

## CHAPTER I

### Introduction: Early Civilization and Political Organization in Babylonia<sup>1</sup>

The earliest large urban agglomeration in Mesopotamia was the city known as Uruk in later texts. There, around 3000 B.C., certain distinctive features of historic Mesopotamian civilization emerged: the cylinder seal, a system of writing that soon became cuneiform, a repertoire of religious symbolism, and various artistic and architectural motifs and conventions.<sup>2</sup> Another feature of Mesopotamian civilization in the early historic periods, the constellation of more or less independent city-states resistant to the establishment of a strong central political force, was probably characteristic of this proto-historic period as well. Uruk, by virtue of its size, must have played a dominant role in southern Babylonia, and the city of Kish probably played a similar role in the north.

From the period that archaeologists call Early Dynastic II (ED II), beginning about 2700 B.C.,<sup>3</sup> the appearance of walls around Babylonian cities suggests that inter-city warfare had become institutionalized. The earliest royal inscriptions, which date to this period, belong to kings of Kish, a northern Babylonian city, but were found in the Diyala region, at Nippur, at Adab and at Girsu. Those at Adab and Girsu are from the later part of ED II and are in the name of Mesalim, king of Kish, accompanied by the names of the respective local rulers.<sup>4</sup> The king of Kish thus exercised hegemony far beyond the walls of his own city, and the memory of this particular king survived in native historical traditions for centuries: the Lagash-Umma border was represented in the inscriptions from Lagash as having been determined by the god Enlil, but actually drawn by Mesalim, king of Kish (IV.1). As a result of this early hegemony, the title "king of Kish" came to be used as a prestige title by any Babylonian ruler strong enough to exercise some sort of hegemony over all of Babylonia, or at least over the northern part.<sup>5</sup>

By the beginning of Early Dynastic III (ED III), around 2500 B.C., this northern part

<sup>1</sup>See section IA of the bibliography for the basic introductions to ancient Mesopotamia in general and the late Presargonic period in particular. It will be assumed that the nonspecialist reader has acquainted himself with at least the works of Oppenheim, Kramer and Bottéro listed there.

A somewhat different account of the political organization of late Presargonic Sumer can be found in Westenholz (Bibl. III). The theory of a Sumerian league with one "great king" is, for me stretching the evidence (though new evidence may make it more probable). For Jacobsen's evidence for such a league in the Fara tablets (Bibl. III), see the reservations expressed by Edzard in *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 5-6, 153ff.

<sup>2</sup>On Uruk, see Adams and Nissen, *The Uruk Countryside*. For cylinder seals, see the recent Introduction in Porada, *Ancient Art in Seals*. For the archaic tablets from Uruk, see Green, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 39, 1ff., with bibliography and an excellent example of what can and cannot be retrieved from a careful study of these texts.

<sup>3</sup>For the Early Dynastic sequence, see Porada in Ehrich (Bibl. IC). The absolute dates are very approximate, and may have to be moved up or back by as much as a century. The Early Dynastic period, especially the later part, is also known as Presargonic, i.e. before Sargon of Agade brought all of Mesopotamia under his control, around 2300 B.C.

<sup>4</sup>SARI Ki 3, IRSA IA 3, ABW Mes. v. Kiš 1f.

<sup>5</sup>Edzard, *RLA* 5,608 suggests that an empire of Kish never existed; Kish was simply the name for northern Babylonia, as Akkad was to become after Sargon. But given the example of Akkad itself (from Sargon's

of Babylonia, that is, the part north of Nippur, must have had a rather important population of speakers of the Semitic language known in its later phases as Akkadian.<sup>6</sup> The first Semitic personal names in Babylonia are attested from about 2500 B.C. at Kish and at Abu Salabikh near Nippur, approximately contemporary with (or somewhat earlier than) the Ebla texts from northern Syria, which provide evidence for a Semitic language different than, but closely related to, Old Akkadian.<sup>7</sup> Our sources for the history of ED III do not allow us to say much about the role, if any, of this ethno-linguistic heterogeneity (Semites of various persuasions, Sumerians, and, no doubt, others) in inter-state conflicts. The extant Mesopotamian sources are in Sumerian, and never refer to the ethno-linguistic affiliations of either allies or enemies.<sup>8</sup>

These sources, primarily royal inscriptions, tell us all too little about the political history of the period.<sup>9</sup> The great exception is the corpus of inscriptions of the rulers of Lagash, for the most part excavated by the French at Tello (ancient Girsu) beginning a century ago, and augmented in recent years by some important finds of the American expedition to Al-Hiba (ancient Lagash). The state of Lagash itself consisted of three major cities, Girsu (Tello), Lagash (Al-Hiba), and Nina (Surgul), as well as many smaller settlements.<sup>10</sup> So, too, the neighbor and antagonist of Lagash, the state of Umma, must be considered not just as the city Umma itself, but as a broader territory including at least one other major city, Zabala (IV.5). We know nothing about the origin of the union of the three cities comprising the state of Lagash; the texts take it for granted, and it goes back at least to the time of Mesalim (ED II). Curiously, the state itself is called Lagash, the name of one of these three cities, but the chief deity of the state is Ningirsu, whose name means "Lord of Girsu." A later union of two cities, in ED III, is that of Uruk and Ur. The first ruler to effect that union, a contemporary of Enmetena of Lagash, tells us explicitly in his inscriptions that he did so (V), and this union of Uruk and Ur eventually included Umma as well (IV.6). But already in the time of Urnanshe, three generations earlier, there is evidence for joint operations

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capital Agade), and of Babylonia and Assyria in later periods (from the cities Babylon and Assur respectively), it is unthinkable that the city Kish would give its name to northern Babylonia if it had not at one time dominated that area. See now Gelb, "Ebla and the Kish Civilization" (Bibl. III).

<sup>6</sup>See the recent remarks of Westenholz (Bibl. III) on Semitic and Sumerian in early Babylonia, and see now Gelb's speculations on Kishite Semitic (Bibl. III, 69ff.).

<sup>7</sup>Pettinato (Bibl. III) chap. IV; Gelb, "Thoughts About Ibla," *Syro-Mesopotamian Studies* 1/1. Gelb now dates the Kish personal names slightly earlier than Fara, the Abu Salabikh texts slightly later than Fara, and Ebla somewhat later than Abu Salabikh. He also suggests that the administrative texts from Abu Salabikh are written in logographic Semitic (Bibl. III, 55ff.).

<sup>8</sup>There are a few inscriptions from Mesopotamia proper that, by virtue of a Semitic pronoun, betray the fact that they were read in Semitic, although written in Sumerian (most such inscriptions are from Mari). Another group of inscriptions, while having no Semitic elements at all, is written in a style that some scholars believe indicates that they were read in Semitic. See now Gelb (Bibl. III).

Westenholz (Bibl. III) has advanced the hypothesis that ethnolinguistic differences *were* important in the political history of ED III (Bibl. III). For the opposing view, see Cooper, *Orientalia* 42, 239ff. and Jacobsen, *Archiv fuer Orientforschung* 26, 8ff.

<sup>9</sup>This has more to do with circumstances of preservation and discovery than with any "sumerische Thematik" (Kienast, *Oriens Antiquus* 19, 247ff.). Building inscriptions are both more likely to be duplicated (bricks and clay nails) and to survive (especially foundation deposits). Historical inscriptions, however, are often on stelas, whose stone is likely to be reused or looted, or on a variety of unusual objects which would not have been produced in large numbers, or whose placement may have been either very exposed (e.g. the copper standard of No. 5) or very remote (pots and cones inscribed with the texts of Nos. 6 and 10 may have been implanted on or near the Lagash-Umma border).

<sup>10</sup>See Falkenstein (Bibl. I B), 17ff.

against Lagash by Ur to the southwest, and Umma to the northwest. In Sumer, then, our sources lend themselves to the following reconstruction of the geo-political environment in ED III: Political power was concentrated in the city-states of Ur and Uruk to the southwest, Umma (-Zabala) to the north, and Lagash (-Girsu-Nina) in the east. For Lagash, battling the states to the southwest and northwest, often acting in concert, was a major pre-occupation. The union of Uruk and Ur, with its eventual absorption of Umma, had the effect (if not the purpose) of isolating Lagash in Sumer.<sup>11</sup> In northern Babylonia, a possible union between the cities of Kish and Akshak is suggested by the alliance between them attested in inscriptions of both Eanatum (IV.3) and, three or more generations later, Enshakushana.<sup>12</sup>

Interstate conflicts attested in the inscriptions of ED III are of two types: those with neighboring city-states, like the Lagash-Umma conflict, had to do with land and water rights;<sup>13</sup> those with more distant states either were related to more local conflicts—for example, Uruk's use of foreign troops in the texts treated below—or in all probability involved attempts to loot supplies of raw materials (raids from Babylonia to outlying areas) or finished goods (raids on Babylonian cities). The documents discussed in this study illustrate the first type. The second is well-illustrated by a letter of Lu'ena, a temple administrator on the southeastern edge of the territory of Lagash, to Enentarzi, then temple administrator at Girsu during the reign of Enanatum II. Lu'ena reports that he intercepted a force of "600 Elamites from Lagash who were carrying booty to Elam."<sup>14</sup> But, of course, looting was not limited only to long-distance raids, as is clear from our text No. 9.

The rulers in whose name these inscriptions are written call themselves and each other by a variety of titles, and despite several studies devoted to this subject, their precise nuances remain unclear.<sup>15</sup> The least specific title is *lú*, literally "man," which I translate "leader."<sup>16</sup> It is most frequently used when talking about rulers of other states without giving their personal names. Text No. 6, for example, talks of "the 'leader' (*lú*) of Umma," but "Uruk, 'ruler' (*ensi*) of Umma." The word translated "ruler," Sumerian *ensi*, is the title taken most frequently by the rulers of Lagash. Its etymology is uncertain, and in the following periods of Mesopotamian history (Sargonic and Third Dynasty of Ur) it is used as the title of provincial governors.<sup>17</sup> But in ED III, it is primarily a title taken by the

<sup>11</sup> This early isolation could explain in part the complete omission of Lagash in the Sumerian King List, a traditional account of early dynasties and rulers of Babylonia (Kramer, *Bibl. IA*, 328ff.; cf. Edzard, *RLA* 6, 77ff., and note the [satirical?] Lagash Kinglist published by Sollberger, *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 21,279ff.). But why then, were e.g. Kish, Anshan and Mari included?

<sup>12</sup> *SARI* Uk 4.1, *IRSA* IH1b, *ABW* Enš. v. Uruk 1 and 3.

<sup>13</sup> Nissen (*Bibl. III*) sees the vulnerability of downstream cities' water supplies to diversion by upstream neighbors as a major source of inter-city conflict in ED III.

<sup>14</sup> Grégoire (*Bibl. III*) 9ff.

<sup>15</sup> See Edzard's discussion in *RLA* 4,335ff.

<sup>16</sup> For a similar use of Akkadian *awēlum* "man," see *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary* A/2,57.

<sup>17</sup> Whether *ensi* also denotes a subordinate in ED III is a subject of controversy. The inscriptions of Mesalim, just before the beginning of this period, name him as "king of Kish" and address the local rulers as *ensi*, but most see this as an overlord-local-independent ruler relationship, not one of king and governor. But at the end of ED III, there is evidence both in Lagash (Bauer, *Welt des Orients* 9,1f.) and Umma (Powell, *Bibl. III*, 27) that there were *ensis* directly subordinate to *lugals*, much as they would be in the following periods. Powell denies that the evidence demonstrates this (*Bibl. III*, 27ff.), but a copy of the caption on a monument of Sargon celebrating the defeat of Lugalzagesi, who began his career as ruler of Umma, then became king of Uruk and extended his domination over all of Sumer (IV.6), does prove that while Lugalzagesi was king of Uruk, there was a separate individual subordinate to him who bore the title *ensi* of Umma. The caption reads "Lugalzagesi, king (*lugal*) of Uruk; Mese, *ensi* of Umma," then breaks off (*Archiv fuer Orientforschung* 20,37).

independent rulers at Lagash (as well as by some rulers of other cities), and used by the rulers of Lagash to describe foreign rulers who, in their own inscriptions, call themselves "king." The title traditionally translated "king," and which is taken by nearly all independent rulers in the following periods, is Sumerian *lugal*, literally "big man." Relatively rare at Lagash, it is the most common title used by independent rulers of other cities in ED III.<sup>18</sup>

We know very little about how rulers exercised power in this period. Their inscriptions, quite naturally, picture them wielding power absolutely, with the help and support of the gods. Administrative documents from Girsu inform us of a wealth of officials, but rarely have to do with political matters. Documents from Zabala that record land grants made by Lugalzagesi to officials of Adab and Nippur reveal something of the economic basis of the ruler's power, and the non-military side of empire building.<sup>19</sup> The letter of Lu'ena cited above points to the importance of the *sanga* or temple-estate administrator. Since much of the economy of Lagash (and other cities) was controlled by the ruler through large land-holding organizations centered around the temples of major deities, the administrators of these organizations were powerful individuals.<sup>20</sup> When Urukagina of Umma was killed after being defeated by Enanatum I of Lagash, he was succeeded as ruler by his nephew Il, who was *sanga* at Zabala (IV.5). Similarly, Enentarzi was first *sanga* at Girsu before he became ruler of Lagash.<sup>21</sup> Although nominally controlled by the ruler, the temple organizations must have been influential centers of power in their own right, and the famous Reform Texts of Urukagina, of which No. 7 is an example, demonstrate an unmistakable, if poorly understood, conflict of interest between the *sangas* and their organizations, and the royal family.<sup>22</sup>

Evidence for inter-state relations is scanty. The alliances and coalitions that appear in the inscriptions suggest that something like the elaborate system of ambassadors and diplomatic missions documented for the Old Babylonian period 500 years later was already operative in the Presargonic period. Several of the texts discussed below mention messages sent between Lagash and Umma, and even pretend to quote them verbatim (V). There is no reason to think this communication between states was in any way exceptional. A famous inscription of Enmetena tells us that "Enmetena, ruler of Lagash, and Lugalkignedudu, ruler of Uruk, established brotherhood (between themselves)." Traditionally it has been assumed that this attested to a treaty or alliance between the two city-states, but new documents show that the relationship between them must have been rather complicated, and the exact meaning of the "brotherhood" text is uncertain (IV.5). But whatever that meaning may be, the inscription remains the earliest attestation for a formal interstate relationship in Babylonia. The recently excavated archives at Ebla in northern Syria confirm that such relationships were widespread, and certainly antedate our extant evidence.<sup>23</sup>

Trade must have played a large role in inter-state relations, both directly and indirectly.

<sup>18</sup> For the title *en*, associated with the city Uruk, and not occurring in our dossier, see Edzard, *RLA* 4, 336.

<sup>19</sup> See Charvát (Bibl. III); Powell (Bibl. III), 29.

<sup>20</sup> On the subject of land tenure and the role of temple organizations in Presargonic Lagash, see most recently Maekawa (Bibl. III) and Foster (Bibl. III). Similar conditions prevailed at Umma-Zabala according to Powell (Bibl. III), 25f.: "The ties between the head of state and the temple are very close, so close, in fact, that the lines dividing temple and state are not perceptible."

<sup>21</sup> See Grégoire (Bibl. III), 14 for the possible relationship of Enentarzi to the Urnanshe dynasty, of which Enanatum II (Enentarzi's predecessor) is the last certain member.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Maekawa (Bibl. III).

<sup>23</sup> Pettinato (Bibl. III), 95ff.; Sollberger, *Studi Eblaïti* 3, 129ff.; Edzard, *Studi Eblaïti* 4, 89ff.

At Lagash, Urnanshe, the founder of the dynasty that dominates our study, claims repeatedly that “he had ships of Dilmun transport timber (to Lagash) from foreign lands.”<sup>24</sup> The administrative documents from Girsu at the end of our period mention commercial exchanges with Adab, Der, Nippur, Umma and Uruk in Babylonia, and the more distant Dilmun, Elam, Mishime, Urua and Uruaz.<sup>25</sup> This trade was usually conducted by commercial agents (*damgar*) of the large institutions, and is sometimes represented as exchanges between royal families or with foreign rulers.<sup>26</sup> We have no information about trade agreements, nor is there any direct reference in the inscriptions to struggles for the control of trade routes. But their importance is attested to by the long inscription of Lugalzagesi found at Nippur, which states that after Enlil made Lugalzagesi king of all Sumer, “from the Lower Sea (Persian Gulf), (along) the Tigris and Euphrates to the Upper Sea (Mediterranean), he (Enlil) put their routes in good order for him.”<sup>27</sup> Lagash, on Sumer’s southeastern flank, must have been especially well-situated for the Persian Gulf trade and trade with Elam (southwestern Iran).

Theoretically, the Sumerian city was the property of the chief god of that city, and he took an active role in its affairs. What this meant in reality is not entirely clear, but the texts in our dossier picture boundaries decided by and between gods (IV.1), gods intervening on the battlefield and elsewhere (V), gods suckling future kings (No. 2 iv), and gods called upon to punish offenders (e.g. No. 9).<sup>28</sup> The theory of divine ownership explains why so much of a city’s land and other economic resources were administered through temple organizations, as mentioned earlier. Most important among the gods for us is Ningirsu, chief of the pantheon of Lagash. The territory that is the subject of the Lagash-Umma border conflict, an area called the Gu’edena (“Edge of the Plain”), is his “beloved field,” and it is to restore this territory to Ningirsu that Lagash battles Umma. This theological rationale of all Mesopotamian imperialism—making war in the name of a god for territory claimed by a god or given to the warring ruler by a god—was thus present at the beginning of recorded Babylonian history. It persisted in royal inscriptions through two millennia and figured prominently in the propaganda of Cyrus the Persian when he justified bringing the last independent Babylonian kingdom to an end.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>24</sup> E.g. *SARI* La 1.12-14.

<sup>25</sup> M. Lambert, *Revue d’Assyriologie* 47,57ff., *Archiv Orientalní* 23,566ff., *Oriens Antiquus* 20,175ff.

<sup>26</sup> *Revue d’Assyriologie* 57,58f., exchanges between Baranamtara, wife of Lugalanda of Lagash, and the wife of the ruler of Adab; *ibid.*, 64f., a shipment of grain and metal to the ruler of Urua.

<sup>27</sup> *SARI* Um 7.1 ii.

<sup>28</sup> See Maekawa (Bibl. III) and Foster (Bibl. III) for various theories of divine ownership as they apply to the socio-economic organization of the state.

<sup>29</sup> Oppenheim in Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (3rd ed.), 315f.

## CHAPTER II

### Sources For The Reconstruction of The Lagash-Umma Conflict

The documents that provide the basis for our reconstruction are all written in the Sumerian language in cuneiform characters, on artifacts of stone or clay. Phrases are grouped in ruled rectangles called cases, and the cases are grouped into columns.<sup>1</sup> Cuneiform as a system of writing is practical only on clay: the characters are configurations of wedge-shaped traces impressed into the wet clay with a reed stylus, and with few exceptions, all record keeping, communication and literary transmission using cuneiform were done on clay. Cuneiform inscriptions *were* executed in stone and, to a lesser extent, in metal, wood and other materials for monumental or artistic purposes, although clay, too, could be used for commemoration, as can be seen from the texts in our dossier. The first three are on stone, but the remaining seven are on various types of clay artifacts (No. 10 also has a stone duplicate), only two of which are tablets of the usual sort. They will all be discussed in more detail shortly.

The form and material of the inscribed artifacts were closely linked to their function. Some royal inscriptions were intended for public display on monuments, such as the Stela of the Vultures (No. 2), erected to celebrate the accomplishments of a ruler. Many others, perhaps the majority of those preserved, were buried in the foundations or built into the walls of the structures whose building they commemorate, to be read only by the gods and by future rulers who might expose the inscriptions during reconstruction of the buildings. A third category of inscription was neither intended for public display nor completely hidden from view: objects presented to a deity for use in his temple. These could be inscribed, but unlike the stelas, whose primary function was to honor the ruler's greatness, the dedicatory inscriptions on votive objects were secondary to the objects' function in the cult, and the inscriptions were probably rarely read. Many of the inscriptions in our dossier neither commemorate the building of a temple nor accompany a votive offering, but celebrate the restoration to Lagash of territory that had been conquered by Umma, and thus form a rather anomalous group whose original context cannot be reconstructed.

One reason for this is that many (Nos. 2-4, 7-9) were found at Girsu before or just after the turn of the century, when archaeological technique was so primitive that many original contexts often went unnoticed. But perhaps there was little to notice: Nos. 1 and 5 were unearthed recently by the American expedition to Lagash, and both were found, reused as fill material, in constructions of later rulers. We are, at least, fortunate in knowing the provenience of most of the texts in our dossier. Only Nos. 6 and 10 are of unknown provenience; the rest are all from the sites of Girsu and Lagash. This, of course, means that our data represent just one side of the conflict. Our only piece of evidence presenting Umma's account is the fragmentary No. 10, which, as preserved, tells us little about Umma's version of the conflict, but what little there is suggests that that version would be a mirror image of the one we have from Lagash.

None of the texts in this dossier, then, are typical of the royal inscriptions of the epoch.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See the discussions of cuneiform and Sumerian in Kramer and in Oppenheim (Bibl. IA).

<sup>2</sup> See note 9 to Chapter I.

Whereas most such inscriptions go into great detail about a ruler's works, both pious and public, with less common summaries of military victories, our inscriptions have been chosen for their concern with the details of the boundary dispute between Lagash and Umma, a concern which in itself is rare among the surviving inscriptions. Only Nos. 1 and 5 resemble the usual inscriptions of the period.<sup>3</sup> No. 9 is not a royal inscription at all, but rather a literary text. Nos. 2, 6, 7, and 10 are unique and important documents whose significance will be discussed below.

### Description of the Documents<sup>4</sup>

#### 1. URNANSHE—STONE SLAB FROM LAGASH<sup>5</sup>

Found in the debris of a later temple, this is the work of an apprentice lapicide who was practicing his engraving technique on an already broken slab.<sup>6</sup> The obverse commemorates the building of the Bagar, Ningirsu's temple at Lagash, and continues with a report, typical of Urnanshe's other inscriptions, of the temples, canals and divine images constructed by him. The reverse contains the earliest extant account of the military success of a Sumerian ruler. Urnanshe introduces this account with the statement that he went to war against Ur and Umma, and then gives details of the victories individually. The naming of captured officers among the enemy troops is unique, and can be compared to the similarly unique bas-relief plaques with the figures of Urnanshe, his family and courtiers, in which each figure is labelled with the name and relation or title of the personage it represents.<sup>7</sup>

#### 2. EANATUM—BAS-RELIEF STELA (STELA OF THE VULTURES) FROM GIRSU<sup>8</sup>

The stela is reconstructed from seven fragments. On the obverse, the main scene shows the god Ningirsu holding a large net filled with enemy soldiers, reminding one immediately of the battle-nets of the gods that figure prominently in oaths that dominate much of the text. On the reverse, the main preserved scenes show Eanatum on foot leading a Lagashite phalanx, and Eanatum in a chariot at the head of a detachment of spearmen. At the lower left, a fragment shows the construction of a burial mound, which illustrates a phrase often found in these inscriptions in reports of military victories, that the victorious ruler made burial mounds of the enemy soldiers.<sup>9</sup> The stela is very possibly the one that Eanatum tells us, in col. xiii of the inscription, he erected in the temple of Ningirsu to commemorate his recovery of the Gu'edena from Umma.

The inscription itself is written in columns traversing the stela, interrupted frequently by the bas-relief, and is very fragmentary. This is especially unfortunate at the beginning, where we are given a detailed account of the Lagash-Umma border conflict, culminating in Eanatum's victory and restoration to the god Ningirsu of "his beloved field," the Gu'edena,

<sup>3</sup> A useful description of the style and structure of these inscriptions may be found in the introduction to *IRSA* (Bibl. IV).

<sup>4</sup> The numbers used here correspond to those given the translated inscriptions in Chapter VI, and are used throughout when referring to these inscriptions.

<sup>5</sup> *SARI* La 1.6, *ABW* Urn. 51; cf. Cooper, *Revue d'Assyriologie* 74, 104ff.

<sup>6</sup> Cooper, *op. cit.*

<sup>7</sup> Strommenger (Bibl. ID), 73.

<sup>8</sup> *SARI* La 3.1, *IRSA* IC5a, *ABW* Ean. 1; illustrated in Strommenger (Bibl. ID) 66-69, Moortgat (Bibl. ID) 118-121, and here (partially), plates 1 and 2.

<sup>9</sup> E.g. Nos. 1 and 6 here.

which had been occupied by Umma. Embedded in this account is the story of the creation of Eanatum to be the super-human champion of Ningirsu, and the dream in which Ningirsu promises him victory. Following Eanatum's victory and a list of the fields restored to Ningirsu (agricultural tracts in ancient Sumer had names), Eanatum, in elaborate ceremonies, makes the ruler of Umma swear a series of similar oaths to the gods Enlil, Ninhursag, Enki, Sin, Utu and Ninki. Then Eanatum enumerates his titles, epithets and other victories, much as we find them in his other inscriptions. After a break in the text, he describes the erection of the stela to commemorate the restoration of the Gu'edena to Ningirsu, and tells us the stela's name (monuments and cultic objects, too, had names in ancient Sumer).

### 3. EANATUM—RIVER-WORN OVOID BOULDERS FROM GIRSU AND OF UNKNOWN PROVENIENCE<sup>10</sup>

These two boulders with identical inscriptions were ca. 25-30 cm. long in their unbroken states, and glorify the restoration to Ningirsu of "his beloved fields." The inscribing of river-worn stones is peculiar to the rulers of Presargonic Lagash, and their significance is unclear. One boulder commemorating the building of a temple by Eanatum I was associated with a copper peg-figurine bearing an identical inscription.<sup>11</sup> Since copper pegs formed part of foundation deposits, it has been suggested that the boulders, also, were buried in foundations of structures, though none have actually been so found.<sup>12</sup> That may have been true for some of the boulders (certainly for the Eanatum I boulder just mentioned), but these Eanatum boulders celebrate no building. And because one of them was found at Girsu itself, they could not have been intended to mark the new boundary with Umma, or be set in the foundation of any structure built in the reconquered territory.

The text begins with a short, fragmentary recapitulation of the boundary dispute, then catalogues the fields expropriated by Umma,<sup>13</sup> and reports the new names given to them (?) by the ruler of Umma. There follows a statement that Eanatum returned the fields to Ningirsu, respecting the original boundary marker.

### 4. EANATUM—CLAY VASE FRAGMENTS FROM GIRSU AND LAGASH<sup>14</sup>

These fragments of two inscribed vases recall immediately the larger and better preserved No. 10, the large clay jar containing one version of No. 6, and the fragments Nos. 11 and 12. Unlike inscribed stone vessels, which are valuable votive offerings to the deity, these clay vessels are not presented as offerings, but are merely the medium for the inscription, and the extant examples are restricted, with one exception, to those in this dossier, suggesting that the medium was used to honor political and military successes, rather than the building or restoration of temples and other works. Unfortunately, none have been found in contexts that provide any clue to their original emplacement.

The inscription, as restored, relates the original demarcation of the Lagash-Umma frontier, and the violation of the boundary by a ruler of Umma, followed by Eanatum's defeat of Umma and restoration of the original frontier. The inscription ends with a series of curses directed against any future ruler of Umma who might violate the border.

<sup>10</sup> *SARI* La 3.2, *ABW* Ean. 6.

<sup>11</sup> *SARI* La 4.5, *IRSA* IC6d, *ABW* En. I 27. The inscription is now duplicated on a stone tablet (*Bibliotheca Mesopotamica* 3, 1), which strengthens the connection with foundation deposits.

<sup>12</sup> Ellis, *Yale Near Eastern Researches* 2, 119.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. the similar catalogue in No. 2 xv.

<sup>14</sup> *SARI* La 3.3, *ABW* Ean. 63 and Ent. 30.



5. ENANATUM I—CLAY TABLET FROM LAGASH<sup>15</sup>

This tablet, found in the temple of Hendursaga, was either a scribal copy or an archival record of a text which, according to the difficult final column, was inscribed on a copper standard in the temple. After enumerating the titles, epithets and religious constructions of Enanatum, the inscription relates the incursion by Urluma of Umma into the territory of Lagash, which he claims as his own. Encouraged by Ningirsu, Enanatum drives Urluma back across the border. The problematic outcome of the Enanatum-Urluma battle, as evidenced by the peculiar conclusion of the episode in this inscription, is discussed in Chapter IV. The final column, separated from the body of the inscription by a blank column, seems to be a notation specifying the locus of the original inscription and the object upon which it was inscribed. The mention of Enanatum's son Enmetena in this colophon suggests that the copy may have been made after the death of the former (IV.4).

6. ENMETENA—CLAY CONE AND JARS FROM GIRSU AND OF UNKNOWN PROVENIENCE<sup>16</sup>

This long inscription is completely preserved in two nearly identical versions, one inscribed on a cone similar to but finer than the famous cones of Uru'inimgina's Reform Texts (IV.6). The other is inscribed on a clay jar, and both are reported to have been found by the same member of a tribe in the Umma-Girsu area. A fragment of the end of the inscription is preserved on a piece of a broad-bottomed vessel from Girsu<sup>17</sup> (compare the inscribed vessel fragments discussed above). Like the inscribed vases, the large cones of Enmetena and Uru'inimgina are somewhat mysterious. Ellis thinks that they may have developed in imitation of the boulders (cf. No. 3),<sup>18</sup> but the form of the cones is very different. None have been found in a context that could provide a clue to their function. Like the inscribed vases, the texts of the cones are concerned primarily with political matters, and are quite different from the usual building and dedicatory inscriptions.

The inscription provides the most comprehensive preserved recitation of the boundary history, beginning with Mesalim's arbitration, and ending with Enlil and Ninḥursag, the great god of Sumer and his consort, supporting Enmetena against a contemporary ruler of Umma who claimed part of the territory of Lagash. Enmetena then reconstructs the boundary-channel between Lagash and Umma, as well as the levee along the boundary channel. After a prayer for Enmetena, the inscription concludes with a curse against any future ruler of Umma who violates the border.

7. URU'INIMGINA—CLAY DISK FROM GIRSU<sup>19</sup>

This half-preserved disk is unusual both for its shape, and the manner of reading it, which is to read each column both on the obverse *and* reverse before going on to the next column (cuneiform tablets are generally read first entirely on one side, then on the other). Nothing is known of its original function.

The inscription, too, is unusual. It begins with a version of the famous Reform Texts of Uru'inimgina (IV.6), listing first the abuses of power, then the abolition of those abuses by decree of Uru'inimgina. There follows a history of the Lagash-Umma conflict, preserving

<sup>15</sup> *SARI* La 4.2, *ABW* En. I 29.

<sup>16</sup> *SARI* La 5.1, *IRSA* IC7i, *ABW* Ent. 28.

<sup>17</sup> The fragment was acquired by the Louvre with another fragment that has been joined to a third fragment excavated at Girsu (the two joined fragments are part of No. 4 here), so it is fairly certain that the fragment containing Enmetena's text was also found at Girsu.

<sup>18</sup> *Yale Near Eastern Researches* 2, 117ff.

<sup>19</sup> *SARI* La 9.3, *ABW* Ukg. 6. The ruler's name was formerly read Urukagina.

only the episode concerning Enanatum I and Urluma. The inscription closes with a list of Uru'inimgina's pious construction activities. The inscription is unusual because neither of the two other preserved versions of the Reforms contain the history of the border conflict,<sup>20</sup> and because both other versions list Uru'inimgina's building activities at the beginning, which is where such a list would normally be expected (cf. Nos. 1, 5 and 8).

#### 8. URU'INIMGINA—FRAGMENT OF A CLAY CYLINDER OR VESSEL FROM GIRSU<sup>21</sup>

The first preserved column of this small fragment of what was originally a very large artifact contains an account of Uru'inimgina's construction of a canal, well-known from other inscriptions of that ruler. The second and third columns contain fragments of an historical narrative which may or may not recount an attack by Umma on Lagash. It is included here to demonstrate how tantalizing and frustrating fragmentary inscriptions can be.

#### 9. URU'INIMGINA—CLAY TABLET FROM GIRSU<sup>22</sup>

This inscription, which in some respects is a precursor of the later Sumerian lamentations over destroyed cities,<sup>23</sup> details the destruction wrought by Lugalzagesi of Umma on the territory of Lagash. It concludes by emphasizing that this was a transgression committed by that ruler, and was not provoked by any wrongdoing on the part of Uru'inimgina. The goddess of Umma, Nisaba, is asked to punish Lugalzagesi for his actions.

#### 10. LUGALZAGESI—CLAY JAR AND STONE TABLET OF UNKNOWN PROVENIENCE<sup>24</sup>

The clay vase fragments which preserve well over half the original inscription, call to mind especially the vase fragments of No. 4, and the other pieces mentioned in the discussion of No. 4. The stone tablet, however, is a type of artifact most often associated with foundation deposits: a stone tablet and a copper peg-figurine bearing commemorative inscriptions were regularly buried in the foundations of temples being built or restored.<sup>25</sup> But this text commemorates no building, and the original placement of the vase and the stone tablet is a matter for conjecture. The stone tablet, perhaps, is the monument the ruler claims, in the inscription, to have erected to mark the border. Like the clay disk No. 7, the columns of the stone tablet are read on both obverse and reverse before moving to the next column.

The name of the ruler for whom the inscription was composed is broken, but it was almost certainly Lugalzagesi of Umma (and Uruk), the great king who claimed to rule over all of Sumer before he was defeated by Sargon of Akkad. This inscription is thus the only evidence from Umma for the Lagash-Umma border dispute. After enumerating the ruler's titles and epithets, we are told that he established the boundary of Umma, restoring the old markers. Then the text describes the border in detail, giving the distance

<sup>20</sup> See n. 23 for a suggested explanation of the historical portion.

<sup>21</sup> *SARI* La 9.4, *ABW* Ukg. 14.

<sup>22</sup> *SARI* La 9.5, *IRSA* IC11m, *ABW* Ukg. 16.

<sup>23</sup> Kramer (Bibl. IA) 38, 142ff., 208; *RLA* s.v. Klage lied. Sollberger (Bibl. II), 33ff. suggests that the trauma of the destruction recorded here led not only to this text's composition, but to a cycle of texts which could have included our Nos. 8 and 11, and perhaps No. 7 as well, which would explain why this last, unlike other versions of the Uru'inimgina Reforms, has a section recounting the history of the Lagash-Umma conflict. See also the interpretation of Westenholz (Bibl. II).

<sup>24</sup> *SARI* Um 7.2, *IRSA* IH2a, *ABW* Luzag. 2. Is the fragment *Oriental Institute Publication* 14,54 from Adab a duplicate (cf. Sollberger, *Orientalia* 28, 344)?

<sup>25</sup> Ellis, *Yale Near Eastern Researches* 2,46ff.

between points along it. The ruler concludes the description by stating that he never transgressed the border, that he restored the old monuments marking it, and erected one of his own. The inscription ends with a curse against anyone who would violate the boundary.

11. NAME OF RULER NOT PRESERVED—CLAY VESSEL OR  
CYLINDER FRAGMENT FROM GIRSU<sup>26</sup>

This and the following fragment are included, as No. 8, to illustrate the problem of dealing with fragmentary texts. The mention of Umma in col. iii' suggests this inscription belongs in our dossier, but unfortunately no royal names are preserved. The ultimatum of col. iv' implies a whole new episode in the diplomatic exchanges between the two rival states, which is not attested elsewhere in the surviving inscriptions.

12. NAME OF RULER NOT PRESERVED—CLAY VESSEL FRAGMENT FROM GIRSU<sup>27</sup>

This fragment may suggest an alliance between Umma and Uruk in a joint struggle against Lagash (IV.6).

<sup>26</sup> *SARI* La 10.1, *ABW* AnLag 9; cf. note 23.

<sup>27</sup> *SARI* La 10.2, *ABW* LuTar v. Uruk I.

## CHAPTER III

### Difficulties in Reconstruction

The efforts of generations of scholarship are represented in section II of the bibliography. Despite these efforts and the abundance of our documentation, there is no general agreement on the details of the reconstruction of the border conflict between Lagash and Umma. The difficulties and disagreements involved are of three kinds: geographical, chronological and philological.

#### 1. GEOGRAPHICAL PROBLEMS

The inscriptions and administrative documents from Presargonic Lagash have left us hundreds of place names and names of watercourses, yet only a small number can be identified with precision. Others can be put in the general vicinity of some known place, but the vast majority remain only vaguely situated at best. When, in text No. 6, Enmetena tells us that he constructed the boundary-channel between Lagash and Umma “from the Tigris to the Nun-canal,” we may think we are in a position to trace that oft-disputed frontier, until we realize that we don’t know where the Tigris *was* at the time<sup>1</sup>—it has shifted courses frequently—nor do we really know what is meant by the Nun-canal. Is it the arm of the Euphrates later known as the Iturungal, as shown in Map 2 (*RGTC* 1), or is it a branch canal that leaves the Iturungal at Zabala, as argued by Jacobsen and drawn by him on Map 3 (*Sumer* 25)?<sup>2</sup> In another inscription, Enmetena tells us that he extended the boundary-channel “from the Nun-canal to Mubikura.”<sup>3</sup> If we combine the two passages, we can assume that Mubikura lies on the Tigris.

Now, administrative texts about a century later provide us with the following additional data:

- 1) The distance from the Nun-canal to Mubikura is ca. 53 km.<sup>4</sup>
- 2) The length of the boundary-channel from Mubikura (assumed to = Mubikura) to bar-rá is ca. 48 km.<sup>5</sup>
- 3) The length of the Lagash boundary ending at the Nun-canal is ca. 58 km.<sup>6</sup>

All of this, when combined with Enmetena’s testimony, suggests a boundary line of ca. 50-60 km. running from the Nun-canal to Mubikura on the Tigris. Yet even with this precision we have problems: “Assuming that the Tigris was the course of the present Duḡail, the distance of 53 km. of Mubikura on the Tigris to the Nun-canal would fit well with the identification of the Nun with the Iturungal. Assuming a more westerly course of the Tigris,

<sup>1</sup> “In fact, not a single settlement on the alluvium identified with the Tigris in pre-Hellenistic times can be identified that would permit the location of any part of the Tigris bed (or beds) to be specified” (Adams, *Bibl. IA*, 158).

<sup>2</sup> Jacobsen, in any case, takes the just-quoted Enmetena passage to refer not to the traditional boundary-channel, but to another, new canal.

<sup>3</sup> *SARI* La 5.2, *ABW* Ent. 41.

<sup>4</sup> *RGTC* 1 s.v. Mubikura.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Falkenstein (*Bibl. IB*), 40 n. 3.

an identification of the Nun with the western Euphrates is conceivable.”<sup>7</sup> And the whole question becomes even more complicated by the evidence of an Ur III text, more than 200 years later than Enmetena, that describes the Namnunda-field (the name of Enmetena’s levee on the boundary channel is Namnunda-kigara “founded in Namnunda”) as stretching from the Nun-canal to the Tigris, with an area that would allow the distance between the two waterways to be no more than 5 km.<sup>8</sup> The only solution that fits all the numbers is one that envisions a border beginning somewhere on the Nun-canal and running obliquely for 50-60 km. to the southeast between the Nun and the Tigris (a “western” Tigris, of course) 5 km. to the east, and joining the Tigris at Mubikura. This is very close to Jacobsen’s border canal, the line on Map 3 from site 19 south to site 36, rather than to the east-west E-kisura (“boundary-channel”) of Map 2 (*RGTC* 1).

There are also some philological reasons for favoring something like Jacobsen’s solution. Text No. 6 speaks of “the boundary-channel of Ningirsu and the boundary-channel of Nanshe,” which suggests—but does not demand—that the boundary ran from the territory of Girsu, city of the god Ningirsu, southeast to the territory of Nina, the city of the goddess Nanshe.<sup>9</sup> And finally, although the Lagash area has been the object of only a very preliminary archaeological survey,<sup>10</sup> both the results of that survey (Map 3), and Landsat imagery<sup>11</sup> support the notion of a northwest to southeast boundary canal, rather than one running east-west. But the tentative nature of the evidence supporting this conclusion must be stressed: no certain knowledge of the location of any place, river or canal mentioned in descriptions of the border; a philological argument based on the association of the boundary-channel with a goddess, which we assume means the ditch abutted territory belonging to that goddess’s city; and traces of ancient canals provided by a very preliminary survey and inadequate Landsat imagery.

## 2. CHRONOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

The absolute chronology of the late Early Dynastic period can be roughly estimated by reckoning backwards from the relatively accurate dates for Mesopotamian rulers a millennium later. M. B. Rowton’s contribution to the *CAH*<sup>12</sup> is an excellent demonstration of how this is done. A recorded solar eclipse in the reign of the Assyrian king Ashurdan III can be fixed to 763 B.C., and because we know the length of the reigns of his predecessors in Assyrian and Babylonia, we can reckon rather precisely back to the accession of Ashurballit I in 1365 B.C.<sup>13</sup> A gap before this in our knowledge of rulers and lengths of reigns means that for the period earlier than ca. 1600 B.C., when we can again establish an unbroken chain of reigns, our absolute chronology is only approximate (but not in error by more than a century), even though the relative chronology is certain back to the beginning of the third dynasty of Ur, ca. 2100 B.C. Then everything becomes very doubtful. For the Presargonic period, we have inscriptions of nearly 60 rulers, but we can secure the length of

<sup>7</sup> *RGTC* 1 224.

<sup>8</sup> See the discussion of Pettinato (Bibl. II), 316ff.

<sup>9</sup> See already Poebel (Bibl. II), 227.

<sup>10</sup> Jacobsen (Bibl. II); cf. Adams (Bibl. I), 134.

<sup>11</sup> Adams (Bibl. I), 34, with the caveats on p. 33.

<sup>12</sup> *CAH* 1/1, 193ff.

<sup>13</sup> *CAH* 1/1, 202f.; Brinkman, *Analecta Orientalia* 43, 68.

reign for only the penultimate ruler of Lagash, Lugalanda (IV.6).<sup>14</sup> The Sumerian King List, to be sure, lists six or seven of the rulers attested in the primary sources, but attributes either unreasonably long reigns to them (Enmebaragesi of Kish, Mesanepada of Ur), or gives them suspiciously round-numbered reigns (25 or 30 years). The rulers of both Lagash and Umma, the protagonists of the historical reconstruction attempted here, are willfully excluded from the list, and other important rulers, such as Mesalim or Lugalkignedudu are either excluded or present in broken portions of the list.<sup>15</sup> Essentially, we are reduced to reckoning by generations, rough estimates of average reigns and other even less reliable methods of approximation, all of which point to a period from about 2450-2300 for the time-span at Lagash from the accession of Urnanshe to the defeat of Uru'inimgina by Lugalzagesi.<sup>16</sup>

The relative chronology of the Lagash-Umma conflict is problematic in several instances. The texts never tell us how much time elapsed between the narrated episodes. Certainly each Ummaite violation could not have been as promptly punished as the texts would lead us to believe. The stages of the conflict between the primordial—for the texts—arbitration of Mesalim and the victory of Eanatum are compressed in texts Nos. 3, 4 and 6; in No. 2, they are told at length, but the inscription is badly broken. Thus, we are not certain whether Eanatum or one of his predecessors was the opponent of Ush, the first Ummaite foe mentioned in Enmetena's history of the conflict (No. 6). Eanatum's account of his struggle with Umma in No. 2 suggests that he had at least two major battles with that city, but the text is so poorly preserved that we cannot be certain. The internal chronology of Eanatum's reign is another problem: How are we to arrange the many victories and defensive battles he lists in his inscriptions, and where in his reign are we to situate his boundary settlement with Umma? When in Uru'inimgina's reign did the destructive raid by Lugalzagesi, described in No. 9, occur? Can this be correlated with the closing of the archive of the Emi at Girsu, and how long after that did Uru'inimgina continue to rule? These and other chronological problems will be discussed, if rarely resolved, in the reconstruction attempted in the following chapter.

### 3. PHILOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

There are still many Sumerian words whose meanings are unknown, and many more whose meanings have been only approximated. This is especially true for relatively early texts, such as the ones used in this study. Grammatically, too, Sumerian guards its mysteries; the nuances of the verb, for example, are notoriously recalcitrant to scholarly penetration. This is painfully obvious in the interpretation offered for the verb "to divert water" in No. 6. In view of the vulnerability of Lagash to any manipulation of the hydraulic system by its upstream neighbor Umma,<sup>17</sup> the most obvious way to understand the passages in

<sup>14</sup>We may know the length of the reigns of the two rulers before him; for the length of Uru'inimgina's reign, see IV, 6.

<sup>15</sup>Cf. n. 11 to Chapter I, and Piotr Michalowski's essay on the Sumerian King List in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (forthcoming). The radical approach to the King List by Kammenhuber, *Orientalia* 48,1ff., is completely misguided.

<sup>16</sup>See the various reconstructions in the works in the Bibliography (IC), and note the shortening of the period from Sargon to Urnammu to under 200 years, which would be the result of accepting Hallo's convincing arguments in *RLA* 3,713f. The absolute dates given here, which follow the so-called middle chronology, may have to be set fifty years earlier, if Huber's just published endorsement of the high chronology is valid (Bibl. I).

<sup>17</sup>See Nissen (Bibl. III).

question is that Umma is diverting water out of the boundary-channel. But the verbal infix employed is most often interpreted as indicating action toward or into, and this interpretation seems to fit best in the broader context of these passages.

If the translations offered in Chapter VI were to reflect all of the uncertainties apparent to the Sumerologist, there would be many more blank spaces and question marks than there are. An attempt has been made to make the translations reasonable and readable. They have been made in the context of the reconstruction in Chapter IV, and while very aware that other reconstructions are possible, I have decided against an elaborate system of notation presenting all possible alternative translations and interpretations. These the reader can find in the works listed in the bibliography.

Not all of the problems are lexical or grammatical. The inscriptions are sometimes willfully elliptical; they just don't provide enough data to enable non-contemporaries like ourselves to understand what is being said.<sup>18</sup> The texts in Chapter VI are full of abrupt shifts and vague references that can only rarely be fleshed out from parallel or similar episodes in other texts. A passage in Eanatum's Stela of the Vultures (No. 2) tells us that "Eanatum, the man of just commands, measured off the boundary [with the leader of Umma?], left (something) under Umma's control, and erected a monument on that spot." What did he leave under Umma's control? We would be hard pressed to make sense of the passage without the fuller account given by Enmetena (No. 6): "Eanatum, ruler of Lagash, uncle of Enmetena ruler of Lagash, demarcated the border with Enakale, ruler of Umma. He extended the (boundary-) channel from the Nun-canal to the Gu'edena, leaving (a) 215 *nindan* (1290 m.) (strip) of Ningirsu's land under Umma's control, and establishing a no-man's land (there). He inscribed (and erected) monuments at that (boundary-) channel." How many other problematic passages, over which scholars continue to break their heads, would become intelligible if we had similar parallel accounts?

\* \* \*

Geographical, chronological and philological problems such as those evoked above are barriers to reconstructing the history of the Lagash-Umma conflict as related in our dossier of contemporary inscriptions. It is only honest to stress, however, that even if all of these barriers were to be surmounted, the resulting history would be a very superficial one. The socio-economic, geo-political and religious realities of mid-third millennium Sumer are poorly understood. What really was a king? What was a border? Deceptively simple questions that are immeasurably more difficult to answer than are questions about a problematic passage or sequence of events. As historians of the ancient world, we operate in a continuous dialectical relationship to our own work and that of our colleagues. It is through the proposal and rejection of theses and modifications of hypotheses that our superficial history becomes more accurate, our real understanding more profound, and it is in this spirit that the following reconstruction is proposed.

<sup>18</sup> For the problem of textual silence on basic matters, see Civil, "Les limites de l'information textuelle," in Barrelet M.-T., *L'archéologie de l'Iraq*.

## CHAPTER IV

### The Border Conflict Reconstructed

#### 1. BEFORE URNANSHE

Historical tradition at Lagash attributes the original arbitration of the Lagash-Umma border to Mesalim, the king of Kish generally thought to have lived about a century before Urnanshe, ca. 2600 B.C. (see Chap. I). Text No. 3 reports that "Enlil demarcated [the boundary between Ningirsu and Shara] and Mesalim erected a monument there," and that "Eanatum did not cross beyond the place where Mesalim had erected the monument." According to this same text, Eanatum carefully restored Mesalim's marker to its original spot on the boundary; text No. 4 says that he erected his own monument where Mesalim had erected one. Both acts are reported by Enmetena in his summary of Eanatum's reign (No. 6 ii). Enmetena also supplies us with the most complete account of the original arbitration:

Enlil, king of all lands, father of all the gods, by his authoritative command, demarcated the border between Ningirsu and Shara. Mesalim, king of Kish, at the command of Ishtar, measured it off and erected a monument there. (No. 6 i)

The boundary is represented as a matter decided by Enlil, chief of the Sumerian pantheon, between the gods Ningirsu and Shara, the chief deities of Lagash and Umma, respectively. In the world of men, Enlil's decision was carried out by Mesalim, whose hegemony extended to Umma and Lagash. So great was his prestige that his name was preserved, or considered worthy of mention, by the composers of our inscriptions over a century after the event, but the names of the local ruler of Lagash and his contemporary at Umma were forgotten or left unmentioned.

If the scribes of Lagash had forgotten the name of Mesalim's contemporary there, we know it. An inscribed and sculpted stone mace head from Girsu reads:<sup>1</sup>

Mesalim, king of Kish, temple builder for Ningirsu, deposited this for Ningirsu. Lugalsha'engur is the ruler of Lagash.

We know nothing else about Lugalsha'engur. Another early ruler of Lagash, Enhegal, who is called "king," is known only from an early land sale document.<sup>2</sup>

Eanatum's account in the Stela of the Vultures (No. 2) of the initial arbitration is broken, a pity because of the richness of detail it must have provided. When col. i picks up after the broken first twenty cases we read "He would pay it as a(n interest-bearing) [lo]an, and grain-rent was imposed on it." The text continues by introducing "the king of Lagash" before breaking off for 22 cases. When it picks up again, it tells of an act of defiance on the part of Umma, which is countered by Akurgal, Urnanshe's son and Eanatum's father. Since the 22 broken cases should suffice to cover Urnanshe, I would assign the reference to interest and grain-rent at the end of col. i not to Urnanshe's reign, but to the original settlement. The principle enunciated here is picked up again in the oaths sworn in the Stela of the Vultures (xviff.), and by Enmetena in text No. 6 ii, and is crucial, I think, to

<sup>1</sup> SARI Ki 3.1, IRSA IA3a, ABW Mes. v. Kiš 1.

<sup>2</sup> Edzard, *Sumerische Rechtsurkunden* No. 114.



an understanding of the entire conflict from Lagash's viewpoint. The cultivated area called Gu'edena (meaning "edge of the plains"), the territory claimed by both Lagash and Umma, the prize they fought over for countless generations, was, for Lagash, "Ningirsu's beloved field," as Eanatum never tires of telling us (e.g. at the end of Nos. 2 and 3). But G. Pettinato, in a long article that traces the conflict for two centuries beyond the period we are discussing, has shown that the Gu'edena was always divided between the jurisdictions of the two states (Bibl. II). The rationalization that allowed Lagash to accept the fact that part of the god Ningirsu's land was occupied by the forces of another god's city, was that this occupation was really a lease arrangement: Ningirsu's grain could be cultivated by Umma, but part of that grain was to be returned in the form of rent and interest.

In addition to making an unpleasant status quo palatable, this theoretical construct had some other advantages. When Lagash was strong, it might turn theory into fact and collect tribute from Umma. When, after a period of weakness, Lagash sought to regain part of the disputed territory from Umma, there was always a ready excuse to send ultimatums and finally resort to arms: Umma had failed to pay the requisite duties, or had exceeded its allotted acreage and transgressed the boundary.

## 2. URNANSHE AND AKURGAL

Until the recent publication of a stone slab found by the American archaeological expedition to Lagash (No. 1), we had no first-hand account of Urnanshe's military exploits. The typical Urnanshe inscription resembles the obverse of that slab: a long catalogue of temples built, statues fashioned and canals dug. Unlike such catalogues in later inscriptions from Lagash, he does not list the gods for whom these works were undertaken. On the slab's reverse, there is a unique report of successful battles against Ur and Umma. Again the style differs from later accounts. Urnanshe not only reports his victories, but gives us the names of important prisoners from each city. Later rulers of Lagash often tell us the names of other rulers they have defeated, but never the names of those rulers' subordinates.

The accounts of the two victories are interwoven in such a way as to suggest they may have been related. It will be argued below that from sometime before the reign of Lugalzagesi Uruk (-Ur) and Umma were allied and perhaps ruled by members of the same families, and that their control of most of the rest of Sumer was the major geo-political fact with which Lagash had to contend. The linking of Ur and Umma in Urnanshe's inscription may well be the earliest attestation of an alliance against Lagash between Umma and states to the southwest. The captured ruler of Umma, Pabilgaltuk, is otherwise unknown. The contemporary ruler of Ur is unmentioned, certainly because he remained uncaptured. But since the Meskalamdug dynasty at Ur had to precede the union of Uruk and Ur inaugurated by Enmetena's (junior?) contemporary Lugalkignedudu and continued by his son Lugal-kisalsi (IV.5), the ruler of Ur at the time of Urnanshe must have belonged to the Meskalamdug dynasty, and was possibly Meskalamdug himself.<sup>3</sup> The Meskalamdug dynasty, then, had interrupted the earlier dominance of Uruk in southern Sumer (p. 1), a dominance which was reestablished by Lugalkignedudu.

When we pass from Urnanshe to the inscriptions of Eanatum and his successors, we enter a different world. Although Urnanshe mentions several captives from Umma by name, he never talks about the border as an object of contention. The Gu'edena, boundary-channels,

<sup>3</sup> Assuming a rough correspondence between the Lagash generations of 1) Urnanshe, 2) Akurgal, 3) Eanatum-Enanatum I, 4) Enmetena; and the generations at Ur of 1) Meskalamdug, 2) Akalamdug - Mesanepada, 3) A'anepada-Meskiagnuna, 4) Lugalkignedudu. It is unlikely that this conflict of Urnanshe with a "leader" of Ur can be related to his small stela found at Ur; see n. 2 to *SARI* La 1.31.

and smashed monuments, all of which figure prominently in subsequent accounts of hostilities with Umma, do not occur in Urnanshe's account. Present evidence, including the general otherness of Urnanshe's inscriptional style discussed above, leads me to believe that the border conflict as a leitmotif in the historical records of Lagash, and the various topoi that accompany it, have their origin in the inscriptions of Eanatum. In the Stela of the Vultures (No. 2), "king of Lagash" at the end of col. i may well be the beginning of the Urnanshe episode in Eanatum's narration. By the time col. ii picks up after a 22 case break, Umma is defying Lagash, and Akurgal, Urnanshe's son and Eanatum's father, is introduced, but the text breaks off again. When it continues it is with another episode of defiance by Umma, and here it is clear that Umma is trespassing in the Gu'edena. This leads to Ningirsu's anger, which results in his creation of the larger-than-life Eanatum to be his champion (No. 2 iv-v). The implication is that the occupation of the Gu'edena that occurred under Akurgal remained for Eanatum to resolve. Some details of the occupation are preserved in No. 3: specific parts of the Gu'edena that were occupied are named, and the ruler of Umma apparently renamed them to commemorate his occupation.

An additional factor in Umma's invasion can be deduced from two difficult passages in the Stela of the Vultures, if they are properly translated here. Before actually battling the ruler of Umma, Eanatum curses him:

The ruler of Umma—where is he recruiting<sup>2</sup>. With (other) men [. . .] he is able to exploit the Gu'edena, the beloved field of Ningirsu. May he (Ningirsu) strike him down! (No. 2 vi)

Then, in a dream, Ningirsu predicts Eanatum's triumph in a passage that begins, "Kish itself must abandon<sup>2</sup> Umma, and being angry, cannot support it" (No. 2 vii). Umma, then, was not alone in its struggle against Lagash, but, as was probably the case during Urnanshe's reign (above), and *was* the case in the reigns of Eanatum I and Uru'inimgina (IV.4 and 6), it had powerful foreign allies.

In both Nos. 3 and 4 there is a telescoping of the events that were narrated in full on the Stele of the Vultures. After the initial boundary arbitration, the texts move on to the Ummaite invasion during Akurgal's reign that preceded Eanatum's recapture of the occupied territory. Both texts summarize the invasion in the same terms:

[The leader of Umma] smashed that (Mesalim's) monument, and marched on the plain of Lagash . . . these (fields) the leader of Umma invaded<sup>2</sup> and smashed the monument. (No. 3)

The leader of Umma smashed that [monume]nt and marched on the plain of Lagash. (No. 4)

Enmetena introduces the episode with a differently worded equivalent to the description of the haughty and defiant behavior of Akurgal's opponent in the Stele of the Vultures (No. 2 ii), and then continues exactly as Nos. 3 and 4:

Ush, ruler of Umma, acted arrogantly: he smashed that monument and marched on the plain of Lagash. (No. 6 i)

The name of Akurgal's opponent, Ush (or Gish), is a new piece of information, that may have been in a broken section of the Stela of the Vultures. He was probably the successor of Pabilgaltuk, the ruler of Umma taken prisoner by Urnanshe (No. 1 r. iv).

### 3. EANATUM

The relative chronology of Eanatum's reign, which is of unknown length, cannot be disentangled, despite repeated scholarly efforts to do so.<sup>4</sup> His wide-ranging military activities

<sup>4</sup> Jacobsen (Bibl. III), 130ff.; Hallo (Bibl. III), 39ff.; Lambert, *Sumer* 8,71ff.





