
The author has, in a series of contributions (see the references in On People, p. 93) dealing with the archaeological and epigraphic remains from Late Uruk Mesopotamia (ca. 3500-3000 B.C.), entered territory most fear to traverse. We indeed have good cause to treat gently the proto-cuneiform documents that e-merge as powerful administrative tools at the close of this period ca. 3300-3000. While their numbers are not small — currently over 6000 texts and fragments containing nearly 40,000 lines of text — their contents remain difficult to understand, and the language they in part represent, undeciphered. One might therefore take immediate issue with the subtitle of the book to be considered here, if not for the fact that Charvat has made a great effort to let the archaic documents stand for themselves, and has included Early Dynastic peri-ods of clear, but still very difficult Sumerian tradition (ca. 2800-2500). Yet it seems this effort was unsuccess-ful, since graphemic interpretations derived from later Sumerian tradition of the 3rd millennium B.C. often serve as the basis for his discussions of the major designations of early Babylonian administrative households.

Charvat divides this short book into seven subsections on what he sees as the key terms documenting an emerging Sumerian state in the latter half of the 4th, and the first half of the 3rd millennium B.C.: the AB ("Sumerian community") in the Late Uruk period, Fara period unclear), the E ("grassroots social groups"), the EN ("head of primordial state" Late Uruk, ED reduced to cultic role), the LU ("adult married man"), the LUGAL ("chief representative of the LU," ED replacing the EN as chief of early state), the MURUB ("adult married woman") and the NIN ("cohort of the EN" Late Uruk, ED transferring to cohort of the LUGAL; all translations taken from the author's general conclusions pp. 90-92). Mixed throughout this treatment of oft-encountered signs and sign combinations in the early Babylonian archives are the author's interpretations of a number of other difficult signs, including GA+ZATU753, NI+RU and NA. It seems to the reviewer that Charvat's treatment of his "key terms" can form a basis for later fruitful discussion of early administrative hierarchy in Mesopotamia (discounting the Schriftarchäologie inherent in the sign form sub-sections that precede his contextual treatment of each key term, in particular to the signs AB [p. 7; note that the Uruk IV period form of this sign has an inverted pyramid, and not a rectangular building upon a conical pedestal], EN [pp. 41-43; the author's breakup of presumed components into "stalk" and NAM, seems ingenious given that neither Uruk IV period glyphs, nor the Uruk Vase offer this variant] and LU [p. 71; interpreting the sign to represent a man bound in cloth, therefore signaling his access to "textile products usually supplied by married women of the pre-industrial societies"]). Based on a proposed understanding of the movement of goods recorded in the ancient accounts that has no evident justification, Charvat interprets GA+ZATU753 to represent "a reserve fund of "national" material wealth" (pp. 51, 90), NI+RU (pp. 15-18) "a common fund" put together and used in time of need by Late Uruk partners, and NA, the institution of the "sacred marriage" (pp. 10-12, and p. 84: "the NIN could act as EN's partner in the NA, fertility-generating ceremony"). In my opinion, these latter and a large number of other speculations (see below) do harm to the credibility of the author's otherwise analytical, if occasionally provocative, treatment of early Babylonian administration.

The book is written for a very restricted audience of Sumerologists with good knowledge of proto-cuneiform publications. Some of the English is unevenly translated, for instance, "procession" for "processing" on p. 7, "basal" activities on p. 18, "potted" goods on p. 16, "hollow" for "capacity" on p. 9 and passim (sounds German!), "kernel" for "kennel" on p. 31 (should be: "pigsy") and so on: mostly smallish errors that do no impede the reader's understanding of the author's arguments. As a general note, the book would have profited from an inclusion of a table with depictions of the major signs discussed, particularly given the author's attention to detail of early forms, and from the deletion of tiring and non-informative lists of sign names related in some way to terms being discussed (see, for instance, those on pp. 50, 55-56, etc.). An excellent bibliography and a general index including all texts cited (published, and large numbers of unpublished archaic texts to appear in reduced form soon in the pages of the CDLI http://cdli.ucla.edu/, and in due course in the series ATU edited by Hans Nissen) close the volume.

Some detail remarks:

Note that the pagination of the table of contents is off by one page for pages 13-36, sporadically thereafter; the index appears to be correct.

p. 13: The author's discussion here (and cropping up again p. 60, and see p. 19 to LAK 172) of the sign IL found as a global qualification on the important field measurement texts MSVO 1, nos. 2, 5 and 6, seems symptomatic of a cavalier use of later Sumerian multivalency (IL for ilu, "to lift", "to carry"). The author must first make the case for the Sumerian phoneticization of the proto-cuneiform signs, and then in each specific case propose both semantic and
phonetic arguments for their occurrence.

p. 59: A much easier interpretation of the MSVO 1, 2, field categories would be "fields (assigned the household of the) EN", "measured fields" and "wooded areas outside (the fields)".

p. 62: NI-RU most likely refers to the ancient settlement of modern Jemdet Nasr; see Bauer, Englund and Krebernik, OBO 160/1, 197 + n. 450.


**Volume I – Argument**

This publication is one of several based upon the author’s dissertation research concerning Sumerian conceptions of the afterlife. Its major thesis is stated at the outset: Most of the two dozen or so persons who seem to receive funerary offerings in a corpus of Presargonics Lagaš texts – thought by past and present scholars to be dead Lagaš royalty or high state or temple officials – were actually alive at the times those texts were written. They were not the beneficiaries of offerings but were merely attendees “assigned to festivals.” While some Lagaš I texts do indeed attest funerary offerings (most notably those referring to the statue of the dynastic founder Ur-Nammu), the existence of a cult of dead ancestors (A. Deimel’s “Ahnenkult”) cannot be proved.

Admittedly, the texts in question have the typical lacunar character of economic records, and only a few (e. g. DP 218 v 6f.) explicitly state that persons named in them are dead. Several texts moreover are problematic, including at least one person who can be shown, from later texts, clearly to be alive, despite being named alongside presumably dead recipients of offerings. But there exists one text in this corpus which seems to offer proof that one significant group of these personages at least was indeed no longer living.

The text is VS 14, 163 (Ukg 3), edited by J. Bauer as AWL 167, which describes a variety of garments issued at the time of the Festival of Baba by Šaša, wife of Iriškagina, for the Lagaš notables Gu-NI-DU, Mengin-ta, Nin-me-zi, Munus-sa-ga, and Gême-qa-ba-ba. These garments are summarized in iv 1 as tûg gidimm-e-ne-kam “garments of the ghosts,” certainly referring to the (statues of the) previously named personages. Bauer’s original guess “tûg-gada-[-]JUL-e-ne-kam” was corrected by Ph. Talon in RA 68 (1974) 167f. The sign gidim in AWL 167 takes the odd shape seen in OIP 99, No. 131 ii 3’, and in the PA-gidim and nu-gidim of ED Lu E 67 and 69 (from OIP 99, Nos. 54, 55, 60), shown copied in MSL 12, 20. As M. Civil pointed out in AuOr 2 (1984) 8 + n. 10 (cf. AuOr 8 (1990) 110), “after Talon’s note was published, MEE 3 199: 97 showed the correctness of the reading by giving GIDIM = nu-ga-[i]-mu (< lû-gidim).” M. Krebernik came to the same conclusion in his discussion of the udug-gidim sign in *Die Beschwerungen aus Fara und Ebla* (1984) 123; for photographs of the same sign-form in his *Incantation* 24 see the pertinent plates in G. Pettinato’s earlier edition in OA 18 (1979) 329ff. With the early Ebla and Abu Salabikh nu-gidim compare later lû-gidim-ma = ša e-te₂-mi₂-ti₂-im₂-m[i], MSL 12, 168: 356 / 194: 3, also the genitive construction in SP 3.168 še-mu₂š, ni-gig lû-gidim-ma-ka, B. Alster, *Proverbs of Ancient Sumer* (1994) q. v.

The reading gidim is not in doubt. Nevertheless, Chiodi persisted (p. 13 n. 22, 69f.) in reading tûg-gada-[-]JUL-e-ne-kam (even though the raised LAGAR-like element at the beginning of the gidim sign is certainly not gada, which occurs six times elsewhere in the same text), relying on the Eb laite reference MEE 4, 336: 1349’ḫûl-hûl = NI-si-li to produce the translation “sono i vestiti di lino per gli addetti alla festa” for the phrase. Despite the fact that hûl has no such meaning in ordinary Sumerian, Chiodi states further that “I-Jul è attestato ad Ebba col chiaro significato di ‘festa’ e sempre con questo valore lo ritroviamo nei testi letterari sumerici,” citing as example EWO 38-40: [en]-en-e ne bâra-bâra-ke-ne, [si-bi ḫû]-ḫûl-la-da IN-DI-e-ne, [za-a]-da kur-gal ṣen-li-ile a mu-un-da-an (-āg-e) “affinché gli en-en e bâra-bâra nella gioia del loro cuore precedano il grande Kur, Enil, ha affidato a te l’incarico.” Leaving aside -ke-ne instead of more usual -gē-ne and the error IN-DI- instead of IM-DI-, how this passage demonstrates a meaning “festa” for hûl is not apparent. The author makes the same assertion again on p. 184: “Il termine I-JUL ... è attestato col chiaro significato di ‘festa’ sia ad Ebba sia nei testi letterari sumerici.”

Having thus disposed of the only reasonably direct evidence that these personages were in fact dead and thus necessarily objects, rather than subjects, of some sort of (funerary) offerings, Chiodi goes on (p. 71) to link this text with others such as AWL 168 (Ukg 1), DP 78 (Ukg! 1) and DP 73 (Ukg! 4), which mention persons of AWL 167 together with other famous persons, as part of her attempt to show that those previously thought to be dead were actually alive and merely “gli addetti alla festa.” Dudo the old sanga and his family, the ancestor(?) Gu-NI-DU, kings Enentarzi and Lugalanda and their queens and relatives, all are said to remain alive well into the reign of Iriškagina, although oddly appearing no longer as usual in ration or field-assignment texts, but only in texts which record them, in association with cultic ritual or offering.