

The beginnings of Sumerology (II)¹ From Delitzsch's grammar to Adam Falkenstein

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[In the second part of this article on the history of Sumerology, the second generation of Sumerologists will be presented. With more cuneiform materials available, this group of scholars developed its research activity during the years preceding the Second World War and improved significantly our knowledge of Sumerian language. Some years after the war, Adam Falkenstein presented one of the most influential grammars of the Sumerian language in the 20th Century.]

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One hundred years after Grottefend made the breakthrough to the cuneiform system, new excavations all over the Near East were still revealing more material. The newly discovered ruins provided a sensational environment for understanding the sacred texts, and soon there appeared new institutions focused on this field. With the aim to promote the research in Oriental Archaeology and to make it accessible to a wider audience, the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft was founded in Berlin in 1898. Also from these years took form within the Assyriology the school of thought called "Panbabylonism", which considered the Hebrew Bible, and subsequently Judaism, as directly derived from Mesopotamian mythology.

Some of the Panbabylonism ideas were presented on January 13th, 1902, to the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft by the German Assyriologist Friedrich Delitzsch, who held a public lecture with the title "the Babel-Bible controversy". In this lecture, Delitzsch claimed that the Jewish Religion and the Old Testament went back to Babylonian roots. After this lecture, there followed three more during the following years, which stressed the supposed cultural, moral and even religious superiority of the Babylonian-Assyrian culture on the Old Testament. These three lectures elicited a wide public debate from the conservative Jewish and Christian side, which continued sharply during the following years. With the irruption of the First World War and the decline of the School of History of Religions, the discussion lost its importance.²

1. This article corresponds to the second part of the article published in *Aula Orientalis*, 32 (2014).

2. See for example M.T. Larsen, "The Babel/Bible Controversy and its aftermath" in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, ed. J. Sasson (New York, 2006), I, 95-106 and S. Halloway, "Introduction: Orientalism, Assyriology and the Bible" in *Orientalism, Assyriology and the Bible*: 19, note 45 for additional bibliography. See also Ch. Trümpler, ed., *Das grosse Spiel*.

Delitzsch's career had begun relatively early. At the age of twenty, he had already become an associate Professor and was giving classes on Assyrian. In 1881, Delitzsch published his important work, *Wo lag das Paradies?*, on the supposed location of Eden. Other outstanding works from this scholar are his *Assyrisches Handwörterbuch* (1894–1896), *Das babylonische Welterschöpfungsepos* (1896), *Die Entstehung des ältesten Schriftsystems* (1897), *Die babylonische Chronik* (1906), the *Assyrische Grammatik* (1906) and his *Assyrische Lesestücke* (1912), which was written in order to teach that language and which included a grammar, a glossary, a syllabary and also a reading book. This was followed by two Sumerian grammars intended for students, which were published in 1914: the *Grundzüge der sumerischen Grammatik* (1914a) and the *Kleine sumerische Sprachlehre für Nichtassyriologen* (1914b). The grammatical ideas he explained, identical in both, and the verbal prefixes he identified, provided the basis for the analysis developed a few years later by Arno Poebel.

In the preface of his *Grundzüge*, Delitzsch argues that each Sumerologist should use his own method to obtain the best results (1914a: vi). Therefore, with an eye on the differences between his own system and that of Thureau-Dangin, Delitzsch prefers not to make any reference to conclusions reached by other scholars.³ In his opinion, it would be best for the discipline in general if each Sumerologist investigated this language independently. In the future, he says, perhaps a final synthesis would be possible with a firm and unchanging basis.

Delitzsch also considers that it is better not to use bilingual texts, since only texts in pure Sumerian are trustworthy (1914a: 2). He identifies two tenses for the Sumerian verb, one simple, which is used to mark the preterit, and one with an *-e* ending, which indicates the present (1914a: §133; 1914b: §92). The two tenses differ from each other in the way they express the plural (1914a: §134; 1914b: §92).⁴

Delitzsch explains most of the verbal prefixes as prefixes with phonetic changes. The subject prefix *e-* would have been identical with the *e* (*a*) connected with *ma* (first person pronoun) and *za* (second person pronoun) and also has demonstrative force. *e-me* or *e-ma* can also be found as *i3-mi* in the period of the old governors of Lagaš. Other phonetic variations that can be found are *imma-* or, with nasalisation, *inga-*, originating in the Eme-sal dialect, although not restricted to it. Delitzsch recovers thus this prefix that was already marked by Bertin in 1885 and which will be again analyzed by Poebel. The last part of the grammar is on syntax (1914a: § 202-222; 1914b: §137-154).

Some years later, in 1923, Arno Poebel published his *Grundzüge der sumerischen Grammatik*. Since his previous contributions to the study of Sumerian, Poebel had also published several text editions and copies (*Historical Texts* (1914) and *Historical and Grammatical Texts* (1914)).⁵ His years working as an associate Professor in the University of Rostock led to the publication of his main work, which had the same title as that of Delitzsch's grammar. As he also noted in his introduction, the title wishes to draw attention to the imperfection of the sources available for the Sumerian language, which are often limited to specific types of texts that determine the direction of our linguistic study (1923: vi). With this volume, Poebel presented to the world one of the most influential grammar of Sumerian, and he consolidated what previous scholars had written by providing the basis for the development of the modern Sumerology.

Archaölogie und Politik (Cologne, 2008), 114-124; S. Ponchia, "Riflessioni a cent'anni dalla polemica *Babel-Bibel*", in *Revue d'Assyriologie*, 107 (2013): 85-89 with further bibliography.

3. As J.D. Prince, "Delitzsch's Sumerian Grammar", in *American Journal of Semitic languages and Literatures*, 31, 1 (1914): 67-78, observes in his review of Delitzsch's grammar, there is no reference, for example, to the important grammar of Langdon, which preceded Delitzsch's by only three years.

4. Already seen by Langdon in 1911: §225.

5. Due to the outbreak of the War, however, those copies, which were made from objects belonging to the Museum of Philadelphia, were published without the opportunity of a final correction (E. Weidner, "Nachruf auf Adam Falkenstein", in *Archiv für Orientforschung*, 22 (1960): 264).

The first pages of his Grammar describe the Sumerian people, their language and its relationship to their Semitic neighbors (§1-14), phonetics (§14-87) and a brief description of word roots (§87-97).

The first important chapter begins in §98 and describes the principles of what he calls "Kettenbildung", the chain formation in Sumerian. Poebel was thus the first Sumerologist to describe Sumerian as an agglutinative language. In his opinion, Sumerian appears to the reader as being formed by "chains" of words and that phenomenon is due to the very nature of Sumerian as an agglutinative language. His analysis is considerably different with what is described today as an agglutinative language; it has more to do with the ideas of linguists such as Wilhelm von Humboldt or Franz Misteli about linguistic typology, which dominated the linguistic studies in the time in which Poebel wrote his grammar.

The most common word order in the Sumerian language is slightly different from what Poebel had proposed in 1914: a) Noun + b) descriptive adjective / descriptive genitive / descriptive relative sentence + c) possessive pronoun / possessive genitive / possessive relative sentence + d) generalizing pronoun / question pronouns / suggestive pronouns + e) plural element + f) preposition + g) verbal concept. The main difference between the word order in a Sumerian sentence and in English or German is that

das Sumerische beginnt die Wortkette mit dem konkreten Substantiv und stufenweise zu den minder konkreten Wortbegriffen herabsteigt, das Deutsche und Englische dagegen von den minder konkreten Begriffen allmählich zu dem konkretesten Begriff, dem am Ende der Wortkette stehenden Substantiv, aufsteigen (§100).

As a consequence, the descriptive adjective, genitive and the relative sentence indicators occupy the same place in the word chain, and the same applies to the possessives, the genitive, the pronoun and the relative indicator. However, the sequence could become more complicated (§105) and could be completed with a noun apposition, which would then have its own chain. The genitive can also form word chains.

Regarding the parts of the sentence, we find the structure S-O-V, as Haupt and others had already established.⁶ This means that Akkadian order would be due to Sumerian influence (§111). The verbal chain contains infixed particles of all the elements that had already appeared in the nominal chain. These elements, called "pronominal infixes", appear as "das Subjekt (der 3. Person) durch die Subjektselemente -n- „er“ und -b-, „sie“ (im Präteritum) wieder auf, den Dativ singularis durch -n-a- „ihm“, „ihr“, den Dativ Pluralis durch -ne- „ihnen“, den Lokativ durch -ni- „darin“, die mit -ta-, -da und -šu₃ [še₃] gebildeten Bestimmungen durch die Infixe -n-ta-, -n-da-, -n-ši- und -b-ta-, -b-da-, -b-ši-, usw." (§114).

After these preliminaries, Poebel deals with the noun. The subject of transitive verbs is marked by the subject element -e (1923: 58, §155). This indicator was originally related to the demonstrative element -e, "this", "the", so that previously, the chain *lugal i-n-du* "the king built" had meant "the king, who built".

The element -ed-, which, according to the author, marks the future, is mentioned for the first time (§165).⁷

6. See E. Marsal, "The beginnings of Sumerology (I)," in *Aula Orientalis*, 32 (2014): 289.

7. In Delitzsch (1914a: 77) this element appears mentioned as *da*, *de₃* and is considered a second kind of infinitive. For modern interpretations of the morpheme -ed- see for example Falkenstein 1949: II §99; W. H. Römer, *Die Sumerologie. Einführung in die Forschung und Bibliographie in Auswahl* (Münster, 1999), 123; M. Yoshikawa, "On the grammatical function of -e- of the Sumerian Verbal Suffix -e-de₃/-e-da(m)", in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 27 (1968): 251-261; O. Edzard, "hamtu and marû und freie Reduplikation beim sumerischen Verbum I", in *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, 61 (1971): 210-211; G. Steiner, "The Vocalisation of the morpheme /-ed/ and its significance", in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 40: 21-41; Yoshikawa, M. 1983; "The Sumerian Verbal Suffixes -de₃/-da(m)", in *Acta Sumerologica*, 5 (1981): 163-172; M. L. Thomsen, *The Sumerian language. An introduction to its history and grammatical structure* (Copenhagen, 1984), §128-131; Th. Jacobsen, "The Sumerian verbal core", in *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, 78 (1988): 184-190; P. Michalowski, "Sumerian," in *The Cambridge Encyclopedia*

After discussing the personal pronouns, Poebel analyses the enclitic forms of the verb “to be”, which fundamentally experiment with the same phonetic changes already described in his article on the verb.⁸

Poebel explains the postpositional element *-e* as follows: “Die postposition *-e* „an-heran“ und das Subjektselement *-e* stimmen ihrer Form nach mit einander überein, sind aber ihrer ganz verschiedenen Bedeutung wegen von einander zu trennen und zweifellos auch verschiedenen Ursprungs.”⁹ And furthermore: “Inwieweit das erstere *-e* vielleicht mit dem Lokativ *-a* identisch (oder später zusammen- geworfen) ist, lässt sich gegenwärtig noch nicht feststellen” (§342).

The subject element can undergo vocal changes, e.g. *-e* can become *-i*. With words ending in a vowel, the *-e* can be assimilated to that vowel. When *-e* is preceded by a genitive element, it turns into *-ke*.

The Sumerian genitive relation can be expressed by a double genitive construction (§368). In this complex, the nouns are located in the first part, followed by the postpositions. The relation among the constitutive parts is as follows:¹⁰

e₂- [dumu- (lugal- ak)- ak]- a
1 2 3 3 2 1

The dimensional infixes *da*, *ta*, *šu₃/še₃*, which are placed in the verbal chain, are preceded by pronominal subject elements (“Subjektselemente”, “akkusativische Personalelemente”) (1923: §487). The pure dative form corresponds to *-ra*. In some of these forms (namely, *-’a*, *n-a*, *-me-a*, *-ene-a*), there is a locative *-a*. Instead, in elements such as *-ne-* and *-ene-*, we find the postposition *-e* or *-i*. Therefore, the locative meaning is part of the dative infix. In Poebel’s opinion, the locative infix can also be found in the first person singular, *-’a-*. The reason for this locative meaning is historical, as the original meaning of these prefixes was “on us”, “on me”, etc. for *me-’a-*, *-’a-*, etc.

In his discussion of the original meaning of Sumerian prefixes, Poebel also mentions the prefix *-n-g* (or *(n)ga*), which, according to him, can be translated as “too”, “and too” or “likewise”, and originally would have been written *-n-da*, “with him” or “to him” (§498).¹¹

Several lines later, the scholar mentions the prefix *imma-*, which he believes to be a simple compound of the verbal prefix *e-* (*i-*) and the dimensional determinative *-me-*, *-mmi-* (“an es heran (für sich)”, “approach it for them”) (§499). This could be related to the combination *-me-’a-* (according to Poebel, *> -ma-*, *-mma-*).¹²

of the World’s Ancient Languages, ed. Roger D. Woodard (Cambridge, 2004), 48; P. Attinger, *Eléments de linguistique sumérienne* (Göttingen, 1993), 190.

8. A. Poebel, “Das Verbum im Sumerischen”, in *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, 21 (1908): 216-236.

9. See, however, G. Steiner, “Intransitiv-passivische und aktivische Verbalauffassung”, in *Zeitschriften der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 126 (1976): 234-5; O. Edzard, *Sumerian Grammar* (Boston, 2003), §5.4.2.2 and 5.4.2.9; Jagersma (2010: 165), and D. Foxvog, *Introduction to Sumerian Grammar* (2014), §170-174, who see a (possible) relation of cognation between the morphemes *-e* (Ergative) and *-e* (Locative-Terminative/Directive).

10. We owe to Poebel our understanding of Sumerian genitive construction as [possessed].[possessor].ak which replaced earlier conceptions. E. Sollberger, *Le Système Verbal dans les Inscriptions ‘Royales’ Présargoniques de Lagaš* (Geneva, 1952) referred however to the view of Thureau-Dangin, as noticed C. Hayes in “Some Thoughts on the Sumerian Genitive,” *Acta Sumerologica*, 13 (1991): 185-194.

11. Poebel analyses **inga* also in §403 and §499. This analysis was followed by Falkenstein, A., “Untersuchungen zur sumerischen Grammatik (Fortsetzung),” in *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, 47 (1941): 219 and R. Jestin, *Le verbe sumérien*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1946), II, 297-304. See also A. Poebel, *The Sumerian prefix forms e- and i- in the time of the earlier princes of Lagaš*, (Chicago, 1931), 11.

12. See W. H. Römer, *Die Sumerologie. Einführung in die Forschung und Bibliographie in Auswahl* (Münster, 1999), 106. See also Poebel 1923: §228; Falkenstein 1949: §184; Thomsen 1984: §220. Finally, see for example Attinger (1993: 271), Jagersma (2010: 497ss) and G. Zólyomi, “Sumerisch”, in *Schriften und Sprachen des Alten Orients*, ed. M. Streck (Darmstadt, 2006), 11ss), who see in *imma-* a compound formed by the ventive (cislocative) that corresponds to that nuance of movement.

The *n* of *na* and *ne*, unlike the locative *ni*, is often doubled in late Sumerian. This also happens with the *m* of *imma* (§501), which appears as *eme-* (*imi-*) and *ema-* in older forms. All of these prefixes will be analyzed broadly in §532-624.

The last part of Poebel's grammar (§731) is on verbal paradigms, which he tries to reconstruct by applying the principles described in his work. To summarize, these paradigms are classified in different themes, according to the prefixed particles. Hence, we find the themes *i*-LAL, *mu*-LAL (subdivided into forms with the "Kausativelement -*b*- und -*n*-"), *al*-LAL, *bi*-LAL (also with causative forms), *immi*-LAL (plus causative forms), *ba*-LAL (plus causative forms), *imma*-LAL. All of these forms can be found in the present-future or preterite, with their corresponding and defining endings.¹³

In Poebel's analysis presented in the *Grundzüge*, several important improvements since his article on the Sumerian verb are pretty evident. Here, any dependence on analysis of the Akkadian verbal system has been discarded completely, and the classification depends entirely on Sumerian textual evidence.

Another important principle remarked upon by Poebel was the principle of the vowel harmony, which was worked out a few years later, in a 1931 publication entitled "The Sumerian prefix forms *e-* and *i-* in the time of the earlier princes of Lagaš". In this text, Poebel assumed the existence of two groups of vowels: the so-called "open vowels": *a*, *e* and *o*, and the "close vowels": *e*, *i* and *u*. The prefix /*i-*/ was pronounced with the open vowel *e* before morphemes containing a vowel of the first group, whereas it was pronounced [i] before a closed vowel. A few years later, in 1936¹⁴ Samuel Noah Kramer had applied the same rule for the prefix /*bi-*/: *be*₂- before open vowels and *bi*₂- before close vowels.¹⁵

In 1919, Cyril John Gadd (1893-1969) had joined the staff of the Department of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities of the British Museum as Rawlinson's successor. For several years, Gadd had turned his attention to the language of the non-Semitic inhabitants of Babylonia, studying under Langdon. Before, when the War broke out, Gadd had continued the work of Alexander W. Allen Leeper (1887-1935), copying and preparing the material for the 35th volume of *Cuneiform Texts*. Due to the War and the decease of the King, the publication of the subsequent parts of *Cuneiform Texts* was temporally interrupted and did not continue until the end of the conflict. From 1915 to 1918, Gadd served with the Worcestershire Regiment and the Royal Engineers. During the war, he also had the task of supervising the evacuation of the Department of Egyptian and Assyrian antiquities of the British Museum. Later, as Keeper, he was able to return to his former position. In 1921, Gadd had also published his *Early Dynasties of Sumer and Akkad*, which included a valuable contribution to early Babylonian chronology. Between 1923-1924, the English scholar was sent by the British Museum and The Museum of the University of Pennsylvania to excavate Ur and Tell al-'Ubêd. The very year of his return, he published his Sumerian

13. As we can see the directional conception is in here completely missing. It was already discussed on former articles of the author and here is simply no more taken into account. See for example his article "Das Verbum im Sumerischen", in *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, 21 (1908): 216-236, which was already discussed in the first part of this article. Later on, Poebel pursued and deepened on his analysis, partially stimulated by the long-term and intensive debate with Thureau-Dangin, which can be followed through several articles published by the *Revue d'Assyriologie*: A. Poebel "The Sumerian genitive element" (1935), which arose from Thureau-Dangin's article from 1907 "Le génitif en Sumérien"; F. Thureau-Dangin, "Le suffixe du relatif et le suffixe du génitif en sumérien" (1935); Poebel has more bibliography on this subject. See, for example, *Babyloniaca*, 4 (1911): 193-215; *Historical texts* (1914), *Journal of the Society of Oriental Research*, 9 (1925): 1-7. See also *Revue d'Assyriologie*, 8, (1911): 88, for further polemics with Thureau-Dangin on the topic of direct and indirect cases and another response from Poebel in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 53, 1 (1938): 148-150.

14. S. N. Kramer, *The Sumerian Prefix forms The Sumerian Prefix forms e- and i- in the Time of the Earlier Princes of Lagaš* (Chicago, 1936).

15. The existence of a six vowel system as suggested by Poebel is, however, no more accepted by some Sumerologists today, since only 4 vowels, *a*, *e*, *i* and *u* seem to be distinguished in the writing. See Thomsen 1987: 39; Jagersma 2010: 33.

grammar, *A Sumerian Reading-Book* (1924), with the object to present, in an adapted form, all the materials which will be needed in the early studies of the learner (1924: iv).

Several years later, in 1932, Viktor Christian (1885-1963) published an article with an outstanding idea, which would not find its acceptance until some years later: the placing of Sumerian language among the so-called “ergative languages”.

Christian had cursed Oriental Studies, Linguistics and Geography at the University of Vienna and he later continued to develop and deepen his knowledge with Delitzsch, Hugo Winckler and Felix von Luschan at the University of Berlin. Christian was not only a remarkable Sumerologist, but also a brilliant Archaeologist and Ethnologist. Among his works are *Beiträge zur sumerischen Grammatik* (1957) and *Die Herkunft der Sumerer* (1961), his last important book. It was however already in his work *Die sprachliche Stellung des Sumerischen* (1932) that Christian considered the non-Semitic language of Babylonia as an ergative tongue, which explained the particular behavior of Sumerian subject and object marks in transitive and intransitive phrases and placed Sumerian language into a new dimension of analysis.

The starting point of his article is the aim to find an answer to the question of to which family the Sumerian language belongs. According to the author, there have been many attempts to find a solution to this problem. The aim of Christian’s work is no other than to compile all those attempts, analyze them critically and bring something else to them (1932: 105).

In order to answer such a question, Christian begins with a brief description of the Sumerian grammar, as it is known until that point. He quotes the works of Thureau-Dangin, Langdon, Delitzsch, Poebel, and Deimel. From these two last authors, he says, he will build his work, even though differing from them in some important points like in their treatment of the subject (1932: 106).

The declination in Sumerian language takes place through the use of suffixes (1932: 112). Without case endings are the vocative, the “object” of “transitive” verbs and the “subject” of “intransitive” and “passive” verbs. Actually, he clarifies, it is not possible to speak about “object” or “subject”, since these are terms from the Indo-European grammar. Also the concepts “transitive” and “intransitive” are not to be used here. The “subject” of the “transitive” verb is however not always marked, mostly in the older texts. When it appears with an ending it appears marked with the ergative, which is named by Christian in analogy with the languages of the Caucasus, and whose case mark is *-e* (1932: 113):¹⁶

Ganz ähnlich liegen nun auch die Verhältnisse beim „Subjekt“ des „transitiven“ Verbums. Auch dieses kann, besonders in alter Zeit, ohne Endung sein, meist aber wird es in den Ergativ gesetzt, wie man diesen Kasus im Anschluss an den Kaukasus-Sprachen wohl am besten wird nennen können. Dieser Ergativ wird gewöhnlich mit der Postposition *e* „an, auf“ gebildet.

On this important paragraph we find the word “ergative” used for the first time in the history of Sumerology. Thereafter, Christian explains the nature of the ergative and how it works in comparison with nominative-accusative patterns (1932:114):

16. The term was used for the first time in 1912 by Adolf Dirr in his work “Rutulskij jazyk”, in *Sbornik Materialov dlya Opisaniya Plemen Kavkaza* (Tbilisi), 42:3: 1-204, about the Rutul language. He based this term on Greek *ergon* (plural *erga*) meaning “work, task”. However, the term did not gain popularity until 1928, with the publication of a work, by the same author, about thirty-five Caucasian languages, which was published in German. For a historiographical survey of the term “ergative” see the article of J. Seely, “An Ergative Historiography”, in *Historiographia Linguistica*, 4, 2 (1977): 191-206. See also R. M. W. Dixon, *Ergativity* (Cambridge, 1994).

„Subjekt“ bezeichnet also beim „intransitiven“ Verbum ebenso wie das „Objekt“ beim „transitiven“ das, was im gegebenen Falle Anteil am Verbalbegriff hat, vom aktivischen Standpunkt aus gesehen, gewissermaßen den „besitzer“ des Verbalbegriffes (Possessivus). Das „Subjekt“ des „transitiven“ Verbums erscheint dagegen als Urheber, erzeuger des Zustandes („Genitivus, Ergativ“).

Although his conclusions are far-reaching, it seems, however, that his publication was neglected by other Sumerologists, or, at least, we do not find any noteworthy reference of it. In *Die Herkunft der Sumerer*, we again find a description of Sumerian ergative system (1961: 13).

One of the authors frequently quoted by Christian is Anton Deimel (1865-1954). Deimel had studied Assyriology under Johann N. Strassmayer and was Professor at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome. In 1920 he founded the *Orientalia* Series. After the First World War, he started copying Old Sumerian Documents at the Department of Near East in Berlin, which were found in Fara by the Excavations of the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft and published them under the title *Liste der archaischen Keilschriftzeichen von Fara, Schultexte aus Fara* and *Wirtschaftstexte aus Fara* (1922-1924). In 1925, he began collecting materials for his main Work, the *Sumerisches Lexikon*, which concluded in 1959 with nine volumes. The first part included a directory of cuneiform signs with their values in Sumerian, Akkadian and Hittite; the second part a collection of ideograms; the third part two volumes of vocabulary Sumerian-Akkadian / Akkadian-Sumerian and the fourth part (also in two volumes) a collection of special groups of ideograms. His main text, the *Sumerische Grammatik*, appeared in 1939 and was indeed the second edition of his *Šumerische Grammatik der archaischen Texte*, which appeared in 1924. In 1935, Deimel published *Das sumerische Verbum*, an addendum to his *Sumerische Grammatik*. There, Deimel revised his conception of the Sumerian verb, together with the new publications that had appeared on this subject, with special attention to those by Arno Poebel.

Thureau-Dangin, he explains, had just published some new grammatical texts, which seem to be analogous to that of Bertin.¹⁷ Most verbal prefixes can be explained simply as pronouns. In relation to the meaning of the verbal prefixes, we find that *mu-*, *ni-*, *e-*, *ba-* have a local (dimensional) meaning,¹⁸ similar to some prepositions in Latin.¹⁹ To this asseveration are presented some objections not observed in Deimel 1928a; “Nach dem obigen gram. Texte AO 17602,²⁰ VII 10 ist das Präfix *mu*= *anâku*, ich. (...) (1935: 9)”. Thureau-Dangin and Witzel are not sure to translate this verbal prefix as the first person: “Ausser diesen und wenigen andern Fällen sind die Formen des Typs *mu-LAL an* zahllosen andern stellen durch die 3. Pers. zu übersetzen. Auch aus diesen Texten folgt nicht, das hier *mu*, *šu*, *er*.”

Deimel also believes that Sumerian has no finite verbs (1935: 11), and he proves the necessity of the prefixes only with motion verbs. His conclusion is that these prepositions were originally adverbs of place. Analogously, other relations developed further with adverbs of time, cause, etc. All of these prepositions have a meaning that relates them to spatial nuances, as well as with causal and temporal. However, most

17. G. Bertin, “Notes on the Assyrian and Akkadian Pronouns”, in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 17 (1885): 65-88.

18. Sollberger names for that reason such explanation “théorie directionaliste” and recognizes Thureau-Dangin as the creator of that theory (E. Sollberger *Le système verbal dans les inscriptions 'royales' présargoniques de Lagaš* (Geneva, 1952), 120-122). Sollberger mentions also M. Witzel, R. Scholtz and A. Goetze as other authors that also opted for the directional theory although with other significances for the prefixes.

19. See B. Landsberger; R.T. Hallock; Th. Jacobsen; A. Falkenstein, *Materialien zum sumerischen Lexikon*, IV, (Rome, 1957), 130-147, and J. Black, *Sumerian Grammar in Babylonian Theory* (Rome 1984), 57-63.

20. Together with Witzel, Deimel had also published a response to Poebel's article in *Orientalia*, N.S., I (1931), 183-192. Cf. S. N. Kramer, “A matter of method in Sumerology”, in *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*, 49 (1933): 229-247 for a fair criticism of this review.

of the time these nuances are difficult to translate and appear to be idiomatic. The Akkadian translations also cannot tell us anything about these forms, because Akkadian does not have this kind of compound, making them unintelligible to a Semitic mind: “Ihre Übersetzungen machen aber durchaus den Sinn des šumerischen Textes richtig getroffen hatten, ein Streben nach scharf exakter wörllicher wiedergabe aller Elemente der šumerischen Formen zeigt sich bei ihnen aber nicht” (1935: 13).

His *Šumerische Grammatik mit Übungstücken* (1939), the second edition of his grammar, is also a discussion with the arguments given by Poebel and Thureau-Dangin respectively (1939: iv). Deimel agrees with Poebel’s assertion, that NI can be read as i_3 , but he does not accept that it could be identical to e -. As we have seen, and as was also established in the first edition of the Grammar, all verbal prefixes, and also the infixes, have a dimensional meaning. The difference between the two is that “die letzteren die Bedeutung des Verbums zu den adverbialen Satzteilen herstellen, während jene den Begriff des Verbums selbst modifizieren, ähnlich wie das Substativ, das bei zusammengesetzten Verben allen Verbal-Präformativen vorgesetzt wird” (1939: iv).

There are also some indications concerning syntax (1939: §3), word order, and the position of grammatical elements, such as case indicators or verbal prefixes. After a brief history of Sumerian literature and the decipherment of Sumerian language (1939: §4), we find the first statements on grammar. There are two kinds of verbal prefixes: modal-prefixes and verbal-prefixes properly. The former express the volutative, the optative, strong affirmation or negation. The explanation of these particles had been given some time ago. Nevertheless, this does not apply to verbal prefixes. They are usually formed with the prefix e -, before or after which the other prefixes are placed. All verbal prefixes have a dimensional meaning, as do all the infixes. The difference between them is that the latter maintain an adverbial relationship with the verb, whereas the former modify the meaning of the verb. The first pages also describe the sound system in Sumerian. Deimel, like other scholars before him, considers the possibility of a tone system, as in Chinese (1939: 20).

The nominal suffix is marked by an $-e$. It was originally a preposition with the meaning “in, an, bei, durch” (1939: 71). The supposition that adverbial $-e$ has its basis in the locative suffix $-a$ is unfounded. The genitive (1939: 73) is formed by the postposition $-(a)k$. Deimel also mentions the dispute between Poebel and Thureau-Dangin about this fact. The scholar understands ka and ge_2 as $ka = k$ (genitive suffix) + a locative or genitive ($a(g)$); whereas ge_2 is understood as g (genitive suffix) + e (suffix of the direct case). On the reading of this sign, he writes: “Das Zeichen KID ist wahrscheinlich = ge_2 (nicht ke); daher wird k des Suffixes ak vor e zu g .” (1939: 75).

The particles mu -, ni -, e -, ba - are used with verbs of motion: mu = Latin: ad ; ni [i_3] = Lat: “in”; e = Latin “ex”; ba = Latin “ab”. All the other verbal prefixes also have a dimensional meaning.

As Deimel explains, Thureau-Dangin and Witzel also assign a dimensional meaning to the verbal prefixes. However, Thureau-Dangin also suggests a second meaning for mu and e , which also express the subject (“ mu = celui-là; e = celui-ci”). According to Witzel, these prefixes express the object; “ mu = celui-ci; e = celui-là”. (1939: 149).

The so-called “preformatives” can be classified into two groups (1939: 156): dimensional prefixes and modal prefixes. The modal prefixes can be either simple e (i -, a -, u -); mu (ma -, mi -, me -); ni (ne -, na); bi (ba), al or compound, when followed by $m/n/b$.

The nominative, accusative and genitive are not repeated in the verbal stem. However, the dative and the locative appear as na or ne for the dative and ni for the locative. Sometimes u - is only a phonetic variant of e - (1939: 160).

Deimel queries the existence of the first person singular element ($-i$), described by Poebel in 1923, §447:

Wo ist nun bei den obigen Verbalformen ein infix *-l-*? -ein Buchstabe, für die Šumerer nicht einmal ein Zeichen hatten? Und wo ist bei der 2. Pers. Sing. ein Infix *-e-*? Und wie kann für das Subjektselement der 1. und 2. Pers. Plur. eine Regel aufgestellt werden, wenn man keine Belege hat?

Deimel answers:

Das Infix *-e-* findet sich bei allen drei Personen des Singulars; aber es scheint, wie auch das Infix *-ra/-ri*, etwas mit der 2. Pers. zu tun haben, nicht zwar als Subjektselement, sondern oft zur Bezeichnung des Dativs "dir". Daher können *-e-* und *-ra/-ri* bei der Erklärung der Verbalformen dienstlich sein (1939: 217).

In economic texts from the Old Sumerian period, there are countless verbal forms without the infixes *-n-*, *-b-* for the third person singular of the preterite. The other persons, instead, are marked by the infixes *-n/-b-* (1939: 217). For this reason, argues Deimel, these infixes could not have been subject elements, but must be phonetic indicators.

After reading Deimel's grammar, the modern reader will realize that many of the important questions about that language still remain unsolved today. There is still a range of opinions on the meaning of the "conjugation prefixes" and infixes. In spite of the vast amount of articles that continue to be published, the path towards the comprehension of the Sumerian language is still uncertain and full of misunderstandings.

From 1939 to 1945, the second major conflict in Europe broke out. The war interrupted the publication of some important journals, such as the *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, which had been published regularly for 30 years. As was the case during the First World War, no significant publications on Sumerology were made during this period. The only work that can be highlighted is that of Raymond Jestin, who published two volumes on the Sumerian verb during the years 1943-1946.²¹ With Jestin we find an exhaustive analysis of the Sumerian verb with countless examples and references to other authors. His references to Viktor Christian (1943: 46ss) are also notable, which nevertheless do not consider the author's classification of Sumerian as an ergative language.

The situation described is depicted in very much the same way as in the first lines of the introduction in Adam Falkenstein's *Grammatik der Sprache Gudeas* (1949/50, 2 vols.). Falkenstein studied Assyriology in Munich (from 1925) under Fritz Hommel and in Leipzig (from 1928) under Benno Landsberger. In 1929, he also presented his dissertation there under the title *Die Haupttypen der sumerischen Beschwörung, literarisch Untersucht*. It was in Heidelberg, however, from 1949, where Falkenstein stood out as a Sumerologist, taking the Grammar from Arno Poebel as a basis, and developing important progresses and results on grammar and literature.

A significant difference between Falkenstein's grammar and the former ones is that the author limited himself to a corpus of contemporary documents instead of trying to analyze the whole Sumerian language at once.²² The texts analyzed in the pages of his outstanding monograph date from the Gudea period and its inscriptions, between the texts of the Post-Sumerian and the Old Sumerian period (ca. 2600-2300 b.C.) and texts from the time of Hammurabi (ca. 1750-1550 b.C.). The first part describes the writing system and the basic grammar, whereas the second volume lays out the syntax of the Sumerian language of the Gudea period.

21. R. Jestin, *Le verbe sumérien*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1946).

22. That was indeed the first "synchronical" (i.e. circumscribed to a period of time) grammar published for the Sumerian language and opened a tendency that will be followed by some of Falkenstein's students like I. Kärki, whose *Die Sprache der sumerischen Königsinschriften der Frühbabylonischen Zeit* (Helsinki, 1967), although mainly outdated, is still a reference for the Sumerian texts of the Old Babylonian period.

The first pages of the grammar are intended to establish the readings of certain signs that have become controversial over the years. Examples are readings such as *bi* for BI and *ke₄* for KID (1949: I, §2). In addition, some words have a final vowel; e.g. GAL should be read *gala*; LUGAL is read as *lugala*, etc. (1949: I, §3).²³ All of these readings are the results of Falkenstein's previous research, which had already been published in several articles in important journals such as *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*.²⁴

As in previous grammars, the first few pages are on phonetics. In some cases, he explains, certain consonants in prefixes can be doubled (1949: I, §4.3). The prefixes in question are: *-ba*, *-be₂*, *-bu*, *-da*, *-de₃*, *-du*, *-ga*, *-ge*, *-ge₄*, *-ga₂* (=nga), *-ha*, *-hu*, *-ke₄*, *-ra*, *-re*, *-la*, *-ma*, *-me*, *-mu*, *-na*, *-ne₂*, *-sa*. The consonant *-l* only appears doubled in one case, namely, *a-zal-le*. Vowel harmony occurs in Sumerian of Gudea period as a frequent phenomenon (1949: I, §9). In addition to vowel harmony, there is a "Spontane Konsonantveränderung" (1949: I, §11) as follows: *n>l b>m*: *i-b-ta>im-ta*²⁵ *i-b-da>im-ta* *t>d*: *ta>da* *d>b*: *du₃ - (e)da> du₃-ba*.²⁶ Other phonological changes are the assimilation of *t>r* and of *m* (originally *b*) > *n*; dissimilation; loss of final consonants (e.g. *-e(d)>-e*) and loss of consonants between vowels (*ibid.*).

Regarding the pronouns (§12-§13), possessive suffixes (§14) and demonstrative pronouns (§15), Falkenstein makes a few improvements to the pronouns established by Poebel:

Simple forms:	Falkenstein	Poebel
First pers. sg.	<i>ga₂ = nga (-e)</i>	<i>mae</i>
Second pers. sg.	<i>*za</i>	<i>zae</i>
Third pers. sg.	<i>a-ne</i> (Old and Neo-Sumerian <i>e-ne</i>)	gives only <i>ene</i>
First pers. pl.	<i>*me-e₃</i>	<i>menden, mende, mede, meden</i>
Second pers. pl.	<i>*me-ze₂</i>	<i>menzen</i>
Third pers. pl.	<i>*a-na-(a-)ne</i>	<i>enene</i>

23. As R. Jestin, *Grammatik der Sprache Gudeas von Lagaš* (Rome, 1952), 9, 181 points out, this phenomenon had also been mentioned by Delitzsch in 1914b: §61 and by R. Scholtz, "Die Struktur der Sumerischen engeren Verbalpräfixe speziell dargelegt an der I. und II. Form," in *Mitteilungen der Vorderasiatischen Gesellschaft*, 34, II (1934): 12, who considered the final vowel to be a secondary addition. Scholtz is also mentioned by Falkenstein 1949: I, §3. Jestin, *ibid.* writes: "les *nicht erklärbare Pleneschreibungen*, il me semble cependant que les exemples du type *ki-za-lag-zalag-ga-a* pourraient vraisemblablement s'expliquer par la forme adjectivale (ou "participiale") en -a suivie de la postposition..."

24. For example *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 43: 169-194; 57: 181-223; 58: 69-118.

25. See C. Wilcke, "Anmerkungen zum 'Konjugationspräfix' /i/- und zur These vom „silbischen Charakter der sumerischen Morpheme“ anhand neusumerischer Verbalformen beginnend mit *i₃-ib₃-*, *i₃-im-*, und *i₃-in-*," in *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, 78 (1988): 47-49.

26. For a critic to the idea that the existence of nasalized vowels would produce those consonant changes see J.A. Black, *Archiv für Orientforschung*, 33 (1986): 77; K. Wilson, *Lingua* 70 (1986) 76; Th. Jacobsen, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 108 (1988) 127-128; M. Yoshikawa, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, 45 (1988): 500.

Accentuated forms:		
First pers. sg.	* <i>ga₂-me (-n)</i>	<i>mae-men</i>
Second pers. sg.	<i>ze₂- me (-n)</i>	<i>zae-men</i>
Third pers. sg.	* <i>a-ne-am₃</i>
First pers. pl.	* <i>me-de₃-de₃</i>	<i>mede-nden, mede-nde</i>
Second pers. pl.	?	<i>mede-nden, mede-nde</i>
Third pers.	<i>-na-ne-ne</i>	<i>enenene</i>

Table 1: Personal pronouns in Falkenstein (1949) and Poebel (1931).

Falkenstein is also the first to note the nasalized reading of /-ngu/.²⁷ According to him, this sign is written *-mu*, because there is no particular sign for the nasalized consonant (*ibid.*).

The subject of sentences with a transitive verb will be marked with an *-e*. (§27). Accusative, on the contrary, will not be marked with any postposition, similarly to the subject of the intransitive and no finite sentences (§27). Other authors (Langdon, *Sumerian Grammar* §70; Gadd, *Sumerian Reading Book*, § 22; Deimel, *Sumerische Grammatik*, §18b; Poebel, *Grundzüge der Sumerischen Grammatik*, § 154) have noticed the same phenomenon.

Falkenstein introduces the term “pronominale Konjugation” (§46) for participles conjugated by the addition of particles which express possession. This form consists of an intransitive or transitive participle followed by an additional *a* (which Falkenstein considers analogue with the nominalizer), plus a particle of possession.

Considering the finite verb, Sumerian also has both transitive and intransitive verbs. In the first group, it is possible to distinguish between two verbal tenses, namely, the present-future and the preterite. The intransitive and passive verb expresses both tenses in the normal form. The ending *-ed* can be used both for transitive and intransitive verbs, which in transitive verbs is used to express the present-future.

Regarding the verbal person endings also some variations since Poebel can be observed (§49);²⁸

27. 𒄩 u₁₀ see A. Falkenstein, “Sumerische Beschwörungen aus Boğazköy”, in *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, 45 (1939): 32.

28. The terms *ḥamṭu* and *marû* are not yet used by Poebel but as Edzard (1971: 209-212) noticed “dort ist allerdings ein Teil des Phänomens implizite berücksichtigt: Poebel widmete einen längeren Abschnitt der sof. ‘Präsensreduplikation (s. 171f.), die, wie er betonte, nicht immer mit der Vollreduplikation der verbalen Basis übereinstimme.” Neither Falkenstein used that and continued with Poebel’s descriptive name of “Präsensreduplikation” (1949: 63, 68-70). The first one to use that terms came some years later: Th. Jacobsen in *Materialien zum sumerischen Lexikon*, 4 (1956), 5 who described *ḥamṭu* and *marû* as “character roots” and announced that the *marû* root is translated in Akkadian as present and *ḥamṭu* as preterite, which appear combined in

	Poebel				Falkenstein			
	“Präteritum”		“Präsens-Futur”		“Präteritum”		“Präsens-Futur”	
	“Actives Präteritum”	“Intransitives Präteritum (Permansivum)”	“Transitive”	“Actives und intransitives Präsens-Futur”	“transitives”	“intransitives”	“transitives”	“intransitives”
First ps. Sg.	-’-	-en	-(e)-n	-en	*-?-	*-en	*-en	*-en
Second ps. Sg.	-e-	-en	-(e)-n	-en	-e-	*-en	*-en	*-en
Third ps. Sg.	-n- /-b-	-	-	-e	*-n-/ *-b-	-	*-e	-
First ps. Pl.	-me-	-enden	-e-nden	-enden	-[me-]	*-enden	*-enden	*-enden
Second ps. Pl.	-ene-	-enzen	- e-nzen	-enzen	*-e-...a- (e)ne	*-enzen	*-enzen	*-enzen
Third ps. Pl.	-n-...eš	-eš	-eš	-ene	*-n-...eš	*-eš	*-ene	*-eš

Table 2: Comparative chart between preterit and present-future endings of the verb in Poebel and Falkenstein.

The final *-n* of the first and second person singular and plural in the preterite is dropped completely in the Gudea period. There is still uncertainty regarding the first person singular. Poebel established a link between that form and the third person singular of the permansive, which does not present any mark. A second possibility, which he considered more probable, is that this form was originally represented by a pronoun of the first person singular, which would be preserved as a hiatus or an extension of a preceding vowel. Falkenstein, on the other hand, suggests that it could be a vocal element (1949: I, §50). He also suggests a relation with the first person pronominal element, also uncertain, which he considers possibly identical to the second person singular *-e-* (§63).

The second person singular infix, if it appears next to a vowel, merges with it. The first person plural is not attested in the Gudea inscriptions, though in this case Falkenstein accepts Poebel’s reconstruction. There is only one piece of evidence for the second person plural. In the single attestation for the third person plural in the corpus that Falkenstein analyses, *-n-* is not preserved. However, *-š* is maintained.

In the first and second persons of the singular for the transitive present-future, the final *-n* is not preserved. An exception of those cases where a vocal suffix can be found. The distinction between third

Sumerian with the so-called “aspects of Awareness” and “the differentiation between unfinished action (*R-e*) and finished action (*R-ø*)”. The system described by Falkenstein, however, remained among Sumerologists until the publication of two important articles by Mamoru Yoshikawa in 1968 (“The *marû* and *hamtu* aspects in the Sumerian verbal system”, in *Orientalia, Nova Series*, 37: 401-416 and “On the grammatical function of *-e-* of the Sumerian verbal suffix *-e-deš/da(m)*”, in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 27: 251-261). Finally, Michalowski in 1980 (“Sumerian as an Ergative Language I,” in *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*, 32 (1980): 86-103) made some important observations concerning the ergativity and its relationship with some of the verbal behaviors that can be observed in Sumerian and concluded that whereas verbal agreement works on an ergative basis in the “perfect”, the “imperfect” works on a nominative-accusative one.

person “human” (“persönlich”) (-*n*-) and “not human” (“sächlich”) (-*b*-) is not marked. First person plural is not attested. For the second person plural there is only one testimony, where both nasals are not written.

For the intransitive, there can be additional observations. Unlike Poebel, in Falkenstein only one form, the so-called “Normalform” (§48) can be observed for both tenses, preterite and present-future. Following Poebel (1923: §447), the third person singular appears without person mark. The first and second forms of the plural are not attested and are therefore reconstructed.

The form *-ed*, which is described as a prolongation of the normal form of the intransitive and passive verb that gives a present-future nuance, is attested in this corpus in just a few examples for the 3rd person singular. This scarce appearance is explained by a phonetic transformation that causes the consonant *-d* to disappear. The remaining *-e-* appears thus assimilated with the *-e-* of the present-future of the transitive.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		10
Poebel	ga ḫe, u ₃ na bara nu	i inga mu al bi ba immi imma abba	-'-a -e-ra -n-a -me-a -ene-/-enne- /-ene-a- -ne	-'- -e- -n- -b- -e-ne-- ene-	-da- -ta- -šu ₃ / -še ₃			-'-i-/ -(')-a- -e(-i)- -n-i- -me-a- -ene(-i)-/ enne(-i)-ene- a- -ene	-n- -b-	R	ed
Falkenstein	ga i(n)g a ḫe u nu na	i mu na ba bi	*-?-a *-e-r-a -n-a *-b-a *-me-a *-e-ene-a *-ene-a-			da	ta ši	*-?-e- *-e-r-e- *-n-e- *-b-e- *-me-e- *-e-ene-e- *ene-e-	*-?- *-e- -n- -b- *-me- *-e-e-n- e>-ene- *-e-n-e-	R	ed

Table 3: Evolution of the verbal prefixes in Poebel and Falkenstein.

The analysis of the elements of the verbal chain also differs in several points with that of Poebel:

i(n)ga is considered by Falkenstein as a preformative and not, like Poebel, as an infix. For Poebel (1923: §403, 498), *inga* was a compound of the prefix *i-* and an infix *-nga-*. Falkenstein, on the other hand, justifies his argument by quoting a passage where *inga-* appears before the conjugation prefix *mu-* (§73). According to Falkenstein, the meaning of this prefix is affirmative, and it also owns a function of link between phrases (analog with Akkadian *u*, *u su* and *-ma*). It appears once in the Gudea corpus without the medial *-n-*.

Following Bruno Landsberger²⁹, Falkenstein names the second slot of the verbal chain “conjugation prefixes”. He also distinguishes between the so-called “properly” conjugation prefixes (*i-* and *mu-*) and the “not properly” conjugation prefixes (*na-*, *ba-* and *bi-*). The element *al-*, which is considered by Poebel, is not listed, as it does not appear in the Gudea inscriptions. The conjugation prefix *na-* (which differs from the preformative *na-*) is compounded by the pronominal element *n-* and the directional element *-a-* from the dative-locative infix (§60). Falkenstein isolates, however, one possible attestation of this conjugation prefix. From the same basis, Falkenstein interprets the prefix *ba-*, which he considers as formed by the pronominal “thing” element of the third person singular *-b-* and the directional locative *-a-*. The prefix *bi-* corresponds, on the other hand, to the union between the pronominal *-b-* and the locative-terminative infix *-e- >-i-* (§62).

The third and the fourth columns correspond to the verbal infixes and suffixes (§63). With exception of the genitive and the comparative, all the cases of the nominal sentence can be gathered in the verbal part.

The Locative terminative (§66) appears in the Gudea inscriptions related with the pronominal element of the first person singular, the third person singular (human and non-human) and the third person plural (human). The first person singular is reconstructed by Falkenstein as **-?-e->*-?-i-*; the third person singular animated is **-n-e->-n-i-*. Finally, the third person non-human corresponds to **-b-e->*-b-i-*. This form cannot, however, be found in the inscriptions and instead we have *-mi-* or *-n-i-*.

The terminative infix (§67) appears in the Gudea period in the form of *ši*. A significant improvement with respect to the terminology can be found here; whereas Poebel simply spoke about the verbal affixes *-da-*, *-ta-* and *šu₃-še₃*, Falkenstein already speaks about “Komitativinfix”, “Ablativinfix” and “Terminativinfix”. All the dimensional infixes occur in Poebel preceded by a personal infix, also if they are not attested (1923: §501).

Finally, regarding the suffix *-ed* (§51) it appears in Falkenstein not limited to the present-future of the intransitive verb, like in Poebel (1923: §626), but also applied to the transitive preterite and the present future. The transitive preterite form of *-ed* is only twice attested and the present future appears a single doubtful time.

The second volume of Falkenstein’s grammar is on the syntax of Sumerian. The author observes that no one except Delitzsch in his *Grundzüge* had included a section exclusively on syntax in a Sumerian grammar (1949: II, vii).³⁰ The structure is approximately the same as in the previous volume: the different parts of the sentences, noun phrases and verbal clauses are examined and followed by a considerable number of examples from the Gudea period.

The work of Falkenstein remained a main reference for the Sumerological studies during the following decades after its publication. Already in the decade of the 80’s, the work of Marie-Louise Thomsen attempted a modernization of Falkenstein’s work with the inclusion of more recent published literature, parallel to the new publications of an increasing number of Sumerian literary texts. The grammar of Thomsen also included the already accepted classification of Sumerian as an ergative language, but was lacking original analyses. From the decade of the 70’s until today, the impact of linguistics has been increasingly valuable for the field of the Sumerological studies, and some important grammars such as

29. In R. Scholtz, “Die Struktur der sumerischen engeren Verbalpräfixe I”, in *Mitteilungen der Vorderasiatischen Gesellschaft*, 39 (1934): 2.

30. However, as it has been noticed, G. Bertin already published a text about Sumerian syntax (Bertin (1888)). See Marsal 2014: 289-291.

Römer's (1999) Edzard's (2003), Zólyomi (2006) or Jagersma (2010) are still bringing new and profitable observations to the field of the Sumerology.

If it is possible to draw any conclusions from this brief survey, they would be, on the one hand, the existence of some misunderstandings and odd developments about which have been traditionally considered the most important contributions and to whom such contributions are allocated by specific authors. An example of this is, as we had seen in the first part of this article, the fact that almost none of the modern scholars mention A. H. Sayce when writing about the early history of the decipherment of the Sumerian language. On the contrary, other scholars whose contributions are less significant, at least regarding the understanding Sumerian grammar, are more commonly quoted on the scholarly literature, although their importance is mainly in other fields, such as Sumerian literature. This applies in the case of F. Lenormant.

In addition, it is also interesting to note the fact that the discerning article by V. Christian on the ergativity of the Sumerian language was apparently not considered of relevance in the time of its publication. In spite of his clear-sighted intuition his article was not seriously discussed, and it was not until the book of Diakonoff in 1967 (1967: 95-115) that the ergative pattern in Sumerian began to be accepted.³¹ A similar case of neglect is the question of the dimensional nuance of the conjugation prefixes. This interesting idea, which has been re-considered in recent years,³² appeared early on in the history of the Sumerology as we have seen, with scholars such as Thureau-Dangin, Deimel, Witzel, and others but later on, firstly with Poebel³³ and after with Falkenstein, which directly departed from the assumptions of Poebel, disappeared from Sumerian grammars for many years.

31. For example, see Rubio, G. 2007: "Sumerian Morphology", in Kaye, A. and Lake, W. (eds.) *Morphologies of Asia and Africa* 1-2, 1327-1379, Pennsylvania: 1327, who names Diakonoff as the first to consider Sumerian as an ergative language. However, John L. Hayes on his *A manual of Sumerian Grammar and Texts* (1990: 9) quotes already Viktor Christian as the first person to apply the term ergative to Sumerian. Jestin in his *Le verbe sumérien* (1946) quoted Christian and mentioned the fact that he does not accept the categories of "subject" and "object" as appropriate for the Sumerian language because they do not owe to Sumerian itself (1946: 120), but however does neither mention the question of ergativity. Also Falkenstein seems to have read the work of Christian, as a reference of it can be found in the bibliography of *Das Sumerische* (1959), but no mention of the question is given throughout the study.

32. See for example Chr. Woods, *The grammar of perspective* (Leiden, 2008), with multiple references in Marsal 2014.

33. It is worthy mentioning here the assumption from Delitzsch that was mentioned at the beginning of this article (Delitzsch 1914a: vi). Delitzsch intentionally omitted any reference to his predecessors. The grammar of Delitzsch was also highly influential on the grammar of Poebel, which significantly wore the same title. Although Poebel debated intensively with Thureau-Dangin during the years previous to the publication of his grammar, no reference to him or his theses can be found among its pages, neither to other Sumerologists, contributing to the oblivion of some interesting theories.