

REVIEWS

PIOTR STEINKELLER: *Third-millennium legal and administrative texts in the Iraq Museum, Baghdad*. (Mesopotamian Civilizations, Vol. 4) xv, 123 pp., 32 plates. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1992. \$30.

The text edition under review continues the series 'Mesopotamian Civilizations' under the very able editorship of J. Cooper. Steinkeller gathers and publishes here the administrative and legal texts in the Iraq Museum from the Fara through to the Old Akkadian periods which stem from illicit excavations (in fact, the author is very terse about the acquisition circumstances of the tablets treated; it might have been of some interest to know, for example, which pieces were bought where and under which circumstances, which pieces were confiscated, and what information was gained about the provenience and find circumstance of the pieces from the persons involved. While it is necessary to take such information with a grain of salt, yet when available, it can and should be offered as corroborating evidence in context-based archival analyses). The total of 74 such tablets is indeed extremely meagre compared with the very large number of illicitly excavated tablets which made their way out of the country and into the antiquities market of the industrialized world.

Following an introduction to the volume with a short description of the provenience, chronology and contents of the tablets treated (pp. 1-12), the author presents in the main body of the book (pp. 13-110) transliterations of all texts, in many cases together with translations and commentaries. There follow very painstaking indexes of personal and divine names, toponyms, and of the Akkadian and Sumerian terms discussed in the text commentaries. The volume is completed with 32 plates of text copies, made primarily by J. N. Postgate (three copies—nos. 38, 42 and 68—by J. Black were included).

My general impression of the book is that it reflects the very high standard of scholarship evident in the work of P. Steinkeller, who has perpetuated and in many respects improved upon the deep knowledge of the early administrative documentation taught by his mentor at the Chicago Oriental Institute, I. J. Gelb. While the editing of a disparate collection of tablets is a task of often unrewarding drudgery, Steinkeller's imposing, detailed knowledge of the text corpora of the periods treated, of text formulae and in particular of third-millennium lexicography, leads his discussions of the respective texts into highly interesting avenues of thought, with a number of provocative and timely excursions. That such topics have been on his mind for some time is evident in the considerable number of references in the commentaries to his own publications and research in progress.

Credit also goes to the author and the series

editor J. Cooper for the professional and nearly mistake-free manuscript. Somewhat confusing, however, is the question of volume authorship. Although the title page and the Library of Congress entry on the impressum cite the authorship as: 'Piotr Steinkeller, with hand copies by J. N. Postgate,' the cover and the series register opposite the title page refer to a dual authorship Steinkeller/Postgate. Acknowledgments, moreover, seem clearly to reflect this latter arrangement, and the introduction states explicitly that 'it was decided that Postgate and Steinkeller would publish the tablets jointly.' Despite the fact that the transliterations and many of the interpretations of the texts stem from the early work of I. J. Gelb for his *MAD* series, and that Postgate, too, must be acknowledged as one of the leading specialists on Babylonian administrative structures and on third-millennium texts, the tenor of the main body of the volume seems mostly to reflect the work of Steinkeller. Postgate's copies display a keen hand insofar as the logo-syllabic signs are concerned. His treatment of the curvilinear numerical signs, however, is somewhat cavalier. The renderings of the sign \bullet (sexagesimal '10', surface 'bür') are often slipshod and reflect no clear geometrical relationship to the oblique signs, which leaves one wondering whether the scribes employed styluses of differing diameter for the various signs (an unlikely prospect). The same may be said of the oblique signs, in particular in relation to each other. For example, the numerical signs qualifying *ninda* and *tu*, in text no. 2, line ii' 3', were apparently impressed using the same stylus, whereas the last sign (qualifying *tu*₇) can only have been made with the same stylus as that used for the first three if the stylus had been first impressed in the clay and then held and rolled downward. Otherwise, the sign shown would represent not '1' (\blacktriangleright) but '60' (\blacktriangleright) in the sexagesimal system. Other clear examples of such slight misrepresentations are to be seen in texts nos. 7 (in particular i 6), 12 (ii 1; are these really \blacktriangleright ?), 13 (obv. 15), 21 (obv. 6-7), 37 (rev. 4') and 51 (ii 2'-3'). Constraints of time and publication format may have caused the copyist to abbreviate his treatment of the obverse or reverse of some of the texts; for example, nos. 4 (obverse), 29-30, 44 (reverse). The extent of the damage on these surfaces is, however, information and warrants their inclusion in the publication, for the obvious reason that a complete drawing represents the only possibility for the reader to judge for himself whether some text might after all be missing. Such copies would not require photographic accuracy and would add no more than a few pages to the book. Despite the fact that Postgate's copies seem otherwise highly accurate, the volume would also have profited from the inclusion of several plates of photographs.

Steinkeller obviously made an effort during his week of Iraq Museum work in 1984 to collate all the texts presented here. The difficulties in this endeavour, in particular in

achieving complete coverage of a group of texts, are known to colleagues who have done the same work, so that the author is to be commended for the fact that only texts nos. 32, 34 and IM 43433 could not be located. It is unfortunate, however, that the author and his collaborators did not press more forcefully to have the exhibition pieces IM 14182 (no. 1) and IM 10631 (no. 39) removed from display for collation and copying, respectively. In the case of IM 10631, we shall be left to wonder whether l. 4 may not after all be corrected to 3¹ (pi) and thus be made to concur with a month-ration equivalence of 90 sila of barley per herder.

p. 3: To the Fara sale list may be added T. Gomi, *Oriente*, 19, 1983, 1-6; the tablet W 17258 cited in n. 10 was supplemented in 1982 with the publication by M. Green in *ZA*, 72, 175 (cf. her comments, pp. 166-7) of the tablet W 18581, a surface find made south-west of the outer wall of Eanna. Although this text documents a house sale to Ur.⁴Sùd, a well-attested name at Fara, it seems unlikely that such tablets should have been brought to Uruk from that city, at least in the case of W 17258, only to be discarded together with pottery shards in the Old Babylonian period, as Steinkeller suggests.

no. 1: The author delivers an extremely informative discussion of the signs $\text{HI} \times \text{DIŠ}/\text{AŠ}$ and $\text{LAGAB} \times \text{ĦA} + \text{A}$; however, the palaeographic development of the former sign, and the meaning of the latter remain unclear. The expected cuneiform correspondence to the curvilinear numerical sign E in attestations of the composition $\text{HI} \times \text{DIŠ}/\text{AŠ}$ would be either the horizontal or oblique wedge (— or ↘), with the reading *aš*, for example in the divine name *aš-dar*. While this is the case with the text *PBS*, 9, no. 3, other references, for example, the texts *MVN*, 10, 82-83, seem to contain the sign $\text{HI} \times \text{Ħ}$. These texts should be re-inspected. It is, further, not obvious that this sign, read *tu*, by Steinkeller, is the same as the sign attested in the cited Fara lists read *aš_x*, which is substantially flatter and longer than the former sign. Such usages as this of numerical signs in graphic composita need to be examined as to the possible metrological, ideographic or even phonetic meaning of the signs involved. The significance of 7 sila $\text{HI} \times \text{E}$ in the Ur archaic text *UET*, 2, 18 iii' 3 (cited p. 16) is unclear. Steinkeller's translation 'liter' of sila here and passim should be underscored as conventional, since it is highly likely that the capacity of the unit changed through time. It may be significant that the sign originally seems to have denoted a container of liquid products (fats and beer), as opposed to the exclusive use of the grain capacity system and of the sign *GAR/ninda* and related signs for dry commodities. Since the product $\text{LAGAB} \times \text{ĦA} + \text{A}$ is found only in the context of sale documents, every discussion of the meaning of the sign combination remains highly speculative. My guess is that it is connected to the Old Sumerian *GIGIR* = *háb*, a type of fish sauce.

See for a more recent short discussion of the assumed metrological unit *pab* M. Powell, *RIA*, 7, 506, and the literature cited there. It may, finally, be of interest to note that in the *ED*

lexical fish list (see G. Pettinato, *MEE*, 3, 91-104 and R. Englund and H. Nissen, *ATU*, 3, 22 and 93-98) the final section dealing with probable fish baskets contains $\text{GA} + \text{ĦI}$, $\text{GA} + \text{SUĦUR}$, $\text{GA} + \text{A}$ and $\text{GA} + \text{KU}_6$.

The sign E transliterated in this text as a raised Roman numeral before names is not an anachronistic 'personal determinative', but the numerical sign representing '1' in the sexagesimal system, used to count and verify the completeness of the witnesses. Thus the main actors in the transaction II. i 1-iv 2 are not qualified by this sign. For the same reason, iv 1 is better reconstructed 1 dug *kaš*, simply because of the presence of the numerical sign.

no. 2: In line v' 9 *nigir* is translated 'herald', in text no. 6, line i 4' 'town crier'.

no. 3: The signs in the text copy representing $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{8}$ *iku* are unusual ($\frac{1}{4}$ usually = $\frac{1}{2}$ rotated 90° clockwise; $\frac{1}{8}$ usually a combination of U and L) and should be recollated (cf. also no. 22, obv. 1). The reading *pi* instead of *bari(g)* of the sign U/L in capacity notations of third-millennium texts should be defended.

no. 4: *viii 4'*, etc. '20 shekels' is not a good translation of $\frac{1}{2}$ *kug ša-na* (' $\frac{1}{2}$ (mana) silver').

no. 9: i 8 *LUL* seems best translated 'entered against', corresponding to the Old Sumerian usage *gú.an.ia mu.gar*, 'set on his neck', Old Akkadian *al NN bašā'um* and Ur III *NN in.da.gál*, 'is debited against ...'.

no. 13: Either the copy or the transliteration of line 22 is defective.

no. 19: Since *kuš* already means 'flayed hide', *gid* may better be translated simply 'stretched'.

no. 20: Steinkeller's point about the phonetic realization of *UZ* is unconvincing. Whether the reconstruction */uzd/* posits a final consonant cluster or a spirantized phoneme peculiar to Sumerian phonology is immaterial, since we have only the graphic response to obviously felt phonetic problems (the intolerance of consonant clusters in final position in Sumerian is not a 'fact', yet). The Ebla reference *a-satum* does not support a facile reconstruction */uzud/*, since Ebla orthography does not differentiate between *a-satum* and *as-tum*, both presumably **aSTum*.

no. 22: obv. 1 and passim: the reading of the sign E is *ēše*.

no. 23: Line 2 of the copy should have been corrected to correspond to the correct transliteration. The fortuitous correspondence of the two signs U and L to 1(*bán*) and 2(*bán*) in liquid measurements in this and following texts need not be reflected in the transliterations. The signs, together with U for $\frac{1}{2}$ (see no. 25), represent $\frac{1}{5}$ and $\frac{2}{5}$ of the jars with a capacity of 30 sila.

no. 29: In the second paragraph of the commentary, correct 1 (*gin*) to 1 (*gur*).

no. 31: Correct the museum accession number to IM 5592/3+6. Steinkeller's speculative interpretation of this text offered in *BSA*, 4, 83-87, as a record of flood measurements may be compared with the Nebuchadnezzar II text published by P. Neugebauer and E. Weidner, *BSGW*, 67/2 (Leipzig 1915, cited B. Landsberger, *JNES*, 8, 250¹³; see now A. Sachs and H. Hunger, *Astronomical diaries and related texts from Babylonia*, 1 [Vienna, 1988], 34-6 and 46-53), from the years 567-566

B.C. According to measurements recorded in the text, the Euphrates rose between the 8th and the 29th of the first month of the year documented a total of 3 cubits and 8 fingers, between the 4th and the 15th of the 11th month a total of 1½ cubits—to fall the next day, and between the 1st and the 5th of the 12th month 8 fingers—to fall the next day (cf. also *ARM*, 10, 25 ... *iznun* ... *mû* 1 GI *izzaz*). Thus, assuming the water level of some natural water course were being measured in no. 31, one would expect both rising and falling water, in particular since in several instances a reading of zero was made. I am inclined to interpret the measurements in the text as the recording of rainfall for unclear purposes, perhaps to calculate the amount of additional water which might have been expected to be at the disposal of agricultural administrators otherwise exclusively dependent on irrigation.

no. 33: The author employs a consequent transliteration of surface notations in other texts, e.g., no. 22 obv. 1: 1(bùr) 1(ēše) 4 lá ¼(iku) (cf. also no. 56); 9(iku) for 1(ēše) 3(iku) here is inconsequent.

no. 35: A correction of the total noted in line 27 to 1;1:4 is necessary to tally with the individual entries and preserve the nice relationship throughout the text for *gig:ziz:še* of 1:6:72, assuming the measures are based on a 300-sila gur.

no. 38: obv. 4 read *gud*¹-*gud*.

no. 39: See the comment above.

no. 44: One of the signs for '10' (●) seems to be missing in the first line of the copy. An emendation 3.20 *uda* lá.30! of ii 7 might be considered, since (1.00 (ii 9) + 4.40 (ii 12)) ÷ 2 (mana per sheep as in column i) = 170; this interpretation would require that the cuneiform numerals following lá in ii 7 referred to animals for some reason 'excused' from wool production.

no. 53: The sign representing ¼ iku in copy would appear to be incomplete.

no. 59: In rev. 10 translation read *UD*¹-*dib*(?)

no. 66: Steinkeller assumes here the use of a 300- instead of the usual 240-sila gur. The reason for this change should be made clear (the point at which the 300-sila gur was introduced during the Old Akkadian period is not clear, possibly during the reign of Naram-Sin; the 240-sila *si.sá* gur remained in use). One rather far-fetched solution for this text is the following: assuming the use of a pre-sargonic Lagash gur of 144 sila, the separate entries would correspond to 420 + 246 + 160 = 826 sila, and this total would have been inscribed as 5(gur) 3¹(barig) lá 2 sila.

R. K. ENGLUND

Professor Meier begins his study with observations on the problems of using the Masoretic Text (MT) for purposes of recovering the Hebrew of a single linguistic source. By drawing on differences in Septuagint and Qumran traditions as well as anomalous examples within the MT itself, Meier finds the latter to be a 'palimpsest'. Thus he insists that all textual variants require examination, with the search for statistical probabilities as the best way to achieve his descriptive goal. This comprehensive approach leads to significant generalizations about direct discourse. For example, there is a clear difference between the way in which the poetry and the prose of the Hebrew Bible are marked. In prose, direct discourse is almost always marked at the beginning. In poetry, this is optional. It may or may not be marked. Even where poetry is marked, this may occur in the middle or (rarely) at the end of the direct discourse, rather than at the beginning. More questionable is Meier's tendency to use statistical probabilities to rewrite anomalies in the MT. Leviticus 13: 45 provides the only example of direct discourse marked after a quotation in biblical narrative. Does this justify opting for the Septuagint witnesses which read the verb of discourse as a niphil and thereby eliminate the presence of direct discourse? Is it not better to recognize the tendency, specific to this verse, for the MT to position every verb toward the end of its clause?

M. argues that *לאמר* (*l'mr*) comes to represent the marker of direct discourse for a selection of verbs. That is to say, *לאמר* (*l'mr*) follows a finite form of these verbs and immediately precedes the beginning of the direct discourse. M. suggests that this occurs rarely in poetry because it preserves an older and more conservative form of the language, before *לאמר* (*l'mr*) took on this role. However, a chronological aspect to this argument is not as clear. Although M. observes parallel usages of this infinitive in Aramaic and Phoenician, that does not automatically allow him to discount the Egyptian evidence from the second millennium B.C. as a possible influence.

Of special significance is the Amarna example which M. cites (EA 255.8-9) from a letter probably originating in the fourteenth century B.C. from Pella. M. suggests that the Akkadian *ana qabî* forms a precise parallel to *לאמר* (*l'mr*). It introduces direct discourse in the letter. However, this Akkadian expression also occurs in a letter from the pharaoh, EA 369.3. Although it does not occur with *šapāru* as in EA 255, it is significant as the one other occurrence of *ana qabî*. In EA 369 it precedes and introduces direct discourse, but is separated from it by two words. Comparisons with other letters from the pharaoh, which use *qabî* at the same position in the letter but without the preposition *ana* (EA 367.3 and 370.4), suggest that *ana qabî* is a variation of an expression with Egyptian origins. Since the lines in the one Amarna letter which M. cites (EA 255) refer to a message from the pharaoh, *ana qabî* almost certainly reflects the Egyptian usage and not 'the grammar of the West Semitic speaker who composed the text'. This evidence does not necessarily argue for an Egyptian origin or for an early date to this phenomenon. Instead, it should urge caution

SAMUEL A. MEIER: *Speaking of speaking: marking direct discourse in the Hebrew Bible*. (Supplements to Vetus Testamentum, Vol. XLVI.) xvi, 383 pp. Leiden, New York and Köln: E. J. Brill, 1992. Guilders 175, \$100.