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## SUMMARY

Puzriš-Dagān, the redistributive center of cattle founded by king Šulgi of Ur close to Nippur has traditionally been understood as a basically agricultural institution, first of all destined to provide the temples of Nippur with animals for the offerings. A closer investigation of the animals distributed by the Puzriš-Dagān administration shows a different picture: the direct expenditure for the state cult amount only to 15 %. The recipients of animals, i. e. of prestigious royal presents, are precisely those persons which enjoy the highest esteem of the king. The resulting picture corresponds largely to the evidence of palace archives of Early Mesopotamia undertaken in an earlier study (see note \*).

## SCRIBAL FOIBLES: TWO POINTS OF INTEREST FROM OB LEXICAL LISTS\*

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For Jenny

## 1. Introduction

Although composite versions of texts have great practical value, they can sometimes hide interesting and useful information. It is easy to forget that behind that composite text lie numerous sources, each of which represents a document in its own right, with its own features and stamped with the unique mark of its author and his idiosyncrasies. It is some of these idiosyncrasies that I would like to discuss here, under the title "Scribal Foibles". This paper presents two further examples of what can be gained by examining the individual sources as documents in their own right, with ramifications beyond the immediate environment. The first point touches on palaeography, more specifically, highlighting the scribal habit of sometimes writing a sign in very different ways not just within a single text but even from one line to the next. The second point provides evidence that scribes memorised the long lexical lists in short chunks — something now demonstrated explicitly in the sources themselves. Finally, it is suggested that OB scribes read lexical lists 'vertically'.

## 2. Allographs

Civil's 1972 article "The Anzu-Bird and Scribal Whimsies" (*JAOS* 92, 271) introduced to Assyriology the phenomenon known as "scribal whimsies". This term describes the deliberate, playful manipulation of signs; as Civil puts it, these whimsies are: "text variants wilfully introduced, in a more or less facetious vein". The first foible I would like to highlight concerns something similar but yet significantly different — not the manipulation of signs but the manipulation of allographs of signs.

It is possible to recognize two main styles of script employed by OB scribes in the edubba: 1) a modern style with cursive forms; 2) an archaising style with more calligraphic forms. Typically, only one style will be employed on any one tablet (or in the case of Type II tablets<sup>1</sup>, any one side of a tablet). This information is often used to date and/or group manuscripts, identify broken signs ('the x-sign in this text is written this way, so this broken sign could / cannot be x') etc. However, looking at the work of student scribes, it becomes clear

\* The following abbreviations are used: Taylor = J. Taylor, *A Study of the Old Babylonian Lexical 'Professions' Lists* (unpublished thesis, University of Birmingham 2002); Veldhuis = N. Veldhuis, *Elementary Education at Nippur: the List of Trees and Wooden Objects* (unpublished thesis, University of Groningen 1997). This article is a paper given at RAI 48 (2002), Leiden, with only minimal changes. A fuller discussion with more detailed references will be found in the forthcoming publication of Taylor.

<sup>1</sup> See M. Civil, Ancient Mesopotamian Lexicography, *CANE* IV, 2308 for details.

that the two styles were not strictly segregated; elements of one style may sometimes be found in texts written in the other style, with obvious implications for the aforementioned analyses based on the investigation of script.

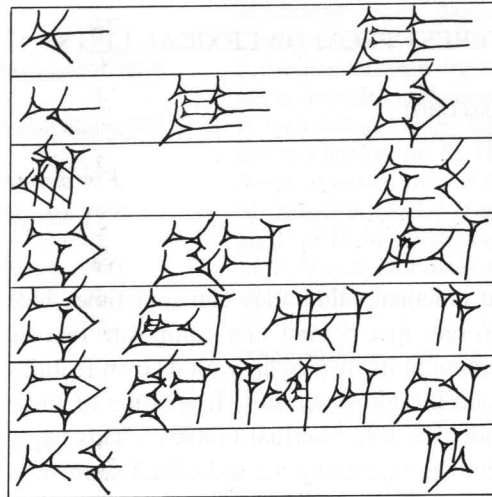


Fig. 1. CBS 11394 (Proto-Lu, Nippur; based on SLT 102 [coll.]). Example 1.

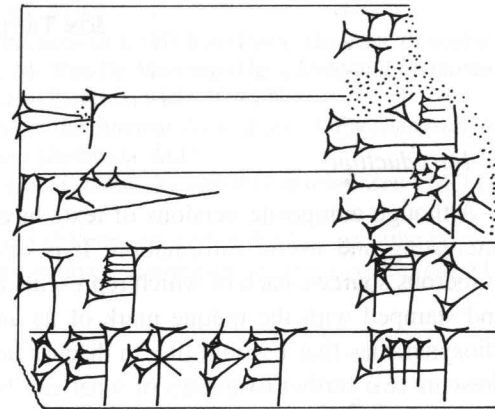


Fig. 2. 1932.392 (Proto-Lu, Kish; based on MSL SS 1 no. 108 [coll.]). Example 2.

#### Example 1 (see Fig. 1)

Here the GUD sign appears five times. Four out of five times it is written in the calligraphic style. In 'obv. III' 11 (here line 3), however, the scribe uses the cursive form.

#### Example 2 (see Fig. 2)

The scribe writes the MAH sign twice: in cursive style in obv. II 6 (here line 2), then calligraphically in the following line.

#### Example 3 (CBS 2145+ [coll.]; OB Lu, Nippur)<sup>2</sup>:

teacher's model

[lu<sub>2</sub> ša<sub>3</sub>]-kalag-ga

[lu<sub>2</sub> ša<sub>3</sub>-si]g-ga

pupil's copy

[l]u<sub>2</sub> ša<sub>3</sub>-kalag-ga

[l]u<sub>2</sub> ša<sub>3</sub>-sig-ga

In this example the GA sign is written four times. In the left column the master has used the calligraphic style but when the pupil comes to copy the first line he writes GA in cursive style. In the following line, however, the pupil uses the calligraphic style of the master.

This raises the question of whether such changes in style as we see in the three examples above represent deliberate acts or mistakes. In the first example, where the tendency is to write in the calligraphic style, the insertion of the cursive form might perhaps be seen as a mistake. And in the third example, the cursive form is certainly a mistake. For in this type of tablet, the aim is for the pupil to copy not just the signs but also the style of the signs.

<sup>2</sup> Only the Sumerian columns are given here. A copy of this tablet was published as PBS 5, 146, but only the model was copied. In this transliteration the cursive GA is printed in a different style.

However, in the second example the insertion of the more calligraphic form is unlikely to be a mistake and should probably be seen as a deliberate act, an attempt by a pupil to show off his prowess.

It is noteworthy that changes in style occur not only in the work of inexperienced scribes, such as those practising Proto-Lu, but also in that of more experienced scribes, such as those practising OB Lu. And the phenomenon is not restricted to a single scribal centre but is present in both Nippur and Kish, and presumably in other centres, too.

What presents itself is neither just the use of different scripts for different documents nor the signs being less carefully written as the scribe becomes tired or bored; it is something more complicated than this. Sommerfeld noticed something broadly similar in Old Akkadian period texts from Tutub<sup>3</sup>. And Sjöberg<sup>4</sup> comments as follows on an OB tablet from Nippur bearing a literary text: "The top of the tablet has [x]-la lugal-ĝu<sub>10</sub> ĝi<sup>is</sup>gu-za [...], and above the LUGAL the scribe has written a second LUGAL in Ur III ductus, and beneath it a third LUGAL in cursive Old Babylonian ductus."<sup>5</sup> This is very clearly deliberate and shows an awareness by the scribe of different writing styles, although it is at the same time also a rather different phenomenon to the one highlighted in this paper, since this use of different styles does not occur within the main body of the text, as happens in the three examples given above.

#### 3. The unwarranted U<sub>3</sub>

The second foible I would like to highlight concerns the writing of superfluous and apparently inexplicable signs. Some three times in the lexical list known as 'Proto-Lu', each time in a different source and at a different place in the composition, an extra, unexpected sign is written. This sign is the U<sub>3</sub> sign; as is well known, this sign is used both to render the sound /u/ and to write the word meaning "and". Its presence can be explained only if one looks at each source tablet as a document in its own right. The three occurrences are as follows:

##### 1) CBS 9847+ (Ni II-066<sup>6</sup>):

1 (= Proto-Lu 746)	u <sub>3</sub> <sup>1</sup> -tu	"able to give birth"
2 (= Proto-Lu 747)	u <sub>3</sub> <sup>1</sup> -nu-tu	"unable to give birth"
3 (= Proto-Lu 748)	u <sub>3</sub> ĝi <sup>is</sup> š <sub>3</sub> -gig <sup>1</sup> -bi-dug <sub>4</sub> -ga	"malformed birth"

This first attestation is the least clear. However, it can be seen that the three terms form a coherent group. The u<sub>3</sub> could be seen as indicating that the UŠ-sign should be read uš but ĝi<sup>is</sup>š<sub>3</sub> ... dug<sub>4</sub> is a known idiom. Or it could perhaps be explained away as a dittography. At any rate, it is interesting since it is an example of an error made by a master / šeš-gal while trying to write in model style.

<sup>3</sup> W. Sommerfeld, *Die Texte der Akkade-Zeit* (Imgula 3, Münster 1999) 7ff. Cf. also the observations of H. W. F. Saggs, *The Nimrud Letters* (Cuneiform Texts from Nimrud 5, London 1952) 2; thanks to Stephanie Dalley for drawing my attention to this reference.

<sup>4</sup> A. Sjöberg, *Miscellaneous Sumerian Texts*, III, JCS 34 (1982) 75 n. 8 (referring to N 1316).

<sup>5</sup> Thanks to both Prof. Tinney and Prof. Sommerfeld for drawing my attention to this reference.

<sup>6</sup> Sigla are given according to the revised edition in Taylor.

## 2) A 30188+ (Ni I-008):

face 4 II 3' (= Proto-Lu 720)	kar-[niġin <sub>2</sub> ]	"one frequenting the quay"
face 4 II 4' (= Proto-Lu 722)	e-[niġin <sub>2</sub> ]	"one frequenting the dike"
face 4 II 5' (= Proto-Lu 723)	pa <sub>5</sub> - <sup>r</sup> niġin <sub>2</sub>	"one frequenting the canal"
face 4 II 6' (= Proto-Lu 724)	<sup>r</sup> u <sub>3</sub> <sup>r</sup> a-gar <sub>3</sub> -niġin <sub>2</sub>	"one frequenting the arable tract"

This second example is a little clearer. Again, the entries form a coherent group (of terms with -niġin<sub>2</sub>, before going on to repetitions of KAR) and the u<sub>3</sub> occurs before the final entry in the group.

## 3) UM 55-21-291+ (Ni I-002):

12" (= Proto-Lu 791)	še-ba	"barley ration"
13" (= Proto-Lu 792)	i <sub>3</sub> - <sup>r</sup> ba <sup>r</sup>	"oil ration"
14" (= Proto-Lu 793)	u <sub>3</sub> sig <sub>2</sub> -ba	"wool ration"
{15" (= Proto-Lu 794)	niġ <sub>2</sub> -ba	"gift}"
{16" (= Proto-Lu 795)	niġ <sub>2</sub> -la <sub>2</sub>	"binding}"

This is the clearest example. Again the entries form a coherent group and again the u<sub>3</sub> occurs before the final entry in that group. Just looking at the signs, we might expect the u<sub>3</sub> to come before the following niġ<sub>2</sub>-ba or niġ<sub>2</sub>-la<sub>2</sub> but probably the first three were such a fixed concept that a mental break occurred after them before continuing. For this particular group forms what is almost a fixed set of terms (being three necessities of daily life), and is well attested as such in texts of various types. Note, for example:

AO 7796 (OB ur<sub>3</sub>-ra; RA 33 [1936] 87) obv. I 8'-10':

še-ba, i<sub>3</sub>-ba, <sup>r</sup>sig<sub>2</sub><sup>r</sup>-ba

Code of Hammurapi §178:

... ki-ma e-mu-uq zi-it-ti-ša ŠE.BA I<sub>3</sub>.BA u<sub>3</sub> SIG<sub>2</sub>.BA i-na-ad-di-nu-šim-ma  
 "... they shall give her barley, oil and wool rations in accordance with the value of her inheritance share"

AO 11140 (adoption text; RA 26 [1929] 106) 32':

... še-ba i<sub>3</sub>-ba u<sub>3</sub> sig<sub>2</sub>-ba nu-ub-[kalag-ge-eš]  
 "... if they do not provide fully the barley, oil and wool rations ..."

In each of the three passages from Proto-Lu the unexpected u<sub>3</sub> occurs before an entry which happens to be the last in a group of related items, most noticeably in the last example. The sign is thus clearly intended to convey the meaning "and" and shows us that the scribe, who at this point would not have been very far advanced, lost concentration and wrote either what the teacher was dictating or what he himself was thinking. This feature actually has significant consequences for our understanding of teaching methods but to my knowledge has never been recorded before, although it could be expected to be present in other lexical lists as well.

a) u<sub>3</sub> at Susa

The interpretation of the evidence advanced here is supported by a group of lenticular-shaped tablets excavated in Susa. The format of the tablets is not exactly the same as those

from Nippur but is certainly close enough to be relevant. The Susa lentils of this type are little, round tablets with two Sumerian entries on the obverse and the Akkadian equivalents on the reverse. As is characteristic of lenticular-shaped tablets generally, the terms are always closely related in one way or another. Consider, for example, *MDP 27, 39*:

obv.	rev.	
(model) išib	(pronunciation)	e-ze <sub>2</sub>
gudu		gu-du
(copy) išib	(Akkadian equivalent)	e-el-l[u]-um
gudu		ù pá-aš-šu-um

As in this example, a number of these lentils from Susa have the u<sub>3</sub> before the final entry. Thus they, too, were thinking: 'a and b'. The writing of u<sub>3</sub> is not a universal feature of Susa lentils — note that there are numerous counter-examples, which have no u<sub>3</sub> — but is a symptom of the scribes memorising the contents as groups and adding an "and" (mentally and sometimes also physically) before the last member of the group. In the case of the Susa examples, the writing of u<sub>3</sub> ought not to be considered a mistake but rather should be classified as within a range of acceptable variation. Our examples from Mesopotamia belong to a slightly different tradition but witness the same phenomenon.

This phenomenon also ties in well with the variation between sources. Not only can a group of entries occur more than once within a composition (and occasionally within a single manuscript) but also it can, and not infrequently does, occur in more than one composition. Note also OB lexical fragments such as CBS 10180<sup>7</sup> and YBC 5038<sup>8</sup> where the contents are very clearly entered as 'logical' groups of two or three. There is thus clear evidence for the OB scribes learning entries in groups.

## 4. 'Verticality' in OB lists

We might perhaps take the point a little further, although from here on we proceed with less certainty. We are all familiar with the practice of referring to compositions by their incipit; when the composition is a bilingual lexical list, this is the first entry in Sumerian followed by the first entry in Akkadian e.g. lu<sub>2</sub> = ša. From this it is tempting to assume that the scribal habit was to read first the Sumerian entry then the Akkadian equivalent, and so on for each apparent pair of entries through the list. We are all familiar with this 'horizontal' usage of a lexical list: Sum. x = Akk. y. Of course, we have known for some time now that lexical lists are a little more complex than that, and that Sum. x = Akk. y is not always the full story<sup>9</sup>; the simple appearance of the lists masks the complex editorial techniques behind them. However, this 'horizontal' thought pattern is deeply engrained, we being very much used to practising it on parallel columns of data. Modern dictionaries work in this way but although the lists may superficially share this appearance, they are not constructed, and consequently do

<sup>7</sup> Part of this tablet was published as OB Lu monolingual fragment F' in *MSL* 12 212-213; the contents do not belong to OB Lu but seem rather to be based on Lu and Izi. The editor there drew attention to the grouping, commenting "... perhaps to be explained as a compilation of, or a model for, a series of exercises on lentil-shaped tablets ... which usually contain pairs of this type".

<sup>8</sup> *MSL* 14, 116-117 (Proto-Ea secondary version).

<sup>9</sup> See M. Civil, *Lexicography, Sumerological Studies in Honour of Thorkild Jacobsen on His Seventieth Birthday*, June 7, 1974 (AS 20, Chicago and London, 1976) 133-134 for a brief discussion.



not function, the same way. The terminological pair of "word" and "translation" so commonly applied to lexical lists is misleading. Very rarely do we give much thought to what we might term the 'verticality'<sup>10</sup> of a list — that is to say, reading it downwards — and it would probably be considered perverse by most people today when confronted with a parallel list to read first a section from one column then one from the other. But this may have been the norm in the ancient near east.

Now Proto-Lu, although explicitly monolingual (except for 1 bilingual source), was implicitly bilingual<sup>11</sup>. The implicit bilingualism of Proto-Lu in particular is clear from references to this composition in literary texts (referred to as  $lu_2 = \check{s}a$  and  $lu_2 = \check{s}u$ ), a literary letter (as  $lu_2 = \check{s}a$ ) and a catalogue ( $lu_2 = \check{s}u$ ), and (as Veldhuis 107–111 has recently shown) this is one reason behind the repetition of Sumerian terms in lists other than to allow for different readings of the same signs/sign groups; for examples in Proto-Lu see ll. 725–731 (KAR seven times), ll. 179–187 (ŠAB nine times) — note that groups such as these are sometimes glossed with Akkadian translations which prove the point.

Getting back to 'verticality', since Proto-Lu was explicitly monolingual, we simply cannot tell whether the habit was to read across or downwards, and the  $u_3$  does not help us, either. However, we are familiar with the practice of reading 'vertically' from a widely cited commentary to *Šumma Izbu*, which quotes Erimḫuš by listing first a group of Sumerian entries then the Akkadian equivalents<sup>12</sup>:

$dul_2-la_2$ ,  $a-dul_2-la_2$ ,  $lah_4-lah_4$   
= [ri-du-tu], e-tel-lu-ú,  $\check{s}á-la-lu$  ina ERIM.ḪUŠ qa-bi

which refers to Erimḫuš I 198–200 (MSL 17, 18):

$dul-la_2$  = re-du-tú "succession"  
 $e_2-dul-la_2$  = e-du-lu-u "(a building)"  
 $lah_4-lah_4$  =  $\check{s}á-la-lu$  "to carry off, plunder"

Both the commentary and Erimḫuš itself are rather later than OB Proto-Lu; and it might be argued that Erimḫuš is an exception, since it is composed of small groups of related terms ruled into sections<sup>13</sup>. But consider also the Susa lentils noted above: I would argue that the arrangement of text on the tablet and the placement of the  $u_3$  suggests that this, too, was read 'vertically' i.e. išib and guḍu, copied išib and guḍu, read eze and guḍu, = *ellum* and *paš-šum*.

Since the practice of reading lists 'vertically' seems to be present in the OB period in Susa and later on in Mesopotamia itself, and given the presence in OB Mesopotamian lexical lists of these fixed groups which stimulate the accidental writing of  $u_3$ , it would seem to be a reasonable suggestion that 'vertical' reading may also have been the practise in OB Mesopotamia.

<sup>10</sup> For this term see Cavigneaux, MSL 17, 3. There the opinion is expressed that 'horizontal' readings are "usual". In the author's opinion, however, the difference between Erimḫuš and other texts here is more one of extent than of nature; Erimḫuš simply draws on existing techniques and formalises them.

<sup>11</sup> The implicit bilingualism of the monolingual lists has been noted already by Civil, MSL SS 1, 6: "The Akkadian translations are always, in my opinion, implicit in the OB unilingual lists" and demonstrated by Veldhuis 102–111. The implicit bilingualism of Proto-Lu in particular is discussed in Taylor 445–447.

<sup>12</sup> TCS 4, 232 Commentary O: 3–4. See also the discussion in MSL 17, 3–4.

<sup>13</sup> But see n. 10 and the evidence cited in section 3. above. MSL 17, 4 comments: "This technique was not, to be sure, unknown in the Old Babylonian schools."

# Abstract

Although composite versions of texts have great practical value, they can sometimes hide interesting and useful information. This paper presents two further examples of what can be gained by examining the individual sources as documents in their own right. The first point touches on the manipulation of different forms of a sign within a single text. The second point provides evidence that scribes memorised the long lexical lists in short chunks.