7)  
lá to hold, to lift, to carry (Text 22)  
Lagaš Lagash (GN) (Text 22)  
lál honey (Text 16)  
lam (Text 22)  
Lamar DN (Text 11)  
le (Text 13)  
li (Text 11)  
li (Text 17)  
lil air, wind (Text 5)  
limmu<sub>2</sub> four (Text 10)

- lú man (Text 7)
- lu<sub>5</sub> (Text 20)
- lugal king (Text 1; Discussion, Lesson 7)
- lul (Text 22)
- ma (Text 1)
- ma-da land (Text 19)
- ma-na mina (Text 21a)
- mah to be splendid, magnificent (Text 6)
- mar (Text 19)
- Mar-tu the Amorites; the West (Text 19)
- me (Text 15)
- mes (Text 22)
- Mes-lam-ta-è-a Meslamtaea (DN) (Text 22)
- mèš (Text 12)
- mu (Text 1)
- mu name (Text 15)
- mu...pàd (pà) to propose (Text 13)
- Mu-ri-iq-Ti-id-ni-im Muriq-Tidnim (GN) (Text 19)
- mu-sar-ra inscription (Text 12)
- munus woman (Text 11)
- na (Text 1)
- nam (Text 4; Discussion, Lesson 9; Sign-list, Lesson 12)
- nam...kur<sub>5</sub> (ku<sub>5</sub>) to curse (Text 12)
- Nammu Nammu (DN) (Text 1)
- Nanibgal Nanibgal (DN) (Text 21b)
- Nanna Nanna (DN) (Text 1)
- Nanše Nanshe (DN) (Text 11)
- ne (Text 6)
- nè forces, troops (Text 19)
- ni (Text 1)
- ní (Text 9)
- Nibru Nippur (GN) (Text 13)
- nidba food offering (Text 5)
- níg (ní) thing (Text 22; Discussion, Lesson 4; Discussion, Lesson 9)
- nin lady, mistress; 'lord' (Text 1; Discussion, Lesson 11)
- Nin-gal Ningal (DN) (Text 4)
- Nin-ğír-su Ningirsu (DN) (Text 11)
- Nin-líl Ninlil (DN) (Text 19)
- Nin-tur-dumu-ğu<sub>10</sub> Ninturdumugu (PN?) (Text 16a)
- nir (Text 19)
- nir-ğál prince (Text 19)
- nitah (nita) man, male (Text 2)
- nu (Text 18)

- nu not (Text 16)
- numun seed; offspring, progeny (Text 15)
- nun (Text 5)
- nun prince, noble (Text 16)
- pàd (pà) to find, call, reveal (Text 13)
- pâr (Text 17)
- ra (Text 5)
- re (Text 6)
- re<sub>6</sub> (Text 16a)
- ri (Text 19)
- ru to send (Commentary, Lesson 4)
- sag̃ head (Text 9)
- sag̃ slave (Text 21c)
- Sag̃-dNanna-zu Sagnannazu (PN) (Text 21c)
- sag̃-ús supporter, sustainer, patron (Text 13)
- saga (kind of priest) (Text 21c)
- sar (Text 12)
- sar to write (Text 19a)
- sig<sub>9</sub> (si) to be narrow (Text 15)
- sikil to be pure, clean (Text 6)
- sipad (sipa) shepherd (Text 19)
- siskur<sub>2</sub> sacrifice (Text 16)
- su (Text 11)
- sud<sub>4</sub> (su<sub>13</sub>) to be long (Text 17)
- šag<sub>4</sub> (šà) heart (Text 18)
- šag<sub>5</sub> (ša<sub>6</sub>) to be good (Text 22)
- Šara<sub>2</sub> Shara (DN) (Text 19)
- še (Text 4)
- šilig to cease (Text 16)
- šu (Text 18)
- šu hand (Text 19)
- šu...ùr to erase (Text 12)
- Šu-dZuen Shu-Sin (PN) (Text 18)
- šul (Text 10)
- Šul-gi Shulgi (PN) (Text 10)
- ta (Text 17)
- temen (Text 9)
- ti (Text 19)
- til to put an end to (Text 15)
- til (ti) to live (Text 4; Commentary, Text 22)
- tu (Text 19)
- tum (Text 18)
- tur (Text 16a)

- ú (Text 11)  
ù and (Text 16)  
ub (Text 10)  
ud (u<sub>4</sub>) day (Text 12)  
ul remote, distant (Text 17)  
un (Text 17)  
Unug (Unu) Uruk (GN) (Text 9)  
ur man, warrior (Text 1)  
Ur-ba- ? Urba? (PN) (Text 22)  
Ur-dLamar Ur-Lamar (PN) (Text 19a)  
Ur-dNammu Ur-Nammu (PN) (Text 1)  
Ur-dNanibgal Ur-Nanibgal (PN) (Text 21b)  
Ur-dNin-ğír-su Ur-Ningirsu (PN) (Text 11)  
ür (Text 12)  
Uri (Text 2)  
Urim<sub>5</sub> (Uri<sub>5</sub>) Ur (GN) (Text 1)  
ús (Text 13)  
utu sun (Text 17)  
Utu Utu (DN) (Text 4a)  
zabar bronze (Text 11; Discussion, Lesson 20)  
zabar-dab<sub>5</sub> (kind of official) (Text 11)  
zid (zi) effective, true (Text 17)  
zu (Text 13)  
zu your (Text 21b)  
zu to know (Text 21c)  
Zuen Zuen (DN) (Text 13)  
“5” (Text 21a)



# Appendix 4

## Bibliography

### Abbreviations

AfO	Archiv für Orientforschung
AHw	Akkadisches Handwörterbuch
AIUON	Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli – Annali
AJA	American Journal of Archaeology
AJSL	American Journal of Semitic Languages
ArOr	Archiv Orientalia
AS	Assyriological Studies
ASJ	Acta Sumerologica (Japan)
BiOr	Bibliotheca Orientalis
CAD	Chicago Assyrian Dictionary
CRAI	Compte rendu de la Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale
GLECS	Groupe linguistique d'études chamito-sémitiques – comptes rendus
HUCA	Hebrew Union College Annual
JANES	Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
JCS	Journal of Cuneiform Studies
JNES	Journal of Near Eastern Studies
MIO	Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung
MSL	Materialien zum Sumerischen Lexikon
OA	Oriens Antiquus
OIP	Oriental Institute Publications
Or	Orientalia
PSD	Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary
RA	Revue d'Assyriologie
RLA	Reallexikon der Assyriologie
SEb	Studi Eblaiti
SEL	Studi Epigrafici e Linguistici
TCS	Texts from Cuneiform Sources
UF	Ugarit-Forschungen
VO	Vicino Oriente
WO	Welt des Orients
WZKM	Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes
ZA	Zeitschrift für Assyriologie

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### **Concordance of texts used**

This concordance lists all the texts used in the Lessons. For each text, the following information is given: number according to Hallo's catalogue (if available); publication of cuneiform; publication of transliteration and translation in SAKI; publication of translation in IRSÄ; location of photograph. The following abbreviations are used:

#### Cuneiform

BE = Babylonian Expedition of the University of Pennsylvania, Series A, Cuneiform Texts. Philadelphia.

BE 1 = 1896 (Hilprecht)

BIN = Babylonian Inscriptions in the Collection of James B. Nies. New Haven.  
BIN 2 = 1920

CT = Cuneiform Texts from the British Museum. London.  
CT 5 = 1898  
CT 21 = 1905  
CT 36 = 1921

MDP = Mémoires de la Délégation en Perse. Paris.  
MDP 6 = 1905

OIP = Oriental Institute Publications. Chicago.  
OIP 14 = 1930

PBS = Publications of the Babylonian Section. The Museum, University of Pennsylvania. Philadelphia.

PBS 13 = 1922

PBS 15 = 1926

R = Rawlinson, H. The Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia. London.

I R = 1861

UET = Ur Excavations. Texts. London.

UET 1 = 1928

UET 3 = 1937

UET 8 = 1965

UVB = Vorläufiger Bericht über die von der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft in Uruk-Warka unternommenen Ausgrabungen. Berlin.

UVB 10 = 1939

UVB 12/13 = 1956

VAS = Vorderasiatische Denkmäler. Berlin.

VAS 1 = 1907

YOS = Yale Oriental Series. New Haven.

YOS 1 = 1915

### Secondary Literature

Hall = H.R. Hall, A Season's Work at Ur. London, 1930.

Hallop = W.W. Hallop, "The Royal Inscriptions of Ur: A Typology". *HUCA* 33 (1962) 1-43.

HSA = L. King, History of Sumer and Akkad. London, 1910.

IRSA = E. Sollberger and J.-R. Kupper, Inscriptions royales sumériennes et akkadiennes. Paris, 1971.

SAKI = F. Thureau-Dangin, Die sumerischen und akkadischen Königsinschriften. Leipzig, 1907.

Several individuals and publishers have either supplied photographs, or provided permission to reproduce copyrighted material. I would expressly like to thank the following: The British Museum, for supplying photographs of the drawing of the ziggurat in Lesson 1; of the drawing of the ziggurat in Lesson 9; of the pedestal in Lesson 15; of the Old Akkadian seal in Lesson 21; of texts CT 21, 2: 90004; CT 21, 3: 90015; CT 21, 6: 89126; UET 1, 55. The Pierpont Morgan Library, for the photographs in Lesson 7 of the cuneiform tablet and the canephore figures. The University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania for the photographs of the stela in Lesson 1 and the stamp seals in Lesson 2. Jack Finegan, for the photograph of the ziggurat in Lesson 1 (reproduced courtesy of Westview Press). Cornell University Press, to reprint from Ur 'of the Chaldees': A Revised and Updated Edition of Sir Leonard Woolley's Excavations at Ur by P.R.S. Moorey © 1982 The Estate of Sir Leonard Woolley and P.R.S. Moorey. The Pontifical Biblical Institute, for several quotations from Sumerian Grammar in Babylonian Theory by Jeremy Black © 1984. Any inadvertent omission of acknowledgments will be corrected in the future.

### **Textual Concordance**

Text 1      Ur-Nammu 8

              UET 1, 40

Drawing of ziggurat: Courtesy of British Museum. Reproduced in Woolley

- (1982) 148  
Photograph of ziggurat: Courtesy of Jack Finegan. Reproduced in Finegan (1979) 51. Reproduced courtesy of Westview Press  
Photograph of stela: Courtesy of University Museum, University of Pennsylvania
- Text 2 Ur-Nammu 7i  
CT 21, 3: 90015  
SAKI 186d  
Photograph: Courtesy of British Museum. Reproduced in HSA, facing page 280  
Photographs of stamp seals: Courtesy of University Museum, University of Pennsylvania
- Text 3 Ur-Nammu 9i  
3a CT 21, 2: 90004  
Photograph: Courtesy of British Museum. Reproduced in Hall 106  
3b CT 21, 2: 90009  
SAKI 186b  
IRSA IIIA1c
- Text 3c Ur-Nammu 7i  
CT 21, 3: 90006  
SAKI 186d
- Text 4 Ur-Nammu 31  
UET 1, 34
- Text 4a Ur-Nammu 11  
CT 21, 5: 90001  
SAKI 196e
- Text 5 Ur-Nammu 23i  
UET 1, 46
- Text 6 Ur-Nammu 5ii  
UET 1, 41a  
IRSA IIIA1j
- Text 7a Ur-Nammu 3iii  
Halio, in: Ancient Mesopotamian Art and Selected Texts. New York: The Pierpont Morgan Library (1976), p. 22  
Photograph: Courtesy of The Pierpont Morgan Library. Reproduced in ibid, p. 17  
Photograph of canephore figurines: Courtesy of The Pierpont Morgan Library. Reproduced in ibid, p. 22
- Text 7b Ur-Nammu 3ii  
CT 21, 4: 90802  
SAKI 186g
- Text 7c Ur-Nammu 5i  
CT 21, 5: 90296

- SAKI 186f  
IRSA IIIA1j
- Text 8 Ur-Nammu 16  
BE 1, 121  
SAKI 188k
- Text 8a Ur-Nammu 3i  
BE 1, 122  
SAKI 187, note h
- Text 9 Ur-Nammu 10i  
CT 21, 7: 90000  
SAKI 186c  
IRSA IIIA1d  
Drawing of ziggurat: Courtesy of British Museum; reproduced in Woolley (1982) 234
- Text 10 Shulgi 52  
UET 1, 55  
Photograph of 30-mina weight: Courtesy of British Museum
- Text 10a Ur-Nammu 10i  
I R 1 i 5  
SAKI 186c  
IRSA IIIA1d
- Text 11 Shulgi 29  
CT 5, 2: 12218  
SAKI 194x  
IRSA IIIA2u  
Photograph: Hallo, in Denise Schmandt-Besserat (ed), The Legacy of Sumer. Malibu: Undena Publications (1976), p. 133
- Text 11a Ur-Nammu 1v  
Boson, Aegyptus 15 (1935) 420  
IRSA IIIA1b
- Text 12 (Ur-Nammu)  
UET 8, 4:21  
IRSA IIIA1k
- Text 12a Shulgi 20i  
PBS 15, 42  
IRSA IIIA2g  
Photograph is of Shulgi 22ii: McCown, Archaeology 5 (1952) 74
- Text 13a Amar-Sin 2ii  
CT 21, 24: 90034  
SAKI 196b  
IRSA IIIA3b
- Text 13b Amar-Sin 2iii  
VAS 1, 26

- Text 13c      IRSA IIIA3b  
                Amar-Sin 1  
                BE 1, 22  
                SAKI 196a  
                IRSA IIIA3a
- Text 14      Amar-Sin 5iv  
                Sumer 3 (1947) 1c, facing p. 236  
                IRSA IIIA3h
- Text 14a     Ur-Nammu 22i  
                UET 1, 45
- Text 15      Amar-Sin 3i  
                CT 21, 25f: 90811  
                SAKI 198d  
                IRSA IIIA3e  
                Photograph of pedestal: Courtesy of British Museum. UET 1, 172, pl. U
- Text 16      Amar-Sin 10  
                BE 1, 21  
                SAKI 198g  
                IRSA IIIA3f
- Text 16a     Shulgi 46  
                RO 2 (1925) 189  
                IRSA IIIA2f
- Text 17      Amar-Sin 11  
                UVB 10, pl. 28  
                IRSA IIIA3d  
                Photograph: UVB 10, pl. 23a
- Text 18:     Shu-Sin 6i  
                CT 21, 28: 90844  
                SAKI 200b  
                IRSA IIIA4c
- Text 18a     Shulgi 43  
                MDP 6, 22  
                SAKI 194y
- Text 19      Shu-Sin 9iii  
                YOS 1, 20  
                IRSA IIIA4d
- Text 19a     Amar-Sin 17  
                BIN 2, 17
- Text 20      Shu-Sin 3  
                OIP 14, 43  
                IRSA IIIC1b
- Text 21a     Shu-Sin 17  
                de Sarzec, Découvertes en Chaldée (1912) vol. 2 pl. 26-bis: 5

- SAKI 202e  
IRSA IIIA4i
- Text 21b Ibbi-Sin 7i  
UET 3, 52  
Photograph of Old Akkadian seal: Courtesy of British Museum.
- Text 21c Ibbi-Sin 8iii  
PBS 13, 5: CBS 12570
- Text 21d Shulgi 51iii  
UET 1, 287  
Photograph: The Illustrated Bible Dictionary (Tyndale, 1980), vol. 3, 1635
- Text 22 Shulgi 47  
CT 21, 9: 89131  
SAKI 194z  
IRSA IIIA2w  
Collation: Gadd, Iraq 10 (1948) 98 n.1  
Photograph: Courtesy of British Museum. Reproduced in HSA, facing p. 246
- Text 22a Ur-Nammu 36  
CT 21, 6: 89126  
SAKI 188n  
IRSA IIIA1m  
Photograph: Courtesy of British Museum. Reproduced in HSA, opposite p. 246

# Appendix 5

## Further Work

The Ur III royal inscriptions studied in this book present only a limited picture of Sumerian. For example, not all the modal-prefixes occur, and there is only limited use of the first and second persons. In order to deepen one's knowledge of Sumerian, it is necessary to do two things: read well edited Sumerian texts, and read the most important and/or recent secondary literature about Sumerian.

More "variety" in grammar occurs in Sumerian literary texts, and for that reason they are perhaps the most useful texts to read at this stage. However, this is not as easy as it sounds. Because most literary texts were copied down in the Old Babylonian period or later, they are often influenced by Akkadian grammar, and may contain forms which are simply "wrong" by the normative rules of Classical Sumerian grammar; such wrong forms can be disconcerting to a relative beginner.

To obviate this problem, it is necessary to work through literary texts which are well-edited. However, some Sumerologists are less interested in grammatical matters than other Sumerologists, and so may not discuss such matters as, for example, a seemingly incorrect use of a personal-affix. Some scholars are more interested in lexicographical matters, and may devote seemingly inordinate amount of space for citing all references for particular words, instead of focusing on the grammar (given the lack of a complete up-to-date dictionary of Sumerian, this is often necessary).

In general, it is always valuable to first skim through an edition of a literary text, in order to determine what kind of emphasis the modern-day editor is placing in his commentary – is it primarily a grammatical commentary, or lexicographic, or stylistic, etc.

When reading through a new text, one will encounter variations of constructions seen previously, or completely new constructions. These may or may not be discussed in a commentary. Upon encountering a new form or construction, the first step is to isolate the problem, that is, determine where in the grammar the problem lies: is it a previously unseen modal-prefix, or a strange use of a dimensional-prefix, or a problem in a temporal clause, etc. At this stage, one must turn to the standard grammars, and to other secondary literature.

The most general grammars which can be examined are, in chronological order (these are further discussed below): Poebel (1923); Falkenstein (1959); Falkenstein (1978<sup>2</sup>); Römer (1983<sup>4</sup>); Thomsen (1984). Thomsen will be of most value to the student; she also includes references to other secondary literature.

In addition to these more general grammars, there are certain articles, on specific aspects of the grammar, which are always worth consulting. These are referred to in Thomsen, but it is useful to keep photocopies of them at hand. Full references are given in the Bibliography.

**moods:** Jacobsen (1965); Edzard (1971f); Michalowski (1980a); Kienast (1981b)

**conjugation-prefixes:** Jacobsen (1965); Gragg (1968; 1972a)

**dimensional-prefixes:** Gragg (1973a); Yoshikawa (1981a)

**personal-affixes:** Michalowski (1980a)

**hamtu - marū:** Yoshikawa (1968a; 1968b; 1974); Edzard (1971f); Michalowski (1980a); Steiner (1981)

**plural verbs:** Krecher (1967-8); Steinkeller (1979); Yoshikawa (1981b)

**imperatives:** Michalowski (1980a)

**copula:** Gragg (1968)

**subordinate clauses:** Gragg (1973b)

**relative clauses:** Gragg (1972)

**ergativity:** Foxvog (1975); Michalowski (1980a); van Aalderen (1982)

As stated above, in addition to reading more texts, it is necessary to read more about the language itself. At this point, the student can profit by a systematic reading of Thomsen. Thomsen cannot practically be used without some previous knowledge of Sumerian, but this Manual should provide enough background to make Thomsen useable. The articles listed above, besides being consulted for reference when an unfamiliar form is encountered, should also be read in their entirety.

For further bibliography on grammatical subjects, one can consult: Sollberger (1952), with a rather complete bibliography through 1952; Römer (1973); Falkenstein (1978<sup>2</sup>); Römer (1983<sup>4</sup>); and Thomsen (1984).

There have been five modern larger-scale grammars of Sumerian. The first of these was Poebel (1923). Poebel was perhaps the first person to really understand Sumerian grammar, and to put its study on a sound footing. Although written in a very old-fashioned style, and although wrong in a number of details, it is still a valuable tool.

Falkenstein published a complete “sketch” of Sumerian in 1959. This work is often cited by Sumerologists, but it suffers from being too terse (the section on morphology and syntax occupies less than thirty pages), and from a rather whole-sale use of concepts and terms which are more fitting for the description of Indo-European or Semitic languages. It also has a rather confusing mixture of synchronic and diachronic description. However, since Falkenstein’s views differ somewhat from those presented in this book, and since his views are accepted (sometimes only tacitly) by many Sumerologists, this book should be worked through.

Falkenstein has also produced a detailed grammar of the language of the inscriptions of Gudea (second edition, prepared posthumously, 1978). Although limited to one group of texts, this is a very useful work. There are three volumes: (1) script and morphology; (2) syntax; and (3) an introduction to the texts, discussing historical background, identifying divine names, etc. This introduction is handy for identifying proper names occurring in other texts. The morphology volume contains elaborate paradigms; these are quite useful, and are in general more accurate than those in Poebel.

Römer (1983<sup>4</sup>) is essentially an updated Falkenstein; the section entitled “Einiges zur Sprache” is less than fifty pages long. However, it has an enormous amount of bibliographic references – there are 641 footnotes; these references are what make the work valuable. A new edition is being prepared.

Finally, the most recent grammar is that of Thomsen (1984); there is an important review by Jacobsen (1988). Thomsen bases her work on the Old Babylonian literary texts, because these exhibit the greatest variety of grammatical variation. The danger with this approach is the fact that in these texts one must always be on guard against Akkadian influence. In spite of this methodological criticism, Thomsen contains a balanced, thorough, and relatively uncontroversial presentation of the grammar, more-or-less in the Falkensteinian tradition. Her book would be difficult for anyone who does not know the principles of cuneiform script, but for those who already know some Sumerian, it will serve as a standard reference for some time.

This Manual will be followed by a second volume consisting of extracts from Inanna's Descent, with a commentary focussing on the grammar of the text.



# Appendix 6

## Topical Index

The index is designed to tie together information scattered throughout this book, in order to permit quick reference and review. Only significant discussions are listed. References are to pages.

- ablative case 177, 197
- absolute case 34
- abstract nouns 67, 105, 251
- adjectives 50, 82, 84, 97, 208, 209, 217
- adnominal cases 54
- adverbial cases 54, 68, 138
- Amar-Sin 154, 209
- amissability 31, 83, 121
- animacy 32, 39, 134, 173
- anticipatory genitive 111, 170-171, 251
- article 31
- aspect 37, 133-134
- Auslaut 31, 32, 175
- autograph 30, 234
- benefactive 32, 111, 200, 230, 251
- brick 41, 91
- brick-stamp 52-53
- building inscription 41, 62, 77, 78, 91, 230
- case system 32, 53, 54
- circumstantial clause 198, 199
- cohortative 175, 252
- comitative case 135, 171-172
- compound logogram 74, 77
- compound nouns 101, 105
- compound verbs 67, 67-68, 70, 95, 129-130, 136, 138, 176-177
- concrete nouns 69, 105, 251
- cone 77
- conjugation 40, 139, 202
- conjugation-prefix 34, 39-40, 88-89, 90, 136, 137-138, 138, 175, 200, 202-203, 252
  - ba 136, 137, 219, 220
  - bi 133, 137, 138, 219
  - ி 34, 88, 90, 175, 200
  - im 200, 202
  - mu 34, 35, 88
- coordination of nouns 51, 185, 187-188

coordination of verbs 61, 62, 188  
 copula 122, 170, 174  
 cuneiform sign formation 26-27, 61-62, 73-74, 89, 104, 118, 125, 153, 174-175, 182,  
     193, 195, 212-213, 213, 223, 224, 247-248, 252  
 curse-formula 133, 142-143, 173, 190  
 dative case 32, 160-161, 251  
 demonstrative 135  
 desiderative 136, 173, 252  
 dimensional-prefix 35, 68, 176, 200  
     ablative 177, 197  
     comitative 136, 138, 170-171, 200  
     dative 35, 200  
     locative 82-83, 84, 199, 200  
     locative-terminative 104, 218  
     terminative 68, 69, 70  
 divinity of Ur III kings 111, 113  
 door socket 95, 97-98, 145, 188  
 double genitive 152, 216  
 Ebla 77, 111, 127, 188  
 .ed 185-186, 187  
 enclitic copula 122, 170, 177, 198  
 ergative case 33, 104, 162, 199, 203, 227  
 ergativity 33, 140-141, 202f  
 foundation deposit 91  
 function of texts 41, 91, 97-98, 188, 254  
 gender 27, 31  
 genitive 31, 33, 39, 51-52, 54, 54-55, 76, 111, 121, 123, 152, 229  
gunû 104, 193, 252  
hamtu 37, 40, 133  
 Ibbi-Sin 231, 242  
 indicative 34  
 intransitive 197, 198, 202  
 loan words 74, 77, 80, 82, 83, 103, 106, 124, 127, 158, 175, 212, 213, 219, 228, 247  
 locative case 82, 84, 135  
 locative-terminative case 103-104, 218, 219, 235, 251, 251-252  
marû 37, 133-134, 139f, 171, 172  
marû-suffix 134, 139f  
 Mesannepadda construction 154  
 modal-prefix 34, 136, 137, 140, 175, 185, 252  
 negation 185, 198  
 nominal phrase 32, 35, 160  
 nominalizer 50, 82, 88, 97, 208  
 numbers 109, 231, 232, 233

- optional pronominal-prefix 171, 172, 176  
overhanging vowel 95, 123-124, 126, 152, 173  
palaeography 49, 52, 60, 89, 116, 149, 227, 234, 256  
participle 50, 82, 122, 154, 187, 208  
passive 105, 197-198, 202  
personal-affix, pre-verbal root 35, 89, 134, 141, 172, 173, 186, 187, 218, 252  
personal-affix, post-verbal root 36, 134, 136, 141, 252  
plural - nouns 76, 82, 217  
plural - verbs 172  
possessive-suffix 32, 97, 103, 235-236  
proper name formation 27, 33, 122, 122-123, 170, 177, 186, 217, 236, 246  
reduced relative clause 151-152, 154  
reduplication 139, 141  
relative clause 88, 132-133, 151, 185, 186, 208, 209  
restoration of text 207, 234, 246, 250  
root 36, 136, 198, 200, 252  
seal inscriptions 235, 236f, 240  
šešsig 252  
Shulgi 114-115, 154, 232  
Shu-Sin 209, 220, 230, 242  
standard inscription 91, 112, 152  
subordinate clause 132  
substrate 106, 153, 158  
syllabic structure 33, 121-2  
syllabic writings 252-253  
temporal clause 132-133, 217  
tense 37, 133-134, 185  
terminative case 67, 69, 103, 217  
titulary 44-45, 56, 113-114, 161, 163, 197, 208  
ù 185  
Ur-Nammu 44, 56, 113, 114  
verbal phrase 34, 37, 38  
vocalic assimilation 76, 124-125, 223, 228  
vocative 235, 251  
votive inscription 70-71, 142, 254  
votive objects 70, 117, 142-143, 177, 210, 221, 240, 254  
weights 112, 231, 232, 232-233, 243  
word order 38, 52, 161, 217, 218, 230, 241  
word order typology 40-41, 55, 111-112  
year-dates 219-220, 221

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