

## **Almost a Family, Practically Related: Questions on Sumerian Kinship Terminology**

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## CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS: ANCIENT LIVES, NEW STORIES: CURRENT RESEARCH ON THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST<sup>2</sup>

### Almost a Family, Practically Related: Questions on Sumerian Kinship Terminology<sup>3</sup>

Andrea Rebecca Marrocchi Savoi

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**Abstract:** The aim of this paper is to investigate some aspects of fictive kinship in ancient Sumer that we find out through administrative, legal and literary texts. From the Neo-Sumerian period several texts of different nature have survived, which constitutes a breeding ground for this kind of study. In anthropological studies the kinship terminology is considered fundamental to understand the structure and dynamics of human societies. It seems that, both in Sumerian and in Akkadian, the terms of kinship are reduced to the first kinship degree, and are not used to express different relationships, but they are unambiguous. Some scholars (Civil 1974; Götzelt 1995) tried to compare Sumerian terminology with other better-known systems, but the results are discordant due to the complexities of documentation and language. Considering that most attested terms express just the first degree of kinship, we can assume that in Sumerian the juxtaposition of primary terms is used to express the most distant relationships on the family tree. A lot of kinship's terms appears in the texts, some of that, probably, used also outside familial context. Perhaps in the workplace the family structure and terminology were adopted symbolically practically, which makes it more difficult to interpret some legal texts, as the so called *di-til-la*, because the ambiguity of terms makes the interpretation unclear. It is necessary to use an interdisciplinary approach through philology and anthropology to enlighten as much information as possible from the texts.

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<sup>2</sup>**Ancient Lives, New Stories: Current Research on the Ancient Near East** was a conference held at the British Museum in London between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2018, organised by Xosé L. Hermoso-Buxán and Mathilde Touillon-Ricci. This paper is part of the proceedings of that conference and have been edited by the organisers, with the support of *Papers from the Institute of Archaeology*.

<sup>3</sup>Following the editorial guideline, specialist Assyriological abbreviations were avoided, and texts are quoted according to the identification numbers of Base de Datos de Textos Neosumerios (BDTNS, <http://bdtns.filol.csic.es/>) and museum numbers are provided as well for the convenience of Assyriologists. Two important opensource databases for cuneiform texts are the aforementioned BDTNS and CDLI Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative numbers (CDLI, <https://cdli.ucla.edu/>). According to the tradition of Assyriological studies, in this paper Akkadian is presented in italics and Sumerian in letterspaced roman.

## Introduction

### *Space and Time*

Recalling the literary text *The Sumerian King List*, after the Akkadian dynasty's domination and the Gutian parenthesis, '*the kingship was taken to Unug*' by Utu-hegal, but Ur-Namma, who was governor (ensi) in Ur on his behalf, defeated him, founding the Third Dynasty of Ur<sup>i</sup> (hereafter Ur III) that would remain in power for about a century (ca. 2112 - 2004 B.C.). The dynastic name comes from their capital, Ur, one of the most important cities in the history of Ancient Near East. From the textual evidence it seems that the state organization of Ur III was more centralized than that of the Akkadian Empire. Many of the ancient administrative texts found date back to this period, which demonstrate the importance of bureaucracy during Ur III. All these thousands of administrative clay tablets are written in Sumerian, but the persons who appear do not always have Sumerian names<sup>ii</sup>, which gives us a glimpse of the cultural variety that there was at the time. Because of Sumerian predominance in the documentation, which replaces the Akkadian used previously during the homonymous empire, in the past some scholars defined it as 'Sumerian Renaissance' (Liverani, 2014, pp. 155-170), but probably the Sumerian was not spoken anymore at that time, it was used only as 'administrative language'<sup>iii</sup>.

### *From tablets to history*

The social history of this period can be reconstructed analysing the thousands of texts belonging to the above-mentioned bureaucracy. Other historical information can be obtained from different sources such as: the inscriptions that are present on various media, e.g., on building materials (bricks, door sockets, nails etc.), on commemorative objects (stelae, statues, etc.) or on seals. The literary texts are also fundamental, but they must be used with great caution to investigate the social history because they provide a non-objective view. All these documents supply us with an extremely detailed and, at the same time, extremely incomplete picture of social life during the Ur III period. The aim of this paper is not to give a definition to something still abstract today such as 'family ties', but to propose a different interpretation of the relationships expressed in some Sumerian texts through kinship's terminology. Through prosopographical researches we can describe the social networks between many characters who appear several times in the documentation, these relationships are sometimes unclear because of the terms used for these links. These terms and their meanings are analysed in the following paragraphs, proposing a 'figurative' use, rather than one closely related to biological ties, something like a fictive kinship. In

this article we start with general remarks on the terminology of kinship before going into detail. Drawing on examples of both literary and administrative texts, such as the *Edubba C* composition and the corpus of ‘messenger texts’ from Umma, this article proposes to analyse and reinterpret a cuneiform text from a private collection (first published by Durand (1977)) in the light of Sumerian kinship terminology.

## **Kinship, Fictive Kinship or Just Terminology?**

### *General Remarks on Fictive Kinship*

Kinship is not a well-defined ‘thing’, but it is an amorphous and polythetic concept (Barnard & Good, 1984: 187ff.). Many scholars from various disciplines developed different definitions of ‘family’, recognizing its existence outside of blood ties or legal kinship and proposing that a social network of unrelated people can be considered a ‘family’ (Braithwaite, et al., 2010). In the current state of research, the use of kinship terminology outside of proper family relationships is attested in many cultures, this can be considered as a figurative use of these terms (Leyton Alvarado, 2018). In using parental terms to indicate a specific relationship, a sort of social diagram emerges, in which each participant is related to the other members of their group. The position that a person holds in the network involves a social role normally associated with a specific family tie, implying rights and duties. By this social means, some features of kinship systems are expanded into other areas of social life (Ibsen & Klobus, 1972).

There are many studies about the fictitious relationship, e.g., about the spiritual kinship that is an affiliation established between individuals involved in the baptism ceremony (Signorini, 1981). The fictive kinship is not something strange bound to lost communities, but it is a cultural attitude that persists in our contemporary societies, e. g. some slang expressions or fake affiliations on social media such as Facebook<sup>iv</sup>. Ibsen and Klobsun (1972: 615f.) identify three possible description of using fictive kin terms in contemporary American society:

- As a form of address used for persons who assume the status of supplementary or replacement kin;
- As a form of address which expresses familiarity within a personal relationship;
- Use of the term as a public validation of a special kind of association.

Trying to apply one of these descriptions to a civilization known only through indirect sources, such as the Sumerian one, would certainly be misleading; moreover, it is not necessary to choose a single point of view to explain this phenomenon. Instead, it is necessary to analyse all the available data, trying to eliminate any superstructure to try to achieve an objective conclusion. To do this kind of analysis through Sumerian documentation, it is necessary to recognize texts in which the kinship terminology seems out of context and to determine if, when, why and in what context the fictive kinship could exist.

### *About Kinship Terminology*

Every language uses a terminological system to briefly describe the relationships among related people. The criteria behind the classification of bonds between *Ego* and *Alter* change in each society. There are many studies about systems and terms of kinship. During the eighteenth-century Joseph-Francois Lafitau carried out research on the customs and traditions of the Iroquois of North America, collected in his book *Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times* (1724). Although he is not considered a forerunner of Cultural Anthropology (Fabietti 1991: 3ff.), he was among the first to notice that societies classify relatives differently. About a century later, by chance, also H. Lewis Morgan studied the Iroquois community but focusing on terms and systems of kinship. He is considered the precursor of modern anthropological analysis; he wrote two of the cornerstones of cultural anthropology: *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family* (1870) and *Ancient Society* (1877). The theories and the models developed to try to understand this phenomenon in the best possible way, engaged illustrious scholars such as: Kroeber (1909), Lowie (1917), Murdock (1949) and Lévi-Strauss (1949) and essays written by various authors and collected by Goody in his book (1973). These, are just some of the anthropologists who have dealt with the issue and who can be considered fundamental for the study of kinship anthropology<sup>v</sup>. Before analysing briefly, the kinship terminology in Sumerian, it is useful to bear in mind the principles that Kroeber (1909) recognised as the basis of parental relationship's differentiations, on which the following analysis will be based:

- Generation;
- Difference between linear and collateral relationship;
- Relative age: age difference within the same generation;
- Gender of relative (*Alter*);
- Gender of the speaker (*Ego*);

- Bifurcation: the sex of the person through whom the family relationship passes;
- Difference between consanguinity and affinity;
- Condition (deceased or living) of the person through whom the relationship passes.

### *The Sumerian kinship terminology*

Before dealing with Sumerian kinship terminology, perhaps we should spend a few lines to clarify what we know about the kinship in ancient Mesopotamia. First of all, we should consider that both in Akkadian and Sumerian, we have different terms to indicate the household and its members. The word that can be translated more properly with household is  $e_2/bītum$ , while the one that refers to the members of the family group is  $imria/kimtum$ . Probably in the first term were included all the inhabitants of a house, including the servants, while in the second one, the designation concerned only those belonging to a certain lineage<sup>vi</sup>. According to the available sources, apart from a few documented exceptions, the family structure is patrilocal, patrilinear and probably mononuclear<sup>vii</sup>. This information comes from the vast Sumerian *corpus* that allow us to draw up guidelines for kinship in the Neo-Sumerian period. Through the Sumerian texts, it seems that this kinship terminology indicates only the primary relationships, specifying the generation and sometimes the kin's gender and relative age. In Table 1 below are indicated the terms of first relationship degree in Sumerian language:

<b>Kinship terms</b>	
ama	mother
ad(-da), ab(-ba), a-a (aya <sub>2</sub> ) <sup>viii</sup>	father
nin <sub>9</sub>	sister
šeš	brother
<b>Relationship terms</b>	
dam	spouse
dumu	child

**Table 1:** Sumerian terms of first relationship degree.

These are the most used terms of kinship in the records, other terms such as  $ninda_2$ ,  $pa_4-bil_{(2/3)-ga}$ ,  $\hat{g}idlam_{(2-3)}$ ,  $lukur$ ,  $ibila$  but these terms cannot be translated easily<sup>ix</sup>.

The Sumerian language does not distinguish gender grammatically; noteworthy is that the relationships terms,  $dam$  and  $dumu$ , require the gender specification which is not implicit in the term, contrary to the terms of kinship, but has to be specified through appositions. It can be specified through the addition of adjectives as  $nita$  ('male') or  $munus$  ('female')<sup>x</sup>. The relative age can be also specified using adjective as  $gal$  (elder, lit. 'big') and  $banda_3^{da}$  (younger, lit. 'small'). Based on the data collected, this system identifies three generations in relation to Ego:

- parents, older generation;
- brothers, peer generation;
- children, younger generation.

Concerning relationships from the second kinship degree, terms were probably created by juxtaposing primary terminology, e.g.  $ad-da-ab-ba$ ,  $a-a-a$  (ayaya),  $ama-a-a$ , but in many cases they must be translated as a general idea, for example these terms can be translated also as 'the elderly' not just as 'grandfather/grandmother'. Adjectives added to the basic kinship terms are used to indicate certain ties, for example, to denote paternal or maternal grandparents the terms used are:  $ab-ba/ ad-da/ aya_2-gal/ gu-la$ , 'grandfather' and  $ama-gal/ gu-la$ , 'grandmother', but these cases are poorly attested and doubtfully interpreted (Verderame, in press). The lack of specific terms referring to this relationship, suggests that they were denoted by using siblings' terms. In conclusion, according to Morgan (1870) patterns of kinship terminologies explained in his above-mentioned work, the Sumerian kinship terminology system is similar in dynamics to the Malayan/Hawaiian one<sup>xi</sup>; it does mean that Ego distinguishes between relatives only on the basis of sex and generation. Consequently, there is no uncle term, mother's and father's brothers are included in the same category as 'parents'. All cousins are classified in the same group as 'brother/sister'. This system is the least descriptive and puts together many different relatives in the same categories. Morgan (1870) hypothesized that the Malayan/Hawaiian system was determined by a situation of 'primitive promiscuity' in which children called all members of their parental generation 'father' and 'mother' because paternity was impossible to define. Currently, there is no evidence of such practices in any of the cultures that use this terminology and people in these societies act differently towards their real parents and other individuals that they call 'father' or

‘mother’. Probably, the semantics of the Hawaiian kinship is related to the presence and influence of ambilineal descent systems. Civil (1974: 142f.) made this categorization of Sumerian terminology for the first time. More recently, various scholars, such as Verderame (in press) and Gonzalez Moratinos (in press), supported it. On the contrary, according to Götzelt (1995), the Sumerian system is similar to the Sudanese one. In his article, the author does not base his analysis on primary sources, but he proceeds to a reconstruction of all possible terms, not always documented. In analysing the kinship terminology, it is very important to distinguish between the terms used to talk *about* a relative and those used to talk *to* a relative, respectively the terms of reference and address. As we have said before, Sumerian and Akkadian are known only by written sources, this involves a considerable difficulty in knowing the terms of address due to their oral nature. In some literary texts, for example *Dumuzi's dream*, direct speeches are reported. In these texts there are some terms of kinship that we can consider as terms of address but there are no structural differences between them and those of reference seem to exist. The same kinship terms appear frequently in the vast Mesopotamian corpus, in both literary and administrative texts, but do not seem to be closely related to family relationships in the strict sense, but rather, these terms seem to be used symbolically to create a bond; a kind of fictive kinship. In the following paragraphs we will try to outline this idea.

## Outside the Family

In Sumerian texts, there is much evidence of kinship terms’ use outside the familial context, both in literature and administrative records. Epithets linked to the role of mother are attributed to the goddess Protectress of the city, for example Ĝatumdug is mentioned as ‘mother of Lagaš’ (ama lagaš<sup>ki</sup>) in the Gudea’s Cylinder A<sup>xii</sup>, the role of the goddess in protecting the city is associated with that of a mother in protecting her children. In Sumerian, there is no term for ‘citizen’, but as the goddess is considered the mother of the city so they are considered the children of the city<sup>xiii</sup>. The symbolic implications of using the terms just mentioned, need further study; for the moment it could be assumed that this terminological choice created an ideal relationship between the various citizens as if they were all ‘brothers’. As Bartash argues, ‘this secondary meaning uses the original meaning of *dumu* as kinship term in a figurative sense by analogy to designate a bond between a person and a larger social entity’ (2018: 9 f.). The term ‘brother’ is also found



outside the strictly familial context and can be added to the hypothetical list of terms used to express a kind of fictive kinship.

### *Like a Brother*

The passages that follow are extracts from the literary composition *Edubba C*, also known as *The advice of a supervisor to a younger scribe*. It consists of a dispute between a senior and a junior member of the Edubba, i.e. the scribal school. The senior member is not just an advanced student, but he is also a regular supervisor (*ugula*).

1-8<sup>xiv</sup>: (The supervisor speaks:) ‘Son of the Edubba (*dumu-e<sub>2</sub>-dub-ba*), come here to me, and let me explain to you what my teacher (*ummia*) revealed. Like you, I was once a youth and had a mentor (*šeš-gal* lit. ‘big brother’). The teacher assigned a task to me -- it was man's work. Like a springing reed, I leapt up and put myself to work. I did not depart from my teacher's instructions, and I did not start doing things on my own initiative. My mentor (*šeš-gal*) was delighted with my work on the assignment. He rejoiced that I was humble before him and he spoke in my favour.’

16-20: ‘He did not vaunt his knowledge: his words were modest. If he had vaunted his knowledge, people would have frowned. Do not waste time, do not rest at night -- get on with that work! Do not reject the pleasurable company of an advanced student (*šeš-gal*) or a junior student (*šeš-banda<sub>3</sub><sup>da</sup>*, lit. ‘little brother’): once you have come into contact with such great brains, you will make your own words worthier.’

In this case, the kinship terms *dumu* and *šeš* are used to indicate a hierarchical relationship, probably implying different tasks related to personal status. The use of the adjectives *banda<sub>3</sub><sup>da</sup>* (lit. junior, little) and *gal* (lit. senior, big) suggests that the experience gained changed the status of the scribe within the Edubba, creating a hierarchical stratification. Four figures are mentioned in this text: the *ummia* (the expert), the *šeš-gal* (the mentor), the *šeš-banda<sub>3</sub><sup>da</sup>* (the mentor's assistant or junior student) and the *dumu* (the novice). The terms of kinship have been used to indicate three of these relationships, perhaps to create more solidarity and cohesion in the common imagination about school, or perhaps even in practice. This is not the only case in the literature where *šeš-gal* is used to indicate a subordination. For example, in *Enmerkar and Ensubgirana*, Ensubgirana submits at the end of the poem saying that Enmerkar has always been the *šeš-gal* (Verderame, in press). Obviously, these are literary texts and an objection that

could be made is that these terms were used for stylistic choice, but this kind of ambiguity is also in the administrative texts.

### *Father of Many or None?*

As mentioned above, Ur III administrative texts are composed by various typologies<sup>xv</sup>, but no matter what kind of document it is, the people mentioned often are introduced by a sort of patronymic such as ‘PN<sub>1</sub> dumu PN<sub>2</sub>’(name *son/daughter of* name). Many scholars have wondered about the nature of this paternity, and whether it reflects a biological connection or if it is only a cultural connection. Dahl (2007) in his work about the ruling family of Umma affirms that:

‘It seems clear that the basic prosopographical information such as familial relationships as expressed in the seal-inscriptions can be trusted. The perception that the term *dumu* can refer to a business associate is borrowed from later Assyrian and Babylonian sources, whereas all third millennium BC Sumerian sources point to this being a genealogical term for son’ (2007: 12).

The seed of doubt may have already been planted thanks to the certainty that, in the subsequent periods, kinship terms were used to express more than familial ties. Therefore, we should not exclude that for the Ur III period. Pomponio (2013) analysed what he called ‘the dilemma of paternity’ through the study of Umma’s messenger texts (2013: 227-231). He argued that the word *dumu* could also be translated as ‘hierarchical subordinate’. To support his thesis, he considered three elements:

- the expression *dumu Ur-nigar* appears many times. Ur-nigar’s ‘*sons*’ may vary from a minimum of seventeen to a maximum of thirty-seven;
- the name of the same official appears as *dumu* of two different people;
- different generations of administrators are contemporary.

In the light of this accurate study, it is difficult to affirm that the term can indicate only a family relationship. This is not the only case from administrative sources, probably with these perspectives in mind, but numerous alternative ways of interpreting different texts could be considered.

## A Proposal for Reinterpretation

### *A First Approach to the Case*

Among the administrative documents of Ur III, there is an important Neo-Sumerian corpus composed of roughly 370 tablets concerning legal disputes. This corpus, known to scholars as *di-til-la*, is among the earliest known written evidence for ancient law. Through these documents it is possible to learn about some of the first evidence of legal proceedings in ancient Mesopotamia. The word *di-til-la* literally means ‘case closed’, the oldest evidence of this term appears in a text from Ešnunna dating to the Akkadian period (Falkenstein, 1956: 10ff.). Many scholars tried to elaborate a pattern to identify a *di-til-la* (Mercer 1913; Falkenstein 1956; Lafont 2000; Molina 2000), but the corpus’ complexity renders the task arduous. These documents allow the study of many aspects of daily life and family ties in ancient Sumer, such as marriage, inheritance, and even slavery. Lives and careers of some Sumerian officials of the administrative apparatus can be reconstructed thanks to prosopographical research, following their movements, promotions, private life, etc. Obviously, the points highlighted are the less sentimental and more pragmatic aspects of Sumerian society. A very interesting text belonging to the corpus of *di-til-la* is a tablet from Nippur containing two columns and two seals on each side, which is kept in a private collection. The document dates back to the *šu-numun* month (fourth month of the Nippur calendar) of the second year of Ibbi-Suen’s reign. It was published for the first time by J. M. Durand (1977). Because of the private ownership it was unknown for study until the publication of Durand and it was not included in the large collection of *di-til-la* by A. Falkenstein (1956). Studies of the texts have been proposed by: M. T. Roth (1984), C. Wilcke (1985), H. P. H. Petschow (1988), B. Lafont (2000), M. Molina (2000). There are discrepancies between the various translations provided by the authors, probably due to the state of preservation of the tablet and its inaccessibility, as well as the grammatical complexity of the text. Unfortunately, photos of the tablet are unavailable; the only picture of this text is a hand-copy by Durand, increasing the difficulty of interpreting the text. The tablet reports a trial history culminating in a death sentence and a division of inheritance.

### *Text*<sup>xvi</sup>

<sup>r.11-9</sup> *Roth translation*: Lugal-giškim-zi, *elder son* of the chief administrator of Inanna’s temple (dumu šeš-gal ugula e<sub>2</sub><sup>d</sup> Inanna-ke<sub>4</sub>), brought suit under the jurisdiction of Amar-Suen. The verdict is established, he (the ugula?) will be executed. The administrator

(ugula) of the Inanna temple pleased him<sup>xvii</sup> (Amar-Suen), the king let him live. Arad-mu the chief minister (sukkal-mah) was the judge (maškim).

r. I 1-9 *Wilcke translation*<sup>xviii</sup>: Lugal-agrig-zi, the *elder son* of the temple administrator of the Inanna, has stolen from the mouth of Amar-Suen. He was convicted and sentenced to death. The temple administrator of Inanna forgave him; the king gave him life. The ‘chief chancellor’ (sukkal-mah) Irgû was commissar (maškim).

r. I 10 – II 7<sup>A</sup> A second time, he (Lugal-giškim-zi) sued the administrator (ugula) of Inanna temple with the charge of ‘eating the cultic taboo’, the charge of (diverting) the ship, ghee, flour for the royal offering diverting them, the charge of (diverting) the ghee for the regular offering amounting about thirty litres (three sila<sub>3</sub>) per month and (the charge of) holding the butter of regular offering. he (Lugal-giškim-zi) initiated the legal proceedings against him (the ugula), before Arad-mu (*or Wilcke: Irgû*) the chief minister (sukkal-mah), Da-da the governor (ensi) of Nippur and Sag-Nanna-zu, he didn’t prove the charges and he was sentenced to death.

r. II 8- v. I 1 Further, concerning the inheritance of Lugal-giškim-zi, the ugula of Inanna’s temple awarded to Lu-bala-saga, his *younger son* (dumu šeš-banda<sub>3</sub>), namely the post of ugula of <sup>d</sup>Inanna’s temple, the residence and the associated ‘paternal’ accoutrements including the royal and ‘paternal’ possessions.

v. I 2-10 *Roth translation*: It has been given. Lu-bala-sa-ga, Sag-En-lil, Ur-A-ba-ba swore by the king that they would not contest his (the ugula’s) dividing (the estate) into thirds, the (assignment of) post of ugula of Inanna’s temple, the residence and the associated ‘paternal’ accoutrements including the royal and ‘paternal’ possessions.

v. I 2-10 *Wilcke translation*: Lugal-engar-du, his brother, and his heirs, wherever they are swore by the king that they would not contest his (the ugula’s) dividing (the estate) into thirds, the (assignment of) post of ugula of Inanna’s temple, the residence and the associated ‘paternal’ accoutrements including the royal and ‘paternal’ possessions.

v. I 11-12 Before Da-da the governor (ensi) of Nippur, the case was concluded.

v. II 1-5 fourth (šu-numun) month of years of Ibbi-Suen king of Ur (in which) the Inanna’s priestess (en) was chosen by means of the omens.

Seal<sup>1</sup> [Ibbi-Suen] god of the Land, the mighty king, the king of Ur, the king of the four heavenly corners. Da-[da] ensi of Nippur *son* of (dumu) Ur-Nanibgal governor (ensi) of Nippur, your servant.

Seal<sup>2</sup> Enlil-a-[mah] the ugula of Inanna's temple, the priest of En-lil-a, Lugal-engar-du his *son* (dumu).

### *Different Scholars, Different Points of View*

Depending on which transliteration we follow, different scenarios emerge, which can be summarised as follows (Table 2):

<b>Durand's interpretation</b>
<p>Storyline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lugal-giškim-zi, the elder brother's son of the supervisor of Innana's temple, appeals to Amar-Suen but the judgment was confirmed. He had been sentenced to death. The supervisor of the temple reconciled with him, the king had pardoned him.</li> <li>• A second time Lugal-giškim-zi sued against the temple supervisor but he did not prove the charges and he was executed.</li> <li>• Following the division of Lugal-giškim-zi's inheritance: Lu-bala-sa-ga inherits the role of temple' supervisor and paternal property.</li> </ul>
<p>Dramatis personae:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enlil-a-mah is the <i>father</i> of Lugal-engar-du;</li> <li>• Lugal-engar-du is the <i>uncle</i> of Lugal-giškim-zi and Lu-bala-sa-ga;</li> <li>• Lugal-giškim-zi is the son of <i>the elder brother</i> of Lugal-engar-du;</li> <li>• Lu-bala-sa-ga is the son of <i>the younger brother</i> of Lugal-engar-du;</li> </ul>

### Roth's interpretation

#### Storyline:

- Lugal-giškim-zi sued his father, Lugar-engar-du, then the administrator of Inanna's temple, during Amar-Suen's reign. The charge of this first trial is not recorded. In any case, the administrator was sentenced to death. He appeases the king, maybe by a financial remuneration and was pardoned.
- After at least twelve years, during the second year of Ibbi-Suen, Lugal-giškim-zi sued his father once again. About this trial the charges are specified: infringing the cultic taboo, interrupting and misappropriating foodstuff designed to various offerings. This time the charges were not substantiated and Lugal-giškim-zi was sentenced to death for his false accusations.
- The remaining part of the document concerns the division of inheritance resulting from the execution of Lugal-giškim-zi. Lu-bala-sa-ga. The younger brother received the inheritance portion of Lugal-giškim-zi, that consist in property and the role of administrator of Inanna's temple.
- Finally, his two brothers (Sag-En-lil and Ur-A-ba-ba) swore in the name of king that they would not contest the reassignment of the inheritance.

#### Dramatis personae:

- Lugar-engar-du is the administrator of Inanna's temple;
- Lugal-giškim-zi is the son of Lugar-engar-du, he is *the elder brother*;
- Lu-bala-sa-ga is the son of Lugar-engar-du, he is *the younger son*;
- Sag-En-lil and Ur-A-ba-ba are *sons* of Lugar-engar-du, they appear as witnesses.

<b>Wilcke's interpretation</b>
<p>Storyline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lugal-giškim-zi was charged with stealing 'from the Amar-Suen's mouth', he was convicted and sentenced to death. The temple administrator of Inanna forgave him, and he was pardoned.</li> <li>• A second time, during the second year of Amar-Suen, he accused the Inanna's temple administrator of infringing the cultic taboo, interrupting and misappropriating foodstuff designed to various offerings. The charges were not proved and Lugal-giškim-zi was sentenced to death.</li> <li>• Following, the inheritance of Lugal-giškim-zi was given to the temple administrator of Inanna's younger son, Lugal-bala-sa-ga.</li> <li>• In the end of the text, Lugal-engar-du, his brother and his heirs would not contest the inheritance's division.</li> </ul>
<p>Dramatis personae:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enlil-a-mah is the administrator of Inanna's temple;</li> <li>• Lugal-giškim-zi is the son of Enlil-a-mah, he is <i>the elder brother</i>;</li> <li>• Lu-bala-sa-ga is the son of Enlil-a-mah, he is <i>the younger son</i>;</li> <li>• Lugal-engar-du is another son of Enlil-a-mah, he appears as witness;</li> </ul>

**Table 2:** Interpretations of RA71 according to different scholars.

Durand (1977) explained kinship terms that appear in the text as a juxtaposition of descriptive terms<sup>xix</sup>, like the Swedish word '*farbror*' composed by '*far*' (father) and '*bror*' (brother) that means 'uncle'. Likewise, in his opinion, *dumu-šeš-gal* and *dumu-šeš-banda* can be translated as 'son of elder brother' and 'son of younger brother'. Roth, Zettler, Wilcke, Molina and Lafont interpreted the tablet in different ways but all of them agreed about considering *dumu-šeš-gal* and *dumu-šeš-banda* as appositional phrases, identifying vertically and horizontally the relationship among siblings. To better understand the text, a prosopographical enquiry is necessary, at least for the main characters. Hallo (1972) and Zettler (1984) tried to draw a family tree of this family by analysing administrative texts from the temple archive of Nippur.

*A different approach: a case study*

Many years have passed since the publishing of above-mentioned publications. In this article, prosopographical enquiries have been carried out using the most recent records about the main characters that appear in the above analysed text<sup>xx</sup>, Enli-a-mah, Lugal-giškim-zi, Lu-bala-sa-ga and the Lugal-engar-du's *sons*.

Enlil-a-mah is known only from the seals of his *son* and successor, Lugal-engar-du. A seal<sup>xxi</sup> of the latter is conserved, datable to the forty-sixth year of Šulgi's reign, in which he appears with the title of supervisor of the temple of Inanna. This means that, probably during the reigns of Amar-Suen and Ibbi-Suen, he was the supervisor in office. The seals of Lugal-engar-du in which Enlil-a-mah is mentioned are as follows (Table 3):

Tablet	Date	Transliteration
BDTNS: 071940 Museum No. IM 061624 Iraq Museum	Amar-Suen (AS) -	[ <sup>d</sup> En]-[lil <sub>2</sub> ]-a <sub>2</sub> -[mah] / [ugula e <sub>2</sub> ] <sup>d</sup> Inanna / [nu]-eš <sub>3</sub> <sup>d</sup> En-[lil <sub>2</sub> -la <sub>2</sub> ] / [Lugal]-engar-du <sub>10</sub> dumu-ni
BDTNS: 034879 Museum No. NBC 10539 = BC 013506 Yale University	Ibbi-Suen (IS) 27	Lugal-engar-du <sub>10</sub> / ugula [e <sub>2</sub> ] <sup>d</sup> Inanna / nu- eš <sub>3</sub> <sup>d</sup> En-lil <sub>2</sub> -la <sub>2</sub> / dumu <sup>d</sup> En-lil <sub>2</sub> -a <sub>2</sub> -mah / ugula e <sub>2</sub> <sup>d</sup> Inanna / nu-eš <sub>3</sub> <sup>d</sup> En-lil <sub>2</sub> -la <sub>2</sub> arad <sub>2</sub> -zu
BDTNS: 078170 Museum No. NBC 11199 = BC 014049 Yale University	AS -	Lugal-engar-du <sub>10</sub> / ugula [e <sub>2</sub> ] <sup>d</sup> Inanna / nu- eš <sub>3</sub> <sup>d</sup> En-/lil <sub>2</sub> -la <sub>2</sub> / dumu <sup>d</sup> En-lil <sub>2</sub> -a <sub>2</sub> -mah / ugula e <sub>2</sub> <sup>d</sup> Inanna / nu-eš <sub>3</sub> <sup>d</sup> En-lil <sub>2</sub> -la <sub>2</sub> arad <sub>2</sub> -zu
BDTNS: 078192 Museum No. NBC 11330 = BC 014177 Yale University	AS -	Lugal-engar-du <sub>10</sub> / ugula [e <sub>2</sub> ] <sup>d</sup> Inanna / nu- eš <sub>3</sub> <sup>d</sup> En-/lil <sub>2</sub> -la <sub>2</sub> / dumu <sup>d</sup> En-lil <sub>2</sub> -a <sub>2</sub> -mah / ugula e <sub>2</sub> <sup>d</sup> Inanna / nu-eš <sub>3</sub> <sup>d</sup> En-lil <sub>2</sub> -la <sub>2</sub> arad <sub>2</sub> -zu



Tablet	Date	Transliteration
BDTNS: 078193 Museum No. NBC 11331 = BC 014178 Yale University	AS -	Lugal-engar-du <sub>10</sub> / ugula [e <sub>2</sub> ] <sup>d</sup> Inanna / nu-eš <sub>3</sub> <sup>d</sup> En-/lil <sub>2</sub> -la <sub>2</sub> / dumu <sup>d</sup> En-lil <sub>2</sub> -a <sub>2</sub> -mah / ugula e <sub>2</sub> <sup>d</sup> Inanna / nu-eš <sub>3</sub> <sup>d</sup> En-lil <sub>2</sub> -la <sub>2</sub> arad <sub>2</sub> -zu
BDTNS: 078195 Museum No. NBC 11333 = BC 014180 Yale University	AS -	Lugal-engar-du <sub>10</sub> / ugula [e <sub>2</sub> ] <sup>d</sup> Inanna / nu-eš <sub>3</sub> <sup>d</sup> En-/lil <sub>2</sub> -la <sub>2</sub> / dumu <sup>d</sup> En-lil <sub>2</sub> -a <sub>2</sub> -mah / ugula e <sub>2</sub> <sup>d</sup> Inanna / nu-eš <sub>3</sub> <sup>d</sup> En-lil <sub>2</sub> -la <sub>2</sub> arad <sub>2</sub> -zu
BDTNS: 194898 Museum No. A 30769 Oriental Institute Museum	AS -	Lugal-engar-du <sub>10</sub> / ugula [e <sub>2</sub> ] <sup>d</sup> Inanna / nu-eš <sub>3</sub> <sup>d</sup> En-/lil <sub>2</sub> -la <sub>2</sub> / dumu <sup>d</sup> En-lil <sub>2</sub> -a <sub>2</sub> -mah / ugula e <sub>2</sub> <sup>d</sup> Inanna / nu-eš <sub>3</sub> <sup>d</sup> En-lil <sub>2</sub> -la <sub>2</sub> arad <sub>2</sub> -zu

**Table 3:** Seals of Lugal-engar-du dumu Enlil-a-mah

The name Enlil-a-mah appears also in three other texts from Puzriš-Dagān. In these texts he does not appear as ugula but as *sagi* or *sagi maškim*, but no *patronymic* is recorded. These texts range from the reign of Amar-Suen to that of Ibbi-Suen. We do not know if it is the same person or not. The texts concerned are listed in Table 4:

Tablet	Date	Transliteration
BDTNS: 009407 Museum No. MAT 260 Museo di Antichità di Torino	AS 9	<sup>d</sup> En-lil <sub>2</sub> -a <sub>2</sub> -mah <i>sagi maškim</i>
BDTNS: 034468 Museum No. Crozer 106 Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School - Crozer Museum	Šu-Suen (ŠS) -	<sup>d</sup> En-lil <sub>2</sub> -[a <sub>2</sub> -ma]h <sup>1?</sup> <i>sagi maškim (or <sup>d</sup>En-lil<sub>2</sub>-[ri-iš-šu]m)</i>
BDTNS: 022030 Museum No. NYPLC 332 New York Public Library	IS 02	<sup>d</sup> En-lil <sub>2</sub> -a <sub>2</sub> -mah <i>sagi</i>

**Table 4:** Occurrences of Enlil-a-mah in the Puzriš-Dagān documentation.

Lugal-giškim-zi occurs several times in many texts from Nippur, Table 5 lists the various instances:

<b>Tablet</b>	<b>Date</b>
BDTNS: 018300 Museum No. FLP 1351 Free Library of Philadelphia	Šulgi (Š) 48
BDTNS: 034829 Museum No. IM 061461 Iraq Museum	-/-
BDTNS: 001672 Museum No. CBS 11574 University of Pennsylvania - Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology	ŠŠ 6
BDTNS: 001700 Museum No. CBS 11212 University of Pennsylvania - Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology	-/-
BDTNS: 025081 Museum No. CBS 09031 University of Pennsylvania - Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology	IS 2
BDTNS: 025227 Museum No. CBS 10154 University of Pennsylvania - Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology	-/-
BDTNS: 025227 Museum No. CBS 14603 University of Pennsylvania - Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology	AS 5
BDTNS: 025377 Museum No. CBS 15023 University of Pennsylvania - Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology	ŠŠ 9
BDTNS: 025382 Museum No. CBS 15061 University of Pennsylvania - Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology	ŠŠ 6
BDTNS: 025560 Museum No. UM 29-16-024 University of Pennsylvania - Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology	ŠŠ 7

Tablet	Date
BDTNS: 014769 Museum No. Ist Ni 00423	AS 5
BDTNS: 014948 Museum No. Ist Ni 02023 İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri	-/-
BDTNS: 009961 Museum No. HS 1021(a) Universität Jena	ŠS 5
BDTNS: 010173 Museum No. HS 1233 Universität Jena	ŠS 7
BDTNS: 030036 Museum No. AUAM 73.0999 Andrews University - Horn Archaeological Museum	ŠS 7
BDTNS: 193756 Museum No. A 029172 Oriental Institute Museum	-/-
BDTNS: 018271 Museum No. FLP 1159 Free Library of Philadelphia	ŠS 9
BDTNS: 025032 Museum No. CBS 08409 University of Pennsylvania - Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology	-/-
BDTNS: 014809 Museum No. Ist Ni 00067 İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri	AS 9
BDTNS: 014996 Museum No. Ist Ni 00400 İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri	ŠS 1

**Table 5:** Occurrences of Lugal-giškim-zi.

In the records the name Lugal-giškim-zi can be found followed by various *patronymics*, the various instances are listed below (Table 6):

Tablet	Date	Transliteration
BDTNS: 018300 Museum No. FLP 1351	Š 48	Lugal-giškim-zi/ dub-sar/ dumu Inim-sa <sub>6</sub>
BDTNS: 025081 Museum No. CBS 09031	IS 2	1 Lugal-giškim-zi/ dumu Ur- <sup>d</sup> Nin-urta
BDTNS: 025377 Museum No. CBS 15023	ŠS 3	Lugal-giškim-[...]/ dub-[sar]/ dumu Ur- <sup>d</sup> Asar- [lu <sub>2</sub> ? -hi?]
BDTNS: 014948 Museum No. Ist Ni 02023	-/-	Lugal-giškim-zi/ dub-sar/ dumu Lugal-a-ma-[ru]

**Table 6:** Occurrences of the name Lugal-giškim-zi followed by *patronymics*.

The first record of the name Lugal-giškim-zi in Nippur documentation is in the tablet FLP 1351 dated to the forty-eighth year of the reign of Šulgi as ‘scribe *son* of Inim-sa’. During Amar-Suen’s reign, there are two records from Nippur<sup>xxii</sup> and one from Puzriš-Dagān<sup>xxiii</sup> which report the name of Lugal-giškim-zi, but we know that in this period the first trial between him and the *ugula* of Inanna’s temple happened. Unfortunately, this document was not found. During the reign of Šu-Suen there are approximately nine attestations of this name in the administrative texts. However, one is particularly interesting. The text CBS 11574 dates to sixth year of Šu-Suen and deals with a controversy about the role of ‘the supervisor of sixty’ (*ugula geš-ša<sub>3</sub>*) between Lugal-giškim-zi and Ur-Iškur, as it seems that the former accuses the latter of not having left him the role of supervisor. Concerning the period of Ibbi-Suen, Lugal-giškim-zi occurs only twice, once in the text considered here, and once again among the witnesses of a repayment of a silver loan (CBS 09031). In this text, however, he is named *son* of Ur-Ninurta. It is not possible to be sure that he is always the same person, perhaps identified by different *patronymics*; also because in the following seal-legends Lugal-giškim-zi is designated as *sanga*:

<sup>d</sup>En-lil<sub>2</sub>-la<sub>2</sub>-an-z[u?] dub-sar dumu Lugal-giškim-zi šanga<sub>x</sub> <sup>d</sup>En-lil<sub>2</sub>-la<sub>2</sub> (undated text, A 029172);

Ur-<sup>d</sup>Ku<sub>3</sub>-su<sub>20</sub>(=ŠIM) dub-sar dumu Lugal-giškim-zi sanga<sub>x</sub> <sup>d</sup>En-lil<sub>2</sub>-la<sub>2</sub>-ka  
(undated text, CBS 08409).

The name Lu-bala-saga also occurs many times in the texts from Nippur (Table 7):

Tablet	Date
BDTNS: 022048 Museum No. NYPLC 372 New York Public Library	- /-
BDTNS: 031517 Museum No. IM 61646 Iraq Museum	ŠŠ 5
BDTNS: 034802 Museum No. IM --- Iraq Museum	- /-
BDTNS: 034803 Museum No. IM 059670 Iraq Museum	- /-
BDTNS: 034817 Museum No. A 31078 Oriental Institute Museum	- /-
BDTNS: 034822 Museum No. A 31099 Oriental Institute Museum	- /-
BDTNS: 034836 Museum No. IM 061? Iraq Museum	- /-
BDTNS: 034877 Museum No. NBC 10630 = BC 013597 Yale University	- /-
BDTNS: 034895 Museum No. IM 061696 Iraq Museum	ŠŠ 7

<b>Tablet</b>	<b>Date</b>
BDTNS: 077519 Museum No. NBC 06730 = BC 009714 Yale University	Š 33
BDTNS: 166734 Museum No. N 0627 University of Pennsylvania - Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology	- /-
BDTNS: 157780 Museum No. Ni. 2112 İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri	ŠŠ 8
BDTNS: 018264 Museum No. FLP 1143 Free Library of Philadelphia, Philadelphia	IS 2
BDTNS: 025311 Museum No. CBS 13554 (+) CBS 13554° University of Pennsylvania - Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology	- /-
BDTNS: 025443 Museum No. N 3650 + UM 29-13-508 University of Pennsylvania - Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology	ŠŠ 5
BDTNS: 025503 Museum No. UM 29-15-725 University of Pennsylvania - Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology	- /-
BDTNS: 025656 Museum No. N 0821 University of Pennsylvania - Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology	ŠŠ 9
BDTNS: 025773 Museum No. UM 55-21-202 University of Pennsylvania - Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology	IS 5
BDTNS: 025811 Museum No. UM 55-21-226 University of Pennsylvania - Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology	IS 1
BDTNS: 014779 Museum No. Ist Ni 13450 İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri	IS 2

<b>Tablet</b>	<b>Date</b>
BDTNS: 014802 Museum No. Ist Ni 13501 İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri	ŠS 1
BDTNS: 014893 Museum No. Ist Ni 02032 İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri	Š 25- 32-44 / IS 3
BDTNS: 060720 Museum No. ROM 925.62.160 Royal Ontario Museum	IS 2
BDTNS: 060936 Museum No. ROM 910x209.083 Royal Ontario Museum	IS 2
BDTNS: 031085 Museum No. Ist PD — İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri	ŠS 5
BDTNS: 009950 Museum No. HS 1010 Universität Jena	AS 4
BDTNS: 009970 Museum No. HS 1030 Universität Jena	IS 1
BDTNS: 009973 Museum No. HS 1033(a) Universität Jena	IS 1
BDTNS: 010017 Museum No. HS 1077(a) Universität Jena	ŠS 3
BDTNS: 010027 Museum No. HS 1087 Universität Jena	ŠS 5
BDTNS: 010083 Museum No. HS 1143 Universität Jena	ŠS 5

Tablet	Date
BDTNS: 010189 Museum No. HS 1249 Universität Jena	ŠS 5
BDTNS: 010198 Museum No. HS 1258 Universität Jena	ŠS 1
BDTNS: 002487 Museum No. Bod. A 018 Ashmolean Museum	ŠS 9

**Table 7:** Occurrences of Lu-bala-saga.

As in the previous case, the name Lu-bala-saga frequently appears followed by different *patronymics* (Table 8):

Tablet	Date	Transliteration
BDTNS: 077519 Museum No. NBC 06730 = BC 009714 Yale University	Š 33	Lu <sub>2</sub> -bala-sa <sub>6</sub> -ga dub-sar dumu Lu <sub>2</sub> - <sup>d</sup> Nin-šubur ugula e <sub>2</sub> <sup>d</sup> Nin-urta-ka
BDTNS: 022048 Museum No. NYPLC 372 New York Public Library	- /-	Lu <sub>2</sub> -bala-sa <sub>6</sub> -ga dumu Šeš-kal-la
BDTNS: 034802 Museum No. IM --- Iraq Museum	- /-	[Lu <sub>2</sub> ]-[bala-sa <sub>6</sub> -ga]/ dub-[sar]/ dumu Lugal- engar-[du <sub>10</sub> ]/ ugula e <sub>2</sub> [ <sup>d</sup> Inanna]-[ka]
BDTNS: 025443 Museum No. N 3650 + UM 29- 13-508 University of Pennsylvania - Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology	ŠS 5	Lu <sub>2</sub> -bala!-sa <sub>6</sub> -ga/ dumu In-na-sa <sub>6</sub>
BDTNS: 014779 Museum No. Ist Ni 13450 İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri	IS 2	Lu <sub>2</sub> -bala-sa <sub>6</sub> -ga/ dumu Lugal-a <sub>2</sub> -zi-da

**Table 8:** Occurrences of Lu-bala-saga in followed by *patronymics*.



The first record of Lu-bala-saga is during Šulgi's reign but his seal contains the appellation of 'scribe, the *son* of Lu-Nin-šubur, the supervisor of the temple of Ninurta' (NBC 06730 = BC 009714). During the Šu-Suen period, the name Lu-bala-saga is mentioned in many texts about various transactions, for a total of about thirteen times. The name Lu-bala-saga is attested for the last time during the third year of the reign of Ibbi-Suen, and again under the reign of this king the name is linked to a different patronymic, 'Lu-bala-saga *son* of Lugal-a-zi-da' (Ist Ni 13450). It is interesting to underline that the task of scribe is certainly related to the Lu-bala-saga mentioned in the text analysed in detail above. This can be asserted in the light of the seals found that report the inscription 'Lu-bala-saga, scribe, son of Lugal-engar-du, the supervisor of the temple of Inanna' (BDTNS 034802). Even in this case it is difficult to understand if the texts always mention the same person with different patronymics or not. Further research is undoubtedly necessary before a certain conclusion can be reached.

There are many references to Lugal-engar-du in the records, as can be seen from the Table 9 below:

<b>Tablet</b>	<b>Date</b>
BDTNS: 034797 Museum No. IM 058896 Iraq Museum	AS 9
BDTNS: 034802 Museum No. IM --- Iraq Museum	- /-
BDTNS: 034812 Museum No. IM 059729 Iraq Museum	- /-
BDTNS: 034836 Museum No. IM --- Iraq Museum	- /-
BDTNS: 034845 Museum No. IM 061537 Iraq Museum	- /-

<b>Tablet</b>	<b>Date</b>
BDTNS: 034868 Museum No. IM 061716 Iraq Museum	- /-
BDTNS: 034879 Museum No. IM 061624 Iraq Museum	- /-
BDTNS: 071940 Museum No. NBC 10539 = BC 013506 Yale University	AS -
BDTNS: 072350 Museum No. NBC 10590 = BC 013557 Yale University	- /-
BDTNS: 078170 Museum No. NBC 11199 = BC 014049 Yale University	AS -
BDTNS: 071897 Museum No. NBC 11314 = BC 014163 Yale University	Š 46
BDTNS: 078192 Museum No. NBC 11330 = BC 014177 Yale University	AS -
BDTNS: 078193 Museum No. NBC 11331 = BC 014178 Yale University	AS / - / -
BDTNS: 078195 Museum No. NBC 11333 = BC 014180 Yale University	AS -
BDTNS: 171488 Museum No. AO 22312 Musée du Louvre, Paris	Š -
BDTNS: 157753 Museum No. Ni. 1443	- /-

<b>Tablet</b>	<b>Date</b>
BDTNS: 024964 Museum No. CBS 08239 University of Pennsylvania - Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology	IS 2
BDTNS: 024998 Museum No. CBS 08353 University of Pennsylvania - Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology	IS 3
BDTNS: 025005 Museum No. CBS 08365 University of Pennsylvania - Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology	IS 3
BDTNS: 025132 Museum No. CBS 09241 University of Pennsylvania - Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology	AS 2
BDTNS: 025149 Museum No. CBS 09540 University of Pennsylvania - Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology	Š - /-
BDTNS: 025287 Museum No. CBS 13390 University of Pennsylvania - Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology	Š 47
BDTNS: 025289 Museum No. CBS 13396 University of Pennsylvania - Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology	- /-
BDTNS: 025327 Museum No. CBS 13724 University of Pennsylvania - Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology	AS 7
BDTNS: 025691 Museum No. IM 058022 Iraq Museum	- /-
BDTNS: 025781 Museum No. UM 55-21-210 University of Pennsylvania - Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology	ŠŠ 5
BDTNS: 025827 Museum No. UM 55-21-262 University of Pennsylvania - Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology	- /-

<b>Tablet</b>	<b>Date</b>
BDTNS: 014940 Museum No. Ist Ni 13308 İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri	ŠS 4
BDTNS: 014945 Museum No. Ist Ni. 1199 İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri	Š -
BDTNS: 060532 Museum No. IM – Iraq Museum	- /-
BDTNS: 031615 Museum No. IM 061558 Iraq Museum	- /-
BDTNS: 031616 Museum No. A 31164 Oriental Institute Museum	- /-
BDTNS: 031617 Museum No. IM 061712 Iraq Museum	- /-
BDTNS: 031618 Museum No. NBC 11300 = BC 014149 Yale University	- /-
BDTNS: 194898 Museum No. A 30769 Oriental Institute Museum	- /-
BDTNS: 166655 Museum No. CBS 11788 University of Pennsylvania - Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology	ŠS 2
BDTNS: 009957 Museum No. HS 1017 Universität Jena	ŠS 4
BDTNS: 010286 Museum No. HS 1346 Universität Jena	Š - /-

**Table 9:** Occurrences of Lugal-engar-du.

Many of these texts and their seals have been analysed in the past by Hallo (1972) and Zettler (1984). However, this article focuses on who are those described as Lugal-engar-du's *sons*, rather than on himself and his career. From the available texts is possible to deduce the following scenario, presented in Table 10:

Tablet	Date	Transliteration
BDTNS: 034802; 034836 Museum No. IM ---; IIM --- Iraq Museum	- /-	[Lu <sub>2</sub> ]-[bala-sa <sub>6</sub> -ga]/ dub- [sar]/ dumu Lugal-engar- [du <sub>10</sub> ]/ ugula e <sub>2</sub> [ <sup>d</sup> Inanna]-[ka]
BDTNS: 034845 Museum No. IM 061537 Iraq Museum	- /-	Sag- <sup>d</sup> En-lil <sub>2</sub> -la <sub>2</sub> ugula e <sub>2</sub> <sup>d</sup> Inanna nu-eš <sub>3</sub> <sup>d</sup> En-lil <sub>2</sub> dumu Lugal-engar-du <sub>10</sub> ugula e <sub>2</sub> <sup>d</sup> Inanna-ka [arad <sub>2</sub> - zu]
BDTNS: 024964; 014940 Museum No. CBS 08239; Ist Ni 13308 University of Pennsylvania - Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology	IS 2- ŠŠ 4	Ur- <sup>d</sup> En-dag-[ga] / dub- [sar]/ dumu Lugal-engar- du <sub>10</sub>
BDTNS: 025132 Museum No. CBS 09241 University of Pennsylvania - Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology	AS 2	In-ta dumu Lugal-engar- du <sub>10</sub>
BDTNS: 009957 Museum No. HS 1017 Universität Jena	ŠŠ 4	Šeš-kal-la/ dumu Lugal- engar-du <sub>10</sub>
BDTNS: 024998; 025005 Museum No. CBS 08353; CBS 08365 University of Pennsylvania - Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology	IS 3- IS 3	Ur-Tum-al/ dumu Lugal- engar-du <sub>10</sub>
BDTNS: 034812 Museum No. IM 059729 Iraq Museum	- /-	Ur- <sup>d</sup> A-ba-ba / dub-sar/ dumu Lugal-engar-du <sub>10</sub> / ugula e <sub>2</sub> <sup>d</sup> Inanna-ka

**Table 10:** Lugal-engar-du's *sons*.

It can be said that there are many sons of Lugal-Engar-du, many more than there are sons mentioned in his inheritance division. In Roth's (1984) transliteration of the di-til-la, only Ur-A-ba-ba, Sag-Enlil and Lu-bala-saga are mentioned. Why? Perhaps are they not sons of the same person named Lugal-engar-du? Or had they not the same right to inheritance? Or the term 'son' should maybe not be understood in the strict sense. Perhaps the inheritance does not concern the paternal estate but is a reallocation of the temple assets given in management to the *ugula*. Many of Lugal-engar-du's *sons* are referred to as 'scribe,' a job that can be considered subordinate to that of the temple supervisor, so a further hypothesis that may be brought forward is to interpret the term 'dumu' as 'hierarchical subordinate' and not as 'son' (Pomponio, 2013). If *dumu* denotes a hierarchical subordination, then the appositions *šeš-gal* and *šeš-banda<sub>3</sub>* would be nothing more than the role occupied in the hierarchical scale within the administration of the temple of Inanna, these terms would indicate respectively the higher official and the lower one. This use would therefore be similar to that used in the scribal school (*Edubba*), as can be deduced from the composition *Edubba C*, analysed above.

## Conclusions

The extent of Neo-Sumerian records allows one to highlight many details of this culture, but all the same it is like looking through a keyhole. Unfortunately, many aspects are still missing or unclear. The aim of this paper was not to find an answer, but rather to present possibilities and raise questions. Over the years, many scholars have wondered what kinship was, without finding an univocal answer. Despite being a foundation of cultural anthropology studies, further investigation is required to better understand its nature. It is certain that kinship can develop in many different ways, depending on socio-cultural environment of each society. It is very complicated to avoid interpreting the data according to one's own cultural superstructure, but it is necessary to prevent any misinterpretations. Furthermore, talking about family and family bonds is more difficult if the field of investigation concerns ancient civilizations. Because of its multiform aspect, to investigate kinship in societies known only by indirect sources, an interdisciplinary approach is required. It is not enough to focus on singular aspect of the issue; on the contrary, a lexicographic, anthropological and philological analysis must be carried out. In the Sumerian documentation of the third millennium B.C., the use of terms of kinship is attested in many extra-family contexts. In the previous paragraphs both literary and

administrative texts have been used as examples to investigate this ambiguous use of kinship terms. Each term has a series of intrinsic meanings; if a term of kinship is applied to an individual, that person can assume rights and duties related to that particular family figure. In the common imagination, a father or an older brother, for example, are both figures worthy of respect, but in different ways. Prosopographical investigations are a turning point, thanks to which it has been possible to become aware of the lives of many people, creating real social networks. It is necessary to understand whether the basis of these social networks is the biological kinship or rather a fictive kinship. The term *dumu*, for a long time, in the context of Ur III, has been translated only with the word son, without dwelling on the question of whether or not there is an effective genetic link. Probably a broader interpretation of the term could solve some idiosyncratic interpretations in certain cases.

The text analysed in detail in this article was chosen, despite the inherent difficulties it presented, to highlight how a broader analysis can open up new prospects. A more historiographical analysis was also chosen, in order to try reinterpreting the text from a new point of view in which kinship terminology could also be used to identify hierarchical relationships in the workplace. In the *di-til-la* analysed above, there are characters who, within the Neo-Sumerian documentation from Nippur, have different *patronymics*, and sometimes also different professions, usually that of the scribe which can perhaps be considered the starting point of some careers such as that of *ugula*. In the light of these data, it can be hypothesised that the *patronymic* can refer to line manager and not only to a family relative, so that changing job would change the *patronymic*. In the above-mentioned case, there are also terms such as *šeš-gal* and *šeš-banda<sub>3</sub>*, which have been interpreted as terms indicating levels of experience in the workplace, for example in scribal schools. Obviously, there are still many questions to be answered, which can probably be solved by further studies. For example, increasing our knowledge about social networks may enable us to shed light on kinship terminology and to resolve doubts about the homonyms recorded in the different texts. Further studies may also investigate whether the use of kinship terminology outside the familial context implied symbolic relationships similar to relatives or not, that is the acquisition of rights and duties towards someone according to the kinship terminology used in a specific context or if this vocabulary was only used for convenience and pragmatism.

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<sup>i</sup> For an introduction to the Neo-Sumerian period see Sallaberger (1999)

<sup>ii</sup> For a brief analysis of ethnic components in ancient Mesopotamia see Verderame (2017, pp. 4-8)

<sup>iii</sup> For a discussion about the relationship between Akkadian and Sumerian see Michalowski (2007) and Woods (2007)

<sup>iv</sup> In some parts of the world, for example in Italy, it is quite common to call the closest friends of their parents ‘Uncle’ or ‘Auntie’, or, in a friendly and slang way, you can refer to your friends with terms such as ‘brother’ or ‘sister’. In both cases there is no biological link between the individuals involved, but it is a fictive relationship. As for fake affiliations, it is not uncommon to find fictitious indications about kinship on personal profiles in social media. For example, it’s a youthful trend to include close friends on the sibling list.

<sup>v</sup> About kinship anthropology and concerning voluntary or fictive kinship, important papers are those of: Ballweg (1969); Dziebel (2007); Galvin, et al. (2019), Nam (2005); Nelson (2013 and 2014); Norbeck and Befu (1958); Pitt-Rivers (1973).

<sup>vi</sup> For a more detailed study of the household in early Mesopotamia see Gelb (1979).

<sup>vii</sup> For an exhaustive study of the Sumerian family see Verderame (in press).

<sup>viii</sup> G. Marchesi, (2004: 180: f).

<sup>ix</sup> For an analysis of these terms please refer to Verderame (in press).

<sup>x</sup> For a full discussion about *dumu* see Bartash (2018).

<sup>xi</sup> Murdok (1949) would later classify this system as "Hawaiian" in his work.

<sup>xii</sup> *Gudea Cylinder A xx 17-18*: ama lagaš<sup>ki</sup> kug <sup>d</sup>ga<sub>2</sub>-tum<sub>3</sub>-dug<sub>3</sub>-ke<sub>4</sub> šeg<sub>12</sub>-bi kur-ku<sub>4</sub>-a mu-ni-tud

<sup>xiii</sup> For an example of the use of *dumu* as ‘citizen’, see the tablet kept at the Free Library of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA, USA; Museum No. FLP 0663.



<sup>xiv</sup> The translation of the text 'Edubba C' has been adapted by the author, based on the material published by Vanstiphout (2003) and on the online source ETCSL (The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature).

<sup>xv</sup> Among the main textual typologies are: reports of barley payments for workers and officers; barley or silver loans; measurement of fields; forecasts of the harvest; reports of workforce employment; the reporting of transactions involving different types of products and artifacts and their management.

<sup>xvi</sup> The text has not been collated. In case of different reading of cuneiform writing made by different authors, all the interpretations are reported. When it is not specified to whom the translation belongs, it is because there are no differences between the authors' translations.

<sup>xvii</sup> Maybe he paid a financial penalty.

<sup>xviii</sup> Wilcke's article is originally in German, the English translation is author's.

<sup>xix</sup> Descriptive terms unequivocally indicate a single relationship between Ego and Alter.

<sup>xx</sup> The texts used for this enquiry all come from Nippur, unless otherwise specified.

<sup>xxi</sup> Nies Babylonian Collection (NBC) 11314, Yale Babylonian Collection, New Haven, Connecticut, USA.

<sup>xxii</sup> BDTNS 014769; BDTNS 025375.

<sup>xxiii</sup> BDTNS 029673.

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