

THE SUMERIAN VERB LUG IN OLD BABYLONIAN LITERARY TEXTS

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Piotr Steinkeller has provided an exhaustive analysis of the Sumerian verbs *l u g* (LU) and *l u g_x* (LUL) and has demonstrated the vagaries of the history of the writing and usage of LU and LUL in early Sumerian texts¹. In preparing an edition of the "Lament over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur" I had the opportunity to wonder about this verb and as a result of a discussion which followed my reading of Steinkeller's manuscript, the author cordially asked me to add my comments on the use of LUG in Old Babylonian literary texts to his article.

Steinkeller has demonstrated that the use of LUL (= *l u g_x*) in the meaning "to live (of an animal), to pasture (intransitive), to herd/pasture animals, to take care of animals (transitive)" was transferred by Old Babylonian times to the sign LU, with the value *l u g*. In literary texts of this period this verb is not commonly encountered; indeed at present only eight occurrences are known. These have been enumerated by Steinkeller in his study and only three of them are repeated here². In all these sentences, except for (e) in which the subject is the unknown word *s a g-m a ḥ* (referring to Ningiz-zida), the verb describes animals and with the exception of (g) these are either birds or fish. An Ur III incantation, L 1036, cited by Steinkeller, has "the lion, the *mušḫuššu*-dragon" as the subject. In Old Babylonian literary usage, however, it appears that *l u g* was closely associated with birds and fish. The later example (g) may have resulted from a confusion of the usage of *l u = duššū*, "to be numerous" with *l u g*, "to dwell". Note that at least

two other literary passages combine the nouns $\text{\textcircled{S} e g}_9$ and $\text{\textcircled{S} e g}_9\text{-b a r}$ with the verb l u in the meaning "to be numerous"³. Example (d), however, can be used to argue against this point. One should also point out the fact that with quadrupeds l u (g) was also used in the sense "to pasture (intransitive and transitive)"⁴.

There are two occurrences of l u g in the "Lament over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur" and both instances create problems for the modern editor. These lines constitute examples (a) and (b) in Steinkeller's enumeration. In order to facilitate the discussion I also repeat the example (c).

(a) LSUr 301

A $\text{u n-b i k u}_6 \text{\textcircled{S} u n i g i n}_2\text{-n a-t[a]}\text{? -g i n}_7$ []
 B $[\text{u}] \text{n-b i k u}_6 \text{\textcircled{S} u d a b}_5\text{-b a-g i n}_7$ $\text{z i-b i m i-n i-i n-t \u0304[m]}$]
 C $\text{u n-b i k u}_6 \text{p \u0304}\text{? -a l u g-g a-g i n}_7$ [] $\text{m i-n i-i b-t \u0304 m-}$
 -t \u0304 m-m u

[A = SRT 51 + Ni 4079 (ISET 2 5) + Ni 4277 (ISET 1 85) + Ni 9951 (ISET 2 61) rev. 10; B = UET 6 130; C = UET 6 131. All Ur sources collated.]

(b) LSUr 406a [UET 6 132:52]

$\text{k u}_6 \text{ a-n i g i n}_2\text{-n a l u g-g a-g i n}_7$ $\text{z i-b i m u-n i-i n-t \u0304 m-t \u0304 m-}$
 -m u-n e

"they seek shelter like fish living in a pond"⁵.

(c) $\text{\u0304-k \u0304}\text{\textcircled{S} k u}_6 \text{ a m u n l u g-g a-g i n}_7$ $\text{z i m u-u n-d i-n i-i b-i r-}$
 -i r

a-ne-eḥ-ma šu ki-ma nu-un as-li

"he was exhausted like a fish in salt water, he was terrified". Sargon-Urzaba
 ba 1.11 (Cooper and Heimpel: JAOS, 103 [1983], 75).

There is clearly some confusion here. In passage (a) the three extant witnesses disagree on the reading of the line. Moreover, the second occurrence of

l u g in LSUr is found in a line which is found only in a manuscript from Ur; the Nippur texts which preserve this section of the composition all lack the line⁶. This is of interest since text C of (a) was written by the same scribe who wrote the Ur tablet which is our only source for line 406a. The confusion in texts A and B of (a) may have resulted from a graphic transmission error. The LU sign is similar enough to NIGIN₂ and KU (d a b₅) so that the complements -n a and -b a could have been added by a confused scribe. It is a little more difficult to explain how p ú-a became Š u in both texts however. In view of example (c) one may suggest that the idea of fish in a pond who seek shelter, or are terrified, was a fixed expression in Sumerian literary texts but the use of l u g was not common and thus certain young scribes had trouble with the cliché. It is worth noting the similarity between z i...i r, "to be afraid", in example (c) and z i...t ú m, "to seek assistance, shelter", in (a) and (b), particularly in light of the fact that the DU sign, i.e. t ú m, has the value i r i/i r₁₀ as a plural suppletive root of d u.⁷ Indeed, the late lexical texts confirm this confusion and assign i r the Akkadian translation *babālu*, for which there is no justification in monolingual Sumerian texts⁸. It is possible that this arose as a result of the analysis of z i...t ú m = *na-pišta abālu*.

Steinkeller has noted that during the Old Babylonian period many of the suppletive stems of Sumerian verbs were interpreted as separate verbs and that the system of such roots was no longer well understood. From the analysis of the literary occurrences of l u g it would appear that this was indeed the case; l u g was a rare verb and some scribes had trouble understanding it. The few attested usages are mostly limited to birds and fish and the use of the LU sign to also express the verb l u = *duššû* added to the confusion. Thus the analysis of l u g provides us with still another example of the results of the Old Babylonian spelling reform which had such a profound effect on cuneiform writing conventions and which is only now becoming known due to the new availability of many new early texts.

- 1) *The Sumerian Verb* l u g_x, above.
- 2) For a previous discussion of l u g in OB texts see A. Sjöberg: StOr, 46 (1975), 311-12. The letters in brackets follow the usage of Steinkeller. There is a possibility that (i) does not belong with the rest of the references since it may be an example of l u g = *balālu*, "to mix", resulting from a confusion between l u(g) and l ù ([...]g a ì-t i-i r-d a-gin₇ š a-l u-u g-g e, Ni 4369 [ISET 1 73:28], edited by A. Sjöberg: JCS, 26 [1974], 165).
- 3) Cf. t i r-t i r-r a š e g₉ š e g₉-b a r ḫ ē-e n-d a-l u (CT 42 pl. 8 ii 27) and š e g₉-š e g₉-b a r ú.n u m u n₂-n a m u-u n-l u e-n e-s ù-u d-b i m u-u n-e (EWO 352 [C. Benito, "Enki and Ninmah" and "Enki and the World Order", University of Pennsylvania Dissertation, 1969, 105]). For this usage of l u g see W. Heimpel, *Tierbilder*, 218ff.
- 4) See ^dš u l-p a-è-[a] d a r a₃ ú-š i m-m a l u g-a-t a (VAS 2 8 ii 31); g u r u š a m u₈ n a m-g a-m u-u n-l u g g i₆-ù-n a b í-DU gloss: x x x x (*et-lu* ?) *še-e-ni te-re-e-ú* (BE 31, 46 i 2 *et passim*).
- 5) z i...t ú m has been recently discussed by J. Klein, *Three Sulgi Hymns*, Ramat-Gan 1981, 209.
- 6) The other sources, all from Nippur, are: PBS 10/2, 19; N 1778 + N 1781; 3 N-T 318B + 3 N-T 321.
- 7) For this value (plural *marû*) see P. Steinkeller, *Notes on Sumerian Plural Verbs*: OrNS, 48 (1979), 61-62.
- 8) This is found in the Emesal vocabulary (MSL 4, 27:6 as a value of DU, i r being the regular Emesal equivalent of t ú m) as well as in Erimhuš V, 195 as a meaning of i r. See CAD A/1, 10.