



BILINGUALISM AND KINGSHIP

*An Analysis of Mesopotamian Bilingual Inscriptions from
the Old Akkadian until the Old Babylonian Period*

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Abbreviations

Bibliographical Abbreviations:¹

AIT: The Alalakh Tablets

ANET: Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament

BT: Brockman Tablets

CDLI: Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative <http://cdli.ucla.edu/>

CM: Cuneiform Monographs

ePSD : electronic Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary Project <http://psd.museum.upenn.edu/>

ED: Early Dynastic

FAOS: Freiburger Altorientalische Studien

IOS: Israel Oriental Studies

LAOS: Leipziger Altorientalische Studien

OB: Old Babylonian

PDT: Die Puzris-Dagan-Texte der Istanbul Archaologischen Museen

PTS: Tablet siglum of the collection of the Princeton Theological Seminary

SAT: M. Sigrist, Sumerian Archival Texts

TCNU: A. Archi, F. Pomponio, G. Bergamini. Testi Cuneiformi Neo-Sumerici da Umma

TU: F. Thureau-Dangin, Tablettes d'Uruk

VA: Museum siglum of the Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin

ZATU: M. W. Green and H. J. Nissen, Zelchenliste der archaischen Texte aus Uruk

¹ The abbreviations listed here are not included in the bibliographical abbreviations list of CAD U/W. For the other abbreviations, see CAD U/W (vii-xxix).

Linguistic Abbreviations:

A: agent

ABL: ablative

ABS: absolutive

ADV: adverbial

COM: comitative

COP: copula

DAT: dative

DO: direct object

ERG: ergative

GEN: genitive

H: human

IO: indirect object

IPFV: imperfective

LOC: locative

MI: middle marker

MOD: modal

NH: non-human

NEG: negation, negative

NMLZ: nominalizer/nominalization

OBJ: object

OO: oblique object

PFV: perfective

PL: plural

PRED: predicative

POSS: possessive

SBJ: subject

SG: singular

SUB: subordinate

VNT: ventive

VP: vocalic prefix

Introduction

The composition of bilingual inscriptions is a well-established and well-attested tradition throughout Mesopotamian history. Sumerian-Akkadian bilingual inscriptions started to occur at the end of the third millennium B.C., during the Old Akkadian period (2334-2154 B.C.). Afterwards, until the Kassite (1600-1150 B.C.) and Isin II periods (1150-1025 B.C.), several Mesopotamian rulers had their inscriptions composed in a bilingual version.²

The corpus of Mesopotamian royal inscriptions has been deeply studied over a long time. Primary editions, as well as hand-copies and transcriptions were already published in the first half of the nineteenth century.³ The inscriptions were later re-edited and re-studied until the past few decades. A few editions focused specifically on certain periods,⁴ while others selected larger groups of texts. In this respect, the project *Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia* (RIM) of the University of Toronto needs a mention, since its aim was precisely that of re-publishing the corpora of Mesopotamian inscriptions.⁵

Such publications include editorial notes as well as textual and contextual commentaries on the inscriptions. Moreover, several studies have investigated and have attempted to classify Mesopotamian inscriptions.⁶

As for the sub-corpus of Sumerian-Akkadian bilingual inscriptions, they were considered in these larger publications. But only a few studies focused specifically on this subject. Besides editions and commentaries on single inscriptions, as well as studies on larger groups of bilingual inscriptions, Galter (1995) provides a list of the whole corpus of Mesopotamian bilingual inscriptions, with specific references and remarks. My research draws therefore on this article in order to provide a comprehensive study of Mesopotamian bilingual inscriptions from the Old Akkadian until the Old Babylonian period (2003-1595 B.C.).

² Galter 1995, 30-34.

³ An edition of the whole corpus was already published in Barton (1929). A more recent comprehensive edition is Sollberger and Kupper (1971).

⁴ Some of these publications will be considered in the present studies. See especially Gelb and Kienast (1990), who published the corpus of Old Akkadian inscriptions. The corpus had already been edited in an article by Hirsch (1963), while Steible (1991) published the corpus of Ur III inscriptions.

⁵ The project started in 1990 and published the corpus in six different volumes. The texts will be here referred to according to the editions in the *Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia – Early Periods* (RIME).

⁶ Kraus (1973) provides a detailed study of the Mesopotamian bilingual inscriptions. See also Hallo (1962) for a classification of the Ur III inscriptions in their different typologies.

The first problem to discuss involves the definition of such texts. Galter (1995, 29), describing the corpus of Mesopotamian bilingual inscriptions, states that “in the case of Mesopotamian bilingual royal inscriptions we find ourselves in the strange situation where most of what is generally called ‘bilingual’ actually is not”. Following Campanile’s definition of a bilingual text,⁷ he further suggests that “a bilingual text should meet two criteria: it must be identical in two versions in different languages and it must show clear indications of simultaneousness on the level of its physical origin, which means, it must be on the same object” (Galter 1995, 29). The scope of the present study is therefore to collect material and textual evidence to determine in each case whether the so-called bilingual inscriptions can be regarded as real bilinguals, or they are rather separate texts.

The second important question involves the reasons for the composition of these texts. These inscriptions may have had originally a communicative purpose, thus serving the needs of a real bilingual community. But after Sumerian died out as a spoken language, the Sumerian texts lost their communicative power. The composition of Sumerian texts turned therefore into a tradition. This research will trace these socio-linguistic developments within the corpus of the bilingual royal inscriptions, in order to determine the aims and reasons for such texts in different contexts and times. For this reason, this study has been divided in three chapters, which correspond to three main periods.

The first chapter investigates the earliest evidence for Mesopotamian bilingual inscriptions, which includes three Sargonic inscriptions of Sargon and Rimuš. The chapter discusses the function of these texts in the socio-linguistic context of the Old Akkadian period. The material and textual features of the inscriptions are then discussed in order to provide evidence for their origin.

The topic of the second chapter are three bilingual inscriptions from the Ur III period. The inscriptions all belong to Šulgi, but they largely differ from one another as for their composition and transmission. These texts are therefore considered separately. After having examined their features, I discuss how and why they might have been composed in each case.

The largest corpus of bilingual inscriptions comes from the Old Babylonian period. I consider first the so-called bilingual inscriptions of Hammurabi and Samsu-iluna, together with two inscriptions of Abi-ešuh and Ammi-ditana. I discuss some aspects of their composition and tradition. Second, I focus on the influence of Akkadian on the Sumerian texts. Sumerian grammatical elements and

⁷ Campanile 1988, 17.

constructions were reinterpreted in analogy with Akkadian in the Old Babylonian inscriptions, as the linguistic analysis of the material can prove.

The last Old Babylonian bilingual inscription to consider is a later copy on clay tablet of an Ammisaduqa inscription. The Sumerian text seems to be an artificial translation from Akkadian, and the date of this composition is debated. This problem will be addressed by means of the textual and lexical commentary on the inscription.

The aim of each chapter is to determine whether the texts had an audience - and if so, who they addressed to – or they rather reflect different aims and needs. The evaluation of the socio-linguistic scenario combines therefore to the textual and linguistic analysis, in order to identify traits and patterns which can provide evidence for the composition of these inscriptions. Such an analysis may help answer the question whether these were composed as original bilinguals, or they rather derive from separate texts. This discussion may therefore clarify aspects of the composition and the tradition of the bilingual inscriptions within the larger corpus of Mesopotamian royal inscriptions.

Chapter 1

Sargonic Bilingual Inscriptions

Introduction

The earliest Mesopotamian bilingual inscriptions appear during the Sargonic period (2334-2154 B.C.). The corpus includes a small group of inscriptions – two of them belonging to the first king of the Sargonic dynasty, Sargon, and one of his son Rimuš. In addition to the limited number of sources, two other factors complicate the study of these inscriptions. First, the originals are not preserved, and the texts are only known from later copies on clay tablets from the Old Babylonian period (2003-1595 B.C.). Second, since the Sargonic dynasty only left inscriptions in Akkadian, the use of Sumerian in these inscriptions is rather unusual and needs to be discussed. These inscriptions may either have spoken to a real bilingual community or they may have had a simple celebrative function. Third, it is unclear whether these were original Sumerian compositions or simple translations from the Akkadian – and if so, when and how these translations were composed.

The central question to be answered is therefore whether these bilingual copies derive from independent inscriptions, or rather from original bilingual texts. These inscriptions may either have been separate texts which were later combined during their tradition, or original bilinguals.⁸

The colophons of the Old Babylonian tablets already provide some hints in this respect. Moreover, the existence of Akkadian unilingual versions and the presence of a curse formula in Sumerian which is missing in the corresponding Akkadian text of a Sargon inscription seem to argue for the separate composition of those inscriptions.⁹ But the Akkadian and the Sumerian versions differ to a much deeper level.

The writing system and a few morphological elements seem to prove that the Akkadian and the Sumerian versions were composed at around the same time, but they do not seem to be translation of one another. The following discussion will show that the use of certain logograms in the Akkadian

⁸ Galter 1995, 30-31. Also, Krecher 1976, 124-128.

⁹ Galter 1995, 31.

and in the Sumerian version differ to a large extent. Moreover, the texts may differ in phraseology and in syntactical structures – and such differences can influence the meaning of the whole text.

I will also select and discuss a few aspects of nominal and verbal morphology to show that some elements – such as case markers and prepositional objects, pronominal suffixes and verbal prefixes – were handled differently in the Sumerian and in the Akkadian versions. The texts are therefore not exact correspondent. This seems to suggest that they derive from independent inscriptions, and that the Sumerian texts are original compositions rather than translations from Akkadian.

1. Sources

The Old Babylonian bilingual copies of the Sargonic inscriptions come from Nippur, in central Babylonia. The colophons state that the originals were inscribed in the Ekur temple of Enlil in the same city.¹⁰ The Old Babylonian exemplars and the fragments preserving these inscriptions have been edited and collated in several publications – notably, Hirsch (1963), Gelb and Kienast (1990), and Frayne (1995).¹¹

A large Old Babylonian tablet (CBS 13972) preserves the three Sargonic bilingual inscriptions.¹² The first and the longest belongs to Sargon and celebrates the king's victories over Uruk and Ur.¹³ Another bilingual inscription of Sargon speaks of the king's campaign against the Upper Euphrates area.¹⁴ The third one is an inscription of Rimuš and celebrates a statue of the king.¹⁵

¹⁰ Galter 1995, 30.

¹¹ I will follow the editions in RIME 2. In a few cases, I have emended Frayne's edition according to more recent readings.

¹² The tablet is now in the Philadelphia Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, together with CBS 14545 that is a fragment of the same tablet. Information and photograph may be found on <https://cdli.ucla.edu/>.

¹³ This text is also partially preserved in Ni 3200. Edition in Hirsch 1963 (Sargon b1), Gelb and Kienast 1990 (Sargon C1), Frayne 1995 (RIME 2, Sargon E2.1.1.1). From now on, I will refer to it with the RIME 2 numbering (Sargon 1). See the introduction to the text in RIME 2, 9, for more detail about the Old Babylonian copies, and Galter 1995, 30.

¹⁴ This text is also fragmentarily preserved in Ni 3200. Hirsch 1963 (Sargon b2); Gelb and Kienast 1990 (Sargon C2); Frayne 1995 (RIME 2, Sargon E2.1.1.11). From now on, I will refer to it with the RIME numbering (Sargon 11).

¹⁵ This inscription is fragmentarily preserved on several Old Babylonian copies: CBS 2344+N3539+CBS 14547, from Nippur, and AO 5477, from unknown provenance. The fragments were collated and edited in Hirsch 1963 (Rimuš b12) Gelb and Kienast 1990 (Rimuš, C9), Frayne 1995 (Rimuš E2.1.2.18). From now on, I will refer to it with the RIME 2 numbering (Rimuš 18). See introduction and commentary in Frayne 1995, 67-68, for more information about the tablets and a bibliography of previous studies. Also, see Galter 1995, 30, for the provenance of the original inscription.

1.2 Audience, Context and Tradition

The use of Sumerian in these inscriptions is unusual. The Sargonic dynasty mainly left inscriptions in Akkadian, as limited as the corpus is. The scarcity of sources may be due to simple material circumstances, but the consistent use of Akkadian in the whole corpus of the Sargonic inscriptions may have also some ideological motivations.¹⁶

The Sargonic kings preferably wrote their inscriptions in Akkadian, rather than in Sumerian, perhaps to distinguish themselves from the preceding tradition of Sumerian kings. They defined themselves as “king of Agade”,¹⁷ and this might also be an element of distinction of the Sargonic dynasty.

The three inscriptions above mentioned represent therefore an exception, since they had also a Sumerian version. The choice of writing these inscriptions in Sumerian is an interesting one, that perhaps had both a practical and an ideological motivation. According to their colophons, these inscriptions came from the Ekur temple of Enlil in Nippur. This city was probably a bilingual center during the Old Akkadian period. The administrative archives from this site document the presence of both Akkadian and Sumerian scribes. This argues for the presence of a Sumerian community that parted of the scribal elite of the city.¹⁸ In such a context, the choice of the Sargonic kings to have their inscriptions written in Sumerian – or in a bilingual version – cannot be due to coincidence. It probably had both a practical and a political motivation – namely, that of speaking to the Sumerian elite of Nippur and that of showing some continuity with the tradition of this city.

The phraseology adopted in the Sumerian version of the Sargonic inscriptions show very well this continuity. An example is the expression $\text{ĝis}^{\text{tukul e-da-sag}_3}$, literally “he beat the weapons”, which occurs several times in Sargon 1 and describes all the many battles of the king.¹⁹ The same expression also occurs in an earlier inscription from the Early Dynastic period.²⁰

¹⁶ The fact that the capital of the Old Akkadian empire, Akkad, has never been found may be the reason why only a few inscriptions of the Sargonic kings are known. See Frayne 1993, 5, for an introduction about the Sargonic royal inscriptions.

¹⁷ See Sargon 1, 2-3 and 31-32. Some further instances can be found in Sargon 2, 2-3; Sargon 5, 1-2; Sargon 6, 2-3, and Naram-Sin 1, 3'4', Naram-Sin 3, 21-22.

¹⁸ Keetman 2014, 8, discusses the evidence from the Onion Archive and from other archives in Nippur. He (8-9) also provides textual proves for the existence of a local variety of Sumerian in Old Akkadian Nippur.

¹⁹ Sargon 1, 17-18; 24-25; 24-35; 54-55.

²⁰ Urukagina 4, 24'.

In the Sargon inscription, this phrase is preceded by a noun phrase in the comitative case that indicates the enemy who the king has fought with. This noun phrase is expressed by the fixed expression “the man of GN” (lu₂ GN=GEN) which takes the comitative case. The same expression occurs several times in an earlier royal inscription of Ur-Nanshe, where it is also used to identify the city which the king fought against or defeated.²¹ The use of the expression “the man of GN” that identifies an entire city can be found also in some royal texts of king Enmetena²² – but many more attestations of this expression that pre-date the Sargonic period may be found.²³

The Sumerian versions of the Sargonic inscriptions seem therefore to draw inspiration from the earlier Sumerian tradition of royal texts. As for the Akkadian versions, they also seem to undergo the influence of the earlier tradition. More precisely, they make use of logographic verbal forms and expression that occur already in the Early Dynastic royal inscriptions. The logographic verbal form I₃.GUL.GUL “he destroyed” occurs four times in Sargon 1²⁴ and is also attested in a couple of Early Dynastic inscriptions, one of Enmetena²⁵ and the other of Urukagina,²⁶ in the very same context. Other logographic verbal forms do not seem to come from the preceding tradition, though. The logographic verbal form SAG.GIŠ.RA, corresponding to the Akkadian *en’ar* and meaning “he destroyed”, is attested five times in Sargon 1²⁷ and occurs quite often in the Old Akkadian inscriptions, but it does not seem to come from the earlier tradition of Sumerian royal inscriptions.

Furthermore, the standard expression “man of GN” – which identifies the entire city in the Sumerian version – is not adopted in the Akkadian text, which simply has the name of the city that the king has conquered.²⁸ Paragraph 2 will deal more specifically with this type of textual discrepancies between the two versions of these texts. But it can already be observed that the two versions of the bilingual Sargonic inscriptions derive from very different traditions. On the one hand, the Sumerian texts are in line with the earlier tradition of royal texts from the Early Dynastic period, which they share some similarities with. On the other hand, the royal inscriptions in Akkadian represent an innovation of the Sargonic dynasty. These texts are certainly built on the earlier Sumerian tradition of this textual genre, but they present some new peculiarities.

²¹ Ur-Nanshe 6b, 65-66; 69-70; 87; 105.

²² Enmetena 1, 70-71.

²³ See the database on <https://cdli.ucla.edu/>, for more instances from the Early Dynastic period.

²⁴ Sargon 1, 17; 43; 48; 66.

²⁵ Enmetena 1, 90.

²⁶ Urukagina 5, 44.

²⁷ Sargon 1, 14; 22; 40; 45; 64.

²⁸ Sargon 1, 19, 25; 36; 59 (Akkadian version).

1.2 Material Features

The Old Babylonian copies that preserve the three Sargonic bilingual inscriptions carry the text in two parallel columns, with the Sumerian version on the left and the Akkadian on the right.²⁹ The two Old Babylonian tablets that preserve the Sargon inscriptions (CBS 13972 and Ni 3200)³⁰ also preserve these texts in a unilingual Akkadian version.³¹

The colophons give some information about the originals. The colophon of Sargon 1, both in the Akkadian and in the Sumerian version, states that the inscription was written “on the base” of a statue.³² It is therefore likely that the two inscriptions were written on different statues. Moreover, the Akkadian version of this text on CBS 13972 ends with captions,³³ which lack a Sumerian translation. This also seems to suggest that the Akkadian text was handed down – perhaps in different versions – independently from the Sumerian text.

As for Rimuš 18, two different colophons are preserved. According to the first one, that is preserved only in the Sumerian text on CBS 13972, the inscription was written “on a *šaḥum* vessel”.³⁴ The second colophon is preserved both in the Akkadian and in the Sumerian version on the other Old Babylonian exemplar of this inscription.³⁵ One sign is corrupted, and the text cannot be translated with certainty, however it seems to contain different information from colophon 1.³⁶ This seems to suggest that the Sumerian text and the bilingual version of this inscription may derive from different traditions.

The two colophons of Sargon 11 are also interesting. Colophon 1 is preserved on CBS 13972, at the end of the Sumerian version. It states that this inscription was originally inscribed on the base of a statue.³⁷ The same tablet also preserves the colophon at the end of the Akkadian version. This colophon states that the inscription was written “on the statue”, and it specifies that the base of this statue “was not inscribed”.³⁸ Therefore, the two versions of this inscription were probably written on different statues.

²⁹ Galter 1995, 30-31.

³⁰ This large tablet from Nippur preserve also other Sargonic inscriptions of Maništušu and Rimuš (see <https://cdli.ucla.edu/>)

³¹ CBS 13972 and Ni 3200 both preserve unilingual Akkadian versions of Sargon 1 and 11 (Galter 1995, 31).

³² The colophon of Sargon 1, 1-2, reads mu-sar-ra ki-gal-ba.

³³ CBS 13972, obv. iii 44-47, obv. vi 46-48 (caption 1’), obv. iv 49-51 (caption 2’) and obv. iv 52-54 (Caption 3’).

³⁴ Rimuš 18, colophon 1, 1, reads: mu-sar-ra ^{uru}duš-en-za-ḥum.

³⁵ This tablet consists of the joined fragments CBS2344+N3539+CBS1547.

³⁶ Rimuš 18, colophon 2, 1-3 (Sumerian and Akkadian), reads: mu-sar-ra- ti-x-bi-ni ri₂-mu-uš₂-kam.

³⁷ Sargon 11, colophon 1, 1-2 (Sumerian column), reads mu-sar-ra ki-gal-ba.

³⁸ Sargon 11, colophon 2, 1-2 (Akkadian version), reads: mu-sar-ra alan-na ki-gal-bi nu-sar.

Another element points to the same conclusion. The Sumerian version of this inscription ends with a course formula, which is absent from the Akkadian text.³⁹ This suggests that the two versions derive perhaps from separate inscriptions, since they are not translations of one another.

To conclude, the texts contain some elements which suggest that these bilingual copies do not derive from original bilingual texts, but rather from independent inscriptions, which were later combined during their tradition in scribal school. The following paragraph will examine some textual discrepancies in the Akkadian and in the Sumerian versions of these texts, and eventually will provide further evidence for such a hypothesis.

2. Akkadian and Sumerian

2.1 Writing System and Lexical Discrepancies

A comparison between the two versions of the inscriptions shows that the two are not exact parallels, and the Akkadian and the Sumerian texts differ to a certain extent. Such discrepancies may show up in the vocabulary or in some constructions, as well as in the writing system, which reveals significant differences. More precisely, the use of logograms for writing Akkadian verbs is most noteworthy, since they do not correspond to those of the Sumerian version. Gelb pointed out this lack of correspondence between the use of logograms in the Akkadian and in the Sumerian texts from the Old Akkadian period, and he suggested that “the use of Sumerograms to express verbs, contrary to the standard procedure, as well as the fact that the Sumerograms occurring in Akkadian are different from the corresponding logograms in Sumerian may reflect the existence of two different system of cuneiform writing” (Gelb 1961, 21).

In the bilingual inscriptions, the logographic writings of verbal forms present substantial differences in the Akkadian and in the Sumerian version, as the table below - which lists all the logograms used to express Akkadian verbs in Sargon 1 with their Sumerian correspondent – will show:

³⁹ The formula reads: lu₂ mu-¹sar-ra-e¹ a[b]-¹ha-lam-e-a an-ne₂ mu-ni ¹he₂-¹ha-lam-e en-lil₂-le numun-na-ni ¹dinanna-ke₄ e x dumu-na-ni ¹he₂-ku₅-¹e¹ “As for the one who destroys this inscription, may the god Anum destroy his name. May the god Enlil bring his progeny to an end. May the goddess Inanna cut off his... *offspring*... Lacuna.” (Sargon 11, 38-48).

Akkadian	Sumerian
SAG.GIŠ.RA (<i>en'ar</i>) “he destroyed” (14, 22, 40, 45, 64)	e-ḫulu “he destroyed” (13, 39, 43, 49, 59)
SAG.GIŠ.RA (<i>en'ar</i>) “he destroyed” (22)	aga₃.kar₂ e-ne₂-se₃.g “he placed a defeat” (19-20)
I₃.GUL.GUL “he destroyed, he broke” (17, 43, 48, 66)	e-ga-sig₁₀ “he flattened” (15, 41, 45, 60)
ŠU.DU₈.A “he took captive” (27)	e-ga-dab₅ “he took” (26)

As the table shows, the logograms used to express the Akkadian verbs do not correspond to those of the Sumerian version. Furthermore, the constructions of these verbs also differ to some extent, as a few examples may show:

1) Akkadian:

u₃ KALAM.MA.KI-šu u₃ lagaš (LA.BUR.ŠIR.RI).KI a-di₃-ma ti-a-am-tim SAG.GIŠ.RA
“And he conquered its district and Lagaš as far as the sea” (Sargon 1, 49-55)

Sumerian:

gu₂ kalam-bi lagaš.KI-ta a ab-ba-še₃ na-x-[n]e-ne e-ḫulu
gu₂ kalam=be lagaš =ta a ab=ak =še x i -n -ḫulu
all land =3NH.POSS Lagaš =ABL water sea=GEN=TERM x VP-3SG-be.bad
“All the land from Lagaš as far as the sea, he destroyed...” (Sargon 1, 46-49)

The two versions contain the same elements and have almost the same meaning – their structure is slightly different, though. In the Sumerian text, the city of Lagaš is in the ablative, but in the Akkadian correspondent Lagaš is the direct object of the sentence. The two structures are therefore not exact parallels, although this discrepancy does not influence that much the meaning of the text.

2.2 Structural Differences

In other cases, the difference may be even more significant. The following expression, which occurs several times in the inscription Sargon 1 may provide evidence for that:

2) Akkadian:

in REC 169 UR₂.KI *iš*₁₁-*ar* *u*₃ URU.KI SAG.GIŠ.RA

“He was victorious over Ur in battle and conquered the city” (Sargon 1, 35-40)

Sumerian:

lu₂ uri₂.KI-ma-da ^{ĝi}š₃tukul e-da-sag₃ aga₃-kar₂ e-ne₂-se₃

lu₂ ur =ak =da tukul i -n -da -n -sag₃ aga₃.kar₂

man Ur=GEN=COM weapon VP-3SG-COM-3SG.A-beat defeat

i -nni -n -se₃.g

VP-3SG.OO-3SG.A-put

“He fought with the man of Ur and defeated him” (Sargon 1, 33-37)

The two constructions are not parallel. The Akkadian version coordinates two clauses - the first one includes a direct object (the city that is destroyed) and a prepositional object introduced by *in* (*in* REC 169), followed by the verbal form in the preterite tense (*iš*’*ar*, “he battled”).⁴⁰ The first clause in the Sumerian version has a slightly different meaning, though, the “man of Umma” being a comitative, and the “weapon(s)” being the direct object of the verb sig₃ “to hit”. As for the second verb, the sign NI before the stem (se₃.g, “to put”) stands for a third singular oblique object prefix (/nne/) referring to the “man of Umma” in the previous clause, while the direct object in the absolutive is aga₃.kar₂ “defeat”. The Akkadian version has a different construction, with verb the *nêru* in the preterite (SAG.GIŠ.RA) governing only a direct object – spelled with the logogram URU and meaning “the city”.

Therefore, the two versions differ in the whole meaning of the text, since their grammatical structure as well as their vocabulary differ to a large extent. The verbal forms – logographically written - are not semantic equivalents. Moreover, the constructions of the Akkadian and the Sumerian clauses are not structural calques of one another – as it could be expected would they be translations from one language to the other.

⁴⁰ Gelb 1952, 189.

3. Composition of the Sumerian Texts

3.1 Writing System

The Akkadian and the Sumerian versions of the Sargonic inscriptions seem to originate from independent texts, and the two versions probably derive from separate traditions. But as for the date of their composition, the Sumerian and the Akkadian versions are contemporary. The Sumerian texts reflect features and rules of the time of the Sargonic era rather than those of the Old Babylonian period, in the writing system as well as in morphology and in some phonetic respects. As for the writing system, the consistent tendency to ignore syllable final consonants is most noteworthy.⁴¹ Verbal prefixes are hardly ever spelled out when in the position of syllable final consonants, as the following verbal forms will show:

1) **nu-ta-dim₂**

nu -b -ta -n -dim₂

NEG-3NH-ABL-3SG.A -fashion

“(No one) had fashioned it ever since” (Rimuš 18, 8)

2) **i₃-dim₂**

i -n -dim₂

VP-3SG.A-fashion

“He fashioned it” (Rimuš 18, 13)

These defective spellings are in line with the older Sumerian writing tradition up to the Ur III texts.⁴² From the Old Babylonian period onwards, verbal prefixes are generally written out also when they consist of a syllable final consonant.⁴³

⁴¹ Jagersma 2010, 19-20.

⁴² See also expressions like ki-be₂ bi₂-gi₄ (Sargon 1, 92-93), or bi₂-keš₂ (Sargon 11, 13). The third singular agent prefix -n- is consistently ignored in the spelling when in the position of syllable final consonant.

⁴³ From the Old Babylonian period *plene* spellings (with CV-VC signs) become the standard system to write closed syllables (Jagersma 2010, 23).

3.2 Vowel Harmony

The Sumerian texts present archaic patterns of phonology as well. The verbal prefixes show the alternance between the two vowels /i/ and /e/, which reflects the Old Sumerian vowel harmony rule. The vowel harmony applies to the terminative prefix (ši/še), to the oblique object prefixes (nni/nne), and to the vocalic prefix /i/, which shows the two forms *i*₃- and e-. According to this rule, a prefix includes the vowel /i/ when it precedes a syllable containing the vowels /i/ or /u/, while the form with /e/ would be used before the vowels /e/ and /a/.⁴⁴ The verbal forms in the Sargonic inscriptions generally follow this tendency,⁴⁵ with a few exceptions that cannot be explained on the base of the vowel harmony rule.⁴⁶

The presence of such forms in the Sargonic inscriptions remains problematic, though. The Old Akkadian texts from Nippur do not show this alternance between forms with /e/ and /i/. Jagersma 2010, 58-59, suggests that “the rule of vowel harmony is restricted to Old Sumerian and early Old Akkadian texts from the South, and is attested for texts from Lagash, Umma, Ur and Uruk. It is not operative in the contemporary texts from Northern towns like Nippur, Adab, Shuruppak, and Isin, because there the change had already been completed by the middle of the third millennium. Only the much earlier texts from the Northern towns Shuruppak and Abu-Salabikh show and alternation between forms with /e/ and /i/”.⁴⁷ Thus, Old Akkadian texts from Nippur such as the Sargonic inscriptions would be expected to include only forms with the vowel /i/, and not /e/.

As Keetman (2014, 8) notices, the vowel harmony is absent from Sumerian administrative texts from Nippur of an only slightly later date.⁴⁸ Therefore, the Sargonic inscriptions vary from the local variety of Sumerian in this aspect. The reason might be the southern origin of the scribe, or perhaps the conscious choice to imitate the Southern dialect of Sumerian.

The reasons for this vowel alternance in the Sargonic bilingual inscriptions remain largely unclear, however the Old Babylonian scribes maintained this archaic feature of the Sumerian texts. Such Sumerian versions did certainly not originate in the Old Babylonian period, since the texts reflect features of an older stage of Sumerian, as for the writing system as well as for some phonetic aspects.

⁴⁴ Jagersma 2010, 57-60. For a different interpretation, Keetman 2010, 74.

⁴⁵ Cfr. forms like e-da-sig₃ (Sargon 1, 18-25-35-55), e-ga-sig₁₀ (Sargon 1, 15-41-45), e-de₆ (Sargon 1, 29), besides forms like *i*₃-dim₂ (Rimuš 18, 13), *i*₃-gub (Rimuš 18, 15) and *i*₃-gul-gul (Sargon 11, 7).

⁴⁶ Cfr. forms like e-ḫul (Sargon 1, 13-39-49-59). For other similar exceptions, see Keetman 2005, 4, and Jagersma 2010, 59-60 for a possible explanation.

⁴⁷ Keetman 2010, 73-74, discusses this phenomenon and summarizes the different positions on this topic. He argues against Jagersma for an alternative explanation of the vowel harmony in Old Sumerian.

⁴⁸ Keetman (2014, 8-9) considers the administrative texts from Nippur dated to Naram-Sîn and Šar-kali-šarri

4. Morphology

The Old Babylonian copies correspond to an old stage of Sumerian as for morphological and linguistic structures as well. The Sumerian language shows almost no influences from Akkadian. As for the noun phrases, the case-marking system is treated appropriately. Moreover, verbal prefixes and suffixes usually correspond to a noun-phrase in the expected case, and therefore, the system of agreement between noun-phrases and verbal affixes is respected, both in function and in gender (human or non-human). The grammatical distinctions of Sumerian – such as human and non-human class of nouns – are overall maintained, even when they lack an Akkadian correspondent.

A comparison between the Akkadian and the Sumerian versions of the texts will prove this assumption further and may shed a light on the composition of the texts as well. I will first discuss some examples of nominal phrases, and second of verbal affixes, in order to investigate the correspondence of the Akkadian with the Sumerian grammatical structures. Eventually, I will discuss the use of the prefix *nga-* in the Sumerian version of Sargon 1 and its correspondence with the Akkadian conjunction *u₃*. The function of this prefix in this text is indeed rather exceptional and may provide further hints as for the composition of this text.

4.1 Nominal System: The Terminative case marker

As for the nominal system, the texts show a wide range of solutions in order to render some Akkadian structures – in other words, the scribes are able to select the Sumerian grammatical elements which better fit the Akkadian correspondent according to the context. The same Akkadian prepositional object can thus correspond to different Sumerian case-markers – the choice being determined by the meaning of that object in the context. The following examples show the treatment of the terminative case marker in correspondence with an Akkadian prepositional object preceded by *adi*, *maḥar* or *ana* respectively.

1) *a-di₃-ma pu-ti ti-a-am-tim*

za₃ a ab-ba-ka-še₃

za₃ a ab =ak =ak =še

side water sea=GEN=GEN=TERM

“As far as the shore of the sea” (Sargon 11, 8-10, 8)

2) *maḥar-śu*

igi-ni-še₃

igi =ane =še

eye =3SG.POSS=TERM

“In front of him” (Sargon 11, 43 and 36)

3) *ana KA₂^den-lil₂*

ka₂^den-lil₂-la₂-še₃

ka₂ en.lil=a(k) =še

gate Enlil =GEN =TERM

“To the gate of Enlil” (Sargon 1, 29 and 28)

Depending on its meaning in the context – “as far as”, “in front of” or simply “to” – the terminative corresponds to an Akkadian phrase introduced by *adi*, *maḥar* or *ana* respectively. The latter, however, may not only correspond to a terminative, but also to a noun phrase in the dative, as in the example below:

4) *ana^den-lil₂-le?*

^den-lil₂-ra

en.lil=ra

Enlil =DAT

“For the god Enlil” (Rimuš 18, 5 and 5)

The same Akkadian preposition can therefore reflect two different Sumerian grammatical elements, depending on its context and function. This shows a great sensibility for the grammatical elements and the categories of Sumerian – starting from the Old Babylonian period onwards, those distinctions tend to be neglected and some Akkadian structures such as the prepositional objects are systematically paired with a fixed Sumerian case marker.

4.2 Verbal Affixes: The Indirect Object Prefix

Paragraph 1 dealt with the semantic and syntactic discrepancies between the Akkadian and the Sumerian verbal forms in the Sargonic bilingual royal inscriptions. Here, I will treat the use of the verbal affixes. In this respect, a comparison between the Sumerian verbs with their Akkadian counterparts presents interesting similarities as well as distinctions, and the treatment of the Sumerian indirect object prefixes may provide good evidence for that. In a few instances, the Sumerian indirect object prefix lacks a correspondent in the Akkadian counterpart:

5) Akkadian:

a-na^d da-gan uš₂-ka-en ik-ru-ub

Sumerian:

^dda-gan-ra ki-a mu-na-za šud₃ mu-na-ra₂

dagan =ra ki =a mu -nna -n -za šud₃ mu -nna -n -ra₂

Dagan=DAT place=LOC VNT-3SG.IO-in-CVVE prayer VNT-3SG.IO-3SG.A-CVVE

“He bowed down for Dagan and blessed him.” (Sargon 11, A. 20-23 and S. 17-19)

In this case, no Akkadian pronominal suffix reflects the indirect object prefix -nna- in Sumerian. This is hardly surprising, though, since the indirect object prefixes in Sumerian and the Akkadian pronominal suffixes behave quite differently. The use of an indirect object prefix is mandatory – with a few exceptions – in presence of an indirect object, expressed or not by a noun phrase in the dative or in the directive case.⁴⁹ Differently, the use of the dative pronominal suffix in Akkadian is not mandatory, especially since the indirect object is already explicitly mentioned in the sentence right before the verb. A pronominal suffix in the dative referring to the indirect object (“Dagan”) would here serve other functions than to simply indicate the indirect object.⁵⁰ The two constructions are therefore exact parallels, although the two verbal forms are not mechanic translations of one another.

A Sumerian indirect object prefix may indeed correspond to an Akkadian dative suffix under different circumstances, though, as in the following example:

⁴⁹ Jagersma 2010, 410.

⁵⁰ Huehnergard 1997, 171.

6) **Akkadian:**

śar-ru-GI LUGAL KALAM.MA.KI ^d*en-lil₂ ma-ḫi-ra la i-di₃-śum₆*

“Sargon, king of the land – the god Enlil did not give him any opponent” (Sargon 1, 72)

Sumerian:

śar₂-um-kin lugal kalam-ma-ra ^d*en-lil₂-le lu₂ erim₂ nu-na-sum*

Sar.um.kin lugal kalam=ak =ra enlil=e lu₂ erim₂ nu -nna -n -sum

Sargon king land =GEN =DAT Enlil=ERG man hostile NEG-3SG.IO-3SG.A-give

“Enlil did not give him any opponent” (Sargon 1, 72 and 67)

Here, the third singular dative suffix *-śum* in Akkadian functions as a resumptive pronoun and indicates an indirect object which would otherwise be left unexpressed in the sentence. The name of the king (“Sargon”) is neither preceded by the preposition *ana*, nor its function is indicated by a case marker whatsoever. It stands therefore out of the syntax - only the dative pronominal suffix that refers to it marks this participant as the logical indirect object of the clause. It may be regarded as a case of topicalization by preposing. The topic of the clause – Sargon – stands at the beginning of the clause, as a nominative absolute or *casus pendens*.⁵¹ The pronoun suffix in the dative expresses its function in the clause.

This dative suffix reflects the Sumerian indirect object prefix which, however, has a slightly different function – namely, that of referring to the king, which is clearly expressed by the dative marker in Sumerian. The Akkadian construction reflects a different purpose. As Huenergard observes, “preposing serves several discourse functions, including easing comprehension in a complicated sentence, highlighting a topic, announcing a new topic, or marking the end of a section of discourse” (Huenergard 2005, 212). Here, it seems to mark the emphasis on the indirect object, namely Sargon.⁵² There is no such emphasis on the Sumerian construction. Therefore, although the two verbal forms contain the same elements, the two structures cannot be defined as exact parallels.

Furthermore, the Akkadian dative suffix can also mirror an oblique object prefix in the Sumerian version:

⁵¹ Huenergard, 2005, 211-212, defines topicalization by preposing as a construction in which “a noun or noun phrase that is the topic of its clause, or that needs emphasis, is dissociated from its clause, and placed at the beginning of the clause, in the nominative case [...] the first nom. noun (phrase) is not part of the grammar of the clause, and is therefore sometimes termed the nominative absolute (also referred to as ‘casus pendens’ [...] or ‘suspended subject’”. See also Kogan 2008, 21-23, who studies this phenomenon in the Sargonic inscriptions.

⁵² For topicalised constructions that highlight the object of a clause, see Von Soden 1995; GAG §130h. The Old Akkadian royal inscriptions also provide evidence for a similar topicalised construction that involves the use of the relative pronoun in the accusative (*ša*) (Kogan 2008, 17-26).

7) **Akkadian:**

^den-lil₂ ma-ḫi-ra la i-di-śum₆

“Enlil did not give him any rival” (Sargon 11, 40)

Sumerian:

^den-lil₂-le lu₂ gaba-ru nu-mu-ni-tuk

en.lil=e lu₂ gaba.ru nu -mu -nni -n -tuk

Enlil =ERG man rival NEG -VNT -3SG.OO -3SG.A -have

“He let him have no rivals” (Sargon 11, 33)

The same Akkadian expression (*la i-di-śum₆*) is equated to a different Sumerian construction, which has different shades of meaning. On the one hand, the Akkadian structure is transitive with a direct object in the accusative (*maḫira*) and an indirect object (*-śum*) in the dative. On the other hand, the Sumerian version has a causative construction derived from a two participants verb (/tuk/ “to have”). I would suggest that the sign NI before the verbal stem stands indeed for the third singular oblique object prefix /nni/, which expresses the subordinate subject of the causative sentence. The Sumerian indirect object prefix and the Akkadian pronominal suffix express here two different grammatical categories – namely, an indirect object and a subordinate subject. Therefore, the two verbal forms are by no means equivalent.

As for their meaning, the two constructions also differ to a certain extent – “to give something to someone” in the Akkadian text, and “to let someone have something” in the Sumerian version. This rendering of the Akkadian construction is somewhat surprising, especially since Sumerian provides a perfectly suitable parallel for the Akkadian expression – nu-na-sum for *la iddiśum*, as in the previous example. Such discrepancy would be more understandable assuming that the scribes were copying from original unilingual inscriptions – which generally included the same text in Sumerian and in Akkadian, without those texts being translations from one language into the other, though.

4.3 The Conjunction u_3 and a Rare Sumerian Prefix

As for some textual elements as well as for some linguistic aspects, the texts show significant discrepancies. This seems to suggest that they were not composed as original bilingual texts, since the two versions do not correspond to one another in many respects. The Sumerian versions seem to be original compositions rather than a translation from Akkadian, since they include constructions and expressions that do not translate their Akkadian parallel, and moreover the texts do not show influences from Akkadian. In this respect, the use of the Sumerian prefix -nga- and his occurrence in Sargon 1 needs to be discuss.

Generally, the prefix -nga- is quite rare and its use is restricted to a number of fixed expressions. It seems reasonable to interpret it as an obsolete element, not productive anymore. For this reason, the meaning of -nga- is somewhat obscure, and its translation largely depends on the context.⁵³

The function of the prefix -nga- seems clear in the Old Akkadian bilingual inscription Sargon 1, though. As Jagersma (2010, 514-515) suggests, the prefix seems here to correspond to the conjunction u_3 in the Akkadian version, and therefore it is reasonable to conclude that -nga- has a conjunctive function. Zólyomi puts forward the same conclusion, stating that “the prefix -nga- functions as a clause coordinator, prefixed, as a rule, to the verbal form of the last one of the coordinated clauses” (Zólyomi 2017, 149), and he presents an attestation from this text as an example of this usage (150).

The table below lists all the attestations of -nga- in combination with u_3 in this Sargon inscription, and shows its function as a clause coordinator:

Sumerian /nga/	Akkadian u_3
1. uru.unu.KI e- <u>h</u> ulu bad ₃ -bi e- <u>ga</u> -se ₃ (12-15)	URU.KI UNU.KI SAG.GIŠ.RA <u>u_3</u> BAD ₃ -š <u>u</u> I ₃ .GUL.GUL (12-17)
2. ^{giš} tukul e-da-sag ₃ e- <u>ga</u> -dab ₅ (25-26)	ŠU.DU ₈ .A (no u_3) (27)

⁵³ Jagersma 2010, 513, suggests that “the prefix -nga- is rare. It occurs perhaps a dozen times in our corpus and its restricted to letters and narrative texts.” For functions and attestations of this prefix, see also Thomsen 1984, 170-172, and Edzard 2003, 123-127.

3. ^{giš} tukul e-da-sag ₃ aga ₃ .kar ₂ e-ne ₂ -se ₃ iri-ni e-ḥulu bad ₃ -bi e- ga -si ₃ (34-41)	URI ₂ .KI <i>iš₁₁-ar</i> <u>u₃</u> URU.KI SAG.GIŠ.RA <u>u₃</u> BAD ₃ - <i>śu</i> I ₃ .GUL.GUL (37-43)
4. ^{giš} tukul e-da-sag ₃ aga ₃ .kar ₂ e-ne ₂ -se ₃ uru-ni e-ḥulu bad ₃ -bi e- ga -si ₃ (54-61)	<i>in</i> REC 169 <i>iš₁₁-ar</i> <u>u₃</u> URU.KI SAG.GIŠ.RA <u>u₃</u> BAD ₃ - <i>śu</i> I ₃ .GUL.GUL (61-66)
5. ^d utu-bi suḥuš-sa-ni ḥe ₂ -bu ₃ -re ₆ -ne numun-na-ni ḥe ₂ - ga -ri-ri-ge-ne (98-102)	^d UTU SUḤUŠ- <i>śu li-su₂-ḥa</i> <u>u₃</u> ŠE.NUMUN- <i>śu li-il-qu₃-ta</i> (105-109)

In the first instance, the use of *u₃* in the Akkadian version corresponds to the prefix -nga- in Sumerian, and thus it is reasonable to assume that the two elements have indeed a conjunctive function. As Jagersma (2010, 515) and Zólyomi (2017, 150) suggest, when the conjunction *u₃* and the -nga- prefix coordinate more than one clause, the conjunction *u₃* is repeated between each clause, while the -nga- prefix only occurs in the last one of the coordinated verbal forms. This happens in 3., 4. and 5. in the table above. For this reason, Jagersma (2010, 515) concludes that “the most likely explanation seems to be that it is only a creative attempt of some scribe to represent an Old Akkadian conjunction in the Sumerian translation. In other words, we are probably dealing with an Akkadianism here”.

The correspondence between the two elements is not so strict, though. In line 25-25 (Sumerian) and 27 in (Akkadian), the -nga- prefix in Sumerian does not correspond to *u₃* (ex. 2.). Here, the Sumerian version has two verbs (e-da-sag₃ and e-ga-dab₅), and consequently two clauses, while the Akkadian only has one (ŠU.DU₈.A). The two expressions differ in meaning and construction, however such discrepancy becomes hard to explain assuming that the -nga- prefix is used here as a simple translation of *u₃*.

Whatever the functions of the -nga- prefix may be, its use in this text is surely rather unusual, and even more unusual is the number of its attestations. With its five occurrences of the -nga- prefix, this inscription alone provides indeed some one third of all the attestations of -nga- in the entire corpus.⁵⁴

Therefore, the function of -nga- in this inscription is isolated. The two other bilingual inscriptions from the Sargonic period (Sargon 11 and Rimuš 18) provide no parallels either for such conjunctive function of -nga-, nor for its equation with the Akkadian *u₃*. In fact, the prefix -nga- does not occur in the other inscriptions at all. As Jagersma (514-515) points out, the curse formula in Rimuš 18 provides an interesting parallel, since it includes almost the same words as that of Sargon 1 – but it makes no use of the prefix -nga-, as the quotation below shows:

8) **Akkadian:**

^den-lil₂ *u₃* ^dUTU SUḪUŠ-*śu li-su₂-ḫa* *u₃* ŠE.NUMUN-*śu li-il-qu₃-ta*

^den-lil₂ ^dutu-bi suḫuš-sa-ne₂ ḫe₂-bu₁₅-re₆-ne numun-na-ni ḫe₂-ri-ri-ge-ne

“May Enlil and Šamaš tear out his foundation and destroy his progeny”

(Rimuš 18, Akk. 23-30; Sum. 23-27)

Clearly, the Akkadian conjunction *u₃* does neither reflect the prefix -nga- nor any other element in the Sumerian version. In Sargon 1 (98-102), though, the Sumerian version of a very similar curse formula includes indeed the prefix -nga-.⁵⁵

Therefore, if the prefix -nga- truly had a conjunctive function comparable to that of the conjunction *u₃*, this use seems to be limited to the inscription Sargon 1. It may be a sophisticated choice of the scribe, who tried to express a conjunctive function in Sumerian by means of this rare verbal prefix. The evidence is too limited to reach any certain conclusions, nevertheless the use of the /nga/ prefix in the Sargonic inscription is quite interesting and may deserve further attention.

⁵⁴ Jagersma 2010, 515.

⁵⁵ See ex. 5 in the table above.

5. Conclusive Remarks

The Old Akkadian bilingual royal inscriptions from Nippur show some problematic features, and many aspects remain unclear as for their composition and their reception. The use of Sumerian represents an exception, since the Sargonic dynasty mainly left inscriptions in Akkadian. This choice may reflect both a practical and an ideological reason. On the one hand, these texts were probably meant to speak to the Sumerian community in Nippur, and thus they would serve a real communicative purpose. On the other hand, writing these inscriptions in Sumerian would place the Sargonic kings in continuity with the preceding tradition of the Sumerian kings. The Sumerian texts show this continuity with the Early Dynastic royal inscriptions, from which they borrow some expressions and phrases. The Akkadian versions represent rather an innovation of the Sargonic dynasty, not only for the language but also for the phraseology adopted.

The two versions of these inscriptions come therefore from different traditions. Furthermore, the Sumerian texts differ from the Akkadian versions in several respects, and this points to one important conclusion. The Old Babylonian copies did probably not originate from bilingual inscriptions, but from independent texts which were grouped together and became bilingual in the course of their transmission.

This conclusion can be drawn already from the tablets themselves. First, some of the texts have captions, which can be different in the Akkadian and in the Sumerian version. This suggests that the two versions had two parallel traditions, but they merged together at a certain point during their transmission. Second, according to the information given in some of the colophons, the Akkadian and the Sumerian versions derive from inscriptions on different objects. The curse formula in Sargon 11 provides also clear evidence, since it occurs only in the Sumerian text.

The two versions differ to a much larger extent, though. As for the writing system, the logographic writings of verbal forms in the two versions show substantial discrepancies. The logograms used in the Akkadian versions do not correspond to those of the Sumerian ones, and thus the verbal stems are not semantic equivalent. Moreover, these verbs often require different grammatical constructions, and as a result, the whole structure and meaning of the Sumerian and of the Akkadian texts may not be equivalent.

This seems to suggest that the Sumerian texts were original compositions rather than translations from the Akkadian ones. These texts have been composed at the same time as the Akkadian parallels, since the writing system follows practices of an older period than the Old Babylonian. Moreover, the Sumerian texts present some verbal forms which follow the vowel harmony, a phonological rule which is only attested in Old Sumerian.

Therefore, the Sumerian and the Akkadian versions likely originated from separate and contemporary inscriptions which included very similar texts. The two versions show indeed similar phrases, with discrepancies in some grammatical structures and constructions. As the examples of the terminative case and of the indirect object prefix have shown, the grammatical structures in the Sumerian and in the Akkadian versions present interesting discrepancies.

Because of such discrepancies, the Sumerian versions do not look like translations, and the texts do not reflect any influences from Akkadian. The occurrence of the -nga- prefix in Sargon 1 seems to argue against this conclusion, since it seems to be used as a translation of the Akkadian conjunction *u₃*. But the combination of the prefix -nga- with the Akkadian conjunction is not so fixed, and in one attestation the prefix does not correspond to *u₃* at all. Therefore, although this may well represent an Akkadianism, the prefix does not translate mechanically the Akkadian conjunction.

On the base of the evidence discussed, it seems reasonable to conclude that the Old Babylonian bilingual copies likely originated from separate independent texts, although very similar in contents and phrasing, which were combined during their tradition. Therefore, these inscriptions are not original bilinguals.

Chapter II

Ur III Bilingual Inscriptions

Introduction

During the Ur III period (ca. 2112-2004 B.C.), Sumerian is again the official language of royal power.⁵⁶ Royal inscriptions are for the most part written in Sumerian, and bilingual Sumerian-Akkadian inscriptions are not attested in this period. The only exception is a small group of inscriptions of king Šulgi.⁵⁷ Their definition is problematic, though, and their composition as bilinguals will be the central issue to discuss in this chapter.

The corpus includes four Šulgi building inscriptions and an Old Babylonian copy of a stele inscription. The building inscriptions have been defined as “*Komplementärbilinguen*” (Krecher 1976, 125) since they provide two different versions – one in Sumerian and the other in Akkadian – of the same text, but on different objects.⁵⁸ Moreover, the textual discrepancies between the two versions argue for the independence of the Akkadian and the Sumerian texts.

The main question is therefore whether these inscriptions may be considered bilingual. Another significant issue is the function of such texts. Did the Sumerian texts still have an audience, or were the Akkadian translations composed to make the inscriptions somewhat accessible?

The status of Sumerian in the Ur III period is indeed an issue, and no certain conclusion can be reached as for the life or death of Sumerian at the end of the third millennium. The study of these inscriptions may however shed a light on bilingualism during the Ur III period and on its relationship with the dynasty in power. At this time, Sumerian was indeed turning into the literary language of royal tradition.

⁵⁶ During this period, Mesopotamia was unified under the Third Dynasty of Ur, and about 60000 published Sumerian texts date from this period (Jagersma 2010, 5-6; Michalowski, 176).

⁵⁷ Šulgi was the second king of the Third Dynasty of Ur after Ur-Nammu. According to the Sumerian King List, he reigned for forty-eight years.

⁵⁸ These texts cannot be defined as bilinguals, since the two versions are inscribed each on its own writing medium (Galter 1995, 29; see also Krecher 1976, 125).

The last text to discuss is a Šulgi stele inscription which presents several problematic aspects. It is preserved on an Old Babylonian bilingual school tablet. The Akkadian and the Sumerian version are arranged on the tablet in a very irregular manner. Moreover, the Sumerian text is written in syllabic Sumerian and shows several misspellings and unusual writings. Furthermore, the curse formula at the end of the inscription share similarities with the curse formulas of some Old Babylonian royal inscriptions, such as that of the Codex Hammurabi. I will analyze and discuss these traits in order to answer the question whether this copy originated from an original Šulgi inscription or is rather a later scribal composition.

The bilingual versions of the building inscriptions and the bilingual copy of the stele inscription reflect therefore different needs and situations. On the one hand, the building inscriptions would express the king's message in two different languages at the same time, thus showing his power and culture. On the other hand, the Old Babylonian bilingual version of the stele inscription may reflect the need of preserving and keeping alive the Sumerian language and tradition, although Sumerian was not spoken anymore. By the Old Babylonian period, bilingualism had become restricted to scribal culture.

1. Two Šulgi Building Inscriptions

1.1 Sources

The Šulgi royal inscriptions have been the subject of several studies and they have been published in many editions – most importantly, Steible 1991 and Frayne 1997 (RIME 3/2). The corpus includes about sixty-five published texts and has been subdivided in different typologies by Hallo 1962.⁵⁹ This classification has been followed in RIME 3/2, the edition that will be adopted here.

The Šulgi inscriptions are for the most part written in Sumerian – some of them are in Akkadian, but no bilingual inscriptions come from Šulgi's reign. The only exception are two building inscriptions in Sumerian. They both have a parallel version in Akkadian. As Krecher 1976,125, has noticed, these texts cannot be defined as bilinguals, since they are not inscribed on the same artefact. Also, Galter (1995, 29) following this suggestion, adopted Krecher's definition of these texts as "*Komplementärbilinguen*".

These texts may be therefore considered only *quasi*-bilinguals. These inscriptions raise a problem, that involves the status of Sumerian and of Akkadian in the Ur III period. Whether the Sumerian texts were meant to communicate with a community of native speakers or Sumerian had already died out as a spoken language is a difficult question, that has been the focus of several studies. Scholars like Michalowski (2006, 174-175) and Rubio (2006, 174-175) have assumed that Sumerian was not the language of the royal dynasty during the Ur III period, and that the Ur III kings were more likely native speakers of Akkadian.⁶⁰ This would not necessarily imply the death of Sumerian before the Ur III period, though. Scholars like Sallaberger⁶¹, Woods⁶² and Jagersma⁶³ have indeed collected textual, onomastic and linguistic evidence that argues for the opposite conclusion. Sumerian may still have been a living language during the Ur III period, although only in certain centres and contexts.

⁵⁹ Hallo 1962, 1-23, studied the corpus of the royal inscriptions from Ur. He divided the inscriptions of the different kings in four main typologies (23-24) - "standard inscriptions/building inscriptions", "votive inscriptions", "weight inscriptions/seal inscriptions" and "late copies". He (24-43) also provided a list of the texts with bibliographical indications as for editions and hand-copies.

⁶⁰ See Jagersma 2010, 9-10, Woods 2006, 91-93, and Michalowski 2006, 164, for summaries of the several different positions.

⁶¹ Sallaberger 2004, 109-140, provides a comprehensive onomastic study of personnel lists in the Ur III period. His findings suggest that Sumerian was still in use at that time.

⁶² Woods 2006, 91-104, also suggests that Sumerian was a living language during the Ur III period, on the base of onomastic as well as on linguistic evidence from the Old Babylonian grammatical text. He (99-114) suggests a longer period of asymmetric bilingualism in Mesopotamia, that eventually ended with the death of Sumerian.

⁶³ Jagersma 2010, 10.

However, if the time of death of Sumerian is still debated, there is not much doubt about Akkadian being the majority language during the Ur III period.⁶⁴ Moreover, the small elite which had access to the written texts was probably fluent both in Sumerian and in Akkadian. The reasons for the composition of two Šulgi building inscriptions in a Sumerian and in an Akkadian version need therefore to be investigated. Did these inscriptions fulfill a communicative purpose, or did they only have a celebrative function?

1.2 Šulgi 23 and Šulgi 24

Two building inscriptions of Šulgi show two versions of a similar text, one in Akkadian and the other in Sumerian. Two of them, Šulgi 23 and Šulgi 24, celebrate the building of the E-meslam temple at Kutha – the former in Akkadian, the latter in Sumerian. The Akkadian version is preserved on a stone fragment from the original inscription,⁶⁵ while the Sumerian one is found on a Neo-Babylonian tablet.⁶⁶

The colophon of Šulgi 24 states that this tablet belonged to a scribe.⁶⁷ The copy seems quite faithful to the original, and it reflects Ur III Sumerian in morphology as well as in the writing system adopted.⁶⁸ The scribe seems to know Sumerian, or at least he is able to copy the Sumerian text without mistakes. He also shows great competence in cuneiform script, as the logographic writings in the colophon show.⁶⁹ He may belong to the same cultural milieu of those Late Babylonian scholars who left so many copies of the ancient cuneiform texts. In this respect, the writing NA₄.NA.RU₂.A “foundation inscription” in the colophon is remarkable, since it occurs in other Late Babylonian tablets.⁷⁰ Unfortunately, the original provenance of this tablet is unknown. It is therefore impossible

⁶⁴ Jagersma 2010, 10; Woods 2006, 102-107; Michalowski 2006, 176-177.

⁶⁵ This inscription is preserved on a fragment of a steatite tablet from Nineveh, now in the Louvre museum (AO 22992). It was published in hand-copy in CT 9, 3. See Frayne 1997, 132, for a brief commentary and bibliography.

⁶⁶ This Neo-Babylonian tablet (BM 35389) is now in the British Museum. Its provenance remains unknown (Frayne 1997, 132). More details about the tablet are available on <https://cdli.ucla.edu/>, where it is also published in hand-copy.

⁶⁷ The colophon reads: IM.GID₂.DA ^{md}EN.DIN-*it*, DUB.'SAR' “Long tablet of Bēl-uballit, the scrib^le^l” (Šulgi 24, colophon line 3). The colophon was edited in Hunger 1968, 127, no. 442.

⁶⁸ Note for instance the defective writing in the verbal form mu-du₃-a (line 8). The agent prefix (/n/) preceding the verbal form is not spelled out in the position of syllable final consonant.

⁶⁹ The colophon is often the place where the scribes showed their great skills in cuneiform writing. (Hunger 1968, 4-5).

⁷⁰ This logogram is attested also in a Neo-Babylonian copy of a Hammurabi Law Tablet (BE XXXI, 22). Finkelstein 1969, 25, comments on the presence of such a logogram in that Neo-Babylonian tablet, and he suggests that probably “this form of the Sumerogram was current in the scribe’s own time”.

to determine whether the activity of this scribe relate to a library from the Late Babylonian period, especially since the name of this scribe does not seem to be attested elsewhere.⁷¹

As for the text of these inscription, both the Akkadian and the Sumerian version dedicate to the god the building of the temple in a few lines.⁷² They show some significant discrepancies, though, which make it very unlikely that the two are translation from one language to the other. A comparison between the two text may show that:

Akkadian	Akkadian and Sumerian	Sumerian
	<p>šulgi <i>da-num</i>₂ šul-gi nita kala-ga “Šulgi, mighty man” (1-2)</p>	
	<p>LUGAL URI₅^{ki} lugal uri₅^{ki}-ma “king of Ur” (3)</p>	
<p><i>u</i>₃ LUGAL <i>ki-ib-ra-tim ar-ba-im</i> “and king of the four quarters” (4-6)</p>		<p>lugal ki-en-gi ki-uri “king of the lands of Sumer and Akkad” (4)</p>
<p>^{ba}DIM₂ “builder” (7)</p>		<p>mu-du₃-a “who built” (8)</p>
<p>e₂-mes-lam “of the ‘House, Warrior of the Netherworld’” (8)</p>		<p>e₂ mes-lam “the Emeslam” (5)</p>
<p>E₂ ^dKIŠ.ERI₁₁.GAL <i>be-li₂-śu</i> “the temple of Nergal, his lord” (9-10)</p>		<p>e₂ ^dmes-lam-ta-e₃-a “of the god Meslamta-e’a” (6)</p>
	<p><i>in</i> GU.DU8.A^{ki} gu₂-du₈-a^{ki} “in Kutha” (11 and 7)</p>	

⁷¹ See Clancier 2009, 473-475, provides an index of personal names that occur in the Neo-Babylonian tablets that relate to the Neo-Babylonian libraries. The name of this scribe is not attested.

⁷² The Akkadian version (Šulgi 23) is an eleven lines inscription, while the copy of the Sumerian one (Šulgi 24) only preserves eight lines.

The two texts differ in many aspects. First, the titles adopted to define the king are different – “king of the four quarters”, in the Akkadian version, and “king of the lands Sumer and Akkad” in Sumerian. Second, the syntactical structure of the two texts is not the same.

On the one hand, the Akkadian version has a verbal form in the participle (line 7), which governs the following genitive (the temple, in line 8). This genitive expresses the direct object of the action. On the other hand, the Sumerian version has a nominalized verbal form in the final line of the inscription (8), which serves as the predicate of the relative clause (5-8) and governs the preceding direct object (the E-meslam temple, in line 5).

In both the two versions, the possessor of the E-meslam temple is indicated by the genitive of the god’s name. The Akkadian text mentions the god of the netherworld, Nergal.⁷³ The Sumerian version has the name of the god Meslamta-e’a, that literally means “the one who went out from the House, Warrior of the Netherworld”.⁷⁴

This inscription provides the earliest evidence for the equation of these two gods.⁷⁵ Perhaps, the identification of the Akkadian Nergal and of the Sumerian Meslamta-e’a started in the E-meslam temple built by Šulgi at Kutha, and this assimilation spread in other centres. In fact, the combination of these two gods is documented in later texts from different provenance.⁷⁶

1.3 Šulgi 27 and Šulgi 28

The other Šulgi building inscriptions that are preserved both in an Akkadian and in a Sumerian version are Šulgi 27 – in Akkadian – and Šulgi 28 – in Sumerian.⁷⁷ They celebrate the building of the E-sikil, the temple of the god Tišpak in Ešnunna. The texts are preserved on two different brick fragments, and therefore they probably come from two different foundation tablets.⁷⁸ The text is very brief, but it reveals an interesting discrepancy between the Akkadian and the Sumerian version. On

⁷³ E2 [4KIŠ].ERI₁₁.GAL “the temple of the god [N]ergal” (Šulgi 23, 9).

⁷⁴ e₂ 4mes-lam-ta-e₃-a “the temple of the god Meslamta-e’a” (Šulgi 24, 6). Von Weiher 1971, 7-9, discusses this divine name and gives a summary of preceding studies, and he also lists the attestations of the Sumerian god’s name Meslamta-e’a in Ur III texts (8-9).

⁷⁵ See von Weiher 1971, 6.

⁷⁶ See von Weiher 1971, 8-9, for later occurrences of the same combination.

⁷⁷ Frayne 1997: RIME 3/2, Šulgi E3/2.1.2.27 (Akkadian) and Šulgi E3/2.1.2.28 (Sumerian). Both the inscriptions have also been published in Steible 1991:2, Šulgi 3 and Šulgi 7.

⁷⁸ The Akkadian version is inscribed on a baked brick which comes from a private house in Tell Asmar and is now preserved in Chicago with the museum number A 8997 (Frayne 1997, 135-136). The Sumerian version is preserved on IM 23839, an inscribed brick now stored in the National Museum of Iraq (Baghdad). More information is available on <https://cdli.ucla.edu/>.

the one hand, the Akkadian text mentions the god Tišpak in the ninth line as the possessor of the temple:

1) ^{ba}DIM₂ e₂ sikil E₂ ^dr^{tišpak}1 in iš-nun^{ki}

“Builder of the E-sikil, temple of the god Tišpak in Ešnunna” (Šulgi 27, 7-10).

On the other hand, the Sumerian version mentions the name of the god Ninazu, that corresponds to the Akkadian Tišpak. The god is here the indirect object of the verb /du₃/ and appears as the first name mentioned in the text:

2) ^dnin-a-zu [...] e₂ sikil e₂ ki-ag₂-ga₂-ni mu-na-du₃

nin.a.zu=ra e₂ sikil e₂ ki—ag̃ =ane mu -nna -n -du₃

Ninazu =DAT house pure house beloved=3SG.POSS VNT-3SG.IO-3SG.A-build

“For Ninazu [...] he built the E-Sikil, his beloved temple” (Šulgi 28, 1 and 7-9).

As for the syntax, the two versions are not parallel, and this suggests that their composition did not take place simultaneously. The two inscriptions include two versions of the same texts without they being meant to correspond to one another. Moreover, their composition on different supports argues indeed for the independence of the Akkadian and the Sumerian texts, that may indeed be defined as “*Komplementärbilinguen*”.⁷⁹

1.4 Two Royal Languages

These inscriptions were likely composed separately in two different languages, and their composition remains somewhat problematic. Whether it was still a living language or not, it is undeniable that Sumerian had a strong symbolic value as the official language of royal power during the Ur III period. The Ur III kings adopted Sumerian as a symbol of their culture and tradition and Sumerian represented an element of distinction from the preceding Akkadian rulers.⁸⁰ Šulgi himself boasted about his great knowledge of Sumerian.⁸¹ As Rubio (2006, 174) has argued, this may suggest that Sumerian was not Šulgi’s mother tongue, and that the Ur III rulers were not native Sumerian

⁷⁹ Krecher 1976, 125.

⁸⁰ Michalowski 2006, 176.

⁸¹ Rubio 2006, 167-174. See also Michalowski 2006, 175-176.

speakers.⁸² But it also means that Sumerian was acquiring a great prestige as the language of kingship – and that knowledge of this language was a virtue that the king himself would boast about.

As for the Akkadian versions of the inscriptions, they were probably the only ones with a real communicative power. The Akkadian versions of these inscriptions may thus have been composed to make the texts somewhat accessible to a broader audience, but they probably had a slightly different function as well. The Akkadian texts served the need of celebrating the king – who could have his words written in both the two languages, Sumerian and Akkadian, at the same time.

2. Šulgi 38: A Bilingual Stele Inscription

2.1 The Old Babylonian Copy

The last inscription to discuss is a Šulgi stele inscription preserved on an Old Babylonian bilingual copy. The tablet is fragmentary and does not provide any information about the original inscription. Furthermore, this tablet presents some problematic aspects. The Sumerian version is written in syllabic Sumerian, and the text shows several spelling mistakes and unusual writings.⁸³ It is therefore difficult to determine the origin of this text.

Before discussing the problem of its composition, I provide here a picture of TIM 9, 35 in hand-copy and I quote here the entire text in transliteration and translation.⁸⁴ The Akkadian text is interlinear with the Sumerian, but the alternance between the two is not regularly arranged. The two versions are occasionally mixed together in the same line (obv.1, obv. 9, rev. 21), and in one case (lines 12-13), the Sumerian and the Akkadian versions are split between obverse and reverse.⁸⁵ The following reconstruction of the text will show the irregularities in the arrangement of the two versions

⁸² Rubio 2006, 174, assumes indeed that Šulgi was likely not a Sumerian native speaker, since “one does not normally boast about knowing one’s mother tongue”.

⁸³ See the commentary in Frayne 1997, 144.

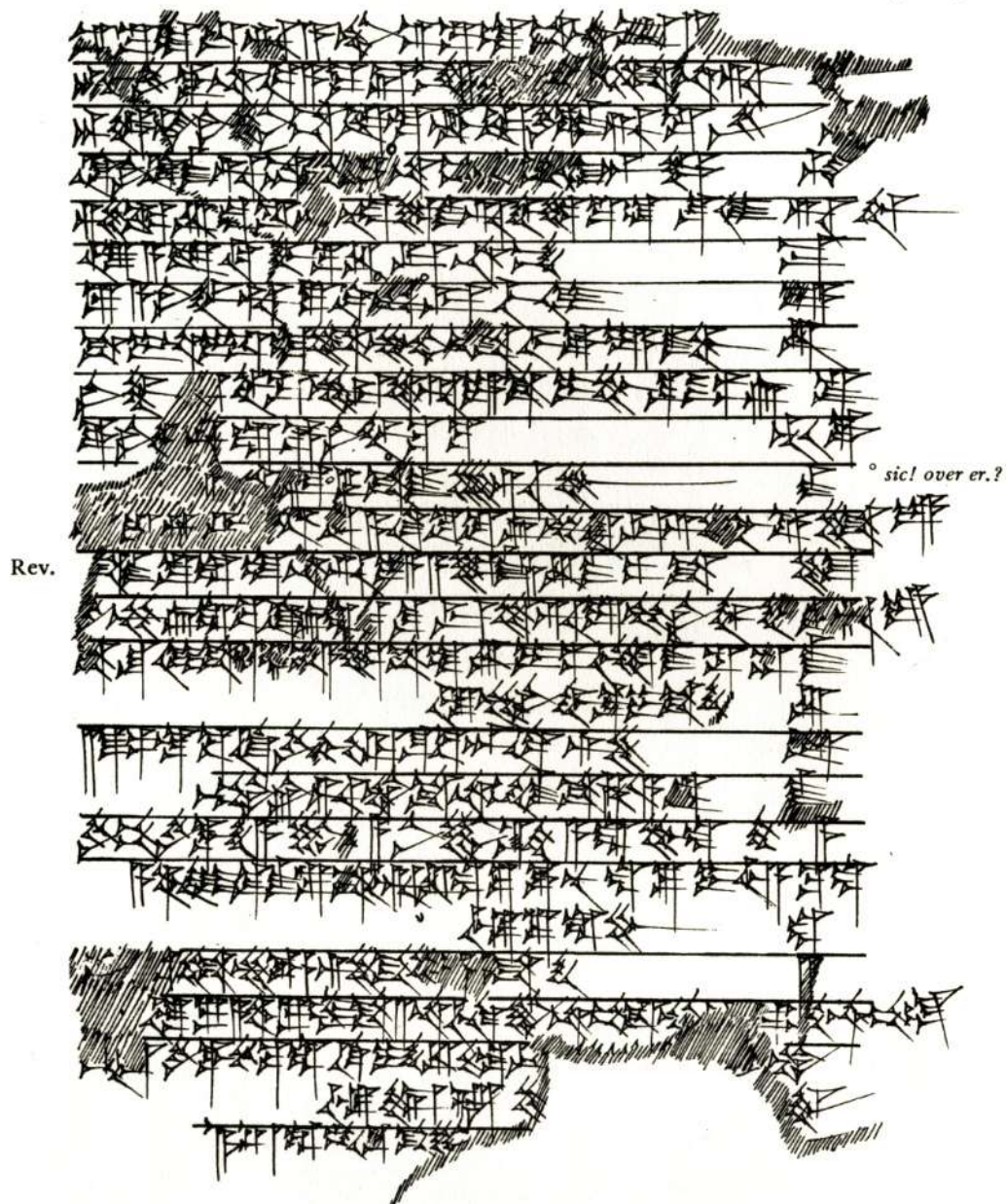
⁸⁴ *Texts in the Iraq Museum* (Baghdad/Wiesbaden 1964 ff.). The tablet (IM 53977) comes from Tell Harmal and is now preserved in the National Museum of Iraq (Baghdad). It was published on TIM 9, 35. For translation, see Gelb and Kienast, 344-347, Ur C 1 (Šulgi 54); Steible 1991: II, Šulgi 54; also, Frayne 1997: RIME2/3, Šulgi E3/2.1.2.36. I follow here the RIME numbering (Šulgi 38) and translation.

⁸⁴ See the commentary in Frayne 1997, 144.

⁸⁵ Picture available on <https://cdli.ucla.edu/>

of the text. Beneath each line in syllabic Sumerian (SS), I give the reconstruction of the text as it would be written in logographic Sumerian (LS), and the corresponding translation.⁸⁶

2.2 Copy, Transliteration and Translation



TIM 9, 35⁸⁷

⁸⁶ The text is quoted following the transliteration and the hand-copy of the tablet on <https://cdli.ucla.edu/>. Small adjustments have been made following Frayne 1997. The reconstructed version of the Sumerian text may be found on the website as well as in Frayne 1997. I follow Frayne 1997 in the translation.

⁸⁷ Picture available on <https://cdli.ucla.edu/>

Transliteration:

Obv.

1. *si-ma-at da-ri-a-tim si-ma-at ta-na-da-a-[tim]*

(Sumerian not preserved)

“A monument befitting eternity, suitable for praise.”

2. *^diškur lu₂-gal na-di-a ku-ga₂-am 'š_a-lam' 'd'ⁱiškur¹ be-li na-ri-i[m]*

(Syllabic Sumerian + Akkadian translation)

^diškur lugal na-řu₂-a ku₃-ga-am₃ (Logographic Sumerian)

For the god Adad, owner of (this) stele,

3. *^dšul-gi ni-in-ta ka-la-ak-ka lu₂-gal u₂-ri-ma lu₂-g[al]*

(Syllabic Sumerian)

^dšul-gi nita kalag-ga lugal uri₅^{ki}-ma lugal (Logographic Sumerian)

4. *ki-i₃-ki u₂-ri du-¹mu ur₂¹-na-am-na-am-mi ^dšul-gi*

(SS)

ki-en-gi ki-uri dumu ur-^dnamma (LS)

5. *zi-ka-ru-um da-a¹n¹-nu-um šar u₂-ri-im šar ma-at šu-mi-ri-im*

6. *u₃ a-ka₃-di-im ma-ru ur-na-am-ma*

(Akkadian translation of 3-4)

Šulgi, mighty man, king of Ur, king of the lands of Sumer and Akkad, son of Ur-Nammu (dedicated this stele).

7. *lu a ni-im-ḥu-lu-di-ma ib-ši-<ag₂>-ge₆-ia (SS)*

lu₂ a₂ niĝ₂-ḥul-dim₂-ma ib-ši-<ag₂>-ge₂₆-a (LS)

8. *ša i-na i-da-at le-mu-tim up-ša-še₂₀-e-ia u₂-wa-ru*

(Akkadian translation of 7)

(As for) the one who gives orders to bewitch me,

9. **ni-im-[d]i-im-ma-mu ib-se₃!(TE)-re-ia ša i-pu-šu u₂-pa-sa-su**
 (SS + Akkadian translation)
 niĝ₂-dim₂-ma-mu ib₂-ze₂-re-a (LS)
 who obliterates my handiwork,
10. **e-ni-¹im-ga₂¹-ra e-<<ni>>-im-ku-ku-te₉-ia!** (SS)
 e₂ niĝ₂-gur₁₁-ra i₃-ni-ib₂-ku₄-ku₄-de₃-a (LS)
11. **[ša] ¹a-na¹ e₂-nig₂-gur₁₁ u₂-še-re-bu-u₂**
 (Akkadian translation of 10)
 who has it brought to a storehouse,
12. **l[u₂] [ni]-¹iš-ḥu-ur¹ ¹na-di¹-a ki-su-su-sa-mu šu ib-zi-¹iḥ¹-e-le-ia** (SS)
 lu₂ geš-ḥur na-ru₂-a ki-šuš₂-šuš₂-a-mu šu ib₂-zi-x-e-de₃-a (LS)
 rev.
13. **ša u₂-šu-ra-at na-ri-ia a-šar u₂-ša-ru u₂-pa-ša-ṭu₂**
 (Akkadian translation of 12)
 who erases the inscription of my stele in the place where I inscribed it,
14. **lu₂ mu-sa-ra-ba ki-sa-ra-ba šu ib-se₃-re-ia mu-ni im-im-sa!¹-re-ia** (SS)
 lu₂ mu-sar-ra-ba ki-sar-ra-ba šu ib₂-ur₃-e-a mu-ni bi₂-ib₂-sar-re-a (LS)
15. **ša šu-mi ša-¹aṭ-ra-am¹ a-šar ša-aṭ-ru i-pa-ši-ṭu₂ u₃-ma-ṭu₃-u₂ u₃ mu-ni-im-šu i-ša-ṭa₃-ru**
 (Akkadian translation of 14)
 who erases my name where it was written (or) abridges it and writes his own name,
16. **a-aš₂-pa-la-ba-ki lu₂-gu-ur šu ba-an-di-zi-¹ia¹!** (SS)
 aš₂-bal-a-ba-ke₄-eš lu₂-kur₂ šu ba-an-zi-zi-a (LS)
17. **aš-šum er-re-tim ša-na-am u₂-ša-ḥa-a-zu-u₂**
 (Akkadian translation of 16)
 or because of (this) course instructs another to do so -
18. **lu₂-bi lu₂-gal ḥe-a in ḥe-a i₃-in-si ḥe-a ra-bu-um ḥe-a** (SS)
 lu₂-bi lugal ḥe₂-a en ḥe₂-a ensi₂ ḥe₂-a ra-bu-um ḥe₂-a (LS)

19. *a-wi-lum šu-u₂ lu ša-ar-ru-um lu e-nu-um lu i-ši-a-ku-um u₃ lu ra-bu-um*

(Akkadian translation of 18)

that man, whether he be king, en priest, governor, noble,

20. *n'a¹-[am]-'lu₂¹-le mu-un zi-ga-l[e] <mu-ni> ša ħe-a (SS)*

nam-lu₂-u₁₈-lu mu-ni zi-gal₂-le sa₄-a he₂-a (LS)

21. *u₃ lu a-wi-lu-tum ša a-na ši-ki-in na-pi₂-iš-'tim šu¹-ma-am na-bi-at*

(Akkadian translation of 20)

or any man endowed with life,

22. *'^den-lil₂¹ lu₂-gal kur-ku-ra-ke i-ħi-gal₂-la [^den-lil₂ be-el ma-ta]-tim u₃ ħe-ga₂-al-
/i-i'm*

(SS + Akkadian translation)

^den-lil₂ lu₂-gal kur-kur-ra-ke₄ en ħe₂-gal₂-la ... (LS)

may the god Enlil, lord of the lands and of abundance,

23. *a ga₂-ra-am ku-ga in [...]*

(SS?)

...

2.3 Commentary

As the reconstruction of the text shows, the Akkadian version seems to follow the Sumerian without a fixed arrangement. The Akkadian text is interlinear with the Sumerian in 7-8, 10-11, 16-17, 18-19 and 20-21. But in 3-4, two lines in Sumerian are followed by the two lines of the corresponding Akkadian translation (5-6). Generally, the Sumerian text precedes the Akkadian, and this would argue for the Akkadian translation of the Sumerian. The two versions were however probably inscribed at the same time - in fact, lines 2, 9 and 22 combine the Sumerian text together with the Akkadian.

As for the composition itself, the text can be divided into two sections. The first section (lines 1-6) deals with Šulgi's dedication of a monumental stele to the god Adad. The king is identified by four standard titles - "mighty man, king of Ur, king of the lands of Sumer and Akkad, son of Ur-Nammu" (3-6) – in both the Akkadian and the Sumerian version.

The second and largest section of the inscription includes the curse formula (7-23), which can be divided into two parts as well. The first part (8-17) consists of a sequence of seven relative clauses and describes the actions of the one (*ša*, line 8) who disrespects the king's inscription. The second part (19-23...) begins with a nominative absolute (*awīlum šū*, 19) which refers to the subject of the preceding subordinate clauses and probably functions as the logical object of Enlil's curse (22).⁸⁸ The inscription then breaks off and it is therefore impossible to know what fate was decreed for "that man".

2.4 The Curse Formula

The presence of such a curse formula raises some problems. Curse formulas do not occur that often in Šulgi inscriptions, and when they do, their forms are very different from this.⁸⁹ The curse formula of Šulgi 38 resembles rather those of some Old Babylonian royal inscriptions. The epilogue of Codex Hammurabi provides the clearest and best-known formulation, but this model was later adopted in several royal inscriptions. A similar formula occurs in two Old Babylonian inscriptions of Yahdun-Līm. The following examples quote the curse formula from the Epilogue of Codex Hammurabi and from Yahdun-Līm 1 and 2. The expressions that recurs in Šulgi 38 have been underlined.

- 1) *šumma awīlum šū awâtija ša ina narija ašṭuru la iqūlma errētija imēšma errēt ilī la īdurma dīn adīnu uptassis awâtija uštepīl uṣuratija uttakkir šumī šatram ipšitma šumšu ištatar aššum errētīm šināti šanniamma uštāhiz awīlum šū lu šarrum lu bēlum lu iššiakkum ulu awīlūtum ša šumam nabiāt Anum rabûm abu ilī nābû palēja melimmī šarrūtīm līṭeršu ḥaṭṭašu lišbir šīmātišu līrur*

“(But) should that man do not heed my pronouncements, which I have inscribed upon my stela, and should he slight my curses and not fear the curses of the gods, and thus overturn the judgements that I rendered, change my pronouncements, alter my engraved image, erase my inscribed name and inscribe his own name (in its place) – or should he, because of dear of these curses, have someone else do so – that man, whether he is a king, a lord, or a governor, or any person at all, may the great Anu, father of the gods, who has proclaimed my reign, deprive him

⁸⁸ This construction may be regarded as a case of “topicalization by preposing” (Huenergard 2011, 211-212).

⁸⁹ Compare for instance Šulgi 35, rev. 1’-6’: “May they (the gods) tear out his [foundation] and destroy his progeny. May they not grant to him heir or off-spring”. A similar but expanded version in Akkadian can be found in Šulgi 25, col. ii’, 1-20.

of the sheen of royalty, smash his scepter, and curse his destiny” (Codex Hammurabi, Epilogue 18-52).⁹⁰

2) ša te-em-me-ni-ia u₂-na-ak-ka-ru-ma te-em-me-ni-šu i-ša-ak-ka-nu

a-wi-lum šu-u₂ lu LUGAL lu ENSI₂ AN u₃ ^den-lil₂ er-re-tam le-mu-uttam li-rur-ru-šu

“(as for) the man who removes my foundation deposits and puts his own foundation deposits (in their places) that man, whether he be a king or a governor – may the gods Anum and Enlil inflict a terrible curse on him” (Yaḥdun-Lim 1, 55-63).⁹¹

3) ša... šu-mi ša-at-ra-am i-pa-ši-tu₂ u₂ u₂-ša-aš-ta₂-ru u₂ a-šu-um er-re-tim ša-ni-ia-am u₂-ša-ha-zu a-wi-lum šu-u₂ lu šar-ru-um lu ša-ka-na-ku-um lu ra-bi-a-nu-um lu a-wi-lu-tum šum-ša a-wi-lam ša-tu ^den-lil ša-pi-iṭ i-li šar-ru-šu li-ma-ti₂

“(as for) the one who... effaces my name or has it effaced and writes his own name previously not there, or has it written there, or because of (these) curses incites another to do so, that man, whether he be king, viceroy, mayor, or common man, may the god Enlil, judge of the gods, make his kingship smaller (than that of any other king)” (Yaḥdun-Lim 2, 118-137).⁹²

The underlined expressions recur, with some discrepancies, in the three curse formulas and in Šulgi 38. The four formulas show also a very similar structure. A sequence of subordinate clauses – a sequence of protasis in Codex Hammurabi, of relative clauses in Šulgi 38 and in the two Yaḥdun-Lim inscriptions - describes the actions of someone who may harm the inscription. The main clause starts with the noun phrase *awīlum šū* “that man”, which remembers the beginning of the apodosis in the laws of Codex Hammurabi. In each case, this nominative stands out of syntax functions as a nominative absolute and functions as the logical object of the curses of the gods.⁹³

Such similarities cannot be due to coincidence – there seems to be a relation between these Old Babylonian curse formulas and that of Šulgi 38. The question is therefore whether this Šulgi inscription provided the model for the later Old Babylonian formulas or this is rather a later scribal composition that drew inspiration from the curse formula in Codex Hammurabi.

⁹⁰ Transliteration and translation follow Roth 1995, 136.

⁹¹ RIME4.6.8.1

⁹² RIME4.6.8.2

⁹³ Huenergard 2011, 211-212.

2.5 The Sumerian Version

Some peculiarities in the Sumerian version may provide clues for the origin of this text. This Sumerian version shows an unusual system of syllabic writings, and this makes it very unlikely that it was copied from an original Šulgi inscription. The many spelling irregularities and phonetic anomalies point to the same conclusion.

First, the scribe seems to have troubles distinguishing the sounds in certain words. He may replace a voiced consonant with a voiceless one, or a palatal with a dental. The following examples show some of these spelling mistakes:

- 1) **ka-la-ak-ka** instead of **kalag-ga** “strong” (3)

Voiced velar stop /g/ > voiceless stop /k/.⁹⁴

- 2) **su-su-sa** instead of **šuš₂ -šuš₂-a** (reduplicated verbal stem **šuš₂** “to cover”+ nominalizing suffix /a/, 12)

Palatal fricative /š/>dental fricative /s/

- 3) **a-aš-pa-la-ba-ke** instead of **aš₂—bala** “curse” (16)

Voiced labial stop /b/ > voiceless stop /p/

Second, the Sumerian phonemes which were not present in Akkadian are often misunderstood in this text. The dental voiceless aspirated affricate /ř/ turns into the voiced dental stop /d/, while the nasal velar sound /ĝ/ may be rendered as a nasal labial (/m/) or occasionally as a nasal dental /n/. The following instances provide example of these phenomena:

- 1) **na-di-a** instead of **na-řu₂-a** “stele” (2)

/ř/>d

- 2) **ni-im** instead of **niĝ₂** “thing” (7, 10)

/ĝ/>/m/

- 3) **ni-iš** instead of **ĝeš** “wood” (12)

⁹⁴ A similar case can be found in 14, which reads lu₂-gu-ur for the expected lu₂-kur₂, “enemy”.

/ĝ/>n; e>i

In ex. 3, the scribe not only replaces the nasal velar sound with a nasal dental (/n/), but he also renders the vowel /e/ with an /i/. The same replacement occurs also in other instances:

1) **ki-i3-ki** instead of **ki-en-gi** “Sumer” (4)

The vowel /e/ assimilates to the preceding /i/. Thus: ki-e>ki-i. As a result, the /i/ is lengthened and this lengthening is reflected in the spelling **ki-i3-ki**. Besides, the nasal-velar sound (n+g) is ignored in the spelling, that only includes the velar /k/.

2) **in** instead of **en** “En priest” (18)

/e/>/i/

3) **i3-in-si** instead of **ensi2** “ruler” (18)

/e/>/i/

As for the treatment of vowels, the consistent tendency of inserting an epenthetic /i/ between the two vowels /ea/ is also remarkable. It seems to represent the development of an intervocalic /j/ between the third singular agent /e/ and the nominalizing suffix /a/, as in the following verbal forms:⁹⁵

- 1) Syllabic Sum.: **ni-im [d]i-im-ma -ĝu₁₀ ib -se₃!(TE)⁹⁶ -re-ia**
Reconstructed Sum.: **niĝ dim₂- ma- ĝu₁₀ ib₂-ze₂ -re -a**
Morphemes: niĝ dim₂ – a – ĝu i -b -ze₂.r -e -a
Analysis: thing create-NMLZ-1SG.POSS VP-3NH.DO-erase-3SG.A-NMLZ
Translation: “who erases my created thing” (9)

The final /a/ should represent a nominalizing suffix, and the insertion of the vowel /i/ between the two vowels /e/ and /a/ reflects the development of a semi-vocalic /j/ between the hiatus /ea/.

⁹⁵ A similar insertion can be noticed also in line 16, which reads šu ba-an-di-zi-ia for the expected šu—ba-an-zi-zi-a, lit. “the one who raises the hand on it”. The copy seems to contain a scribal mistake, since the scribe replaces the first verbal stem with the sign DI (ba-an-di-zi-a). This may reflect a shift z>d between the dental nasal /n/ and the vowel /i/ in pronunciation.

⁹⁶ The sign TE seems to be a mistake for se₃ (sign SUM, meaning “to place”).⁹⁶ However, this does not explain why the stem is followed by the syllable /re/ standing for an imperfective third singular agent suffix /e/. The verb ze₂ “to erase” seem preferable in this context, especially since it is often spelled with the final /r/.⁹⁶ The scribe probably confuses the voiceless dental affricate /z/ (of the stem ze₂) with the voiceless dental fricative /s/ (of the verbal stem se₃).

- 2) Syllabic Sum.: **e -ni-im -ku -ku -te9-ia**
 Reconstructed Sum.: **i3 -ni-ib2-ku4-ku4-de3-a**
 Morphemes: i -ni -b -ku.ř -ku.ř -e -a
 Analysis: VP-in-3NH.OO-enter-enter-3SG.A-NMLZ
 Translation: “who brings it into (a storehouse)” (10)

The nominalizing suffix /a/ is again spelled with the sign *ia*, which may reflect the epenthetic insertion of /j/ to avoid the hiatus.⁹⁷

2.6 Observations

The spelling mistakes and the several phonetic irregularities discussed above cannot be explained as simple copy errors, since they seem to derive from the misinterpretation of certain sounds. The text may therefore not have been copied from an original Sumerian inscription, but it is more likely a later composition. It was perhaps composed in syllabic Sumerian as a scribal exercise. It may consist of an imitation of the Šulgi inscriptions, as well as of other royal texts from the Old Babylonian period.

That the Sumerian text is a later scribal composition may be the reason why the text contains so many phonetic irregularities. The spelling system adopted by the scribe may be influenced by his own pronunciation of the Sumerian words, and this would explain the misunderstandings and misspellings of certain phonemes. Some of these irregularities may indeed reflect a real change in the pronunciation of Sumerian during the Old Babylonian period. By that time, Sumerian had already died out as a spoken language and was only kept alive by the Akkadian scribes, who were certainly influenced by their mother tongue when reading and writing in Sumerian.

The Akkadian version was meant to translate the Sumerian. The two versions were probably composed simultaneously, however, and this may be the reason for their irregular arrangement on the Old Babylonian tablet. This may also explain the presence of the Akkadian word *rabûm* in line 18 of the Sumerian version. Perhaps, the scribe could not think of a Sumerian correspondent for the Akkadian term, and thus he simply wrote the Akkadian translation of it – which is then repeated in the Akkadian version.

⁹⁷ As for the verbal prefixes, what may be noticed is that the vocalic prefix /i/ changes into an /e/. Moreover, the voiced labial stop /b/ of the third non-human direct object prefix is interpreted as a nasal labial /m/. This is probably a scribal mistake. The scribe may be influenced by the beginning of the line, which includes the exact same syllables (**e-ni-im**). As for the verbal suffixes, the situation is perhaps more complicated. The scribe replaces the expected sign *de3* (NE) with TI, probably to be read as *te9*. This is probably due to a misinterpretation of the final consonant of the verbal stem *ku.ř* “to enter”. The scribe confuses the Sumerian voiceless aspirated dental affricate (/ř/) with a voiceless dental stop /t/.

A last piece of evidence for such a conclusion comes from the Akkadian text. In the curse formula, the text reads *ša-na-am* “another” instead of the expected *šanīam* (rev. 17). This writing, which implies the contraction of the two vowels (/i+/a/>/â) is not attested in texts from the Ur III period. Moreover, it contrasts with the other Old Babylonian attestations of such a curse formula.⁹⁸ This writing becomes more common starting from the late Old Babylonian period onwards.⁹⁹ This makes it likely that that the Akkadian text was composed later than the early Old Babylonian period. The curse formula may therefore have been composed on the models of other Old Babylonian inscriptions, as the Epilogue of the Hammurabi codex, that include a similar formula.

3. Conclusive Remarks

After having analyzed the evidence, it is reasonable to conclude that there are no real bilingual inscriptions from the Ur III period. The corpus only includes two building inscriptions of king Šulgi, which can be defined as “*Komplementärbilinguen*” since they provide two different version – one in Akkadian and the other in Sumerian – of the same text.

Although they cannot be strictly defined as bilinguals, these inscriptions show the use of Sumerian aside to Akkadian, and thus they provide evidence for the role of bilingualism in Mesopotamia during the Ur III period. On the one hand, the Sumerian texts are losing their communicative function and are indeed acquiring a different, symbolic and celebrative role. On the other hand, the Akkadian texts surely had a much larger audience – if they were not the only ones to have a public. Akkadian was certainly the majority language during the Ur III period. The Akkadian versions of these inscriptions may thus have been composed to make the texts somewhat accessible to a broader audience, but they probably had a slightly different function as well. The Akkadian texts served the need of celebrating the king – who could have his words written in both the two languages, Sumerian and Akkadian, at the same time. I would suggest that the composition of these Šulgi inscriptions in two languages was indeed meant to reinforce the royal message, that could be expressed both in the two most important languages of the reign according to the king’s needs and purposes.

⁹⁸ The Hammurabi epilogue reads *ša-ni-i-am*. The same form is found in Yaḥdun-Līm 1 and 2. See the quotations in 2.4.

⁹⁹ In Old Babylonian, the sequence /ia/ is usually retained. The contraction *ia>â* is a feature of the late Old Babylonian texts (Huenergard 2011, 260).

In addition to the four building inscriptions, the only evidence for an Ur III bilingual inscription includes the Old Babylonian copy of a Šulgi stele inscription, which reveals several problematic aspects. First, the curse formula at the end of the inscription resembles the model of the curse formula in Codex Hammurabi and in a few other Old Babylonian inscriptions. Second, the Sumerian text shows a very unusual system of syllabic writings and many spelling mistakes, which seem to derive from the wrong interpretation of certain sounds. These irregularities suggest that this copy could not originate from an original Ur III inscription.

This bilingual text is probably to be regarded as a later scribal composition of a Sumerian text together with its Akkadian translation. This may explain the very irregular arrangement of the two versions on the Old Babylonian tablet, as well as the syllabic writings and the phonetic anomalies. Moreover, that this text is a later scribal composition may be the reason why it includes a curse formula which is attested in texts from the Old Babylonian period onwards. The scribe may be influenced by later models of royal inscriptions in the composition of this text. This text represents therefore the need of keeping alive the knowledge of Sumerian, although Sumerian had long died out as a spoken language. The inscription was perhaps composed as an exercise, on the model of the Šulgi inscriptions. It may represent therefore an attempt by the scribe to learn Sumerian. This shows that Sumerian had eventually turned into a literary language only preserved by the scribal tradition during the Old Babylonian period.

Chapter III

Old Babylonian Bilingual Inscriptions

Introduction

The Old Babylonian period (2003-1595 B.C.) has yielded a large number of royal inscriptions, both in Akkadian and in Sumerian. The corpus of bilingual inscriptions from this period includes three inscriptions of Hammurabi (c. 1728–1686 B.C.) and four of his son Samsu-iluna (c. 1686–1648 B.C.) that are known in two parallel versions, one in Akkadian and one in Sumerian.

Further evidence for Old Babylonian bilingual inscriptions comes from later copies. An inscription of king Abi-ešuḫ (c. 1648–1620 B.C.) and one of his successor Ammi-ditana (c. 1620–1583 BC) are known from Old Babylonian copies on clay tablets.¹⁰⁰ The tablets are fragmentary, and thus it is unclear whether these texts were copied from original bilingual inscriptions or perhaps they come from independent texts. For phraseology and for some linguistic features, these texts share similarities with the Hammurabi and Samsu-iluna inscriptions, and thus it is reasonable to conclude that they come from Old Babylonian original inscriptions. I will therefore consider them together with the Hammurabi and Samsu-iluna inscriptions in my study.

The last bilingual inscription from the Old Babylonian period is one of king Ammi-ṣaduqa. It is known from a Middle Babylonian, perhaps even Neo-Babylonian copy on a clay tablet from Nippur. The Sumerian text is artificial and difficult. Several words are only attested in lexical lists, and this suggests that the Sumerian version is a later scribal translation from Akkadian. Because of its textual peculiarities, I will keep this text apart from the Old Babylonian corpus of royal inscriptions in my study. I will examine its features separately, and I will discuss the problems concerning the date of its composition.

¹⁰⁰ See Frayne 1990: RIME4.3.8 and RIME4.3.9.

The aim of the following chapter will be to show textual and linguistic patterns within the corpus of the Old Babylonian bilingual inscriptions. First, I will consider the inscriptions of Hammurabi and Samsu-iluna, together with those of Abi-ešuh and Ammi-ditana, and I will discuss their textual features and phraseology. Second, I will turn to a linguistic analysis, in order to show the Akkadian influence on Sumerian in the Old Babylonian bilingual inscriptions. I will therefore select and discuss some Sumerian verbal constructions and grammatical elements that were reinterpreted in analogy with Akkadian.

These linguistic developments reflect a substantial change in the status of Sumerian, which is an exclusively literary language by the Old Babylonian period, only written by non-native speakers. Sumerian was still used in literary genres of Sumerian tradition - like the royal inscriptions, that also had a significant tradition in Akkadian. The Old Babylonian bilingual inscriptions originated therefore from this situation of bilingualism. Akkadian was the majority language in Mesopotamia, and the Akkadian texts were the only ones to find an audience. But Sumerian still had a very important role as the language of scribal tradition and cuneiform culture. The Akkadian scribes still learnt this language and they still composed texts in Sumerian – which unavoidably reflected the influence from Akkadian.

The prestige of Sumerian as the language of scribal knowledge and cuneiform culture was still great in later times, as the late copy of the Ammi-šaduqa inscription proves, although the scribes had lost knowledge of it. The discussion of this Ammi-šaduqa inscription will show therefore the artificial use of Sumerian in its latest stages.

1. The Corpus

The corpus of Old Babylonian bilingual inscriptions can be divided into two groups. The first one includes the bilingual inscriptions of Hammurabi and of his son and successor Samsu-iluna known from their originals. They are preserved sometimes in multiple versions from different fragments of foundation tablets, clay cones, bricks.¹⁰¹ The second group consists of three bilingual inscriptions of the first dynasty of Babylon known from later copies on clay tablets. For their linguistic traits as well as for their phraseology, the inscriptions of Abi-ešuh and Ammi-ditana are very similar to those of Hammurabi and Samsu-iluna. The third bilingual inscription of this group, belonging to Ammi-saduqa, constitutes an exception, since it seems to be a later translation from Akkadian.

Before turning to the linguistic and textual analysis, I shall briefly present those texts and their general features. I will then discuss evidence for the developments of Sumerian under the Akkadian influence in the Old Babylonian bilingual inscriptions.

1.1 Hammurabi and Samsu-iluna Inscriptions

The group of bilingual inscriptions from the Old Babylonian period includes three inscriptions of Hammurabi and four of his son Samsu-iluna. I briefly list them following the RIME4¹⁰² numbering:

- **Hammurabi 2, 12 and 14**

Hammurabi 2 commemorates the building of the wall of Sippar in about eighty lines of text. The Akkadian and the Sumerian version of the inscription were inscribed on different clay cones found in Sippar. The Sumerian version is found on three fragments of clay cones, now in the British Museum (BM 80141), while the Akkadian one is preserved on the two fragments of CBS 11 and on the two fragments of A 24645.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ These are not real bilingual texts, since the Sumerian and the Akkadian versions were originally inscribed on different objects (Krecher 1976, 125). To Hammurabi also belong fragments of the only bilingual monumental royal hymns from the Old Babylonian period. They are not considered as royal inscriptions, but rather as royal hymns (Galter 1995, 32).

¹⁰² Frayne 1990, *Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods* Vol. 4: *Old Babylonian Period*.

¹⁰³ Frayne 1990: RIME 4.3.6.2. Pictures and some hand-copies are available on the website <https://cdli.ucla.edu/>.

Hammurabi 12 speaks of the king's works on the Sippar's wall. It was also inscribed on clay cones found in Sippar during different excavations. The Sumerian version is preserved on seven cone fragments, while nine cone fragments and a small cylinder (YBC 2150) preserve the Akkadian version of this inscription. The Sumerian text preserves forty-six lines, while the Akkadian version has thirty-nine lines. The inscription describes the king's works on the Sippar's wall.¹⁰⁴

Hammurabi 14 concerns the building of the Ebabbar temple in Larsa. The Akkadian and the Sumerian texts were inscribed on different limestone tablets. The tablet BM 91076 preserves the Sumerian version, while the Akkadian one is found on LB 974. The Sumerian text, with its thirty lines, is complete, while the Akkadian one is fragmentary – only sixteen lines are preserved.¹⁰⁵

- **Samsu-iluna 3, 5, 7 and 8**

Samsu-iluna 3 commemorates the building of the wall of Sippar and of the Ebabbar temple in that city. The two versions were inscribed on several clay cones found in Sippar. More specifically, twenty-three cones fragments preserve the Sumerian version of this inscription, which is also partially preserved on a copy on clay tablet (CBS 13884). Thirteen cones fragments preserve the Akkadian version. The text is complete, with ninety-eight lines in the Sumerian version and one hundred and twenty-three lines of text in the Akkadian.¹⁰⁶

Samsu-iluna 5 describes the restoration of six fortresses. The eighty-two lines of the Sumerian text are preserved on a foundation tablet (BM 91083) and on a small clay statuette from Sippar (BM 22507), both in the British museum. The Akkadian version, which includes eighty-one lines of text, is also fully preserved on the limestone tablet VA 2645, and fragmentarily on BM 38402 (clay tablet), both of unknown provenance.¹⁰⁷ The latter copy has a partially preserved colophon.¹⁰⁸

Samsu-iluna 7 deals with the building of the wall of Kish. The Sumerian version is preserved on three fragments of clay cylinders, but the text is not complete. The Akkadian version – with its one hundred and thirty-eight lines of text - is completely preserved on the clay cylinder YBC 2296, and partially on three other cylinder fragments.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ Frayne 1990: RIME 4.3.6.11. See commentary and bibliography in Frayne 1990, 247-248, for further information.

¹⁰⁵ Frayne 1990: RIME 4.3.6.14. See Frayne 1990, 350-351, for a short commentary on the tablets and some bibliographical indications.

¹⁰⁶ Frayne 1990: RIME4.3.7.3. See Frayne 1990, 374-375, for further information about the tablets and some bibliographical indications.

¹⁰⁷ Frayne 1990: RIME 4.3.7.5. See Frayne 1990, 380, for a short commentary and bibliography.

¹⁰⁸ BM 38402, obv. ii, 17-21.

¹⁰⁹ Frayne 1990: RIME 4.3.7.7.

Samsu-iluna 8 describes the construction of “Fort Samsu-iluna” on the Diyala river. The Sumerian version is preserved on VA 5951 and IM 42465. Both the two clay cylinders preserve the whole text, which includes ninety-four lines. The Akkadian version is found on a cylinder fragment (A 22088), that preserves only a small part of the text.¹¹⁰

None of these inscriptions was found in an Akkadian and in a Sumerian version on the same object. They cannot therefore be defined as strictly bilingual texts. Moreover, they are known from many different fragments and exemplars, which occasionally show some textual discrepancies. It is therefore likely that these inscriptions were composed and handed down in multiple versions.

1.2 Old Babylonian Inscriptions from Copies

The group includes three Old Babylonian inscriptions that are known from their copies on clay tablets. An inscription of Abi-ešuh, successor of Samsu-iluna (**Abi-ešuh 1**)¹¹¹ is found on two tablet fragments dated to the Old Babylonian period. One of them carries the text in both the Akkadian and the Sumerian version, while the other preserves only the Sumerian version of it.¹¹² The text, of which some twenty lines are preserved, commemorates the construction works of the king in Luḥaya. The existence of a Sumerian unilingual copy suggests that the Sumerian and the Akkadian version derive from independent inscriptions.¹¹³ It is therefore likely that this copy did not originate from a bilingual inscription.

The second Old Babylonian inscription of this group belongs to Ammi-ditana (**Ammi-ditana 2**)¹¹⁴. The text records the building of “Fort Ammi-ditana” on the bank of the SAR-BI-it canal, whose identification is unclear. Some forty lines of this inscription are preserved on an Old Babylonian bilingual copy from Nippur.¹¹⁵ The tablet is broken and does not contain any information about the original. It is therefore impossible to determine whether this was an original bilingual inscription or rather it was copied from separate texts.

¹¹⁰ Frayne 1990: RIME 4.3.7.8. See Frayne 1990, 388-389, for a short commentary and some bibliographical indications.

¹¹¹ Frayne 1990: RIME 4.3.8.1.

¹¹² BM 55473 (obv.) + BM 40125 (rev.) are bilingual. BM 38446 only preserves the Sumerian text. The hand-copy is available on <https://cdli.ucla.edu/>. See Frayne 1990, 404, for commentary and bibliography.

¹¹³ Krecher 1976, 126.

¹¹⁴ Frayne 1990: RIME 4.3.9.2.

¹¹⁵ This bilingual tablet was first edited in Kutscher 1989 as BT 5.

The third and last bilingual inscription belonging to this group is an inscription of Ammi-šaduqa (**Ammi-šaduqa 1**).¹¹⁶ The inscription commemorates the fashioning of the figure of a protective genius (*lamassu*) in some thirty lines. It is preserved on two fragments of clay tablet from Nippur.¹¹⁷

The bilingual text is divided into three columns. The first column contains some phonetic glosses to the Sumerian version. The second column carries the Sumerian text, while the third one has the Akkadian version. The Akkadian version and the phonetic glosses are written in Middle Babylonian script, while the Sumerian version shows Old Babylonian sign forms. The Sumerian text seems to be an artificial translation from the Akkadian version. It is therefore likely that the original was a unilingual Akkadian inscription which a Sumerian translation was added to, perhaps as a scribal exercise.¹¹⁸

For these reasons, the text looks very different from the other Old Babylonian inscriptions and presents unique traits. I will therefore treat it separately at the end of this study.¹¹⁹

1.3 Textual and Structural Features

The inscriptions of Hammurabi and Samsu-iluna and the copies of Abi-ešuḫ 1 and Ammi-ditana 2 are very similar as for phraseology and textual structure. The sets of expressions and phrases attributed to the king are a good instance, since they follow standard patterns. The Akkadian titles correspond to fixed expressions in Sumerian. Compare, for instance, the following list of expressions:

1) LUGAL *da-num*₂ LUGAL KA₂.DIĜIR.RA.KI

lugal-kala-ga lugal-KA₂.DIĜIR.RA^{ki}

“mighty king, king of Babylon”

In: Hammurabi 12, 2-3, and Hammurabi 14, 10-11 (S) and 3’-4’ (A); Samsu-iluna 3, 53-54 (S) and 65-66 (A); Samsu-iluna 5, 29-30 (S) and 26-27 (A); Samsu-iluna 8, 2-3 (only Sumerian preserved); Abi-ešuḫ 1, 7’-8’ (S) and 6’-7’ (A).

¹¹⁶ Frayne 1990: RIME4.3.10.1.

¹¹⁷ Ni 833+Ni 10753 are two fragments of the same tablet. See the commentary in Frayne 1990, 425.

¹¹⁸ Frayne 1990, 425. Some information is available also on <https://cdli.ucla.edu/>.

¹¹⁹ See paragraph 3.

2) LUGAL KALAM *šu-me-ri-im u₃ ak-ka-di-im*

LUGAL ki-en-gi ki-uri-ke₄

“king of the land of Sumer and Akkad”

Hammurabi 14, 12 (S) and 5’-6’ (A), and Abi-ešuḫ 1, 9’ (S) and 8’-9’ (A).

3) LUGAL *ki-ib-ra-tim ar-ba-im*

lugal an-ub-da-limmu₂-ba-ke₄

“king of the four quarters”

Hammurabi 12, 4 (S and A); Hammurabi 14, 13 (S) and 7’-8’ (A); Samsu-iluna 3, 54-55 (S) and 65-66 (A).

4) LUGAL *mu-uš-te-eš-mi ki-ib-ra-at ar-ba-im*

lugal an-ub-da-limmu₂-ba-ke₄ gu₃-teš-a ib₂-si₃-ga

“king who makes the four quarters be at peace”

Samsu-iluna 5, 31-32 (S) and 28-30 (A); Samsu-iluna 8, 5-6 (only Sumerian preserved); Abi-ešuḫ 1, 11’-12’ (S) and 10’-11’ (A).

Such expressions are, for the largest part, inherited from the tradition of the earlier royal inscriptions. Some of them are attested since the Ur III or even the Old Akkadian period. The epithet *lugal kala-ga* “mighty king” (1), that corresponds to the Akkadian *šarrum dannum* in the OB bilingual inscriptions, was first adopted by Amar-Sîn during the Ur III period.¹²⁰ The following title has the form “lugal GN” (Hallo 1957, 10) and through this title the king identifies himself as “king of Babylon” (LUGAL KA₂ DIĜIR-RA). It is one of the most common royal titles and is already attested in pre-Sargonic times.¹²¹

The king may also define himself as the ruler of the entire land, and thus adopt the title *lugal ki-en-gi ki-uri-ke₄ / šar māt šumerim u akkadim*, “king of the land of Sumer and Akkad” (2). This expression was also one of the royal titles in use during the Ur III period, and its adoption by the Old Babylonian kings is therefore in line with that tradition.¹²²

¹²⁰ Hallo 1957, 89.

¹²¹ Hallo 1957, 12-28.

¹²² This title is attested for the first time under Ur-Nammu (Hallo 1957, 77).

The title “king of the four quarters” (3, lugal an-ub-da-limmu₂-ba-ke₄ / *šar kibratim arba'im*) is also inherited from the earlier tradition, since it is attested in the royal inscription since the Sargonic period.¹²³ Hammurabi introduced a new form of the title “the king who makes the four quarter be at peace” (4, lugal an-ub-da-limmu₂-ba-ke₄ gu₃-teš-a ib₂-si₃-ga / *šar muštešmi kibrat arba'im*) - and this innovation was later adopted by the other kings of the first dynasty of Babylon.

Therefore, the Old Babylonian kings inherited their phraseology from an earlier tradition, and they occasionally adapted this tradition to their taste and needs. They may define themselves as the favorite of the gods (*migir*, in Akkadian, and nun-še-ga, in Sumerian),¹²⁴ and their kingdom as a commission that the gods gave them “as a gift” (ni₃-ba-ni-eš, in Sumerian, *ana qīštim*, in Akkadian)¹²⁵. The king is the one who pleases the hearts of the gods (*muṭīb libbi*, in Akkadian, ša₃ du₁₀-ga is Sumerian)¹²⁶, since he does what makes the gods happy.¹²⁷ For these reasons, the gods will let the king exercise his power in peace forever (*ana dār*, in Akkadian, and du-ri-še₃, in Sumerian).¹²⁸

These are only some of the expressions that are commonly used to describe the king and his power in the Old Babylonian bilingual inscriptions. The kings wanted to present themselves as the ones who brought peace and happiness into the world, and they made use of Akkadian and Sumerian expressions to express such an ideology of their power. These expressions are therefore distinctive of the royal inscriptions of this dynasty.

The texts present some common structures as well. The incipit, for instance, is quite standard. Several inscriptions begin with the same temporal structure “*inu...inu-šu*” or “*inu... inūmišu*” (“when...at that time”),¹²⁹ an incipit that largely resembles that prologue of the Hammurabi codex.¹³⁰

¹²³ This title occurs for the first time under Naram-Sin (Hallo 1957, 49).

¹²⁴ Hammurabi 2, 5 (S) and 6 (A); Hammurabi 12, 33(S) and 37 (A).

¹²⁵ Samsu-iluna 3, 98 (S) and 122 (A); Samsu-iluna 7, 135.

¹²⁶ Hammurabi 2, 32 (S) and 34 (A).

¹²⁷ Samsu-iluna 3, 79 (S) and 98 (A).

¹²⁸ Samsu-iluna 5 78 (S) and 75 (A); and Samsu-iluna 3, 98 (S) and 121 (A).

¹²⁹ In the Akkadian versions, Hammurabi 2, 1 – 28; Hammurabi 14, 11’; Samsu-iluna 3 1 – 25 – 39; Samsu-iluna 5, 1 – 13; Samsu-iluna 7, 116; Samsu-iluna 8, 4’; Ammi-ditana 2, 19’. This type of structure is translated in Sumerian using different strategies. In the Hammurabi and Samsu-iluna inscriptions, it is translated with a nominalized clause in the locative case, introduced by the noun ud “day”. This temporal clause may be resumed by the locative ud-bi-a or u-ba, “on that day”, which corresponds to the Akkadian *inu-šu* or *inūmišu* and begins the main clause (Hammurabi 2, 1 – 28; Hammurabi 14, 17 – 23; Samsu-iluna 3, 1-17 and 18; Samsu-iluna 5, 1-14; Samsu-iluna 7, 11’’; Samsu-iluna 8, 56). Differently, the inscriptions of the later king Ammi-ditana translate the same Akkadian construction with a Sumerian nominalized clause in the ablative (Ammi-ditana 2, 18 and 19’).

¹³⁰ Hammurabi Codex, Prologue, 1-27 (Roth 1995, 76). For this particular temporal structure in the codex, see Hurowitz 1994, 45-46.

Because of their textual and structural similarities, the Old Babylonian bilingual inscriptions of Hammurabi and Samsu-iluna seem to belong together with the copies of Abi-ešuh 1 and Ammi-ditana 2. They come from the same tradition, a tradition that was largely inherited from the preceding royal inscriptions.

2. Akkadian Influence on Sumerian

The Old Babylonian bilingual royal inscriptions not only show common textual and structural features, but they also share similar linguistic patterns. The Sumerian texts undergo a deep influence from Akkadian, since Sumerian was a dead language by that time. The scribes who wrote those texts were Akkadian native speakers, and therefore they show the tendency to reinterpret some Sumerian elements and constructions in analogy with their Akkadian correspondents.

Zólyomi 2000 (335-360) studies the developments of Old Babylonian Sumerian under the influence of Akkadian. He considers the replacements of case-markers in a few Sumerian constructions (343-347) and the use of the verbal prefixes /bi/ and /ni/ (347-353) in the Old Babylonian Sumerian. I build on his article to study the influence of Akkadian on the Sumerian versions of the Old Babylonian bilingual inscriptions.

I discuss first a few Sumerian constructions that were reinterpreted in analogy with their Akkadian parallel. In this respect, I will examine the verbs *ĝar* (“to place”) and *ku₄* (“to enter”), as well as the verbal construction *šu—igi—bar* (“to look at”) and their use in the Old Babylonian bilingual inscriptions.

I shall then focus on the reinterpretation of Sumerian grammatical elements. In this respect, I suggest that some Sumerian elements such as the dative plural marker and the third singular enclitic copula were equated to different Akkadian elements, thus acquiring new functions.¹³¹

¹³¹ I already studied these linguistic developments within the bilingual inscriptions of Hammurabi and Samsu-iluna in a former unpublished paper (2018). I provided evidence for the reinterpretation of the verbs *ĝar*, *ku₄*, and the verbal constructions *igi—bar* and *šu-si* (the latter is not discussed here). I considered the case of the Sumerian dative plural and of the third singular enclitic copula. Here, the linguistic analysis is only aimed to show the shift of Sumerian from a spoken to a literary language during the Old Babylonian period. The case-by-case discussion will therefore be briefer. The scope is to show the peculiarities of these texts and to investigate these linguistic changes in the broader context of Mesopotamian bilingual inscriptions. I will therefore consider here also the two inscriptions of Abi-ešuh and Ammi-ditana, that I did not consider previously.

2.1 Akkadian Reinterpretation of Sumerian: Sumerian Verbs and Constructions

2.1.1 The verb **ĝar**

The constructions of the verb **ĝar** (“to place”) **igi—bar** (“to look at”) and perhaps, **ku₄** (“to enter”) are reinterpreted in analogy with Akkadian. Sumerian construed these verbs in combination with a noun phrase in a fixed case, which may be replaced by a different one in the Old Babylonian bilingual inscriptions.

The verb **ĝar** was construed in combination with the locative case (-a) in Sumerian.¹³² But in the bilingual inscriptions, this locative may be replaced by a terminative -še₃.

1) Akkadian:

ana ni-še ZIMBIR.KI ri-iš-tam lu aš-ku-um

Sumerian:

un zimbir.KI-še₃ asila ĥe₂-bi₂-gar

un zimbir=(ak) =še asila ĥa -bi₂ -? -gar

people Sippar =(GEN)=TERM joy MOD -3NH.? -1SG.A -place

“I truly established joy for the people of Sippar.” (lit. “placed joy *onto*...”)¹³³

(Hammurabi 2, 68 and 69)

2) Akkadian:

a-na aš-ri-im aš-ku-un

ki-bi-še₃ im-mi-ĝar

ki =be =še i -m -bi -? -ĝar

place=3NH.POSS=TERM VP-VNT-3NH.on?-1SG.A-place.”

“I placed it (the decree of the gods) onto its place”

(Samsu-iluna 3, 82 and 101)

The equation seems to be triggered by the semantic equivalence between the Sumerian **ĝar** with *šakānum*, which is here combined with a prepositional object in the genitive preceded by *ana*.¹³⁴

¹³² Jagersma 2010, 176-179.

¹³³ A similar expression occurs in Samsu Iluna 7, 15'. Ki-bi-še₃ gar-ra vs. 34-35. *a-na aš-ri-im ša-ka-nam*.

¹³⁴ CAD Š I, *šakānu* 2a, 2b and 2c.

For its meaning (“to, for”) this Akkadian preposition is reflected by the Sumerian terminative case marker -še₃.

1.1.2 The construction **igi-bar**

The Akkadian preposition *ana* does not correspond to a Sumerian terminative in all cases, though. The expression *igi—bar* “to look at” is probably a good example. The expression literally means “to bring (out) the eye(s) (absolutive) to something/someone (terminative)”. In ‘standard’ Sumerian, the object which the action of looking is directed to takes the terminative case. But this terminative is replaced by a dative in the Old Babylonian inscriptions:

3) Akkadian:

ana ^dUTU *in bu-ni-šu dam-qu₂-tim ip-pa-al-su₂-ma*

Sumerian:

^dutu-ra igi sa₆-ga-na mu-un-ši-bar-ra-am₃

utu =ra igi sa.g =ane =a mu -n -ši¹³⁵ -bar -a =am

Utu =DAT eye good =3SG.POSS =LOC VNT-3SG-TERM -CVVE-NMLZ =3SG.COP¹³⁶

“(When Enlil) looked at the god Šamaš with favor (lit. his good eye(s))”¹³⁷

(Samsu-iluna 3, 4-5 and 5-7)

4) Akkadian:

a-na ^dAMAR.UTU [DU]MU *re-eš-ti-im ša e₂-a ḥa-di-iš ip-pa-al-su-šum*

Sumerian:

^dAMAR.UTU dumu sag ^den-ki-ka-ra igi ḥul₂-la-ne-ne-a in-ši-in-bar-re-eš-a

Amar.Utu dumu saĝ en.ki=ak =ra igi ḥul₂=a =ane.ne -a

Marduk son head Enki =GEN=DAT eye joy =GEN=3PL.POSS=LOC

i -n -ši -n -bar -eš -a

VP-3SG-TERM-3SG.A-CVVE-3PL-NMLZ

“When they (the gods) looked at Marduk, first born of Ea, with their joyful look”

(Samsu-iluna 5, 3-6 and 3-6)

¹³⁵ The presence of the terminative prefix in this form will be discussed below (2.2).

¹³⁶ The function of the third singular copula in this context will be discussed below (see 2.4).

¹³⁷ Samsu-iluna 3, 4-5 (Sumerian) and 5-7 (Akkadian). Translation based on the Sumerian version. The equation between the 3SG copula and the Akkadian *-ma* will be discussed below, as well as the presence of the terminative prefix /ši/ in the verb (2.1).

The terminative would be expected in the Sumerian construction of *bar*, in analogy with the Akkadian prepositional phrase *ana* + genitive. But the indirect object of *igi – bar* is here construed with a dative *-ra* rather than a terminative.

Perhaps, the Akkadians perceived the terminative as the endpoint or direction of a movement – as it happens with *ĝar*. In this case, the terminative represents a suitable parallel for the Akkadian *ana* + GEN. But the prepositional object (*ana*+genitive) that occurs here in combination with the verb *palāsum* has a slightly different function. It indicates the participant in the benefit of whom is performed the action of “looking favorably”. It is a *dativus commodi*, which is best translated with a Sumerian dative rather than a terminative.

1.1.3 The Verb *ku₄*

As Zólyomi (2000, 343-344) noticed, the terminative may replace the locative also in combination with the verb *ku₄* “to enter”.¹³⁸

5) Akkadian:

ana DUL.DUL u₃ kar-mi lu u₂-te-er

Sumerian:

du₆ ka-ar₂-me-še₃ ħe₂-ni-ku₄

du₆ karme =še ħa -i -ni -? -ku₄

(mound.)ruin ruins(GEN.PLUR)=TERM MOD-VP- in? -1SG.A -enter

“I truly caused (the cities) to turn (lit. to enter) into ruins.”¹³⁹

(Samsu-iluna 3, 48-49 and 36)

In this example, the terminative replaces the locative in combination with *ku₄*. Zólyomi (2000, 343) suggests that this replacement is triggered by the analogy with the prepositional object introduced by *ana* in Akkadian (*ana DUL.DUL u₃ kar-mi*).¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Zolyomi 2000, 343-344 lists several instances of the construction TERM – *ku₄* in texts from the Old Babylonian period.

¹³⁹ Samsu-iluna 3, 36 (Sumerian) and 48-49 (Akkadian). Interestingly, the scribe here coordinates the Sumerian substantive *du₆* with an Akkadian one (*kamru*).

¹⁴⁰ Zolyomi 2000, 343, argues that “the use this preposition considerably overlapped with the use of the Sumerian case-marker *-še₃/* and their correspondence was extended analogously to other expressions which originally used a case-marker different from *-še₃/*, but which were translated into Akkadian with *ana*.”

This construction may predate the Old Babylonian period, though. Interestingly, the combination of the terminative with *ku*₄ appears also in a few Ur III administrative tablets, in sentences like the following:

- 6) *igi lugal-še*₃ *ba-an-ku*₄
*igi lugal(=ak)=še ba-n(i)-ku*₄
 eye king(=GEN)=TERM MI-in -enter
 “They were brought in front of the king.”¹⁴¹

Such a shift may not reflect an Akkadian influence, but rather an internal evolution of Sumerian at its latest stage. Such combinations TERM—*ku*₄ appear in administrative, and not literary, texts. Perhaps, the shift LOC>TERM with *ku*₄ belonged to a lower register during the Ur III period, and thus it is not reflected in the literary language. The use of the terminative in combination with *ku*₄ may later become the norm in the language learnt by the Old Babylonian scribes. This explains its occurrence in the texts from the Old Babylonian period.

2.2 Akkadian Reinterpretation of Sumerian Grammatical Elements

2.2.1 Sumerian Dative Plural

The constructions discussed above have shown that some Sumerian structures were reinterpreted in order to better reflect their Akkadian parallel. But in other cases, the scribes may be dealing with an Akkadian construction that did not have a suitable parallel in Sumerian.

This happens with the Akkadian preposition *ina* or *in* + genitive plural, a combination used to express the group of entities among which the action is performed. The combination occurs quite frequently in the royal inscriptions, in expressions such as “among the gods, among the kings”. In the Old Babylonian inscriptions, these expressions are translated with a Sumerian dative plural, as the following example shows:

¹⁴¹ UET 9, OO48, P138179, rev. 6.

The same combination (TERM+*ba-an-ku*₄) occurs in TMB 2, nn., obv.3; SAT 2, 1103, obv.ii 13; PTS 1178, obv. 3; PDT 1, OO18, rev. 1; BPOA 7, 0001, obv. 3. A slightly different combination (TERM+*ku*₄-ra) occurs in BM 117201, obv. 3; PPAC, 1725, obv. 5; PTS 1307, obv. 4; TCNU 640, obv. 6.

1) **Akkadian:**

LUGAL *in* LUGAL-*ri*₂ *la ib-ni-u*₃

Sumerian:

lugal lugal-e-ne-er ba-ra-an-dim₂-ma

lugal lugal=ēne =r(a) bara -n -dim₂ -a

king king =PLUR =DAT NEG.MOD-3SG.A-build -NMLZ

“Which no king among the kings had ever built.”

(Hammurabi 12, and 42-43 and 36-37).

This use of the dative occurs a few more times in the Old Babylonian bilingual inscriptions, in the following combinations:

1. *šar-ru in* LUGAL-*ri*₂

lugal-lugal-a-ni-ir

“among the kings” (Hammurabi 2, 43 and 47)

2. *in* LUGAL *maḥ-ra*

lugal-IGI.DU-ne-ne-er

“among the former kings” (Samsu-iluna 3, 45 and 58)

3. *in* ^d*a-nun-na-ki*

^da-nun-na-ke-ne-er

“among the Anunnaki gods (Samsu-iluna 5, 9 and 8)

4. *i-na i-gi-gi*

[nun-g]al-e-ne-er

“among the Igigi gods” (Samsu-iluna 7, 6 and 5)

5. *in* *i*₃-*li*₂

dingir-e-ne-er

“among the gods” (Samsu-iluna 7, 1” and 50)

This function of the dative is not attested in Sumerian. I suggest that this usage was probably triggered by the analogy with other prepositional constructions that indicate a spatial or figurative location.

In Akkadian, the location where the action takes place *in* is expressed by an object introduced by *in(a)*. This object corresponds to either to a locative or to a directive case in Sumerian.¹⁴² Thus:

in(a)+genitive = LOC/DIR

The locative is rarely used with human class nouns, though, and the directive is restricted to the non-human class.¹⁴³ The latter, however, has its correspondent in the dative for nouns of the human class, and this can have triggered the equation of the Akkadian prepositional object with the Sumerian dative. Therefore:

in(a)+genitive=LOC/DIR(NH) *but* DIR(NH)=DAT(H)

in(a)+genitive=LOC/DIR(NH)=DAT(H)

The structure *in(a)* + genitive plural is thus reconstructed as a Sumerian dative plural, although a dative plural noun phrase in Sumerian would not express that meaning.

2.2.4 Sumerian Enclitic Copula

The case of the copula is similar. This Sumerian element seems to be reinterpreted to reflect an Akkadian structure under certain circumstances. A Sumerian enclitic first person copula corresponds to an Akkadian nominal structure in which an independent personal pronoun occupies the clause final position and functions as the subject of the nominal sentence.¹⁴⁴ Such independent pronoun reflects the Sumerian enclitic copula:

1) Akkadian:

be-li-šu a-na-ku

lugal-la-ni-me-en

lugal=ane =me-en

king =3SG.POSS=COP-1SG

¹⁴² The directive case is used to express the oblique object (Jagersma 2010, 169-172). In combination with certain verbs, however, it may indicate a location with the meaning “into contact with” (Jagersma 2010, 434). With this meaning, its functions might easily be assimilated to those of an Akkadian prepositional object introduced by *ina*. See the examples in Jagersma 2010, 435-438.

¹⁴³ For the forms and uses of the locative case marker, Jagersma 2010, 179. See also Jagersma 2010, 165-172, for the directive.

¹⁴⁴ Huehnergard 1997, 11-12. Another strategy to express noun predicates in Akkadian is the predicative construction of a verbal adjective base, usually referred to as “stative” (Huehnergard 1997, 219-223).

“I am his lord.”¹⁴⁵

The two constructions are structurally equivalent. In both versions, the topic – “his king” - stands in clause initial position. The Akkadian subject is the independent personal pronoun *anāku*, and therefore it stands in clause final position.¹⁴⁶ In the Sumerian version, the subject is solely expressed by the enclitic pronominal subject on the copula (-en). The equation is simply *anāku = me-en*, an equation which is triggered by the same position which the two elements occupy in the clause. Thus, the Sumerian copula is used to translate the Akkadian nominal construction.

The third singular form of the copula -am behave quite differently, though. It usually corresponds to the Akkadian enclitic particle *-ma*, which has several uses.¹⁴⁷ More precisely, the particle can serve as a focus marker, and occasionally marks the logical predicate in verb-less clauses.¹⁴⁸ With this function, it could be easily equated to a copula.¹⁴⁹ Like the Sumerian enclitic copula -am, it can be attached to the predicate of a verb-less clause.¹⁵⁰ Like the Sumerian enclitic copula, it can be used to mark the focus on a specific element of the clause.¹⁵¹

However, the bilingual royal inscriptions provide several instances of a third singular copula corresponding to an Akkadian *-ma*, which neither serves as predicate marker nor performs a function which is somewhat that of a copula. In fact, the third singular copula /am/ can also translate an Akkadian *-ma* that functions as a clause connector, as in the example below:

¹⁴⁵ Hammurabi 2, 33 (Sumerian) and 35 (Akkadian). Further evidence can be found in: Hammurabi 2, 6 (S) and 6 (A); Hammurabi 12, 9 (S) and 10 (A), 34 (S) and 39 (A); Samsu-iluna 3, 26 (S) and 34 (A), 58 (S) and 71 (A); Samsu-iluna 5, 19 (S) and 17 (A), 32 (S) and 30 (A).

¹⁴⁶ The pronoun is interpreted as the subject of the clause. The standard Akkadian word order (SOV) is inverted in verb-less clauses where an independent pronoun stands as the subject. Huenergard 1986, 225, suggests that “the difference in word order in OB, MB and MA material is most easily explained as the result of a rule of syntax involving the shape of the subject”.

¹⁴⁷ For the different uses of *-ma* and their origin, see Cohen 2000 207-208. Also, Huenergard 1997, 49-50.

¹⁴⁸ Cohen 2001, 90, suggests that the function of *-ma* is to “focalize the preceding entity, marking it as focus”. He further notices (90-91) that “in the grammatical literature of Akkadian the particle *-ma* is sometimes referred to as copula in non-verbal clauses”.

¹⁴⁹ Cohen 2000, 214, indeed suggests that “the two mentioned uses (copula and logical predicate) may actually be one function”. These uses would relate to the basic function of the particle *-ma* to mark as focus the element which it is attached to (Cohen 2001, 90).

¹⁵⁰ In Sumerian, the enclitic copula is usually attached to the predicate of the copular clause. The subject may be either solely expressed by the form of the copula (as in ex. 13) or it can be expressed both by the form of the copula and an independent noun phrase. The noun-phrase which functions as the subject precedes the predicate (Jagersma 2010, 687-688).

¹⁵¹ In certain constructions, the Sumerian copula can function as a focus-marker (Jagersma 2010, 712-123). Also, Zolyomi 2014, 112.

2) Akkadian:

^dUtu *la im-gu-ru-ma* BAD₃ ZIMBIR.KI *la i-pu-šum-ma*

Sumerian:

^dutu ba-ra-mu-un-ši-in-še-ga-am₃ bad₃ zimbir.KI nu-mu-na-ta-an-du₃-am₃

utu=e bara -mu -n -ši -n -še.g -a - am₃

Utu=ERG NEG.MOD-VNT-3SG-TERM-3SG.A-agree-NMLZ-3SG.COP

bad₃ zimbir(=ak) nu -mu -nna -ta -n -du₃ =am₃

wall Sippar (=GEN) NEG-VNT-3SG.IO-ABL-3SG.A-build=3SG.COP

“(Since) the god Šamaš did not favor (one of the kings), (and consequently) no king built for him the wall of Sippar”.

(Samsu-iluna 3, 60-62 and 47-49) ¹⁵²

The particle *-ma* serves here as a coordinator between two consequent events, marking the causal/sequential relationship between the two clauses. The two clauses are thus logically subordinated to the main clause which follows them – “I, Samsu-iluna... raised the wall of Sippar” - and for this reason the two are marked by the particle *-ma*.¹⁵³

However, the two functions of the particle *-ma* – predicate marker and logical connector – largely differ from one another.¹⁵⁴ Only the former can immediately assimilate to a Sumerian copula:

-ma P.M. = -am

The second use of *-ma* – namely, clause connector – is probably to be kept apart from this one, though. In fact, the two uses have been traced to two different particles.¹⁵⁵ But synchronically, the two morphemes are merged together in a single particle (*-ma*). Thus:

-ma C.C. = *-ma* P.M.

I suggest that this correspondence triggered the equation with the Sumerian copula:

¹⁵² A similar usage of the copula can be found in Samsu-iluna 5, 58 (S) and 64 (A). See also Ammi-ditana 2, 10' (Sumerian) and 10' (Akkadian).

¹⁵³ Huenergard 1997, 49. See also Cohen, 2000, 207-208 and 220-222.

¹⁵⁴ Cohen 2001, 89-90, suggests that the particle *-ma* “represents at least two different morphemes, which have different functions, although both are written in the same way and are enclitic [...] one is the consecutive *-ma*, connecting series of verbal forms [...] the other *-ma* focalizes the preceding entity, marking it as focus”.

¹⁵⁵ Cohen 2000, 208, distinguishes a “substantivizing particle *-ma*”, which the function of *-ma* as predicate marker would have come from. The *-ma* of sequence, which functions as connector between clauses, should be regarded as a different particle (Cohen 2000, 220-221).

-ma C.C = *-ma* P.M. *but* *-ma* P.M. = -am

-ma C.C. = *-ma* P.M. = -am

The functions of the Akkadian *-ma* are automatically transferred to the Sumerian third singular enclitic copula. Therefore, /am/ may translate the Akkadian *-ma* even when it functions as clause connector rather than predicate/focus marker or copula.

3. Ammi-šaduqa 1

3.1 The Text

The linguistic developments of Sumerian in the OB bilingual inscriptions can be understood as the direct consequence of a more general change in the Sumerian language, which turned into a purely literary language exclusively written by non-native speakers. This development did not stop there, though. Sumerian texts were still composed in later periods, and unavoidably these texts look more and more like artificial compositions of the scribes. The bilingual copy of an OB inscription of Ammi-šaduqa shows very well this tendency and it will be the topic of the following paragraph.

This inscription (Ammi-šaduqa 1) deals with the fashioning of a protective figure (*lamassu*) and is preserved on a later copy on clay tablet.¹⁵⁶ The tablet comes from Nippur and was excavated in the site of the Enlil temple.¹⁵⁷ It was first published by Hilprecht (1893) in hand-copy.¹⁵⁸ Another fragment, which partially preserves the first ten lines of this inscription, was edited for the first time in Frayne 1990.¹⁵⁹

The text runs in three columns. The first column, of which only the final part is preserved, contains some phonetic glosses to the Sumerian text in the second column. The Akkadian text runs in the third column, of which only the beginning is preserved. The tablet breaks off after line 31' and the text is therefore only partially preserved.

¹⁵⁶ The tablet is the join of the two fragments Ni 833 + Ni 10753. They are both stored in the Arkeoloji Müzeleri in Istanbul. See note no. 17 and 18.

¹⁵⁷ See Hilprecht 1910, 7-10, for details about the site of the temple library in Nippur where this tablet was found and for other tablets that were excavated in the same archaeological context.

¹⁵⁸ See BE A, Vol. 1, Part 2, No. 129.

¹⁵⁹ Frayne 1990 (RIME4.3.10.01) published Ni 833. I was unable to find a find a copy of this fragment.

The script of the Sumerian text in column II shows the Old Babylonian sign forms, while the phonetic glosses in column I and the Akkadian text in column III are written in Middle Babylonian script. This makes it difficult to date the tablet. Hilprecht 1910, 9, no. 2, already discussed this problem, stating that “the left (Sumerian) columns of this interesting fragment are inscribed in the hieratic writing of that period [...] generally used in inscriptions of a more monumental character [...] while the two Akkadian columns are written in the “demotic” or cursive writing of the ordinary documents of Ammi-zaduga’s times, which sometimes resembles the Neo-Babylonian characters to such a degree that it is difficult to determine the exact age of the tablet without other assistance”. Similarly, Kraus considered this tablet as a Neo-Babylonian copy.¹⁶⁰

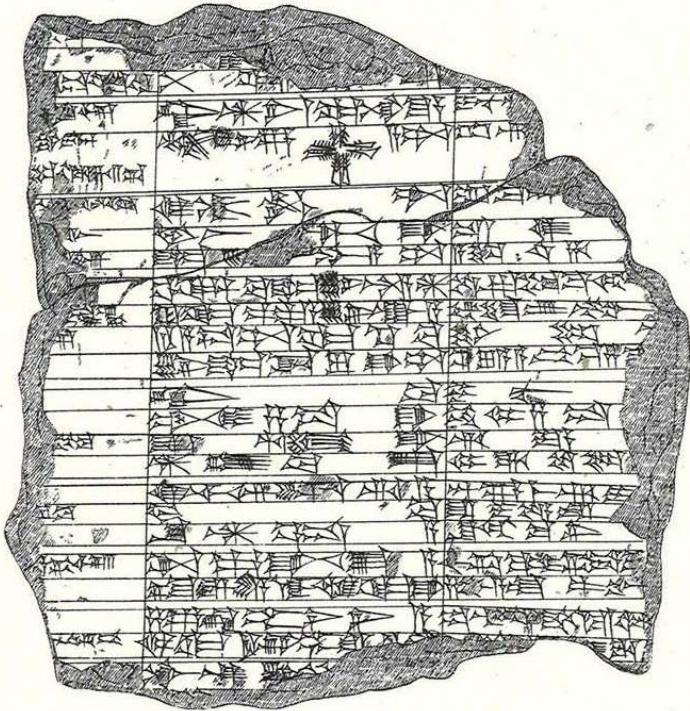
Furthermore, the Sumerian text contains several rare logograms and words from lexical lists, and it also includes some expressions that are not attested elsewhere. This text is therefore difficult to understand and to read and seems to be an artificial translation from the Akkadian original.

I will comment on the most remarkable words and logograms of the Sumerian version, in order to identify their origin and, possibly, the reasons why they are found in this context. This textual and lexical commentary will eventually provide evidence for the date of composition of this text.

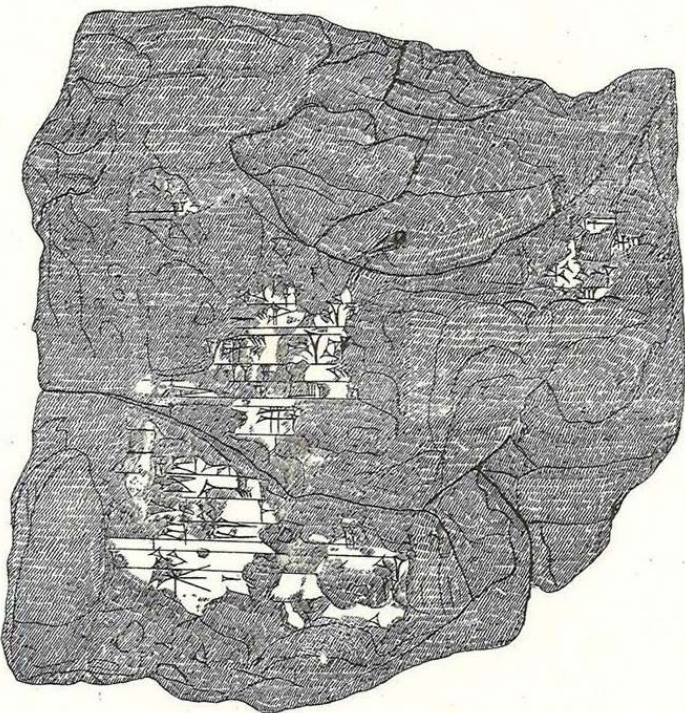
¹⁶⁰ Kraus 1958, 12. The unusual writing system of this tablet has been discussed also by Lambert (1933, 177; see also MSL II, 89 and 108).

3.2 Copy, Transliteration and Translation

BE I/2, plate 129¹⁶¹



Obv.



Rev.

¹⁶¹ Hand-copy published in Hilprecht 1893 (BE I/2, plate 129).

Transliteration and Translation:¹⁶²

Sumerian

Akkadian

Lacuna

Lacuna

1'. [...]

le-at [x x x]

2'. [...] x

mu-um-ma N[E-x x]

3'. [...]

be-el-ti-š[u]

1'-3') [For the goddess Ištar], mighty one of... [his] lady,

double ruling-----

4'. [*am-mi-ša-du*]-*qa*₂

am-mi-ša-du-q[a]

5'. [...-m]a?

LUGAL *dan-num*₂

6'. [...K]I?

LUGAL KA₂.DINGIR.RA^{ki}

7'. [...]

*ka-ri-ib na-na-ar-ʿx*¹

4'-7') Ammī-šaduqa, mighty king, king of Babylon, who adores the bright one,

double ruling-----

8'. [...]

DUMU *a-ša-re-d[u]*

9'. [am-m]i-[di-ta-na]

[š]a *am-mi-di-ta-n[a]*

10'. pa₄-sag [x x x]

ʿa-bi x x x x e¹ [x]

8'-10') first born son of Ammī-ditān[a], father....,

double ruling-----

11'. ug AN ŠITA SAG SAG PAP x-e

i-nu ʿ^{d1}[x x x x x]

12'. nam-gar₂-dan tuddaḥ (DU₈X4)-a-ta

ta?-r[i x x x x x]

11'-12') After the god... multiplied defeat,

double ruling-----

¹⁶² Transliteration and translation according to the RIME edition (Ammišaduqa 1).

13'. ki-ZUM urbigu (URxUR)-ta *um-ma-^ran¹-[x x x x]*

14'. HIXGADA aš-BULUG-ga *is₂-ki-[pu]*

15'. bi₂-i[n-bu-bu-a-ta *a-šar tam-ḥa-[ri]*

13'-15') had thrown down the army of [...] (on) the battle-field,

double ruling-----

16'. zabar-ba bi₂-in-ḥal-am₃ *te-eb tu-ku-ul-[ti-šu]*

17'. x KA PA-PA-a in-ak-a *iḥ-tu-u₂ mu-tal₂-[li]*

18'. nig₂ a-ra₂-ta sag rim-ma *in le-t[i]*

19'. in-ne-da-lu-ga-ta *e-lu a-a-bi iz-za-a[z-zu]*

16'-19') after the onrush of [his] *weapons*, had crushed the princes, had stood in might over the enemy,

double ruling-----

20'. ug-ba *i-nu-[šu]*

21'. am-mi-ša-du-qa₂ *am-mi-ša-du-[qa]*

22'. kuš₇ še₂₁-ga *re-iu-[u₂]*

23'. DINGIR zib-ba-ke₄ *mi-gir te-li-[ti]*

20'-23') at [that]time Ammī-šaduqa, shepherd favourite of the very competent one (i.e. the goddess Ištar),

double ruling-----

24'. ki-ti gi-da-ri-a *^dlamma meš₂-ri-i*

25'. du₁₀-ba *ša i-kar-ra-[bu]*

26'. šu an-e₃-a *šu-ul-ma-ni-[iš]*

24'-26') [fashioned] a... protective genius of prosperity which blesses him beneficently,

double ruling-----

27'. ŠA kala-ga šita₄-a *ši-ta ma tum ga qar x [x]*

28'. bara₂ (*) gi₄-a LIŠ x ugun du₁₁-ga *ša-^rpu¹-a-at, pa-rak-k[i]*

double ruling-----

29'. za kal-la galam du₃-du₃-a *ab-nam a-qar-tam šu₂-ud-du-[rat]*

30'. sa₂-du₁₁ (*)ninda kaš ib₂-^rra¹-x x [x x] x da [x]

31'. BU NA? s[a₆ x x x] [...]

Lacuna Lacuna

29'-31') sparkling with precious stones, *regular offerings, bread, (and) beer...* Lacuna

3.3 Commentary

10') pa₄-sag: this Sumerian word corresponds to the Akkadian *abi* “father” in line 10'. It is an apposition of the personal name *Ammi-ditana* (line 9) and therefore it is in the genitive case. However, the expression pa₄-sag is not attested elsewhere in the cdli database, except for an isolated occurrence in an Old Akkadian administrative text.¹⁶³ The standard Sumerian word for “father” or “ancestor” corresponding to the Akkadian *abum* should be pa₄-bil-ga¹⁶⁴ or simply pap (also written pa₄)¹⁶⁵. This may be a sophisticated variation of the scribe who does not know the standard Sumerian word.

12') nam-gar₂-dan: the reading of these logograms is indicated by the phonetic gloss in col. I, line 12'. This combination of logograms is not elsewhere attested,¹⁶⁶ and since the Akkadian version does not preserve this line, it is impossible to determine the exact meaning of it.

du₈x₄: Frayne reads the logogram as tud^aḥ. This reading is indicated by the phonetic gloss in col. I (12'). It is perhaps an artificial reconstruction of a Sumerian word corresponding to the Akkadian *tahtû* “defeat” (CAD T, *tahtû*).

¹⁶³ YBC 8589 (col. II, line 5).

¹⁶⁴ pa-bil₂-ga; pa-bil₃-ga; pa₄-bil₂-ga; pa-bil-ga; pa₄-bil-ga; pa₄-bi-ga: "a kinship term" Akk. *abu*. (<http://psd.museum.upenn.edu/nepsd-frame.html>)

¹⁶⁵ pap, "first and foremost, pre-eminent; father; male, virile; brother" Akk. *abu; ahu; ašarēdu; zikaru*. (<http://psd.museum.upenn.edu/nepsd-frame.html>)

¹⁶⁶ See the cdli database as well as the ePSD.

13') urbingu: the reading of the sign URxUR as urbingu is attested in lexical lists which equate this logogram with the Akkadian *šitnumu*, “vying, fighting”.¹⁶⁷

14') BULUG: the sign on the tablet has a slightly different shape from the standard Old Babylonian sign form.¹⁶⁸ Moreover, the meaning of this term in the context is unclear.¹⁶⁹

In the cdli database, this term is found in several Old Babylonian literary texts¹⁷⁰ and in a dozen lexical lists.¹⁷¹ Interestingly, six of these lexical lists come from Nippur.¹⁷² It is therefore likely that the scribe who wrote the Ammi-šaduqa inscription knew this term from a similar lexical list.¹⁷³

16') zabar: the term zabar “bronze” occurs here in the expression zabar-ba bi₂-in-ḫal-am₃, which seems to correspond to the Akkadian *te-eb tu-ku-ul-ti-šu* (16') “after the onrush of his weapons”. It may be regarded as a case of metonymy, whether the scribe was aware of it or not.

As for the term zabar, it occurs frequently in Ur III administrative texts. In the Old Babylonian period, it appears in literary texts and in several lexical lists.¹⁷⁴ Significantly, it is attested in twenty-two lexical lists from Nippur, and this makes it very likely that they belong to the same tradition as the Ammi-šaduqa inscription. During the Middle-Babylonian period, the term occurs on a lexical list from Alalakh (AIT 445). Interestingly, the same Middle Babylonian lexical list also glosses the term bulug (col. II, 15'-21').¹⁷⁵ The word does not seem to be part of the lexical tradition in later periods. It is not attested in the Neo-Assyrian lexical works and moreover, it does not occur in the Neo-Babylonian texts.

¹⁶⁷ CAD Š III, *šitnumu* a) and b). For the equation of this term with the logogram URxUR and the word urbingu, see Cavigneaux 2000, 50. See also Green 1978, 153-154. Note that a Middle Assyrian lexical list from Assur gives this word as the reading of the logogram LU₂xLU₂ (VAT 9541 col. 2, 3').

¹⁶⁸ MSL 2, 108.

¹⁶⁹ The logogram bulug is attested in some administrative texts from the Ur III period. It seems to function as a unity of measure in lists and accounts. It can be preceded by the determinative urud, with the meaning “needle; stake”. (<http://psd.museum.upenn.edu/nepsd-frame.html>).

¹⁷⁰ This term is found in some twenty-five Old Babylonian literary texts that include thirty-five attestations.

¹⁷¹ Twelve lexical lists from the Old Babylonian period include forty attestations of this logogram.

¹⁷² The six Old Babylonian lexical lists from Nippur that include the term bulug are the following: N 5056 + UM 29-16-391; CBS 6420; N 6257; IM 58433 + IM 58496; CBS 7844 + CBS 7855 + N 5302 + HS 1796 + HS 1869; CBS 6398 + CBS 6522 + N 6997.

¹⁷³ In later periods, the term bulug is not found on lexical lists anymore. The only exception is a Middle Babylonian lexical list from Alalakh that preserves this entry (AIT 445, col. II, 15'-21'). In the Neo-Babylonian period, the term shows up on a literary text from Uruk (VAT 14488, obv. 12'). It can also be found in a few medical and literary texts from the Neo-Assyrian period, as well as in a royal inscription of king Tiglath-pileser III (IMJ 74.049.0096a + 74.049.0096b + private collection (Mahboubian, H.), published in RINAP 1, Tiglath-pileser III 35).

¹⁷⁴ Four hundred thirty-three attestations in fifty-seven different texts in the cdli database.

¹⁷⁵ In the Middle Babylonian period, the word zabar is also attested in some administrative texts from Nuzi, in a scientific tablet from Nippur and in several Mari letters.

20') ug-ba: this combination is not attested elsewhere. The scribe seems to replace the sign for ud (UD) “day, sunlight” with UG “light”, perhaps due to similarity of their meaning and sound. In fact, the combination ug-ba corresponds here to the Akkadian *inu-šu*, which is usually translated as ud-ba “on that day”.

22') kuš₇: the term designates an official of high rank and corresponds here to the Akkadian *re'u* “shepherd, protector”.¹⁷⁶ The term kuš₇ occurs in lexical lists from the Early Dynastic period already.¹⁷⁷ It is attested again during the Old Babylonian period, in six lexical lists from Nippur.¹⁷⁸ Interestingly, the term kuš₇ does not seem to occur anymore in later periods.

26') šu an-e₃-a: this expression represents perhaps an artificial translation of the Akkadian adverb *šulmaniš* “peacefully, in peace”.¹⁷⁹ This expression does not seem to be attested elsewhere in the cdli database, though, except for an Early Old Babylonian lexical list from Nippur.¹⁸⁰ Remarkably, on this lexical list, the expression is followed by the sign ŠA which begins the Akkadian gloss to the Sumerian term.¹⁸¹ The same sign (ŠA) follows this Sumerian expression also on the Ammi-šaduqa inscription, where the meaning and reading of this sign are unclear. Perhaps, the scribe had this or a similar lexical list in mind, and therefore he wrote the Sumerian expression followed by the Akkadian pronoun *ša*.

27') šita₄: the logogram means “weapon”, and in this case it is usually preceded by the determinative geš.¹⁸² But here it lacks the determinative and its meaning is not fully clear. Without the determinative, the term also occurs in a couple of royal inscriptions from the Early Dynastic period belonging to Ur-Nanshe (Ur-Nanshe 6b and 9).¹⁸³ Interestingly, both the two inscriptions deal with the fashioning of the figure of a protective Lamma.¹⁸⁴ Ammi-saduqa 1 speaks of the very same topic. It is therefore very likely that the scribe had access to a copy of these inscriptions of Ur-Nanshe and drew inspiration from these inscriptions to write this text.

¹⁷⁶ CAD R, *re'u* 2b.

¹⁷⁷ CDLI Lexical 10, ex. 4 (P225940), col. ii, 5'.

¹⁷⁸ IM 058566; CBS 2241 + CBS 9850 + CBS 9851 + CBS 11394 + N 4631 + N 5222; UM 55-21-291 + IM 58664; N5454; A30272; N 5910.

¹⁷⁹ CAD Š III, *šulmaniš*.

¹⁸⁰ CBS 2165 + CBS 2174 + CBS 2212 + CBS 2346 + CBS 2355 + N 5445, col. III, 11.

¹⁸¹ ¹lu₂ šag₄ šu an-e₃ = *ša i-ru i-ša-ru*¹ [...]

¹⁸² šita₂; ĝeššita₂; ĝeššita₄; ĝeššita_x([KAK.GIŠ]) "a weapon" Akk. *kakku*, <http://psd.museum.upenn.edu/nepsd-frame.html>.

¹⁸³ These two inscriptions are published in Frayne 2007, RIME 1.09.01.6b and RIME 1.09.01.09.

¹⁸⁴ Ur-Nanshe 6b, surface a, 57-59, reads: ^dlamma šita₄-e₃ mu-tu “He created a (statue of a) Lamma šita'e”. The very same expression shows up in Ur-Nanshe 9, 16-17.

28') *bara₂*: the text has the sign AD for the expected *BARA₂* “dais” that should correspond to *parakki* in the Akkadian version.

ugun: the logogram stands for the word *ugun* or *ugunu* “decoration”. This writing (U.GUN₃) is attested in Old Babylonian literary texts¹⁸⁵ and in five lexical lists that all come from Nippur.¹⁸⁶ The scribe of Ammi-šaduqa 1 may therefore be influenced by this lexical tradition in writing this logogram.

29') *za-kal-la*: this combination translates literally the Akkadian *abnam aqartam* “precious stone”.

galam: the logogram should stand for an adjective meaning “skillful, clever” (Akk. *naklu*).¹⁸⁷ However, its meaning is not entirely clear in this context. In the cdli database, this term is attested several times in Ur III administrative texts, and it occurs in Old Babylonian texts of different genres – most importantly, in nineteen royal inscriptions and in eight different lexical lists. Three of these lexical lists come from Nippur.¹⁸⁸ The scribe may be adopting this adjective from some Old Babylonian lexical lists, or perhaps he is drawing inspiration from the royal inscriptions themselves. The word is rarely attested in later periods, and it does not occur in any Middle Babylonian texts.

3.4 Observations

As the commentary may have shown, this text presents problems on a lexical level. Some words and logograms are rarely attested - sometimes they are only known from lexical lists. A few expressions seem even to be hapax attested in this text only. This makes it very unlikely that the Sumerian version was copied from the Old Babylonian original.

It is reasonable to assume that the Sumerian text was rather translated from the Akkadian, perhaps as a scribal exercise. This could fit well with the context of the temple library in Nippur, where the tablet was found.¹⁸⁹ But the exact date of this composition is hard to determine.

¹⁸⁵ This logogram occurs in four Old Babylonian literary texts, one from Nippur and the others of unknown provenance (see <https://cdli.ucla.edu/>).

¹⁸⁶ CBS 14159 + UM 29-16-533 + UM 29-16-562, col. IV, 10-11 and 32-33; N 5056 + UM 29-16-391, rev. col. I 12-13, col. III, 2; CBS 10067, col. I, 1-2; CBS 7844 (+) CBS 7855 (+) N 5302 (+) HS 1796 + HS 1869, surface a7, col. 1, 18-19 and col. 2, 11-12.

¹⁸⁷ <http://psd.museum.upenn.edu/>, *galam*.

¹⁸⁸ See the cdli database for the attestations.

¹⁸⁹ Hilprecht 1903, 7-9.

As stated above, the phonetic glosses to the Sumerian version as well as the Akkadian text are written in Middle Babylonian script, and this poses some problems. The same type of script was still in use in later times, during the Neo-Babylonian period, and this makes it hard to date the text on a paleographic base.¹⁹⁰

I would suggest a date closer to the Middle Babylonian than to the Neo-Babylonian period. The text seems to provide lexicographical evidence for such a date. Some logograms that occur in this text – like bulug, zabar, kuš₇ – are attested several times in literary texts, and most remarkably in lexical lists from the Old Babylonian period, or even earlier. Many of these lexical lists come precisely from Nippur, the same site where the copy of Ammi-šaduqa 1 was found, and this makes it even more likely that these logograms had a tradition in the lexical works composed in that city during the Old Babylonian period. The same can be stated as for the logogram U.GUN₃ (to be read ugunu) that is only attested in Old Babylonian literary texts and in some lexical lists, precisely from Nippur.

This tradition seems to stop after the Old Babylonian period, and these logograms are not found in later lexical lists, with only a few exceptions. Therefore, I would place the activity of this scribe in continuity with the Old Babylonian lexical and literary tradition from Nippur, that attest many of the logograms found in this text. I would therefore suggest a date of composition during the Middle Babylonian period.

This text cannot be reduced to a late scribal production artificially built upon lexical lists, though. Here and there, the scribe seems to be influenced by other ancient sources to compose his translation. Interestingly, he seems to draw inspiration from two inscriptions of Ur-Nanshe that dealt with the same topic as that of Ammi-šaduqa 1, and he uses the very same expression (lamma-šita₄-e₃) to describe the Lamma figure fashioned by the king. In a few instances, he seems even to create new combinations of signs to compose his translation, as it is the case with ug-ba, pa₄-sag, tuddaḥ and nam-gar₂-dan.

The result is a unique composition, that looks like Sumerian without being written in the Sumerian language. It was perhaps meant to show the scribe's skills, or it was simply composed as an exercise. This text shows therefore the latest developments of the Sumerian language, which had turned into a symbol of scribal culture and cuneiform tradition. Some scribes would still try to compose in Sumerian, although they lacked any knowledge of it, and consequently, the texts lost any contact with the ancient language.

¹⁹⁰ See Hilprecht 1903, 9, no. 2. Kraus (1958, 12) suggests that this copy was composed during the Neo-Babylonian period. See also MSL II, 89 and 108, for considerations about the script of this text.

4. Conclusive Remarks

The analysis of the Old Babylonian bilingual inscriptions has shown the shift of Sumerian to an only literary language. The royal inscriptions had a long and well attested tradition both in Akkadian and Sumerian, and for this reason the Old Babylonian kings had their inscriptions written in Akkadian, in Sumerian and in both the two languages at the same time, although the Sumerian texts did not have any communicative functions anymore.

The corpus of bilingual inscriptions from this period is quite large, although not many of these texts can be classified as real bilinguals. On the one hand, the inscriptions of Hammurabi and Samsuiluna are not strictly bilingual texts, since the Akkadian and the Sumerian versions were inscribed on different objects. On the other hand, no certain conclusions can be reached as for the inscriptions known from later copies, although it seems likely that they derive from unilingual inscriptions that merged together during the scribal tradition, rather than from original bilingual texts. The late bilingual copy of Ammi-šaduqa 1 represents an exception. The phonetic glosses, as well as the presence of many logograms that are only attested in late lexical lists make it very likely that the Sumerian version was a later translation from the Akkadian original.

The Old Babylonian bilingual inscriptions show common features and patterns, that largely derive from the earlier – Sumerian and Akkadian – tradition of this literary genre. But the Sumerian texts show now deep influences from Akkadian. This comes as no surprise, since Sumerian was already a dead language by the Old Babylonian period, and these inscriptions were written by Akkadian scribes. The linguistic analysis has shown that the Akkadian scribes reinterpreted Sumerian in several ways. They may replace the appropriate case marker in a given construction in order to better reflect their Akkadian counterpart. Many Sumerian expressions were thus reinterpreted in analogy with Akkadian, as it is the case with *ġar*, *šu—si*, *igi—bar*, and perhaps *ku*₄.

Furthermore, some Sumerian grammatical elements were reinterpreted to express Akkadian structures. Thus, the Sumerian dative plural case marker reflects the functions of an Akkadian prepositional object (*ina*+GEN.PLUR) - although the Sumerian dative would not have this meaning at all.

Besides, Sumerian constructions that did not find a correspondent in Akkadian were paralleled to different Akkadian elements, acquiring new functions. It is the case of the third singular enclitic copula */am/*, that was equated with the Akkadian enclitic particle *-ma* and is thus used as a clause connector.

These linguistic phenomena reflect the developments of Sumerian as a literary language, only written by non-native speakers. Sumerian was dead as a spoken language, but it was still learnt and used as the literary language of cuneiform culture.

The symbolic value of Sumerian was still great in later periods, as the later copy of the Ammi-saduqa inscription proves. The inscription is partly written in Middle Babylonian script and therefore it was probably composed in the Middle Babylonian, perhaps even in the Neo-Babylonian period, a time in which the scribes had probably lost any real knowledge of Sumerian. The Sumerian text looks therefore artificial and obscure, since it contains several rare logograms only attested in lexical lists.

Many of these lexical lists come from Nippur and are dated to the Old Babylonian period. This makes it likely that the copy of the Ammi-šaduqa inscription comes from the same tradition. The inscription may therefore be dated to the Middle Babylonian period, although an even later date cannot be excluded.

The scribe of this inscription probably translated the original Akkadian text in Sumerian, although he lacked any real knowledge of the language. This inscription shows therefore the latest development of Sumerian, that had turned into a secret knowledge artificially kept alive by the scribal tradition.

Conclusions

The present analysis of Mesopotamian bilingual inscriptions from the Old Akkadian until the Old Babylonian period dealt with a diverse group of sources. In each case, material and textual evidence has been collected to determine the origin of the texts, and the discussion has shown that these texts were probably not composed as bilinguals. In some cases, their transmission as bilinguals started with their scribal tradition, that occasionally combined independent inscriptions that included similar texts in Sumerian and in Akkadian.

Although these inscriptions cannot be strictly defined as bilinguals, they were composed in two parallel versions, one in Akkadian and one in Sumerian. The use of bilingualism in these compositions reflects different aims and reasons depending on the socio-linguistic context which the texts originated from, and such developments reflect the shift of Sumerian from a spoken to a purely literary language. This analysis has followed the tradition of Mesopotamian bilingual inscriptions from the Old Akkadian until the Old Babylonian period, and it has shown that the purposes of these texts changed over time.

The three Sargonic inscriptions that come from Nippur and provide the earliest evidence for Mesopotamian bilingual inscriptions may have fulfilled both a practical and an ideological purpose. These texts may have been addressed to both the Akkadian and the Sumerian elite at the same time, thus serving a real communicative purpose. But they may have played an ideological role as well. On the one hand, the Sumerian texts were probably meant to show continuity with the Sumerian royal tradition of the earlier periods. On the other hand, the use of Akkadian was distinctive of the Sargonic dynasty. The two parallel versions of the Sargonic inscriptions had therefore both a communicative function and an ideological reason. The Old Babylonian tablets from Nippur that carry these inscriptions did probably not derive from original bilingual inscriptions, though. According to their colophons, the Akkadian and the Sumerian versions were copied from different statues. Furthermore, the analysis of the material and textual features of the Old Babylonian tablets has pointed out several discrepancies between the Akkadian and the Sumerian versions, which argue for their separate composition. These inscriptions merged together and were transmitted as bilinguals in the Old Babylonian scribal tradition.

Similarly, four building inscriptions of Šulgi can be considered separate inscriptions which show two versions, one in Akkadian and the other in Sumerian, of parallel texts. These cannot be defined as bilinguals, since the two versions show substantial discrepancies and were inscribed on different objects. The use of Akkadian aside to Sumerian in those texts is remarkable, though. At this moment, the Akkadian texts had probably a much larger audience than the Sumerian – or perhaps, they were even the only ones to have a public. But Sumerian was acquiring an important role as the language of the royal dynasty, and for this reason the royal inscriptions were mainly composed in Sumerian. These inscriptions mark the shift of Sumerian from a spoken into a literary language. After the Ur III period, Sumerian had died out as a spoken language, but royal inscriptions were still written in Sumerian to continue this tradition.

A last piece of evidence for an Ur III bilingual inscription is an alleged Šulgi stele inscription that is preserved on an Old Babylonian tablet. This text presents several problematic aspects, which suggest that the text was not copied from an original Šulgi inscription, but it rather represents a later bilingual composition. The Sumerian and the Akkadian versions were probably composed simultaneously, and the text can therefore be considered as a late bilingual text. This copy may therefore reflect the need of preserving the tradition of writing in Sumerian in the Old Babylonian scribal culture, when Sumerian was not a spoken language anymore.

The tradition of writing texts in Sumerian can be seen also in the bilingual inscriptions of Old Babylonian kings. At this time, Sumerian had already died out as a spoken language and it had turned into a purely literary language. The use of Sumerian in these inscriptions is therefore a tradition. This continuity with the older inscriptions appears from the phraseology that the inscriptions adopt. Expressions and titles are inherited from the earlier tradition and are preserved by the Old Babylonian kings, both in the Sumerian and in the Akkadian versions of the texts.

As for the Sumerian versions, these texts show a strong influence from Akkadian, as the linguistic analysis of the bilingual inscriptions of Hammurabi and Samsu-iluna has shown. The two bilingual inscriptions of Abi-ešuḫ and Ammi-ditana reveal similar linguistic patterns, which reflect the shift of Sumerian from a spoken to a literary language, only kept alive by the scribal tradition.

These developments did not stop there, though, as the later copy of an inscription of Ammi-šaduqa shows. This inscription is preserved on a clay tablet from Nippur and has been dated to the Middle Babylonian, or even Neo-Babylonian period. The Sumerian text of this inscription contains many rare words and logograms. Some of these are only attested in lexical lists, or in a few literary texts. Interestingly, the majority of these ‘source’ texts comes from Nippur and is dated to the Old

Babylonian period. This fact may suggest a date for the text closer to the Middle Babylonian, rather than the Neo-Babylonian, period.

The text also shows interesting expressions and phrases that are not attested elsewhere. They seem to be artificial productions of the scribe, who tried to compose in Sumerian although he had no thorough knowledge of it. This text shows therefore the latest development of Sumerian, which had turned into a secret knowledge of scribal culture and vaguely resembled the ancient language.

Mesopotamian royal inscriptions reflect such developments of the Sumerian language and its shift from a real spoken language to a purely literary one, which became more and more abstract over time. A similar shift may involve the reasons for the composition of these texts. The use of writing royal inscriptions in Sumerian and in Akkadian may originally have fulfilled a real communicative purpose, thus serving the needs of a real bilingual community. In later times, this use became an element of tradition, that was maintained although the Sumerian texts did not have a Sumerian audience anymore. The Babylonian kings would still have their inscriptions composed in Sumerian in order to preserve the Sumerian tradition. This evolution in the socio-linguistic scenario is reflected by the texts themselves, which present different material, textual and linguistic features. The study of the Mesopotamian bilingual inscriptions has thus shown different roles of bilingualism, with its developments in the royal and scribal tradition of cuneiform culture.

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<<http://cdli.ucla.edu/>> (Los Angeles/Berlin)

ePSD: electronic Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary Project

<<http://psd.museum.upenn.edu/epsd/index.html>>(Philadelphia)

ETCSL: Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature

<<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk>> (Oxford)