PETR CHARVÁT

SIGNS FROM SILENCE
UR OF THE FIRST SUMERIANS

KAROLINUM

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To Elena Charvátová, my mother

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FOREWORD

This is a book on the early history of ancient Mesopotamia, describing the story of the Sumerian city of Ur before the well-known "Royal graves" of the 27th pre-Christian century (c. 3000–2700 B.C.).

All through my career in Assyriology and Oriental Archaeology I have been fascinated by the phenomenon of the "Royal graves" of Ur. It goes without saying that I was not alone in this; such distinguished names as Leonard (later Sir Leonard) Woolley, Max Mallowan, Agatha Christie, Sidney Smith, Hans-Jörg Nissen, Susan Pollock, Roger Moorey, Richard Zettler, Holly Pittman or Gianni Marchesi all belong to personages that were, in one way or another, involved in the excavation and interpretation of this unique source for the early history of Sumer, and at the same time fascinated by the light that these treasures of the past shed on the early history of mankind.

Only very recently did I realize with some amazement that my investigations of Early Dynastic Ur have begun more than thirty years ago (*Charvát 1979*; *Charvát 1982*; *Charvát 1993*; *Charvát 2002; Charvát 2011b*). However, good fortune showered mercy on me, and brought me the chance to obtain deeper knowledge of all the problems of early Ur, only after the year 2000 A.D.

My stay in the U.S., where I worked in the University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology of the University of Pennsylvania at Philadelphia precisely on the Ur materials in 2003–2004 as a John William Fulbright fellow, opened me the door to a closer study of the Ur finds, including a firsthand experience with items from the "Royal graves" and some of the household articles that Her Majesty, Lady Puabi (or Puabum, as my learned friend and colleague Gianni Marchesi would have it) took with her on her voyage to eternity. In Philadelphia, I had the occasion to profit from the friendliness and kind help of Richard Zettler and Shannon White, of the Near Eastern Section of the abovementioned Museum. My daily *pied-à-terre*, however, was the Tablet Room of the Babylonian Section of the said Museum, and here I must with gratefulness acknowledge the amity and heartfelt assistance of Barry Eichler, then Director of the Babylonian Section, Steve Tinney, its present Director, Philip Jones, Fumi Karahashi, Richard Palmer, Ann Guinan and especially my very dear colleague and friend Erle Leichty.

I owe a great deal of gratitude to Holly Pittman, who spared no effort to be of assistance to me at Philadelphia, and who put me in contact with Sara Jarmer Scott, another personage to which I feel bound by gratitude. Sara has put very generously at my disposal her doctoral dissertation on the SIS sealings of Ur, in which she treated all the currently accesible materials from Ur in Philadelphia and London.

I feel deeply convinced that the key to the unravelling the mystery of the "Royal graves" phenomenon lies in our understanding of the society that produced them, and that in its historical dimension. What was this society like? Did it enjoy an assured subsistence level, or were its members living on the brink of starvation? What social structures did this society build? How did it make its decisions, who were the persons and/or institutions of authority? Did the Ur kingdom (for at that time I conceived of it as of such) merit the designation of "Oriental despotism"? What role did religion play in the public life of archaic Ur? Not until we know more about all this can an attempt to solve the mysteries guarded so well by those who went down into the "Royal graves" of Ur be succesful.

In the endeavour undertaken in this book, my attention focuses particularly on the mass of seal impressions found in what Leonard Woolley called the "Seal Impression Strata" (henceforth abbreviated as SIS) of Ur, comprised between the so-called "Jamdat Nasr cemetery" as a lower chronological margin and the extensive burial ground containing the "Royal graves" as the upper chronological margin. These sealings constitute historical sources of unique character. Their reverses supply much precious archaeological information. Bearing inscriptions, they also give historical evidence, and the images carved in them present a priceless source material of iconographic character.

Having resolved to find as comprehensive answers to these questions as can be put forward, I managed to obtain materials in Philadelphia with the help of which I intended to tackle the whole complex of problems. As I proceeded with the study, it became clearer and clearer that an important source group will have to be addressed – namely the inscriptions on the SIS sealings. This necessitated one more trip to Philadelphia, where I spent the summer of the year 2005 thanks to a grant from the American Philosophical Society, working in the Tablet Room to see through the skeleton information supplied by the inscriptions on SIS seals.

All the necessary materials being then at my disposal, I looked forward to sit down to work on them. The fate, alas, decided otherwise. Turbulences of practical life induced me to leave the Oriental Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic at Prague, where I had been working until the end of 2005, and to seek employment in a new and dynamic University of West Bohemia at Pilsen, which offered me a post thanks to the obligingness

of the then Head of the Depatment of Anthropology, Ivo Budil. After 2005, Prague reserved for me a half-post at the Faculty of Education of Charles University, and a fraction of a post in my research base of yore where I had spent my formative years as a scholar, the Archaeological Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, v. v. i. I am sorry to say that this link with the "cradle" of my academic career came to an end in 2011. Putting into operation a new series of university courses, and settling down to new tasks and routines, commanded more of my time and energy than I had thought previously. Nevertheless, I could at least initiate, and bring to an end, two research projects focusing on ancient Mesopotamian history after 2005. In these we concentrated on the relations between rulers and deities of ancient Mesopotamia (*Šašková-Pecha-Charvát 2010*), and on connections between the rulers and the ruled in the antiquity of the Land of Two Rivers (*Charvát-Maříková Vlčková 2010*). At this point I have to render deeply felt thanks to my learned colleagues and friends who made all this possible by exercising themselves, often to the utmost: Lukáš Pecha, Kateřina Šašková, Petra Maříková Vlčková, and Jana Mynářová.

At a point where I nearly despaired over the heap of Ur materials lying still on my shelves, the *Internationales Kolleg MORPHOMATA* of the University of Cologne, Germany, appeared on the scene as if prompted by a superior force. Having been asked whether I would have anything to contribute to the *MORPHOMATA* research programme – *Genese, Dynamik und Medialität kultureller Figurationen* – I suddenly realized that here was a fair chance to rescue my Ur evidence from oblivion, and to bring my efforts, which had by then extended over eight years, finally to fruition. The project which I submitted was kindly approved by the *Beirat* of *MORPHOMATA*, and so I could happily dedicate myself to research on Ur in the hospitable and friendly ambience of the *Kolleg*, situated in a quiet neighbourhood abounding in greenery within the justly famous city of Köln am Rhein. Having seen the tombstones of Roman soldiers of African and Indian origin in the *Römisch-Germanischen Museum* of Köln, I feel sure that I have been preceded by other Oriental or Orientalist personages at Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippina. Yet, I must say that during the year 2011–2012, support extended to me by the *MORPHOMATA* helped me to write this book in which I render account of my efforts aimed at deepening our knowledge of the emergence, and stabilization, of statehood in human history. Again, I have to declare my debt of gratitude both to *MORPHOMATA*, especially in the persons of its both Directors, Dietrich Boschung and Günther Blamberger, as well as to my friends at home who kindly took it upon themselves to bear the burden of extra work due to my absence from Pilsen. This goes especially for *Spectabilis* Pavel Vařeka, Dean of the Philosophical Faculty of the University of West Bohemia at Pilsen, and to Daniel Křížek, my faithful Deputy Head at the Department of Near Eastern Studies

of the Philosophical Faculty of the University of West Bohemia at Pilsen; I must not forget Eva Fürbachová and especially Iveta Nocarová, the indefatigable Secretaries of our Department.

I feel obliged to thank at least three of my *confratribus consororibusque pro Oriente Antiquo militantibus*, though I owe much to many of these. Walther Sallaberger of the Ludwig-Maximilan-Universität München was always ready to help myself and all the Pilsen team by going to Pilsen to lecture our students, by giving expert advice and, most obligingly, by admitting us to study in the perfectly furnished Library of his Institute at München. Jean-Marie Durand of the Collège de France has kindly consented to my study visits to the Library of the Cabinet d'Assyriologie upon the venerable Mont-Sainte-Geneviève in the Quartier Latin, where so many wise men and women made their contributions to the world of learning. Giacomo Benati of the University of Turin has been kind enough to read the archaeological part of this book and add a number of valuable comments, for which I am most grateful to him.

It is right and proper that an Orientalist publication should render homage to those next-of-kin to the author. My thanks go to all my family, my sons Jan and Ondřej, daughters-in-law Lenka and Eva, grandsons Antonín, Kryštof, Václav and granddaughters Nora and Markéta. Before all, however, I am obliged to Kateřina, my wife, who had so often patiently suffered the absences of my mind from her side due to the voyages of my imagination into the third pre-Christian millennium.

I wrote this book with help from many who have shown goodwill and amity. All the errors and inconsistencies are, of course, mine.

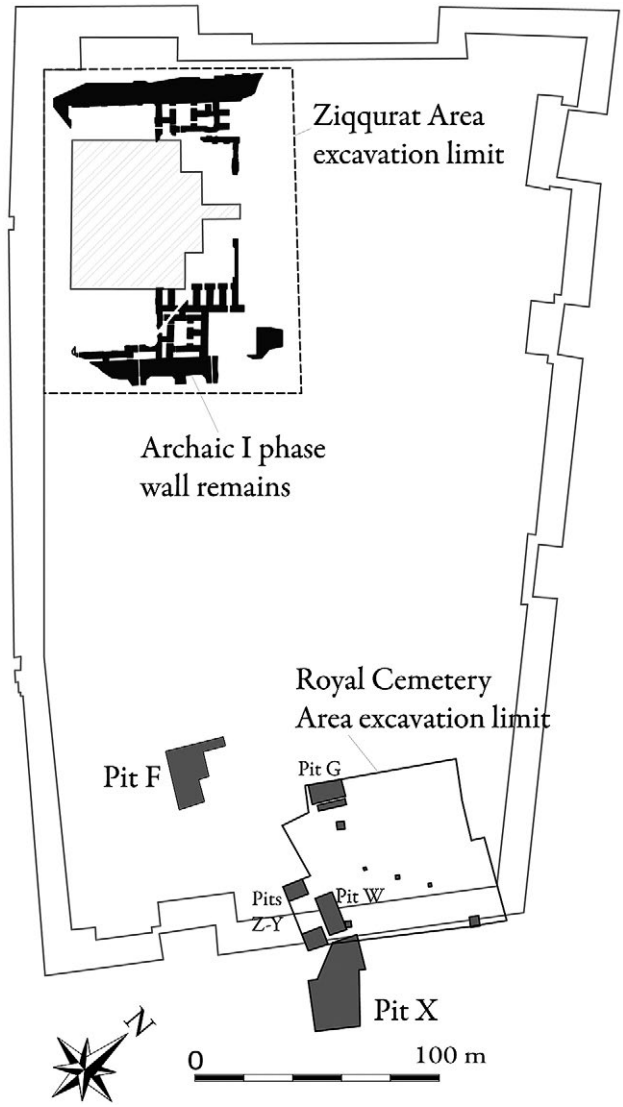
Acknowledgements

I was fortunate enough to be able to inspect the collections of the Near Eastern Section of the University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, U.S.) in 2003–2004 during my study stay in the USA, financed by a grant from the Prague establishment of the John William Fulbright Foundation (No. 2003–28-02, Fulbright No. ME659), and in 2005 thanks to a Franklin grant conferred on me by the American Philosophical Society, as well as to that of the Grant Agency of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic (grant No. A8021401). For permission to study in the collections and to refer to the materials discussed above, as well as for manifold help and support, I am deeply obliged to Richard Zettler and Shannon White of the Near Eastern Section of the said University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, as well as to to Holly Pittman, Curator of the Near Eastern Section of the said University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.

This contribution could not have been written without the generous support which I received in the academic year 2011–2012 as a Fellow of the Internationales Kolleg MORPHOMATA (Universität zu Köln, Germany). I am profoundly grateful to MORPHOMATA, to their Directors Dietrich Boschung and Günther Blamberger, and to the capable and friendly staff of this major institution of interdisciplinary research.

Cologne on Rhine and Prague, in 2012–2014.
Petr Charvát

The central precinct of the Sumerian city of Ur,
with excavation pits of the Leonard Woolley expedition



Benati 2015, Fig. 2 p. 4.

I. ARCHAEOLOGY: LIGHT OUT OF THE SHADOWS OF PAST AGES?

The formation of "primary states" during the 4th millennium BC (or Late Uruk period) is a key time for societal change in southern Mesopotamia. The onset of the 3rd millennium BC offers evidence of different socio-economic dynamics that, however, remain largely unknown.

The site of Tell al-Muqayyar, ancient Ur, in southern Iraq, is best known for its late Early Dynastic "Royal Cemetery" (ca. 2500–2350 B.C.) but it had already been a political center at the onset of the 3rd millennium (Early Dynastic I period, ca. 2900–2700 BC). Due to the rich archaeological evidence at our disposal, Ur is an ideal test case for analysis of the stabilization of the freshly formed Mesopotamian statehood for this specific time period. This book addresses the internal economic and political organization, as well as spiritual orientation and achievement, of archaic Ur. Emphasis is placed here upon the interplay between economic and socio-cultural actions, analyzed on the basis of three main lines of evidence: archaeology, written sources and iconographic data.

Excavating within the central sacred precinct of the city, the Leonard Woolley expedition (1922–1934) explored also the archaeological strata below the famous "Royal Cemetery", but above the so-called "Jemdet Nasr cemetery" (see below). These strata have yielded alternate layers of both domestic and administrative refuse including numerous find groups of seal impressions on clay, referred to as "Seal-impression strata" (SIS).

The seal-impression bearing strata constitute an ideal source category for the investigation of economic, administrative, social and spiritual structures streamlining the life of one of the major successor states of the Uruk-age culture. The analysis of the inscriptions borne by the sealed surfaces will give fairly instructive data for the use and socio-economic context of the relevant seals. On the other hand, impressions which the sealed objects left behind on the reverses of the clay sealings will reveal the type of seal carrier, and thus provide first-rate evidence of social and administrative practices of the relevant period. Inscribed seal impressions excavated from reasonably well-dated contexts will thus offer a historian the best possible material for studies of the socially engineered goods-exchange practices available.

Any qualified assessment of the find context of the early Ur sealings (published as *UE III*, on the find context see Woolley, in *UE III* pp. 1–2, and *Woolley*

1955, passim; for recent revisions of the situation see *Sürenhagen 1999* and *Dittmann 2006*) must begin with the review of their stratigraphic situation. This is what must be examined at first.

The best-informed source is, of course, the author of the excavation himself, Leonard Woolley. Let us hear what he has to say:

The upper levels containing graves of the Royal Cemetery age had been dug away by us in 1926; in them there was no stratification[1]*, owing to the disturbance of the soil by the grave-diggers,and our work has always stopped short at a stratum – the first recognisable as such – of red burnt brick earth and broken brick, pottery, etc. This is SIS 4-5, the stratum rich in clay jar-stoppers with archaic seal-impressions* (Ur Excavations, Vol. III) *which underlies much of the cemetery and is invaluable as giving a terminus post quem for the graves* (v. Ur Excavations, Vol. II p. 222).

Below this the strata, sloping sharply down with the fall of the rubbish as dumped here from the town, are remarkable well defined.
A band of light earth,
one of dark soil,
a grey belt containing much lime,
light earth,
dark again and
light succeed one another;
then comes a belt of red burnt earth containing seal impressions and pottery, and
a lime belt also rich in seal-impressions and broken sherds, labelled on the section as SIS 6;
a heavy bed of black mixed rubbish in the upper part especially of which there were more seal-impressions is SIS 7.

Another layer of burnt earth separated this from the next rubbish-mass which thanks to the presence of liberal admixture of burnt matter was itself rather red in colour; it contained very few seal-impressions (SIS 8) but was really distinguished by the common occurrence of clay goblets of the peculiar type JN.25 which were not normally found above this stratum of below it; at the same level were found (in a black streak running through the red) part of a "mixing bowl" of rough clay, Type RC.1, a clay disk with a hole towards one edge, a rough clay figurine of an animal,

1 Here my learned friend and colleague Giacomo Benati of the University of Turin, who had been kind enough to read the manuscript version of this publication, adds a note of caution. In his opinion, the excavators fully understood the stratification of the cemetery only during the 1930–1931 field campaign, looking at the exposed sections (see *Woolley 1934*, Pl. 9a). This must have been due to the excavation methods of the time. However, the examination of the original records allows the observation that strata were often recognized and distinguished even during the excavation of the tombs. Giacomo Benati is now working on these details with the aim of building a better stratigraphy of the cemetery.

part of a limestone bowl, Type JN.11, and a rubbing-stone,; at 7.50 m was a clay goblet of Type JN.25 (*Woolley 1955*, 79–80).

Leonard Woolley obviously included the SIS 8-4 into the earlier stage of his *Planoconvex Brick Period* and ascribed the accumulation of SIS 5-4 to the time of building layer E in his Pit F, assigning the underlying building layer F to his *Jamdat Nasr Period*. In general, he seems to have supposed that this whole band of strata came into being over a relatively short time (*Sürenhagen 1999*, 180), a proposition to which Dietrich Sürenhagen agrees (*Sürenhagen 1999*, 207).

Dietrich Sürenhagen observes, probably with reason, that the SIS 4-5 stratum probably represents rubbish layers dumped from a higher-lying settlement, and that from NW to SE and to NE. He has also noticed that SIS 7 is directly overlying SIS 8, the latter documented only in Pit Z where it tapers off (*Sürenhagen 1999*, 180).

Except the above-cited publications and comments, several other authors have recently commented on the finds of the sealings of archaic Ur of the incipient third millennium B. C. and their archaeological context. These include Richard Zettler (*1989*), Reinhard Dittman (*2006*, 38–39), and Nicolò Marchetti (*2006*, 71–83, esp. pp. 72–76; the book is now available in English as *Marchesi-Marchetti 2011*, as Giacomo Benati tells me). Their assessments bring arguments for dating the SIS 8, (and possibly also SIS 7?), layers into the early ED-I; indeed, all the SIS 8-4 strata have been recently dated into ED-I (*Marchesi-Marchetti 2011*, 54, reference courtesy Giacomo Benati). Layer(s) SIS 7 and 6 are supposed to relate to the latest graves of the "Jemdet Nasr cemetery", still within the ED-I age. Dietrich Sürenhagen argues that the SIS 7 underlies these interments (*Sürenhagen 1999*, 186), and that the SIS 6 accumulated over them (*Sürenhagen 1999*, 236, and Conclusions, 242–243). The SIS 6 may thus possibly belong to the early ED-II period (*Sürenhagen 1999*, summarizing table on p. 250). It is then proposed that after an interval, comprising obviously a prolonged period of time, the SIS 5-4 strata were deposited (expressedly *Sürenhagen 1999*, table on p. 208). Dietrich Sürenhagen has dated these into the ED-II–ED-IIIa transition period (*Sürenhagen 1999*, summarizing table on p. 250).

On the other hand, Richard Zettler, who has investigated the pottery profiles impressed into the jar sealings of the SIS 8-4 layers, suggests a date in ED-I and/or ED-I–II (*Zettler 1989*, esp. p. 379).

The question is obviously a tricky one, and poses a challenge to anyone wishing to obtain more information on the archaeological context of the SIS strata[2]. Let us see what can be done to elucidate the problems concerned.

2 Again, Giacomo Benati observes that large quantities of pottery fragments from the SIS strata were not properly registered and therefore never published and discussed.

WOOLLEY'S PIT F AND THE SIS

As for the Pit F, brought into connection with the SIS by Leonard Woolley, the abovementioned layer E is the very first in which planoconvex bricks[3] do appear at Ur, following the earlier predominance of rectangular bricks (*Sürenhagen 1999*, 190). The general plan of the building layout, two structures set apart by a narrow lane, is not, however, affected in any manner, continuing from at least the time of stratum H (*Woolley 1955*, Pl. 75; *Sürenhagen 1999*, 205). A similar change from rectangular to planoconvex bricks has been observed in the case of two phases of a "house" between the terrace wall of Woolley's Pit G and RT 777, which clearly represent the earliest phase of structures built within the gradually accumulating rubbish strata (*Woolley 1955*, Pl. 72; *Sürenhagen 1999*, 207). In other words, with the onset of SIS 4-5 we are moving within an (how?) early phase of ED-I[4].

The hallmark of the incipient Early Dynastic pottery tradition, the solid-footed goblet, appeared as early as stratum H here (*Sürenhagen 1999*, 192), though Reinhard Dittman, leaning on the original assessment of Leonard Wooley, puts the *floruit* of the solid-footed goblets to the local layer G (*Dittmann 2006*, 34). In layer E it was already missing[5], with reserved-slip ware and occasional occurrence of items with haematite-coloured slip, of black ware and of pottery decoration by deep triangular notches (*gashed ornament*) and by rope-moulded ridges on shoulders (*Sürenhagen 1999*, 205). The pottery vessels with fenestrated (openwork) ornament found here do nevertheless show that we are still moving within the solid-footed goblet phase of Early Dynastic pottery (*Sürenhagen 1999*, 207).

Dietrich Sürenhagen has also noticed parallels among the finds from SIS 8-4 and Pit F. The mass presence of solid-footed goblets in SIS 8 implies a correlation with terminal stratum H and stratum G of Pit F. Bored diorite lids of black diorite and pottery rattles link SIS 7-6 with Pit F stratum F, possibly even with stratum G (*Sürenhagen 1999*, 207).

Reviewing the evidence of the Ur Pit F, Reinhard Dittmann sees the peak occurrence period of the solid-footed goblets in the local strata H and G (and in SIS 8), equalling these layers with Nippur Inanna XI-X. For him, SIS 7-6 then fit into the time of F and E layers in Pit F and Nippur Inanna X-IX. In their turn, the SIS 5-4 (with the archaic texts of Ur) fall within the stage

3 Giacomo Benati notes that brick types are no longer considered a period marker. But my other learned friend and colleague, Martin Sauvage (CNRS, France), believes that they have not lost their chronological value altogether. Here I leave the decision to the discretion of my readers.

4 Giacomo Benati thinks that SIS 4-5 represent a very late ED-I phase, and that Harriet Martin may be right in dating part of the SIS 4-5 to the ED-II on stylistic criteria.

5 The revision of the Ur records has led Giacomo Benati to the conclusion that solid-footed goblets turned up both in Level H and G, being no longer present in Level F.

delimited by Pit F layers E or D, i.e. perhaps to the terminal period of Nippur Inanna IX (IXB: *Dittmann 2006*, 39).

Dittmann also notes that the Ur and Nippur pottery evidence imply that ED-I pottery style survived longer in the south than in the north; in Ur and Nippur, ED-I style lasted for most of the period characterized by ED-I and ED-II styles in the Diyala sites (*Dittmann 2006*, 38). Dittmann observes that while most of the SIS impressions have been dated into early ED-II (in the Diyala sequence), it cannot be excluded that at least some of the motifs are older (early ED-I, and even before? *Dittmann 2006*, 39).

This author then puts the date of the earlier SIS 8-4 into ED-I–ED-II (*Dittmann 2006*, Tab. 1 on p. 36; see also *Matthews 1993*, 43–44, 46–47, and 49, reference courtesy Giacomo Benati).

WOOLLEY'S *JAMDAT NASR CEMETERY* (JNC) AND THE SIS

The group(s) of burials referred to as *Jamdat Nasr Cemetery* by Woolley (henceforth JNC) give(s) us a *terminus post quem* for the SIS strata, and must thus be taken into consideration as well. The author of the excavations takes notice of the fact that strata SIS 8 (in Pit Z) and SIS 7 (in Pit W) lie above the layer containing burials belonging to this cemetery (*Woolley 1955*, 76, Pls. 77 and 82). This superimposition is direct in Pit W, while a layer containing solid-footed goblets reportedly intervenes between the JNC stratum and SIS 8 in Pit Z[6]. Woolley goes on to say that the NE end of SIS 7 was disturbed by digging of graves which, however, he distinguished from the JNC, with a remark that they are later in date and consequently likely to postdate the deposition of SIS 7; according to him, most of the other JNC graves *were dug before the SIS 7 stratum was formed and are necessarily older than it* (*Woolley 1955*, 76). Pit Y has yielded information to the effect that the SIS 5-4 layer lies directly over the JNC stratum here (*Woolley 1955*, Pl. 82; *Sürenhagen 1999*, 210).

Dietrich Sürenhagen applies a considerable effort in attempting to prove that the NW sector of Pit X contains graves dug into the SIS 7, and thus postdating its deposition (*Sürenhagen 1999*, 210). The relevance of this interpretation depends on the identification of the SIS-7 demarcation in the SW (right-hand) side of Woolley's Pl. 77 with the bundle of thin strata running

6 On the strength of observations of Giacomo Benati, solid-footed goblets occurred in SIS 8, not in the layers above. He says that the thin black layer depicted within the stratification of SIS 8 contained remains of at least one bowl of type RC.1, found elsewhere in Mesopotamia in association with solid-footed goblets and some other finds. However, it is puzzling that Woolley talks about a solid-footed goblet found at 7.50 m. This would mean that at least one example of solid-footed goblets was found in SIS 7 (?, *Woolley 1955*, 79–80).

parallel to one another in the NE (left-hand) side of the same Plate, left of the "staircase" in its centre, which I view as by no means certain.

On the other hand, Dietrich Sürenhagen is probably right in attributing the "SIS IV–V" designation to the stratum bundle in the SW (right-hand) side of Woolley's Pl. 78 to an error and identifying this bundle with a tripartite layer sequence documented in the NE (left-hand) side of Woolley's Pl. 77. We owe him thanks for the hint that sealing *UE III*: 560, whose unmistakably Fara style has not escaped scholarly attention (*Otto 2010*, 22), might have been deposited later and its original archaeological context disturbed by grave-digging of the subsequent ED-IIIa period (*Sürenhagen 1999*, 210).

What follows out of this is that while an overwhelming majority of the JNC is superimposed by SIS 8, 7 and 5-4, a part of SIS 7-6 has been disturbed by grave-digging postdating the main JNC period (*Woolley 1955*, 76).

As to the overall chronology, Dietrich Sürenhagen puts the functional period of the JNC at about 120 years, that is, a space accommodating roughly four human generations (*Sürenhagen 1999*, 232). He also notices that the structuring discernible in material appurtenances of the JNC graves display a great deal of continuity and coherence (*Sürenhagen 1999*, 224, and 236), and opts for dating within ED-I (*Sürenhagen 1999*, 243, see also *Forest 1983*, reference courtesy Giacomo Benati).

SO WHAT?

For our purpose it is of relevance to know the length of the time period during which rubbish layers including the SIS had been dumped. The published find report offers no direct evidence on this and any conclusions can be reached by inferences only. As already observed, Woolley included the SIS 8-4 into the earlier stage of his *Planoconvex Brick Period* and ascribed the accumulation of SIS 5-4 to the time of building layer E in his Pit F, assigning the underlying building layer F to his *Jamdat Nasr period*. In general, he seems to have supposed that this whole band of strata came into being over a relatively short time (*Sürenhagen 1999*, 180), a proposition to which Dietrich Sürenhagen agrees with some hesitation (*Sürenhagen 1999*, 207).

Later authors tend to envisage a longer accumulation period for the whole sequence (*Sürenhagen 1999*, 181). This position has been argued at length by Dietrich Sürenhagen (*1999*, esp. pp. 182–184), who proposes dating of the SIS into the interval between ED-I and incipient ED-IIIa (*Sürenhagen 1999*, 250, Tab. 54). His opinion may be taken to conclude that

- SIS 8 and SIS 7 fall within the ED-I period, while

– SIS 5-4 are to be situated within the same period of time, but into a somewhat later subphase characterized by the transition from rectangular to planoconvex bricks, and the immediately following time[7].

I must, however, frankly confess that I am sometimes at a loss to follow Sürenhagen's reasoning. Chiefly, it is not clear to me in what manner are the situations encountered in Woolley's Pits D and G to be conceived as shedding light on the SIS of Pits W, Y and Z. I find it difficult to heed at least one of Sürenhagen's stratigraphic interpretations, the one asserting that the terrace wall of Pit G is later than the houses between it and RT 777. Dietrich Sürenhagen uses this proposal to extend the sequence of stratigraphic events which he inserts between the *Jamdat Nasr Cemetery* (defining a *terminus post quem* of the SIS), and the SIS themselves. Stratigraphically speaking, the terrace foundation reaches roughly to the same depth as that of the earliest house, and layers covering the ruins of this house abut the terrace masonry (*Woolley 1955*, Pl. 72). Moreover, we should take into consideration the fact that finds from this area appear to have been substantially mixed, with a considerable quantity of them reaching back to the Ubaid-culture period (*Sürenhagen 1999*, 184).

In addition to this, Woolley's idealized section of this excavation sector (*Woolley 1955*, Pl. 72) gives limited information on the position of particular finds, especially those of epigraphic or sphragistic character. In view of the fact that we do not know whether this "terrace wall" of Pit G (*Woolley 1955*, Pl. 72) was built on ancient surface or whether its lowest parts were sunk into a foundation trench[8], it is next to impossible to assess the dates of the "tablet" recorded in Woolley's Pl. 72 in a layer abutting the foundation of terrace wall, and the "tablets"recorded there between PG 1237 and PG 1332. Supposing that no foundation trench was sunk, the tablet by the terrace wall should precede in date the 1237–1332 tablets, deposited, as it would seem, long after the terrace wall vanished under the heavy rubbish strata. Yet, as we do not know precisely the history of the deposits abutting the terrace wall, I find it difficult to give any unequivocal opinion.

In general, I cannot help seeing in all these stratigraphic data the remains of a series of "houses" (if these flimsy structures deserve such a name), of which Woolley has suggested that they may even have been *store-rooms*

7 Probably still within late ED-I (or incipient ED-II?), see above (*Marchesi-Marchetti 2011*, 54), as Giacomo Benati tells me.

8 Giacomo Benati would consent to this assumption, but adds that according to the original records, most of the Pit-G finds have never been properly published. He feels confident, however, that a review of these materials will allow him to shed more light on the stratification of this Pit.

of a temporary nature (*Woolley 1955*, 71)[9], having been built, used and deserted over short periods of time within an area of dumping rubbish, with both processes running simultaneously. As we shall see, Woolley's notion of impromptu structures of short-term use will be of some relevance to the research results presented below. It is probably of relevance that very few of these "houses" supplied evidence of longer-term occupation layers. Having been active within a dump area, their builders are also likely to have disturbed the layers on which they were erecting their structures, and thus I find it difficult to base any reliable conclusions on the position of small finds vis-à-vis the immovable structures. Another aspect likely to be of consequence is the fact that the "house" remains are not directly superimposed over one another, but their stratigraphic position is defined by their situation over the dumped-rubbish strata, of which we do not know the pace at which they kept accumulating[10]. Here it must be pointed out that Dietrich Sürenhagen himself believes that the period of ten years would be sufficient for the emergence of a stratigraphic event. Commenting on Leonard Woolley's assumption that at least ten years must have elapsed between the deposition of an earliest and latest grave in a series of superimposed burials, during which the position of the earliest grave must have been forgotten, he finds this time length *sehr plausibel*, and notes that ... *sich die Gelände durch Schuttablagerungen ständig veränderte* (*Sürenhagen 1999*, 231 fn. 183). Admittedly, however, there is very little waterproof information to go by, and a great deal of interpretation must needs involve assumptions of speculative character.

My own impression is that of a series of shelters built within the rubbish sttrata, and in the course of their deposition, deserted within short periods of time, with the ruins of the earlier of them gradually covered by the garbage accumulations. In other words, instead of Dietrich Sürenhagen's stratigraphic sequence (earlier structures – later structures – administrative discards, each phase following the preceding one) I propose to view the stratigraphic record as evidence for a continuous sequence of building structures[11], their abandonment and dumping rubbish, all these goings-on taking place more

9 Giacomo Benati would agree with this, suggesting that the fact that these structures yielded remarkable bulks of administrative materials allows us to think of official buildings.

10 This is only partly true according to Giacomo Benati. He observes that there is evidence of superimposed reconstructions. Notably, the houses lying between PG 777 and Pit G show at least two building phases. This situation appears to be confirmed by the remains excavated near tombs PG 800 and PG 1237, characterized by two construction phases. In particular the house remains near PG 800 produced more than 2.00 m of stratification (*Woolley 1955*, 70).

11 Giacomo Benati is inclined to see this as plausible, going on to say that according to Woolley's account (*Woolley 1955*, 70), some of these structures were built before the accumulation of SIS 4-5, at some point covered by it, reconstructed above it, and then cut by Royal Cemetery tombs. This let us suppose a lifespan considerably long, roughly speaking between the ED-I and the late ED III.

or less at the same time, or in very short temporal stages. I would therefore tend to place the whole SIS sequence within the ED-I (south) period of time.

Giacomo Benati has now provided us with a first review of his findings (*Benati 2015*). Here are his own *ipsissima verba*:

"Building remains were identified in three excavation areas: Pit F, Pit G, and in the strip comprised between Pit G and the southeastern limit of the RC Area. In Pit F – located to the back of the Royal Cemetery (in the following RC) area – a pottery production area with kilns, in use during the late 4th millennium, was converted into a dwelling area at the turn of the 3rd millennium. Large mud-brick compounds lying at about 10m above sea level (in the following asl) in both Pit F and Pit G, suggest that this part of the mound was an urban area with courtyard houses, alleyways and a thick boundary wall during the first quarter of the 3rd millennium (cf. Woolley 1956: pl. 73). Evidence from these soundings indicates that houses were often refurbished, and at intervals rebuilt following similar layouts. As indicated by the stratigraphy of the houses, the first building phase was destroyed by a fire and rebuilt shortly afterwards. A major landscaping episode consisted of the expansion of the built-up area of the town through the construction of new house lots in an open area seemingly located at the brink of the settlement.

Conversely, the strip comprised between Pits Z-Y and W – occupied by steeply sloping rubbish heaps – remained in use as a midden for a long period. The debris excavated in the Royal Cemetery Area were seemingly cast out from an upper terrace lying at ca. 10m asl, into a low-lying area used as burial ground since the late 4th millennium (the so-called "Jemdet Nasr Cemetery"). The debris of SIS 8-4 formed a slope following a northwest/southeast direction, suggesting that the throws originated from the area lying immediately to the back of Pit Z. Repeated episodes of garbage deposition gradually filled the gap between the terrace and the lower ground, and formed a rubbish heap in the area comprised between Pits Z-Y, W and X.

This short-lived quarter was then abandoned (the upper building phase was depleted all over), as was the whole slope (*Benati 2015*, 2–4).

Archaeological data allow us to identify three organizational phases for this settlement:

- Phase 1: the debris of Pit G (1-5), Pit F household remains (Levels K-I), and part of the Jemdet Nasr cemetery burials.
- Phase 2: SIS 8-6 debris, Pit F household remains (Levels H-G), part of the JN cemetery burials.
- Phase 3: the assemblages from SIS 5/4 and connected waste layers, the "administrative quarter" and Pit F household remains in Levels F-E (*Benati 2015*, 12)."

A final note: it may be legitimately asked why this book omits the testimony of coeval cylinder seals actually found at Ur (*Legrain 1951*). The reasons for this are very simple.

First and foremost, very few of the cylinder seals belonging, on grounds of style, to our period of time have reliable find contexts (if any; see *Legrain 1951*, pp. 11–13, Pls. 2–6). Of these, seals Nos. 30 and 31 (*Legrain 1951*, p. 11; see also *Sürenhagen 1999*, 200–201, 284 sub # 47, 286 sub # 79, Taf. 55: 10, 57: 7) turned up in the levels 8.00 and 7.80 m of Pit F, belonging thus to Woolley's *kiln stratum 4*, dated by Reinhardt Dittmann (*2006*, 28–29) into the *ausgehenden Späturuk-Zeit*. Two of them occurred in Jemdet Nasr-age graves, explored in the extended excavation of the Royal-cemetery area designed as PJ (*Legrain 1951*, 12 # 73, 13 # 88). Still other two items came to light in the filling of the Ziggurat Terrace, dated by Woolley into his Archaic I (*Legrain 1951*, 13 # 84, in SW courtyard, and 13 # 90). But all the other items either do not possess any find context at all, or come from later deposits, frequently from "Royal-Cemetery period" graves. It might be speculated what happened to these seals between the dates of their manufacture and of their deposition in earth, but hardly any safe conclusions might be reached that way, I fear.

In this connection, let us also notice a recently published cylinder seal displaying a Fara-style contest scene and bearing an inscription which might be read E_2 AN ŠEŠ (e_2-^{d}nanna?), possibly from Ur, but collected in Mesopotamia in early nineteenth century (*Thorn-Collon 2013*, 137, # 116). Another ED-I cylinder seal from Uruk has just been published (*Lan 2012*).

Second, to whatever use the bearers of the ED-I cylinder seals from Ur put them, they definitely avoided the engineered-exchange sphere employing the seals which left behind impressions culled from the SIS strata. None of the actual cylinder seals found at Ur matches any of the SIS impressions, and their actual significance thus lies open to doubt. Again, speculations on the meaning of this may be multiplied *ad libitum*. At least one of the possibilites could perhaps be mentioned – that of the matrices of the SIS sealings of Ur having been made of perishable materials like bone, wood or clay[12]. However, under these circumstances I am convinced that the finds of early cylinder seals from Ur do not yield any information which could be used for historical research.

12 Documented in Syria: *Mazzoni 1992*, 191 – a wooden cylinder seal from Ebla, TM.75.G.729, and Tav. XLIII: 8. Another example is the "Marcopoli cylinder", an ivory cylinder seal from the collections of the *Ecole Biblique de Jérusalem*: *Thalmann 2013*, 279 Fig. 25. See also *Benati 2015*, 15 fn. 23 for the possibility of clay cylinder seals.

II. INSCRIBED SEALS FROM ARCHAIC UR

The seals and sealings from the SIS strata of Ur constitute historical material of first-rate importance for the reconstruction of the city's history in the crucial period of emergence and first stabilization of the local variety of ancient Mesopotamian statehood. Capable of giving valuable archaeological evidence of the common everyday culture of their users, their importance for the "pictorial language" of the early elites of Ur cannot be overestimated, as we shall see subsequently, the more so as other ED textual material was hardly ever sealed (*Andersson 2012*, 20).

But nowhere does the significance of the SIS seals and, before all, sealings, strike our eyes more forcibly than in the area of the historical evidence which they are capable of supplying. Unlike the cuneiform texts, giving invaluable information but shedding light on few spheres of Sumerian public life only, sealings furnish evidence of a triple kind: in addition to archaeological data on materials and structures sealed, and to iconographical evidence yielding insight into the manner in which the elites of Ur perceived their own roles within the world as they knew and imagined it, inscriptions on sealings supply historical data. In conjunction with the two previously named source categories, these yield a unique insight into the process by which early Mesopotamian statehood sank its roots into the fertile soil between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers.

This was the reason for which I decided to include interpretation of those inscriptions on the SIS seals capable of being deciphered, and shedding light on the historical processes involved. In fact, I have to say at the very beginning that I have concentrated primarily on the impressions from SIS 8-4, which fulfil the condition of depicting the very earliest goings-on in the city state of Ur, just after 3000 B. C., as has been argued in the first chapter. Sealings found in later SIS – those numbered 3, 2 and 1 – are taken into consideration only rarely, especially in those cases when the findspot of the sealing in question cannot be established with precision and the possibility of later origin must be seriously weighed.

The reader will have remarked that entries for the one-hundred and forty eight sealings treated in the following text do differ, falling into two categories. The more extensive descriptions, coming from myself, are based on the study of the materials that went through my hands in the course of my

stay at the University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology of the University of Pennsylvania at Philadelphia in 2003–2004. The shorter entries, which nonetheless supply all the information that we need for an analysis of early Ur society, all come from the publications of Roger Matthews (*Matthews 1993*) and Sara Jarmer Scott (*Scott 2005*). I cannot be grateful enough to both of these authors who substantially facilitated my task and took great care to collect information most useful for all students of the history of incipient Mesopotamian statehood.

It will be apparent that I am trying to include all the information available to me. The sequence in which the sealings are arranged here follows the order in which they appeared in Leon Legrain's publication (*UE III*, my first column from left to right). I give museographical information comprising the excavation number beginning with U (second column), and sometimes also what appears to be the division number, denoting presumably items, despatched after final division to a particular institution (third column, optional, a three-digit number). The fourth column identifies the museum number (starting with the letters UM) and the fifth one the archaeological context.

Data obtained from the museum catalogue follow next, accompanied by references to the treatments by *Matthews 1993*, *Scott 2005*, and to the CDLI files (http://cdli.ucla.edu)[13], where applicable. Verbal descriptions of the reverse and obverse of each sealing describe what can be seen on the item presently. In descriptions of the obverse, I am giving Legrain's rendering of the signs, where available, and also the first attempts of mine, which can differ from the full sign treatment that follows. I have, however, judged it advisable to leave these "first impressions" as they are, in order to offer clues for possible variant readings. As to the description of the reverse traces, and especially imprints of cords and ties of all kinds, I am following the procedure proposed by Roger Matthews (*Martin-Matthews 1993*, esp. p. 37; *Matthews 1993*, 44–46). In measurable cases, my tables give cord thickness (CT), strand thickness (ST), strand interval (SI) and cord spin (Spin). Interpretation of the respective inscriptions then follows after the archaeological data, organized traditionally according to lines and columns in which the signs are identified and their interpretation – in many cases admittedly tentative – is given. I am mostly trying to read from the upper left side to the lower right side, in lines and then in columns. Many of the inscriptions will be found to consist of a kind of shorthand, of which the reading presents enormous difficulties and in some instances I am offering more or less educated guesses. The final parts of interpretation of the inscriptions subsume the effort in an overall "translation" or rather characteristics of content of the inscription.

13 Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative, A joint project of the University of California, Los Angeles, the University of Oxford, and the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin.

My references to items published by Matthews and Scott identify the citation from their works (from left to right, first column). Data in the second column give evidence on the object or structure sealed, with the third column adding data on possible counter-marking or counter-signing apparent on the sealing. Finally, the *regest* of the inscription fill in the fourth column, with interpretation of individual signs given below the table where necessary. Wherever the findspot is not given, the item comes from SIS 4-5.

I do hope that my interpretation of inscriptions on sealings from the earlier SIS strata at Ur will do some service.

* * *

1. *UE III*: 1	U 18 490	876	UM 33-35-465	Pit W, Jamdat Nasr Grave Level

See *Scott 2005*, 215, and http://www.cdli.ucla.edu/cdlisearch/search_beta/search_results.php?SearchMode=Text&order=ObjectType&SealID=S006310& [accessed February 13, 2014]. Catalogue: "Ur PG. PIT W. SIS IV–V, Found in Storage 1989". Obverse: signs of writing. Reverse: impression of concentric strands of a basket lid. Individual strands coiled around with bast fibres, the orifice displays impressions of a soft tissue tied over with a string. Strands of the basket-work: r = 32 mm, 27 mm and 22 mm. Maximum basket-strand thickness measurable = 5.5 mm. Cord:

CT = 2.7 mm	ST = 1.7 mm	SI = 6.9 mm	Spin Z

Red-brown clay without visible admixtures.

Inscription:

I: 1:

X

I: 2:

ŠIDIM = *ZATU* No. 524 p. 286 = *MSVO 1* p. 146 = *UET II*: 381 (a dignitary). *MEA* No. 440 p. 199: "to build", "to create". In Abu Salabikh, šitim = "architect" (*Krebernik-Postgate 2009*, 20, register). In ED Lagaš, ŠIDIM = "Baumeister" (*Selz 1995*, 58).

E$_2$ = *ZATU* No. 129 p. 196 = *MSVO 1* pp. 98–99, see *Steinkeller 1995*, 700 sub No. 129 on reading. In Šuruppak, E$_2$ can also refer to a cluster of arable fields, "agricultural district" (*Pomponio 1987*, 298). *Alster 1974*, 46–47, comments on the lines 207–208 of the Instructions of Šuruppak with the very famous Šuruppak proverb:

ša$_3$ ki-aga$_2$ nig$_2$-e$_2$ du$_3$-du$_3$-u$_3$-dam
ša$_3$ hul-gig nig$_2$-e$_2$ gul-gul-lu-dam,

that is, "a loving heart builds houses, and a heart full of hatred pulls them down". In ED personal names, E$_2$ could stand for the god Ea (*Krebernik-Postgate 2009*, 15 s. v. E$_2$).

A less likely variant reading would be UR$_3$ = *ZATU* No. 591 p. 305, missing in *MSVO 1*. *MEA* No. 255 p. 131: "roof", "terrace". For Thomas Balke (*Balke 2006*, 125 fn. 531), ùr = *mašāru* = "über etwas hinweggehen", "to elevate". *Alster 1991–1992*, 25, comments on line 60: the UR$_3$ sign turns up at Abu Salabikh, šu__ur$_3$ = *pašāṭu, kapāru* = "to wipe off". *Biggs 1974*, 54, 112: appears in the za$_3$-mi$_3$ hymn collection with an Umma deity, ^{d}Šara. Name of a temple? *Selz 1995*, 218: UR$_3$ = *sapānu* = "niederwerfen". In Abu Salabikh, ^{giš}GANA$_2$-ur$_3$ = "harrow" (*Krebernik-Postgate 2009*, 19). *Huber 2000*: guru$_7$-a im-ùr-ra = "plaster the guru$_7$ with clay; close, seal the guru$_7$ (most probably a granary)".

I: 3:

X (too broken).

II: 1:

NUN (= AGARGARA, ERIDU) = *ZATU* No. 421 p. 260, *MSVO 1* p. 131. See *Steinkeller 1995* p. 706 sub No. 421. The lexeme NUN occurs in Fara-age personal names, but in one single instance (*Visicato 1997*, 76). *Selz 1995*, 285: ^{d}ur$_2$-nun-ta-e$_3$-a = "Die aus dem Schosse des Fürsten hervorgegangene" = one of the septuplet daughters of the goddess Baba, lukur priestesses, venerated in the Gudea-period ^{d}lama-ša$_6$-ga temple of Lagaš. Seven lukur priestesses are known as early as ED Lagaš where they were nin ensi$_2$-ka. *Szarzyńska 1992*, 282 fn. 24: NUN may turn up alone, elsewhere it refers to the gods Enki, Enlil, Nannar, Ninurta. This term denotes a special rank of the deity mentioned. See also *Charvát 2006*.

PAP = PA$_4$ = *ZATU* No. 427 p. 263 = *MSVO 1* pp. 133–134. *Selz 1995*, 272: Maurice Lambert says that the Fara texts have a simple PAP = munus instead of PAP.PAP, translating the term as "La Fertilisatrice"; Selz proposes here "die wachsen lässt, grosszieht", a form possibly identical with the nominal form bulug$_3$ = PAP.PAP = *rubbû(m)*, read currently most often as munu$_4$. "She who fosters growth?" But this sign may also refer to an "unfinished, open transaction" (*Selz 1993*, 186, "Archivvermerk", on this also *Selz 2011a*, 277, and *Schrakamp 2012a*, 146 sub # 1). See also *Krebernik 2004* (ED: "Personennamen… lassen sich hinsichtlich ihrer Aussagen gut auf die Königin [von Lagaš, *pch*] beziehen"; in later lexical tradition "eine weibliche, der Muttergöttin oder Ištar nahestehender Gestalt").

BULUG$_3$ = DIM$_4$ = MUNU$_4$ = *ZATU* No. 62 p. 183, missing in *MSVO 1*. DIM$_4$ = *MEA* No. 60 p. 63, a sense of "big", "to be big", as well as *leqû* = to take. The lexeme occurs in Fara-age personal names (*Visicato 1997*, 122). In Fara-age texts, munu$_4$-mú = "malster" (*Martin-Pomponio-Visicato-Westenholz 2001*, 40 *ad* text 35). *Rosengarten 1960*, 71: BULUG$_3$ = "green malt", sprouting, which, dried in an oven, is turned into BAPPIR. MUNU$_4$ = "Malz" (*Bauer 1989–1990*, 81)

II: 2:

DUR$_2$ = *ZATU* No. 127 p. 195 = *MSVO 1*, p. 98 = *UET II*: 384c. *MEA* No. 536 pp. 221–223: "to sit", "to settle", "to reside". *George 1992*, 291: dúr = *markasu* = "bond". *Rosengarten 1960*, 391–395 on díb = DAB$_5$ = "prendre en main, entreprendre, recevoir". *Bauer 1989–1990*, 80: DAB$_5$ = "ergreifen", "setzen", transitive TUŠ = "sitzen", "sich setzen". *Selz 1995*, 81 fn. 336 on DAB$_5$ = "übernehmen". *Zgoll 1997*, 405–406: dab$_5$ = "packen". On the DUR$_2$ sign also *Alster 1991–1992*, 17 on line 155, and 19 on line 199, also pp. 29–31: érin DI.KUD = DÚR.DÚR di kud = (when) you judge (your) people, out of which it follows that érin = DÚR.DÚR, sedentary people; line 199: sikil ki-dúr-me nu-mu-da-gi$_4$-gi$_4$ = "a girl will not return into our house" (as she will marry an outsider), so again dúr = to reside permanently. In ED Lagaš, DUR$_2$ = dúr = tuš = "weilen" (*Selz 1995*, 182 fn. 832). In Ur-III texts DUR$_2$ = "Standfläche, Standring (von Gefäßen)", and, in general, base of any object; the texts distinguish between UR$_2$ = "Schoß" and DUR$_2$ = "buttocks"; in descriptions of vessels, UR$_2$ = those with figural decorations inside, DUR$_2$ = only if the lower part of vessel is of a different material (*Paoletti 2012*, 147). Cf. also *Gelb-Steinkeller-Whiting 1991*, 55; *Biggs 1966*, table on p. 77, 77–78, fn. 37.

One sign of two lunate curves (a numeral?).

Two illegible signs.

A list of dignitaries, the written agenda of whom was deposited in the sealed basket?

"Builder of houses, one who makes Eridu fruitful (or malster of Eridu?), a resident (or sedentary population)…"?

* * *

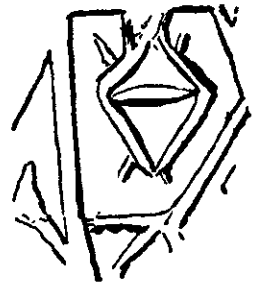
2. *UE III*: 9 (= *Matthews 1993*, No. 65 = *Scott 2005*, No. 82), found in SIS 8	Reed matting package	No counter-mark	URI$_3$+AB?? Delivering agency?

See http://www.cdli.ucla.edu/cdlisearch/search_beta/search_results.php?SearchMode=Text&order=ObjectType&SealID=S006251& [accessed February 13, 2014].

Inscription:

URI$_3$ = *ZATU* No. 595 p. 306 = *MSVO 1* p. 161. *Steinkeller 1995*, 710 sub No. 595: the sign is ŠEŠ, has also a value /nanna/. Also *Szarzyńska 1992*, 281 fn. 12: in archaic Uruk, ŠEŠ is Nannar, not Ur. Also *Michalowski 1993*, 120–121 (Ur is ŠEŠ. AB). *Pongratz-Leisten 1992*, 306, s. v. URI$_3$.GAL: the sign ŠEŠ is to be understood as URI$_3$ since Uruk III; depicts a standard that can be planted into earth, such standards may stand in pairs flanking doors.

* * *



3. *UE III*: 14 (= *Matthews 1993*, No. 78 = *Scott 2005*, No. 84), found in SIS 8	pot with covering	No counter-mark	KAM = tu$_7$ = liquid food?

See http://www.cdli.ucla.edu/search/search_results.php?order=ObjectType&SealID=S006264 [accessed February 18, 2014].

Inscription:

TU$_2$ = not in *ZATU* but related to a group of signs HI × DIŠ, HI × AŠ, KAM and KAM$_4$ (*Steinkeller-Postgate 1992*, table on p. 16). Piotr Steinkeller points to the occurrence of this sign in a text of archaic Ur (*UET II*: 18: iii: 3) and interprets its meaning as "soup". Also, KAM = tu$_7$ = *ummaru* = "eine Suppe oder Fleischbrühe" (*Bauer 1989–1990*, 86), "soup" (*Gelb-Steinkeller-Whiting 1991*, 293). "Eintopf(gericht)" according to *Brunke 2011*, 382–383. In later ED Ur, a receptacle called HI × AŠ = sùr sometimes assumed gigantic proportions, as no less than 500 minas of copper were needed for its production; the lexeme also denoted a gigantic and cumbersome weapon there (*Alberti-Pomponio 1986*, 97 ad text 44). The identity of TU$_7$ = "soup" and "a kind of bread, cake or bun" at Ebla (*Bonechi 2003*, 86–88) implies the possibility that (also?) for transport purposes, Sumerian cooks boiled their potages down to

solid "instant" soups, similar to the "pocket soups" of the early modern age of Europe and the U. S. (*Wilson 1991*, 224)[14].

* * *

4. *UE III*: 24	U 18 550	740	UM 33-35-478	Pit W, SIS 6-7

See *Matthews 1993*, 79 = *Scott 2005*, 227, and http://www.cdli.ucla.edu /search/search_results.php?order=ObjectType&SealID=S006265 [accessed February 17, 2014]. Catalogue: "Ur PG. PIT W. SIS VI–VII, Found in Storage 1989". Obverse: signs of writing. Reverse: a cylindrical object coiled around by a cord. The conically expanding end of the object consists of parallel segments. Was this a bale wrapped in reed matting? Cylindrical object: r = 12 mm, thus d = 24 mm. Widths of the terminal segments: 11.4 mm, 10.1 mm and 9.4 mm. Cord: only the CT = 5.9 mm can be measured. Traces of fine parallel grooves, perpendicular to the axis of the cord, are visible on the surface of the cord impression. Red-brown clay without visible admixtures.

Inscription:

Column I:

ŠA$_3$ = *ZATU* No. 503 p. 280, frequently with field plots, = *MSVO 1* p. 142. In Ur-III texts, $^{(tu9)}$ša$_3$ = "Futter (z. B. von Stiefeln)", of textile or wool (*Paoletti 2012*, 174).

An alternative reading would be

14 The relevant passage is well worth citing in full: "With the vogue [late 17th century] for thin soup based on chicken or veal broth came a new invention. Its earliest name was ‚veal glue', and it was the forerunner of the bouillon cube. Strong veal stock was slowly stewed for many hours, strained and simmered again, allowed to set, scrapted free of sediment, and then gently cooked. It was a great deal of work for such a small output. But veal glue, its name later changed to ‚pocket' or ‚portable' soup, continued in demand all through the eighteenth century. Jam or beef or sweet herbs were now often boiled with the veal, to give a tastier flavour."

TU$_7$ = see above, # 3. "Soup".

Does this refer to some form of container?

The following sign is very difficult to decipher. Could it be

KUŠU$_2$ = *ZATU* 305 p. 234, missing in *MSVO 1* and *MSVO 4*?. Piotr Steinkeller (*1995*, 703 sub No. 305) believes that the identification of this sign as KUŠU$_2$ is erroneous but offers no alternative solution. Might there be a connection with the site GIŠ.KUŠU$_2$.KI, of which a king named Aka dedicated a lapis-lazuli bead to Inanna, discussed by Gebhard Selz (*2003*, 506–511)? Jeremiah Peterson now identifies KUŠU$_2$ as an aquatic animal other than turtle (*Peterson 2007*, 213–217). Another possibility could be

SUKUD = *ZATU* 493 p. 278, in *MSVO 1* only the double form on p. 141.

ŠA = *ZATU* No. 500 p. 279 = *MSVO 1* pp. 141–142. ŠA = na$_5$ = *pitnu* = in lexical lists "box, chest" (*Krispijn 2008*, 178–179).

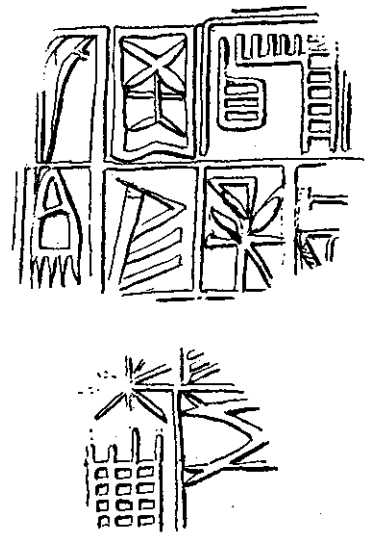
Column II:

X

X

"(Delivery of) seafood in containers"?

* * *



5. *UE III*: 25	U 18 550	706	UM 33-35-469	Pit W SIS 6-7

See *Matthews 1993*, 116 = *Scott 2005*, 219, and http://www.cdli.ucla.edu/search/search_results.php?order=ObjectType&SealID=S006302 [accessed February 17, 2014]. Catalogue: "Ur PG. PIT W SIS VI–VII, Found in Storage 1989". Obverse: signs of writing. Reverse: a peg protrudes from a "wavy"

(irregular) surface. No traces of cord. Peg: r = 12 mm, thus d = 24 mm. What is being sealed here? Red-brown clay without visible admixtures.

Inscription:

Column I:

I: 1:

This is a very difficult sign. Two possibilites may be valid:

GISAL = *ZATU* No. 222 p. 215, missing in *MSVO 1*, *LAK* 483 = "ein Feldgerät". *Gelb-Steinkeller-Whiting 1991*, 54 on the sign *LAK* 483, possibly identical with the sign GISAL but its reading is uncertain;

RU = *ZATU* No. 435 p. 265 = *MSVO 1* p. 135 = *UET II*: 204 = *LAK* 281. A similar sign is the RU of Jemdet Nasr-aged NI + RU = *MSVO 1* pp. 128–137 (on this now *Monaco 2004*, 3, fn. 4). Texts presumably from Jemdet Nasr, and possibly from Larsa, feature the clause $1N_{14}$ $Še_a$ RU, where RU specifies both barley and emmer (*Monaco 2007*, 118, CUSAS 1, 077, O0103, with a parallel of *MSVO* 4, 54, possibly from Larsa). *Gelb-Steinkeller-Whiting 1991*, 104: the sign group AN.RU may also be an abbreviated form of $^{d}Sud_3$ (SU.KUR.RU). This seems more likely to me. For ^{giš}RU = *tilpānu*, "(shooting) bow", see *Wilcke 1991*, and *Waetzold 2001a*, 110–111 (= giš-šub-ba "Los, das Los werfen"; ein Wurfholz, eine Art Bogen, Kurzspeer, Wurfspeer?). Karin Rohn (*Rohn 2011*, 14, sub # 1, p. 106 fn. 874 translates "Wurfwaffe", Gebhard Selz (*Selz 2011b*, 229 sub # 3:1) refrains from a *verbatim* translation.

I: 2:

GA_2 × NAGAR = this sign combination remains unattested. GA_2 = PISAN = *ZATU* No. 162 p. 203, *MSVO 1* p. 104, NAGAR = *ZATU* No. 382 p. 251, *MSVO 1* p. 127. No corresponding sign in *UET II*. *Selz 1993*, 397: ğá = "Gebäude", auch pisan = "Behälter", ğanun = "Speicher", GA_2 × GI = "Rohrkorb". *Selz 1995*, 28, fn. 75: GÁ = "Gebäude". The same general sense is assumed by Mark Cohen: gá-udu-ur_4 = "sheep-plucking shed", attested to from Uruinimgina to Old Babylonian (*Cohen 1993*, 61). "Un type d'enclos", "… où se tiennent souvent des bovins et des ovins" (= "Stall, Gehege" = *Attinger-Krebernik 2005*, 73 sub # 254'). GA_2 = "outbuilding, shed, barn" (*Andersson 2012*, 136 fn. 763). The orthography of the divine name Zababa in the newly discovered Kish plaque suggests an early reading /ba/ for GA_2 (*Steinkeller 2013*, 134).

The NAGAR sign seems to have carried a host of meanings in the third millennium B.C. A group of archaic texts from Jemdet Nasr and Umma includes the sign group $NAGAR_a$ ZI_a $SANGA_a$ (*Monaco 2007*, 4). In the Fara texts, it occurs either as an abbreviation of the name of ^{d}Nin-ìldu (IGI.NAGAR.BU), denoting Enki as a carpenter, or as the divine name ^{d}E (also Ištar), a god from whose blood mankind was created, with reading ^{d}Alla (*Krebernik 1998*). Moreover, the reading ^{d}NAGAR = ^{d}illa and ^{d}alla may point to a deity known as vizier of Ningišzida, to a divine figure called Hayya (^{d}NAGAR = ha-a-a-u) and to a (later?) pair of "pristine" divine beings killed in order to create human beings

(*Krebernik 2002a*, esp. pp. 293–297). The Fara-age divine name ^{d}Alla-pa-è, "Alla soars in splendour", belonged to an underworld deity identified with Dumuzi (*Mander 1986*, 53; *Cohen 1991*, 167–168 ad No. 7). The NAGAR = Alla reading held on through the Akkad period (*Steinkeller-Postgate 1992*, p. 62 ad ii 14) until the Ur III age (ibid.). On NAGAR = "carpenter" see *Krebernik-Postgate 2009*, 19, register.

The Akkad period brings the first references to "a mysterious entity" named DUB.NAGAR, which consumed food and appeared in the same category as the highest civil dignitaries (king and ensi$_2$, *Westenholz 1987*, 96). A similar meaning is expressed for Ur-III texts by Hans Neumann (*Neumann 1993*, 111 fn. 610 and 203). At Ebla, the DUB.NAGAR was obviously an arts-and-crafts establishments since it disposed of "Meissel, Stemmeisen und Beitel" (*Waetzold 1995*). In an Ur-III text from the fifteenth year of king Ibbisuen (*UET III*: 1498), Marc van de Mieroop translates é-DUB.NAGAR as "ateliers of the sculptors", receiving wax, ivory and wood for the production of luxury items (*Van de Mieroop 1999–2000*, 112–113). Finally, the noun níğ-nagar^{SAR} denotes an edible substance (*Civil 1982*, 15–16).

The overall impression seems to be one of a notion referring to the vegetation- and fertility symbolism, and to the outcomes of engagement of supernatural fertility forces. A translation of "storage space for (edible?) substances of organic origin" may not be entirely off the mark. Something similar may be implied for a much earlier period by a cylinder-seal impression from tomb U-153 of Abydos in predynastic Egypt, dating to the Naqada IId period (3580–3480 BC, *Hill 2004*, 21, fig. 11. b on p. 37 and fig. 18: e on p. 44).

I: 3:

An alternative explanation will involve the reading bala-bulug$_4$, "contribution of the border regions"?

NAM$_2$ LA = NAM$_2$ is *ZATU* No. 384 p. 251 = *MSVO 1*, p. 127. LA = *ZATU* No. 306 p. 234, with attestation of a lexical unit nam$_2$-la; it is missing from *MSVO 1*, as well as from *MSVO 4*. Both these sign forms from Ur seem to be close to signs from Abu Salabikh peculiar to the *ductus* of those texts: *Biggs 1966*, table on p. 77 and fn. 37 on pp. 77–78. In ED Lagaš LA = syllabic la in suffixes (*Meyer-Laurin 2011*, 55). A dignitary?

Column II:

II: 1:

NIMGIR = *ZATU* No. 399 p. 255 = *MSVO 1* p. 130. In the Fara texts, the NIMGIR was in charge of uru-DU = foreign workers probably coming to the city (*Pomponio 1987*, 33) and of the nu-su personnel. He received 1 gur of barley monthly and must have been a rather high official, as only 24 of them are attested to in the Šuruppak texts (*Alberti-Pomponio 1986*, 108; *Pomponio 1987*, 33, 57). In Abu Salabikh, nigir = "herald" (*Krebernik-Postgate 2009*, 20, register). In Early Dynastic Lagaš, the NIMGIR (= nigir) publicly announced sales