

The Reforms of UruKagina and an Early Sumerian Term for "Prison"

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1. Ever since their appearance, nearly a century ago, in the edition of Ernest de Sarzec¹, the group of texts commonly known as the "Reforms of UruKagina"² have continued to fascinate cuneiform scholars and to pose challenges to their interpretational skills. Surely, few other sources in the vast corpus of Sumerian texts have generated a comparable amount of interest and controversy. Although in the last few decades a significant progress has been made in the understanding of this extremely important historical and legal document, the "Reforms of UruKagina" remains an obstinately difficult source, and, in fact, it seems safe to predict that ours is not the last Sumerological generation to grapple with its problems.

As a contribution to that ongoing effort, in this article I will treat a single, though highly important, passage of the "Reforms of UruKagina", in the hope of adding to the understanding of the legal and social import of UruKagina's act. It is a real pleasure to dedicate these pages to Miguel Civil, who, among his numerous and fundamental contributions, has done so much to explicate the intricacies of Early Dynastic writing and lexicography, and who himself has tackled the problems posed by the "Reforms of UruKagina"³.

The passage in question, Ukg. 4 xii 13-22 (= Ukg. 5 xi 20-29), follows immediately after the list of redresses promulgated by UruKagina. It reads as follows:

1. *Découvertes en Chaldée*, vol. 2: *Partie épigraphique* (Paris, 1884-1912), L (Cône A), LI (Cône B), LII (Cône C), and L (Plaque ovale). Republished (with duplicates) by E. Sollberger in *Corpus* as Ukg. 1, 4, 5, and 6, respectively.

2. Although the reading Uru-inim-gi-na, proposed by W. G. Lambert, *Or.* NS 39 (1970) 419, enjoys wide (if not universal) acceptance these days, this reading remains as hypothetical as the earlier Uru-ka-gi-na. This is due to the fact that the existence of a divine Lugal-inim-gi-na, cited by Lambert as his evidence, is hardly conclusive for the reading of Uru-KA-gi-na, for both inim and ka take the adjective gi-na as a matter of course. See, e.g., inim-gi-n[a] = (a-wa-tum) [ki-it-tum] (Sag B 274 = *MSL* SS1, p. 33), as compared with ka-gi-na = (pu-ti) ki-nu (Sag B 145); for *pū kīmu*, see the numerous examples listed in *CAD* K, p. 390a (note especially the common OAkk PN Pūšu-kin). The PN Lugal-inim-kalaga / Nu-gal-en-nam-gal-ga, cited by D. O. Edzard, *ARET* 5, p. 44, in support of Lambert's reading, has even less bearing for this problem.

[See now Edzard's discussion of this problem in the present volume, pp. 77-79, where he argues for the reading -ka-gi-na.]

3. See, e.g., *BiOr* 40 (1983) 565-66.

- xii 13) dumu Lagaš^{ki}
 14) ur₅-ra ti-la
 15) gur gub-ba
 16) še si-ga
 17) níg zuḥ-a
 18) sag giš ra-a
 19) é-ÉŠ-bi
 20) e-luḥ
 21) ama-gi₄-bi
 22) e-gar

The difficulties, both lexical and syntactic, that are presented by this passage are best illustrated by the comparison of the five most recent translations of these lines:

M. Lambert: "Il fit laver les domiciles des habitants de Lagash de l'usure, de l'accaparement, de la famine, du vol, des attaques, (et) il fit instituer leur liberté"⁴.

S. N. Kramer: "He (Urukagina) amnestied the 'citizens' (literally, 'the sons') of Lagash who (were imprisoned because of) the debts (which they) had incurred, (or because of) the amounts (of grain claimed by the palace as its) due, (or because of) the barley (claimed by the palace for its) stores, (or because of theft (or) murder, and set them free"⁵.

B. Hruška: "Urukagina hatte die Bewohner von Lagaš von dauernder Verschuldung, Massverfälschung(?), Dürre, Diebstahl, Mord, und Hauseinbruch befreit (wörtlich gereinigt) (und) ihre Freiheit gesetzt"⁶.

H. Steible: "Die Bürger von Lagaš, die in Zinsverpflichtung lebten, – von ..., von der ...– Gerste, von Diebstahl (und) Totschlag, – von diesen ... hat er (sie) gereinigt; eine Befreiung davon hat er verfügt"⁷.

J. S. Cooper: "He cleared and cancelled obligations for those indentured families, citizens of Lagash living as debtors because of? grain taxes?, barley payments, theft or murder"⁸.

It is evident that the interpretation of this passage hinges on the meaning of é-ÉŠ-bi and its syntactical position in relation to the rest of the sentence. As we have seen, Lambert translates é-ÉŠ-bi (read by him as é-ḥun-bi⁹) as "domiciles", assuming, apparently, that é-ḥun means "rented house". This reading is adopted by Cooper¹⁰, though he wants to see in ḥun a term for "indentured". Hruška's translation of é-ÉŠ-bi as "Hauseinbruch" (with the reading é-eše-bi¹¹) is a guess based on the context, as is apparently Kramer's rendering "he amnestied (them)" of the complex é-ÉŠ-bi e-luḥ. Finally, Steible leaves é-ÉŠ-bi untranslated (which he reads É.ŠĚ-bi¹²).

Luckily, there survive four other occurrences of é-ÉŠ, all four of them coming from Lagash texts, and their combined evidence permits us to determine the meaning of this term beyond any reasonable doubt. Thus, in *Nikolski* 1 20 iv 9-12, which is a record of še-ba lú-di₄-di₄-la-ne, "barley-rations of the 'small' ones", and which dates to Urukagina's fifth regnal year, the recipients of the rations include a certain Igi-si₄, the fisherman, who is said "to live in the é-ÉŠ" (é-ÉŠ-ka i-ti)^{12a}. Apart from demonstrating

4. *RA* 50 (1956) 183.

5. *The Sumerians: Their History, Culture, and Character* (Chicago, 1963), p. 319.

6. *ArOr* 41 (1973) 128.

7. *FAOS* 5/1 (Wiesbaden, 1982), pp. 309-11.

8. *Sumerian and Akkadian Royal Inscriptions, 1: Presargonic Inscriptions*, American Oriental Society Translation Series I (New Haven, CT, 1986), p. 73.

9. *RA* 50, p. 182.

10. *Op. cit.*, p. 74 n. 26.

11. *ArOr* 41, p. 129.

12. *FAOS* 5/1, p. 310.

12a. Add Igi-si₄ šu-ḥa é-ÉŠ-ka i-ti in *DP* 116 iv 14-17 (Urukagina 4, 7th month), 117 iv 8-10 (Urukagina 4, 10th month),

that é-ÉŠ is a genitival syntagm (the point confirmed by *ITT* 1 1287 and 1418, see below), this example makes it clear that, first, the é-ÉŠ was a building or structure that existed at Lagash (and, very importantly, was in use during UruKagina's reign!), and that, second, this building could house ordinary people.

These conclusions are corroborated by *ITT* 1 1379 and 1418, both dating to the Sargonic period. Of them, *ITT* 1 1418 is a roster of 159 men, who were "mobilized" (lú zi-ga) to be assigned to various duties. Included among them (obv. line 6') are three men, who were "(stationed) in/at the é-ÉŠ" (3(guruš) é-ÉŠ-ka), undoubtedly to perform there some type of work or service.

ITT 1 1379, which is also a roster of workers, yields similar information. It lists 198 conscripts, under a single overseer (nu-bānda), who include two men "(stationed in/at) the é-ÉŠ" (2(guruš) é-ÉŠ - obv. line 6).

But it is the fourth occurrence of é-ÉŠ (*ITT* 1 1287), also of Sargonic date^{12b}, that yields the decisive evidence for the meaning of this term. Because of its importance, it is necessary to cite this document in its entirety:

5 lú, lú-^{si}tukul-^{lá}, URU.SAG.RIG₇(PA.ĤÚB.DU)^{ki}-ke₄, mu-laĥ₄, bar Puzur₄-^(d)Ĥa-ri-i[m(-ka)], é-ÉŠ-ka, i-se₁₂.

The gendarme of URU.SAG.RIG₇¹³ has brought in five men; because / on account of (the claim of) Puzur-Ĥarim they live / are staying in the é-ÉŠ.

We will be justified in assuming that those five men were brought to Lagash forcefully, in all likelihood from URU.SAG.RIG₇, in connection with a legal claim on the part of Puzur-Ĥarim¹⁴; upon their arrival in Lagash, they were placed in the é-ÉŠ, evidently in anticipation of the ensuing court action. One may conclude, therefore, that the é-ÉŠ represented a place of detention of some kind. And, if we recall the context in which this word appears in the "Reforms of UruKagina", it becomes obvious that that place was simply "prison"¹⁵.

2. In addition to the examples of é-ÉŠ discussed above, this term also appears in the Ebla Vocabulary, line 318 (*MEE* 4, p. 235): É.ÉŠ.TUŠ (var.: É.ÉŠ.A) = *a-ba-lum/lu-um*. I assume that the Sumerian

and 118 iv 14-16 (UruKagina [x]). Note that *DP* 116 is dated precisely one year earlier than *Nikolski* 1 20 (UruKagina 5, 7th month), which shows that Igi-si₄ "lived in the é-ÉŠ" for at least one year. The former three texts list yet another individual living in the é-ÉŠ: ^dNin-ti-bād-mu é-ÉŠ-ka i-ti (*DP* 116 vi 3-5, 117 v 16-17 [written ^dNin-gír-su-bād-mu], 118 vi 1-2). It is noteworthy that in the earlier texts belonging to the same series (*De Genouillac*, *TSA* 18 [UruKagina 3, 4th month]; *HSS* 3 26 [UruKagina 3, 5th month], 27 [UruKagina 3, 12th month]; *Nikolski* 1 16 [UruKagina 4, 4th month]), both Igi-si₄ and ^dNin-ti-bād-mu are listed without the phrase é-ÉŠ-ka i-ti; Igi-si₄: *De Genouillac*, *TSA* 18 iii 18 - iv 1; *HSS* 3 26 iii 16-17, 27 iv 3-4; *Nikolski* 1 16 iv 2-3; ^dNin-ti-bād-mu: *HSS* 3 27 v 11; *Nikolski* 1 16 v 5.

12b. To these four Sargonic examples, add the following occurrence: five fugitives ... PN é-ÉŠ-ka [...] -éš, "PN [put(?)] in the prison" (*ASJ* 6 [1984] 130 no. 4:17-19).

13. For the problems involved in the reading of this toponym, see my discussion in *Vicino Oriente* 6 (1986) 35 n. 39.

14. For this legal usage of bar ... (-ak-a), see É-nam gu-za-lá-e Ur-zu gu-za-lá-da bar géme Be-li-dan-ka-ka la-ba-gi₄-gi₄-da-ke₄-éš mu lugal i-da-pa, "Enam, the chair-carrier, together with Ur-zu, the chair-carrier, swore an oath by the name of the king not to raise claims regarding the slave-woman of Béli-dan" (*MVN* 3 107:1-5); ¹Ur-^dEn-líl dumu ^dEn-líl-lí é-LÚ.BU^{ki} bar sag zuĥ-a Isin_x(IN)^{ki}-ka ^did-da an-ne-e₁₁, "Ur-Enlil, son of Enlile, because of the stolen slave(s) from/of Isin went into the river for the (members of the) household of LÚ.BU" (*TuM* 5 49 i 1 - ii 2); and passim in *TuM* 5 159.

15. Another early Sumerian term for "prison" appears to have been é-nam-árad, "house of slavery", which occurs in *MLC* 1262 (see p. 233 for hand-copy by B. R. Foster), a Sargonic tablet from the Yale Babylonian Collection: ¹U¹-da, ¹Ur-^dIštaran, ¹Enkur-ra, dumu Ur-PA-me, é-nam-árad-ka, i-se₁₂-ám (*MLC* 1262:1-6). I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to William W. Hallo for his permission to publish this document, and to Benjamin R. Foster, for drawing the tablet and for putting his hand-copy at my disposal. For é-nam-árad, cf. É.ÁRAD (no translation) in *VE* 328 (*MEE* 4, p. 236).

The earliest-attested Akkadian term for "prison" is *bī kišertim*, which occurs in a Sargonic text from Nuzi: (three PNs) in É *ki-šê-er-tim* [a]-ti-ma [a]-la-kam li-iš-bu, "should stay in the prison until I come" (*HSS* 10:5-11). The word *kišertu*, which appears as *kišersu* in OA sources (see *CAD* K, pp. 450-51), is possibly a loan from the Sumerian *ki šer₇-da(-ak), for which cf. é šer₇-da in "Nungal Hymn" 10.

logogram is to be analyzed as “the one who dwells (tuš) in a prison”; the variant É.ÉŠ.A probably represents é-ÉŠ-a(k), “the one of the prison”. As far as the Semitic gloss is concerned, three separate roots might be considered here: 1) 𐎠𐎢𐎽 “to oppress” (Akk. *ḫabālu*); 2) 𐎠𐎢𐎽 “to bind” (Akk. **ebēlu, eblu*); and 3) 𐎠𐎢𐎽 “to bind, to join together” (Akk. **ebēru, ibru*). Assuming that the gloss is an accurate rendering of the Sumerian logogram, the root 𐎠𐎢𐎽 would offer the best choice, as the word in question could be connected with either *ḫab(i)lu*, “oppressed, captive” (*CAD H*, pp. 16-17), or *ḫābilu, ḫabbilu*, “criminal” (*CAD H*, pp. 14, 16). However, such a possibility seems to be precluded by the fact that, in the Ebla Vocabulary, /ḫa/ is never expressed by the sign A, but rather regularly written with 𐎠𐎢𐎽.

As the expected writing of /ḫa/ is with É, the choice of either 𐎠𐎢𐎽 or 𐎠𐎢𐎽 is not entirely free of difficulties either. However, since /ḫa/ can on occasion be expressed by the sign A¹⁶, 𐎠𐎢𐎽 and 𐎠𐎢𐎽 must be considered superior choices to 𐎠𐎢𐎽. In this connection, note the entry Á.LÁ = *a-ba-lum/lu-um* (VE 537 = *MEE* 4, p. 260), where the Semitic gloss, formally identical with that of the earlier example, undoubtedly represents either 𐎠𐎢𐎽¹⁷ or 𐎠𐎢𐎽.

3. And finally, we need to consider the question of the reading of é-ÉŠ-a(k). The simplest and most obvious solution is that, in this term, ÉŠ stands for éš(e), “rope”; the resulting translation “house of the rope” would not be a bad description of a house of detention. A solution that I consider to be more likely, however, is that ÉŠ is to be connected with the logogram LÚxKÁR (or LÚxGÁNAtenû), standing for “captive, wronged”, on the assumption that ÉŠ is identical with the KÁR/GÁNAtenû of the logogram in question, as the two signs are not distinguished graphically in Third Millennium texts¹⁸.

In support of my proposal that the ÉŠ of é-ÉŠ-a(k) is to be connected with the KÁR of LÚxKÁR, note the equation [en]-nu É.LÚxKÁR.A = *ši-bi-it-tum*, “prison”, in *Diri V* 305 (cited in *CAD S*, p. 155b), where the logogram É.LÚxKÁR.A is reminiscent of our é-ÉŠ-a(k) and, even more so, of the variant É.ÉŠ.A in VE 318 discussed earlier.

The logogram LÚxKÁR occurs already in ED lexical texts: ED List E 151 (*MSL* 12, p. 19) and VE 1283' (*MEE* 4, p. 333). Since in the first source LÚxKÁR is followed by nu-zuḫ, “thief”, lú-sag-gaz (wr. KUM), “murderer”, and lú-me(sic)-sig, “denouncer”¹⁹, it apparently is understood there in the sense of “criminal” or “captive”. In the second source, LÚxKÁR is provided with the gloss *da-ba-lum*, which prob-

In Ur III times, the term for “prison” is apparently /ennuḫ/, variously written as en-nun-(ḡ), en-nu-(ḡ), or en-nun-(ḡ) (*YOS* 4 183:4). Though the basic sense of /ennuḫ/ is “watchhouse” or “guardhouse” (Akk. *mašartu*; note already EN.NUN.AK = *na-za-lum /našārum/* in VE 908 = *MEE* 4, p. 301; and en-nu bād(-da) in Sollberger, *Corpus Ukg.* 17-33), it is clear that in the Ur III period this facility also served as a place of detention. The sources from Umma frequently mention individuals who stayed in the /ennuḫ/ (en-nu/nun-(gá) ti-la) for periods ranging from a few months to one year (for examples, see *YOS* 4 183, 192; *MVN* 14 330, 362, 475, 482; Sigrist, *Syracuse* 135; Sigrist, *Princeton* 326, 327, 328). Though in some cases these individuals may have been assigned there as guards (as was clearly the case in the above-discussed *ITT* 1 1379 and 1418, most of them apparently were inmates. See, especially, Sigrist, *Syracuse*, 196, which lists a group of workers classified as guruš en-nun-gá ti-la, who have been assigned to such jobs as še-sag₁-a-šè, zār-tab-ba, ki-su₇-ka gub-ba, and dub-lá⁴ Utu gub-ba. Note also the following examples, which deal with escapees: zāḫ PN dab₂-ba iti še-kar-gál-la-ta ud 11 ba-ra-zal en-nun-gá ti-la (*MVN* 14 121:1-4); 1 guruš UN-fl ud 7-šè zāḫ-ta en-nun-gá ti-la (Sigrist, *Syracuse* 259:2'-4'); 1PN árad PN₂ zāḫ en-nun-ta iti šu-numun-ta <ud> 15-àm ba-ra-zal-la-ta PN₃ sipad i-dab₃ (Sigrist, *Princeton* 324:1-6). The meaning “prison” of /ennuḫ/ is also clear in “Nungal Hymn” 10: é gu-la en-nu-un é šer₇-da lú-nam-tag-ga kin-kin.

In later periods, the usual words for “prison” are *bīl kīlī* and *bīl šibittī*. See *CAD K*, p. 360b; *S*, p. 157b. Cf. also *ki-šū* and *kišukku* (*CAD K*, pp. 464-65).

16. Krebernik, *ZA* 72 (1982) 219, 221; G. Conti, *Il sillabario della quarta fonte della lista lessicale bilingue eblaíta*, *Miscellanea Eblaíta* 3 = *Quaderni di Semitistica* 17 (Florence, 1990), pp. 17-18.

17. So Conti, *op. cit.*, p. 152. Note that this root is also attested in VE 1174b (*MEE* 4, p. 325): GÁNA.ÉŠ = *‘à-ba-lu ḫablul*, “rope”. Cf. M. Krebernik, *ZA* 73 (1983) 41. For á ... lá, “to bind arms” (cf. á-lá, “fetter”), corresponding to Akk. *kamū* and *kasū*, see *CAD K*, 128b; B. Alster, *Dumuzi's Dream*, p. 113.

18. Cf. Civil's observation, in reference to LÚxKÁR in ED Lu E 151, that “GÁN-tenû has the form of a slanted ÉŠ” (*MSL* 12, p. 21).

19. Written usually (lú-)eme-sig-kú-kú, Akk. *ākīl karši*, also *ša karši* (*CAD K*, pp. 222-23).

ably represents *tabālu*, "to take away, to seize". LÚxKÁR also occurs in Ebla economic sources²⁰, where it seems to mean "captive"²¹.

In ED and later Third Millennium non-lexical sources from Babylonia LÚxKÁR is strikingly rare, its occurrences being limited, with very few exceptions, to Akkadian texts²². This raises a possibility that LÚxKÁR may have had its origins in the northern ("Kishite") variety of cuneiform.

According to later lexical sources, LÚxKÁR has the values še₂₉, šaga_x, and heš₅. See še(-e), ša-gá = LÚxKÁR (Proto-Ea 627-28 = *MSL* 14, p. 56); ^{še(-e)}LÚxKÁR = *šagšu* "vanquished", ^{ša-gá}LÚxKÁR = *hablum*, "wronged", ^{še(-e)}LÚxKÁR = *kamū*, "captive" (OB Lu A 495-97 = *MSL* 12, p. 172; cf. Aa VII/2:21-26 = *MSL* 14, p. 461); he-eš LÚxKÁR = *hablu*, *kalū* (Diri VI E 47 = *JAOS* 65 [1945] 224). For šaga_x, note also the syllabic writing ša/šà-gá in "Šulgi X" 145²³ and the entry PA-^{ša-an-ga}ŠAG₅ = [*ha*]-*an-na-qu* (Nabnitu XXIII 40 = *MSL* 16, p. 212; against the edition, in the Sumerian logogram the sign is ŠAG₅ and not šanga – information courtesy of M. Civil), where the gloss ša-an-ga, because of the translation *hannaqu* (cf. the examples cited below), is almost certainly identical with šaga_x = LÚxKÁR.

Yet another value of LÚxKÁR is apparently er₁₃ or ere₁₃. See er (var. e-[r]e) = LÚxŠU, er (var. e-[r]e) = LÚxÉŠtenū (Proto-Ea 630-31 = *MSL* 14, p. 56); ^{ere}LÚxÉŠtenū = *hanāqum*, ^{ere}LÚxŠU = *hanāqum* (OB Lu A 498-99 = *MSL* 12, p. 172), where LÚxÉŠtenū and LÚxŠU are clearly allographs (or, more correctly, late learned derivatives) of LÚxKÁR²⁴.

Among these values, the Diri reading heš₅ is highly suspect, as it is not corroborated by other sources; quite likely, this value is identical with haš = *habālu* (Aa III/5:118 = *MSL* 14, p. 346)²⁵. Also excluded from our consideration may be the value er(e)₁₃, for this reading probably represents èr = NITaxKUR, "servant". This leaves še₂₉ and šaga_x as the only readings that can be posited with assurance for LÚxKÁR in Third Millennium sources. And, since there is nothing in the evidence that would permit us to favor one of these two values over the other²⁶, both /še/ and /šaga/ are equally possible as the reading of ÉŠ in é-ÉŠ-a(k). Accordingly, we may provisionally conclude that this term is to be transliterated either é-šè or é-šaga_x(ÉŠ).

20. For examples, see G. Pettinato, *MEE* 2 41 vii 2; A. Archi, *ARET* 3, p. 367; 4, p. 308.

21. This meaning seems fairly certain in *ARET* 3 882 ii 6, which lists 20 na-se₁₁ LÚxKÁR; in other examples LÚxKÁR could equally well be a personal name or even a verb.

22. See Gelb and Kienast, *FAOS* 7 Rimuš C 1, C 2, C 3, C 4, C 5, Narāmsīn C 1, Ur C 2 (Šūsīn). In second mil. texts, LÚxKÁR is more common, occurring especially in the verbs šaga_x(-a) ... ak, šaga_x-šè ... dug₄, and šaga_x ... gur₄, for which see J. Klein, *Three Šulgi Hymns* (Ramat-Gan, 1981), pp. 164-65.

23. á-tuku si-ga ša(var. šà)-gá-aš-šè la-ba-an-gur₄-e, "(so that) the strong does not oppress the weak" (J. Klein, op. cit., p. 144; and discussion pp. 164-65).

24. The same seems to be true of the logogram LÚxÉŠ+LÁ = *cšela* (and other readings), standing for *hanāqu*, *hannaqu*, *hitnuqu*, *kamū*, and *kalū* (Aa VII/2:27-32 = *MSL* 14, p. 461-62; for *cšela* = *hitnuqu* see also Nabnitu XXIII 42 = *MSL* 16, p. 212), which appears to be a fanciful writing of *éše-lá* (Akk. *kasū*), "bound, fettered" (*CAD* K, p. 248a). Cf. also LÚxŠĀ.KU = *habbilu* and LÚxŠĀ-a = *šaqišu*, cited in *CAD* H, p. 14a.

25. Cf. also haš and giš-haš ... ak = *šagāšu* (*CAD* Š/1, pp. 66-67; *AHW*, p. 1126a).

26. The status of (and the possible connection between) these two values is very unclear. It would be tempting to connect še₂₉ with the verb šè-(g) of the Pre-Sargonic sources from Nippur, which seems to mean "to take away" or "to seize". See 1 máš ki PN-ta ba-an-šè-ga ki PN₂-ka ab-ba-úš ganun-mah-šè [a]n-de₆, "one goat had been taken away(?) from PN; after it had been slaughtered at PN₂'s, it was brought by him (i.e., PN₂) to the central storehouse" (*OSP* 1 108:1-7); 73.2.7 zíz ni-ga Maš-pád-da^{ki} A-mi-mi^{ki} ba-šè [ú(?)] Ur-Da-mu-ke₄-ne šu ba-ti, "73.2.7 of flour was taken away(?) (from) Mašpada (and) Amimi; [the men(?)] of Ur-Damu received it" (*OSP* 1 72:1-6); (four sheep and goats, plus their recipients) an-ne-šè ki PN-ta, "(these animals) were taken away(?) from PN for them" (*TuM* 5 94:6-10); dabin^rx^r ab-šè-g[a] ba-sum (*TuM* 5 200 iii 1-3). In this connection, it may be recalled that *tabālu*, "to take away", is given as a translation of LÚxKÁR in VE 1283' (see above p. 230). However, the possibility that šè-(g) is identical with še₂₉ seems to be precluded by the evidence of lexical sources, which indicate that the latter value had a vocalic ending. For the same reason, it is equally unlikely that še₂₉ could be genetically related to šaga_x (with šaga_x possibly being a verbal noun of še₂₉). Also, šaga_x cannot be connected with the Nippur šè-(g), since lexical and other sources are quite consistent in assigning to it the phoneme [ng]. This whole issue is still further complicated by the fact that šaga_x may in fact end in [r], as is suggested by the entry nam-ri šà-ga-ra = MIN (= *šal-la-tum*) *hab*-[limi] (Hh II 68 = *MSL* 5, p. 68).

4. Returning now to the passage of the “Reforms of UruKagina” discussed earlier, I propose to translate it as follows:

The citizens of Lagash – the one who had lived in indebtedness, the one who had set up a (false) gur-measure (and) the one who had (improperly) filled (the accurate gur-measure) with barley²⁷, the thief²⁸, (and) the murderer – he swept their prison clean (of them) (and) established their freedom.

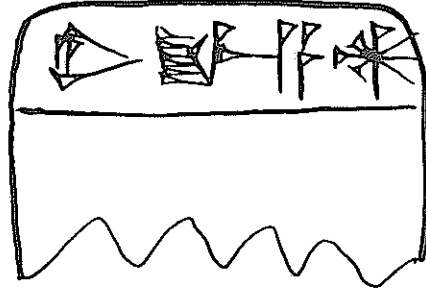
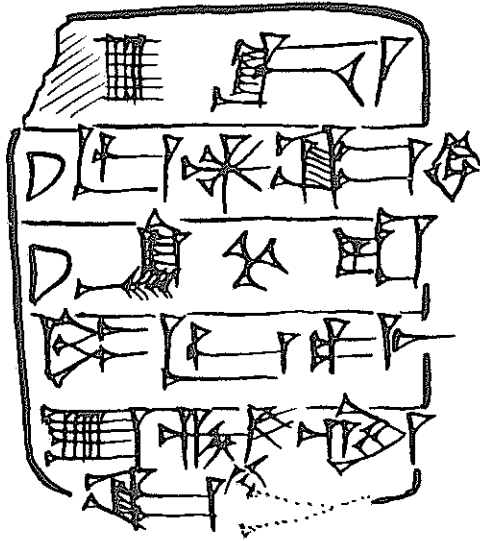
My translation assumes that *dumu Lagaš^{ki}* is an anticipatory genitive: “of the citizens of Lagash ... their prison he cleaned (and) their freedom he established”; the following V-a forms are taken as relative clauses, as in *lú é dù-a*, “the one who erected the temple”.

If we accept this understanding of the passage, it becomes obvious that we find here a description of the act of general amnesty – the earliest such promulgation on record – covering all possible categories of incarcerated felons: debt-prisoners, swindlers of every kind, thieves, and murderers²⁹. As we have no means of verifying its truthfulness, it is possible, of course, that UruKagina’s claim of having pardoned the criminals of Lagash was merely part of the rhetoric which set out an ideal of legal justice. Still, even if UruKagina’s amnesty never materialized, the fact that such radical (I hate to use the word “progressive”) legislation could at all be contemplated (or, at the very least, to be held as morally just) in the Early Dynastic Sumer is, in my view, highly significant. It is also significant that, as far as I know, none of the later legal promulgations or other legal sources in ancient Mesopotamia contain even a suggestion of imprisoned criminals ever being pardoned, not to mention the granting of general amnesty. These facts again stress the uniquely humane character of the early Sumerian social and legal institutions – a point that was made by various scholars in the past, and which needs, though without the corny exaggeration it has sometimes inspired, to be rightly acknowledged today.

27. It appears that xii 15-16 is concerned with two alternative forms of fraud: the falsification of measures and improper weighing and measuring. Although both cases are stated in positive terms, I take it that a pejorative sense is meant in each. In the first case, *gur ... gub* is apparently understood as the opposite of *gur gi-na ... gub*, for which see “Nanše Hymn” 234-35, 241-42: *na, gi-na kug lá-e-dè gur gi-na gub-bu-dè ban inim gi-na kur-kur-ra šu ba(-an)-gá-gá-dè*, “she places in their hands the weighing of silver with a fixed weight, the setting up of a fixed gur-container, (and) the certified ban-measure for/of all the lands”. By analogy, in the second case *še ... si*, “to fill (a container) with barley, to make a full payment”, seems also to have a negative sense, meaning probably “to fill (a container) with barley (inaccurately), to make an (incomplete) payment”. For *še ... si*, note especially *é-mu šen-nam še si-ma-ni*, “my house is a šen-container - fill it with barley for me!” (Ukg. 4 xii 4-5); and note also the common construction *kug šu-a ... si*, “to fill (someone’s) hands with silver” (Steinkeller, *FAOS* 17, pp. 30-31).

28. Instead of analyzing the word in question as *nig-zuḥ-a* (Akk. *šurqu*), “stolen thing, theft”, I take it to represent *nig zuḥ-a*, “one who stole things”.

29. Here it should be recalled that this is precisely how our passage was understood by S. N. Kramer (see above p. 228). I can only regret that Sam did not live to see the confirmation of his idea, for I am sure that he would have appreciated this another “first”!



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5.7 x 5.1 cm

Fig. 1:
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