





STUDIES IN THIRD MILLENNIUM PALEOGRAPHY - 3: SIGN DARA₄

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In OA, 22 (1983), 179-89, J. Krecher offered a new edition of "Animal List A", originally published by G. Pettinato in MEE 3, 47-56. This new edition utilizes the text MEE 3, 62, which, as Krecher had established in 1982¹, is a syllabic version of the list. Another edition of this list, using the same sources, was published independently by Th.J.H. Krispijn in JEOL, 27 (1981-82), 47-59.




Commenting on line 12 of the list, which contains the equation áb dara₄ = ab da-ra "dark colored cow"², Krecher notes that the sign DARA₄, "später SÍG+AŠ, ist noch in der neusumerischen Zeit mit SÍG identisch"³. As the evidence for the usage of SÍG to write dara₄ in Ur III times, Krecher cites the examples of SÍG, replacing darāḥ (= DÀRA)⁴, Akk. *turāḥu* "wild goat"⁵, in the Nippur spellings of the year-formula Šu-Sin 2.

Discussing the same line, Krispijn, in contrast, identifies DARA₄ as LAK-670 and distinguishes it from SÍG, i.e., LAK-793⁶.

Although in the Ur III examples cited by Krecher the sign in question is in fact to be read dara₄, dara₄ cannot be considered merely one of the readings of SÍG. In agreement with Krispijn's suggestion, in the 3rd millennium script DARA₄ (= LAK-670) and SÍG (= LAK-793) are two different signs⁷. In ED sources the usual form of the former sign is  (see, e.g., MEE 3/A, pl. 27 no. 52 vii 9 = SE 58); in contrast, SÍG  is written  (see, e.g. MEE 4, pl. 15 no. 11 rev. vii 27ff = VE 97 lff). In this  connection, note that DARA₄ forms part, apparently as a phonetic complement, of the sign LAK-262, which seems to have been the original graph of /darāḥ/ "wild goat"⁸.

The reading of DARA₄ is given in the Ebla Syllabary as dè-rf-NÚM (MEE 3, p. 198 line 58). While M. Civil reads the gloss as dè-rf-núm /derin/, assuming that -núm represents a nasalization⁹, I prefer, for reasons which will become apparent later on, to read it dè-rf-ḥum, with the interpretation /dereḥ/ or /darāḥ/.

As far as I know, DARA₄ does not occur in Pre-Sargonic sources. The only Sargonic attestation of this sign is found in the month-name ITI NĪG.A.DARA₄, recorded in a tablet from Tell al-Wilayah¹⁰.

In that tablet, DARA₄ is written . However, DARA₄ is frequent in Ur III sources, where it  has the form , i.e., SĪG+AŠ. This, in fact, is the sign that Krecher finds in the Nippur spellings of the year-formula Šu-Sin 2. For good examples of the sign, see Owen, NSAT 649:7, 816:12; NRVN 88:10, 228:11. Note that at Nippur the spelling with dara₄ actually takes precedence over that with darah₄, and thus may be considered the standard one for Nippur texts.

Apart from the Nippur spellings of the year-formula Šu-Sin 2, DARA₄ also occurs in the texts from Drehem, where it describes a type of ovid¹¹. Compared with other ovids, the DARA₄ occur quite rarely in Drehem sources; and when they do occur, their numbers tend to be very small¹².

The fact that DARA₄ describes animals of both sexes¹³, excludes any possibility of reading the sign as ganam₄ or u₁₀, and of connecting it with *lahru* "ewe"¹⁴. The only plausible solution is to assume that, as in Nippur texts, at Drehem DARA₄ stands for darah₄ "wild goat"¹⁵. For this interpretation, it is significant that the attestations of darah₄ are exceedingly rare in Drehem sources¹⁶.

In addition, the sign DARA₄ occurs in the word a-dara₄, which is one of the designation of goats in Drehem texts¹⁷. That this term is to be read a-dara₄ is proved by the existence of a variant form a-darah₄, which too serves to describe goats¹⁸. It is characteristic that the a-dara₄/darah₄ goats are often listed together with wild goats (dara₄/darah₄)¹⁹. However, as is demonstrated by the text PDT 526, which in the totals records the wild goats (darah₄) separately from the a-darah₄ goats (included among sheep - udu), the latter definitely are not "wild goats". In view of the fact that dara₄ means "dark red" (Akk. *da³mu*), one might be tempted to speculate that a-dara₄/darah₄ is a color designation. But since this term is used exclusively in reference to goats, such a possibility seems most unlikely. Further, the frequent association of the a-dara₄/darah₄ animals with wild goats can hardly be mere coincidence, so that one must assume some kind of connection between the two. Here I can think of only one explanation: the term a-dara₄/darah₄, to be translated "wild-goat seed"²⁰ designates a hybrid resulting from the interbreeding of the domestic goat with its wild counterpart²¹.

This interpretation of a-dara₄/darah₄ finds support in the existence of the parallel terms a-udu-*hur-sag* "mountain-sheep

seed" and a-am "wild-cattle seed", which seem to denote hybrids of the wild sheep and wild cattle respectively²².

The only complication to the acceptance of the above interpretation lies in the Ur III month-name ezen-A.DARA₄ "Festival-of-the-A.DÀRA"²³, evidently identical to the earlier-cited Sargonic NÍG.A.DARA₄, where A.DARA₄ is suspiciously similar to the Drehem term. Since the meaning "wild-goat seed" makes little sense in this context, one is forced to speculate that A.DARA₄ either stands here simply for "wild goat" (i.e., darah_h)²⁴ or, perhaps more likely, is a syllabic spelling of the month-name Addarum²⁵. I must confess, however, that I find neither explanation fully satisfactory.

The last point remaining to be considered is the relationship between dara₄ and darah_h. It seems quite probable that dara₄ "dark red" is simply a description of the color of the wild goat's hide, and thus represents the same word as darah_h²⁶. If so, the pronunciation of DARA₄ could be reconstructed as /dara_h/ or /dura_h/. This, in turn, would lend substance to the reading dè-rí-ḥum of the gloss in SE 58, which we proposed at the beginning of this note.

¹ In a paper read at the Ebla Conference, held in Naples in April of 1982; see now *Il bilinguismo a Ebla*, ed. by L. Cagni, Napoli 1984, 139 n. 5.

² OA, 22; 181. See also *ibid.*, 181 lines 13, 14, 22, and 24 (in the last example, DARA₄ is glossed dar).

³ *Ibid.*, 184-85.

⁴ For the reading darah_h (or durah_h) of DÀRA, see ta-ra-a_h DÀRA (Proto-Ea 846 = MSL 14, 62); du-ra-a_h DÀRA = tu-ra-*h*[u] (Secondary Proto-Ea OB = MSL 14, 135 line 19); da-ra DÀRA = tu-ra-*h*u (S^b 375 = MSL 3, 153).

⁵ darah_h/turā_hhu is usually translated as "ibex" (German "Steinbock") by Assyriologists. See, e.g., B. Landsberger, *Fauna*, 94; W. Heimpel, *Tierbilder*, 247; AHW, 1372; M. Sigrist, AUCT 1, p. 71. However, this identification is not very convincing, for the ibex (*Capra ibex*) has a very limited distribution in Asia (from west of Lake Baikal to Turkestan and Kashmir). A much more likely choice is the Persian wild goat (*Capra hircus aegagrus*), the "bezoar" or "pasang" of Asia Minor, the Caucasus, and the Zagros and Elburz Mountains, which is generally believed to have been the ancestor of that region's domestic goat (*Capra hircus*). See Ch.A. Reed in R.J. Braidwood-B. Howe, *Prehistoric Investigations in Iraqi Kurdistan*, Chicago 1960, 130-31; F. Hole-K.V. Flannery-J.A. Neely, *Prehistory and Human Ecology of the Deh Luran Plain*, Ann Arbor 1969, 266; J. Clutton-Brock, *Domesticated Animals: From Early Times*, London 1981, 58-59.

⁶ *Op.cit.*, 50.

⁷ See already M. Civil in *Il bilinguismo a Ebla*, 96.

- 8 LAK-262 will be discussed, together with the related signs LAK-263 and LAK-264, by the present author elsewhere.
- 9 *Op. cit.*, 96.
- 10 J.N. Postgate: *Sumer*, 32 (1976), 94 n°2 rev. 6'.
- 11 The extant designations of the DARA₄ are as follows: nita, "male" (e.g. Sigrist, AUCT I 409:3, 728:1, 933:3); SAL, "female" (e.g. Sigrist, AUCT I 409:4, 471:2, 803:1); ga, "suckling" (e.g. Sauren, *NY Public Library*, 241:7); ħur-sag, "mountain" (e.g., PDT 86:9) and giš-dù "breeder" (e.g., PDT 213 rev. 3'). Apart from the Drehem sources, the same usage of DARA₄ is found in a text from Susa (MDP 18 137:2', rev. 1', Ur III[?]), which lists, along a number of sheep, 2 DARA₄.
- 12 The most common numbers of the DARA₄ per text are one and two. As far as I know, the largest number of the DARA₄ recorded in one text is 136 (Legrain, TRU 115). Note also Sauren, *NY Public Library*, 225 and 241, listing twenty and twenty-one DARA₄ respectively.
- 13 See note 11.
- 14 See ú, ú-a, la-ħar DARA₄ = la-aħ-ru (Ea I 207-209 = MSL 14, p. 127).
- 15 Yet another occurrence of the spelling dara₄ for darah is found in the Ur III canal-name pa₄-dara₄-an-na, "Wild-goat-of-heaven" (MVN 10 231 i 3), for which compare é-darah-an-na (Cohen, *Eršemma*, 201), and darah-abzu, "wild goat of Abzu" (Gudea Cyl. A xxiv 21 and the year formula ŠS 2).
- 16 The occurrences of darah in Drehem texts known to me are AnOr 7 154:14, 25, 43, 50, 57 (2 darah); Legrain, TRU 182:7 (2 darah-SAL, following 8 máš-gal a-darah and 1 SALáš-gàr a-darah); Sigrist, AUCT I 446:5 (1 darah-SAL); PDT 526 (1 darah-nita, 1 darah-SAL, and 2 darah-SAL gaba, followed by 2 máš a-darah gaba, 1 máš ga a-'darah', and 5 máš a-darah gaba). For the meaning of a-darah, see below.
- 17 The types of goats thus described are as follows: máš (e.g., BIN 3 170:8, 199:2, 5, 305:1; Sigrist, AUCT I 477:3, 641:1, 921:2), máš-gal (e.g., BIN 3, 281:2, 301:2, 305:4; Sigrist, AUCT I 350:1, 849:3), máš-gal niga (e.g., BIN 3 25:1; Sigrist, AUCT I 630:1), máš ga (e.g., Sauren, *NY Public Library*, 9:2; BIN 3 25:4; Sigrist, AUCT I 630:4), ùz (e.g., BIN 3, 305:2; Kang, SACT I 79:2), SALáš-gàr (e.g., PDT 154:3, 345:25; Sigrist, AUCT I 6:1), and SALáš-gàr ga (Sigrist, AUCT I 630:5).
- 18 See the examples cited in note 16.
- 19 For the dara₄ and the a-dara₄ goats appearing in the same text, see, e.g., PDT 154:1-3; BIN 3 170:1, 8; Sauren, *NY Public Library*, 9:1-2, 241: 5-9. For the similar occurrences of the darah and the a-darah goats, see the examples cited in note 16.

- 20 Cf. a = *rihûtu*, "semen, procreation" (AHw, 983b). For this interpretation, see already Legrain, TRU (text), p. 123, who translated a-udu-ḥur-sag, a-"dara", and a-"sīg" as "croisés de mouflon", "croisés de capricorne", and "croisés de bouquetin(?)" respectively. The same conclusion was also reached by A. Deimel, SL 100:4: "Diese wilden Tiere [darah] wurden auch eingefangen und gezähmt und zur Kreuzung mit Ziegen verwendet; vgl. máš-gal-a-R, eine grosse Ziege, gekreuzt mit einem Steinbock". And finally, note A.L. Oppenheim's interpretation of a-dara₄ as "sīg-descent" (*Eames Collection*, p. 15).
- 21 As I am informed by K. Butz and R.H. Meadow, the practice of introducing wild strains into the herd to improve the stock, primarily to increase its body size, is well-documented in cattle and sheep breeding. This practice finds explanation in the fact that the process of domestication, particularly in its early stages, almost always leads to a reduction in body size. Though not necessarily negative in itself, this phenomenon assumes an acute form under arid conditions, often resulting in dwarfism.
- 22 I owe this suggestion to J.N. Postgate, who also brings to my attention his statement in *Equids in the Ancient World*, ed. by R.H. Meadow and H.-P. Uerpmann, Wiesbaden 1986, 199: "... we know that, in the Ur III period at least, strains of wild sheep and goats were being deliberately crossed with domestic animals". For the designation a-udu-ḥur-sag (usually misread as a-lu ḥur-sag), see udu a-udu-ḥur-sag (e.g., BIN 3 8:1, 114:1, 391:1), u₈ a-udu-ḥur-sag (e.g., BIN 3 114:2, 301:1), sila₄ a-udu-ḥur-sag (e.g., BIN 3 199:1, 4), sila₄ ga a-udu-ḥur-sag (e.g., Kang, SACT 1 79:3) and kir₁₁ ga a-udu-ḥur-sag (e.g. BIN 3 305:3); for a-am, see gud a-am (e.g., Jones-Snyder 39:2), gud a-am niga (e.g., Kang, SACT 1, 182:2), áb a-am niga (Jones-Snyder 64:4), amar gud a-am ga (e.g., Kang, SACT 1 95:1; Sigrist, AUCT 1 618:1), and amar peš a-am ga (Jones-Snyder 37:1). Of special interest here is the text Jones-Snyder 64 (courtesy J.N. Postgate), which lists, apart from amar peš a-am ga, áb a-am niga, and udu a-udu-ḥur-sag, also máš-gal a-dara₄ and SALáš-gàr a-dara₄.
- 23 Attested in MVN 13 748:9, a tablet from the SIA-a archive (for which see most recently Steinkeller: JAOS, 102 [1982], 643), and in several documents from the archive of a merchant Tūram-ilī (M. van de Mieroop: JCS, 38 [1986], 27 n°3:11, 45 n°15:6, 78 n°38:8).
- 24 Cf. here the Ur III month masda-kú "Eating-of-the-gazelle".
- 25 See I.J. Gelb, MAD 3, 20; CAD A/1, 110-11.
- 26 Compare the semantic evolution of the French *chamois*, from "mountain goat" to "yellowish-brown (color)".