

Lugal-šà-lá-tuku: Glimpses into the Career of an Old Sumerian Chief Sea Fisherman from Lagaš and his Work Environment

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Abstract This paper examines the professional career of the fisherman Lugalšalatuku in Presargonic Lagaš as it is traceable in the nearly 1800 economic records from the institution É-munus ‘house(hold) of the lady’ renamed by IriKAgina to é-‘Ba-Ú ‘temple of the (goddess) Ba’U’ in the wake of his reforms. Basing on instructive examples from this corpus, it is attempted to outline his specific career during the reigns of the rulers Enentarzid, Lugalanda and IriKAgina (c. 2336-2314 BC) in his role as a prominent overseer of a group of sea fishermen. Specifically, the economic and social relevance of professional fishing will be considered in the context of its internal structure and organisation as well as the involved professional fields and sub-groups.

Keywords Old Sumerian fisheries. Lugalšalatuku. É-munus. Economic network. Fish taxes.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Previous Research and Scholarship. – 3 The Institutional Network of Old Sumerian Fisheries. – 4 The Overseers of Fishermen: A Conspectus. – 5 The Overseers of Fishermen in Presargonic Lagaš/Ĝirsu. – 6 The Professional Career of Lugalšalatuku. – 7 Conclusion.

In memory of my parents Irmgard and Kurt Balke

1 Introduction

Even though fishing and thus the profession of a fisherman indubitably commenced in proto-/prehistoric times¹ as an individual cyclical seasonal activity, it evolved in some regions of the Ancient Near East from the late fourth Millennium BCE onwards into a highly professional field of activity with considerable social esteem and economic importance that even accelerated within the institutional milieu of Ur III economy. The economic relevance of fishing can be eventually inferred from the use of the metrological Bi-Sexagesimal System B*, derived from the standard Bi-sexagesimal System B for discrete goods as barley, cheese, fresh fish as established in the Uruk IV/III-period presumably adapted to counting allocations of a certain type of fish. The economic importance of fishing is especially true and traceable in the detailed documentation of the activities and transactions of the personnel of fishermen contextually assigned to the institution of the É-munus “house(hold) of the (ruler’s) wife” in Presargonic Lagaš. In the following, the present author will comprehensively examine the specific socio-economic relevance of the Old Sumerian fishermen, including an evaluation of their proportionate contribution to the economy of the Lagaš/Ĝirsu city-state, visualized through the plethora of written evidence of the archive of the Emunus. However, primarily the career of the prominent fisherman Lugalšalatuku, well

¹ See Potts 2012, 221-4 and Van Neer et al. 2005, 143-9.



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known in his role as an overseer of a team of sea fishermen, will be taken into meticulous consideration in his work environment's broader context. He is amply attested in our corpus comprising nearly 1,800 documents,² largely originating from the reigns of the rulers Enentarzid, Lugalanda(nuḫuḡa) and IriKagina, as illustrated in table 1 [tab. 1]. His working career will be illuminated and illustrated by means of conclusive examples from the core corpus of fish-texts consisting of c. 130 records,³ and then further supplemented through elaborate textual evidence. Hereinafter, his working career as it is verifiable according to the economic sources from the É-munus⁴ will be portrayed in more or less chronological order from the earliest tangible evidence during the reign of Enentarzid (c. 2336-2331 BC) until the latest securely datable evidence during the reign of IriKagina (c. 2324-2314 BC). This virtually biographic approach will be complemented by the inclusion of significant phrases that cover the fishermen's regular institutional commitments and deliveries if necessary.

Before starting with an in-depth analysis of the eminent role of Lugalšalatuku, it is essential to pinpoint the fundamental significance of professional fishing and fish as a commodity of exceptional nutritional value in the hydraulic landscape of southern Mesopotamian alluvium, respectively.⁵ This landscape is characterised in its hydrological and geomorphological nature among other things by the encompassing main rivers of the Tigris and Euphrates, once running nearer together in central southern Mesopotamia, as well as a network of irrigation channels in southernmost Mesopotamia.⁶ Accordingly, it is hardly surprising then that professional fishing evolved into a most relevant economic factor for food supply and (cultic) nourishment in the region of the city-state of Lagaš (al-Hiba). This development eventually resulted in a wide-ranging professional specialisation adapted to the sphere of activity, the fishing ground, or the applied fishing method, manifesting through the plethora of textual records about the prolific economic activities of the Emunus institution.

2 Previous Research and Scholarship

Englund in his both seminal works⁷ significantly contributed to the understanding and scholarly evaluation of Early Dynastic fisheries from the late Uruk period, namely Uruk III (ca 3200-3000 BC), until the Ur III period including the socio-economic implications as well as (palaeographic) aspects of fish, fish products and its specific lexical terminology. J. Bauer⁸ provided a concise and still highly useful outline of the fish texts from Presargonic Lagaš according to the level of knowledge at that time, whereas R. Prentice⁹ in her highly valuable study included the organisation of the various groups of fishermen only in a scanty manner.¹⁰ D.T. Potts,¹¹ on the other hand, provided a general detailed overview about fish in the ancient Near East from a predominantly archaeological point of view, however, also considering third-millennium BC cuneiform sources. A. Salonen,¹² being part of his lexical and historic-cultural investigations, examined the written evidence from all periods, but his study contains a large amount of misinformation and thus represents no coherent reliable source. Currently, N. Borrelli¹³ has considerably addressed the important role of fishing and further processing of its by-products in third-millennium BC Mesopotamia as well as its crucial involvement into the institutional Ur III economic network.

² Cf. Balke 2017, for significant essential addenda and corrections on single onomastic entries see Balke 2021.

³ This corpus comprises all those administrative documents dealing with the affairs of the fishermen in the broadest sense.

⁴ See Balke 2021, 1 for arguments in favour of a reading é-munus instead of conventional é-mí.

⁵ See Wilkinson et al. 2015, and Nadali, Polcaro 2016.

⁶ For details on the surrounding ecosystem of the Early Dynastic city-state of Lagaš including the localities: Ġirsu, Lagaš, Niġin (Tell Zurghul) and the outpost Gu'abba as well as the Lower Mesopotamian alluvial and deltaic landscape in general see Nadali 2021 and Iacobucci et al. 2023.

⁷ Englund 1990; 1998.

⁸ Bauer 1998.

⁹ Prentice 2010.

¹⁰ See Prentice 2010, 125-7.

¹¹ Potts 2012.

¹² Salonen 1970.

¹³ Borrelli 2021.

3 The Institutional Network of Old Sumerian Fisheries

On this large-scale textual basis two main groups of fishermen can generally be differentiated in the corpus under consideration: the $\check{s}u\text{-}ku_6(-\check{r})^{14}$ $ab\text{-}ba(-k)$ ‘sea fishermen’ concerned overwhelmingly with the open water area, presumably the Persian Gulf, and the class of $\check{s}u\text{-}ku_6(-\check{r})\ e_4\ du_{10}\text{-}ga$ ‘freshwater fishermen’ primarily concerned with the numerous canals, lakes and lagoons in the city-state of Lagaš.¹⁵ In addition, further sub-groups of fishermen appear in the administrative corpus, in each case distinguished according to their fishing ground or the applied fishing technique: $\check{s}u\text{-}ku_6(-\check{r})\ e_4\ du_n$ ‘coastal fishermen (lit. ‘fishermen of the water ditches’), $\check{s}u\text{-}ku_6(-\check{r})\ e_4\ ses$ ‘fishermen of brackish water’ and $\check{s}u\text{-}ku_6(-\check{r})\ sa\ \check{s}u\ ba_9\ \check{r}\acute{a}$ ‘net fisher (lit. ‘who cast out a net’).¹⁶ The classification according to the varying fishing grounds and fishing techniques roughly remained a distinctive feature until the Ur III period, see, for example, a list of the personnel of the household of the goddess Nindar(a) (AAS 178 rev. ll. 4-5) enclosing freshwater fishermen and fishermen of the brackish water among other professions.

Nonetheless, the two core groups are classified differently according to administrative terms depending on the documents’ specific transactional characteristics. Therefore, both groups commonly appear by name next to each other in so-called conscription lists, for example, in DP 135 (Ukg 1), which mentions 15 sea fishermen (rev. iv 15) and 18 freshwater fishermen (rev. ii 18) close together due to their professional adjacency with the overseers Nesaĝ and Udu in charge. Otherwise, the numerically larger group of sea fishermen received barley allocations, see, for example, TSA 19 from the fourth regnal year of IriKAgina. This record mentions barley allocations to 44 fishermen along with their supervisors, among them Lugalšalatuku and Nesaĝ as in charge of the two largest groups consisting of 15 and 12 individuals, respectively (see below). On the other hand, the group of freshwater fishermen apparently constitutes a separate section among the persistent personnel that has taken over subsistence land ($l\acute{u}\ \check{s}u\text{-}ku\ da\ b_5\text{-}ba$), for example, in RTC 54 (Lugalanda 6) rev. col ii 4-iv 3 mentioning 14 freshwater fishermen supervised by $\acute{e}\text{-}\acute{i}\text{-}g\acute{a}\text{-}ra\text{-}s\acute{u}$ and $\acute{e}\text{-}sig_4\text{-}zi\text{-}d\acute{e}$ as overseers.

TSA 19 (IriKAgina L4)

obv. col. 1

1. $l\acute{u}\ \check{s}e\text{-}ba\ 1(\text{barig})$	13 individuals each 60 Sila
2. $\check{s}e\text{-}b\acute{e}\ 3.1(\text{barig})\ gur\ sa\check{g}\check{g}\acute{a}l$	the respective barley: 960 Sila
3. $ne\text{-}sa\check{g}$	(for) Nesaĝ,
4. $15\ l\acute{u}\ 1(\text{barig})$	15 individuals: each 60 Sila
5. $\check{s}e\text{-}b\acute{e}\ 3.3(\text{barig})\ lugal\text{-}\check{s}\acute{a}\text{-}l\acute{a}\text{-}tuku$	the respective barley: 1080 Sila (for) Lugalšalatuku

rev. col. 1

1. $\check{s}u\text{-}ni\check{g}\acute{i}n\ 44\ l\acute{u}\ 1(\text{barig})$	Total: 44 individuals: each 60 Sila
2. $\check{s}e\text{-}b\acute{e}\ 10.1\ gur\ sa\check{g}\check{g}\acute{a}l$	the respective barley: 3060 Sila
3. $\check{s}e\text{-}ba\ \check{s}u\text{-}ku_6\ ab\text{-}ba$	the barley rations for the sea fishermen
4. $^{\#}ba\text{-}\acute{u}\text{-}ke_4\text{-}ne$	of (goddess) Ba’u

DP 135 (IriKAgina L 6)

rev. col. ii

8. $\check{s}u\text{-}ni\check{g}\acute{i}n\ 20\ l\acute{a}\ 2\ l\acute{u}$	Total: 18 individuals
9. $\acute{u}\text{-}du$	Udu (is)
10. $ugula\text{-}b\acute{e}$	the respective foreman
11. $\check{s}u\text{-}ku_6\ a\ du_{10}\text{-}ga\ me$	Freshwater fishermen they are

rev. col. iii

¹⁴ The phonemic nature of the final consonant /r/ probably pronounced as a voiceless aspirated alveolar affricate [ts^h] has been dealt with in detail by Jagersma 2006.

¹⁵ Their specific social role and economic impact on the Old Sumerian fishery is beyond the scope of this little study but will be elaborated elsewhere with particular focus on families engaged in freshwater fishing and sea fishing.

¹⁶ Later, the administrative evidence from Girsu/Lagaš during the Lagaš II dynasty also mentions the professional class of $\check{s}u\text{-}ku_6\ sa\text{-}par_4\text{-}me$ ‘they are net fishermen’, see, for example, Maiocchi, Visicato 2020, 239 no. 386 (AO4303) ii 5’. This specific tablet is particularly noteworthy, for it documents extremely large quantities of fish deliveries by several overseers – nearly 480,000 sea fish – that surpasses the known scope of supply as documented in the Early Dynastic corpus of fish texts from this site by far.

13. šu-niġín 15 lú	Total: 15 individuals
14. ne-saġ	(under) Nesaġ
15. ugula-bé	the respective foreman.
rev. col. v	
1. šu-ku ₆ ab-ba-me	Sea fishermen they are.
RTC 54 (Lugalanda 6)	
rev. col. li 4-8	
8 lú 1 (barig)	8 individuals 1 (barig) each
še-bé 2 é-ì-gàra-sù	the barley: 2 (barig) for E'igarasu
6 lú 1 (barig)	6 persons with 1 (barig) each
[še-bé] 1 2 (barig) é-sig ₄ -zi-dè	[the barley] 1 2 (barig) for Esigzide.
šu-ku ₆ e ₄ du ₁₀ -ga-me	They are freshwater fishermen.
rev. col. iv 3	
še-ba lú šuku dab ₅ -ba-ne	Barley rations for those who have taken over subsistence land.

Further qualifications, but without occupation-specific denotation are šu-ku₆(-r̄)¹⁷ (aša₅) gú-edinna 'fishermen of the Gu'edinna (fields)', šu-ku₆(-r̄) i₇-maḥ 'fishermen of the Imah-canal' or šu-ku₆(-r̄) zú-lum-ma 'fishermen of the (grove) of date palms', šu-ku₆(-r̄) ġír-su^{ki} 'fishermen of Ġirsu',¹⁸ šu-ku₆(-r̄) é-munus 'fishermen of the Emunus', led by the ruler's wife, and šu-ku₆(-r̄) é saġġa(-k) 'fishermen of the temple administrator's household';¹⁹ notably, the last classifying feature is only attested during the reign of Lugalanda, specifically in the following records: VS 27, 93 (Lugalanda 6), RTC 31 (Lugalanda 4), RTC 35 (Lugalanda 2) and DP 279 (Lugalanda 2); in RTC 35, for instance, a certain Lugalpiriġ delivers 10 tortoises as his individual share to the regular mandatory fish taxes (ku₆ du su). Nevertheless, as DP 174 clearly proves, these professional categories are unmistakably linked to the group of freshwater fishermen in large part, see DP 174 col. i 1-col. ii 3 enumerating a freshwater fisherman named é-gar₈-zi-dè, further on gu-ú, a fisherman of the grove of dates, ur-^{di}gi-ama-[šè], a fisherman of the Imah-canal, and a fisherman of the Gu'edinna named ur-^{di}nin-ġír-su. Interestingly, the fishermen are brought up together with a fowler (mušen-dù^{mušen}) among those provided with wool allocations (lú siki-ba). This is probably due to the morpho-semantic closeness of both classes of animals, as according to the Early Dynastic lists of Fish and Birds their designations occupy closely related categories with quite overlapping boundaries. Moreover, this becomes evident by the occurrence of homophonous nominations such as a fish named gam-gam^{ku} (EDFi 8) and a bird called gam-gam^{mušen} in line 36 of EDB-A²⁰ though written with different cuneiform signs. Furthermore, it holds true for the fish ubi^{ku}, a type of barb according to the characteristic whisker-like barbel,²¹ written with the sign RSP 179 (ŠE+SUḪUR) and the /ubi/-bird, usually written ub-bí in our corpus. This morphological nearness and overlap as well as the common habitat shared by both groups of animals

¹⁷ The Sumerian lexeme šu-ku₆(-r̄) 'fisherman', written with the sign sequence ŠU+ḪA, likely refers to archaic traditional fishing by hand, is not regularly attested before the late Early Dynastic Period. In our corpus its final voiceless aspirated affricate /ř/ (/tsʰ/) mainly occurs in form of the spelling šu-ku₆-e "fisherman-e_{ERG}" attested ten times (see: DP 322 rev. ii 3, 325 obv. ii 2, TSA 7 obv. iii 1, VS 27, 51 obv. ii 3, 53 obv. i 4, 90 rev. i 2, VS 25, 28 obv. ii 3, VS 14, 64 rev. iii 3, 139 obv. i 4, 156 obv. iv 4, 64 rev. iii 3), but once in the plural CV-spelling šu-ku₆-ře₆(DU)-(VS 25, 62 rev. I 2), too. Here, the first more frequent spelling already witnesses the gradual loss of its independent phonemic status and final reduction to mere zero in standard cuneiform writing. Furthermore, the fact, that the Sumerian noun enku(-r̄) 'inspector of fisheries' written with the signs ZAG.ḪA equally contains this phoneme strongly suggests that Sumerian ku₆ 'fish' originally contained /ř/ as final consonant (=ku(a)ř/) being lost and merged with other consonants, respectively from the late Early Dynastic period onwards. Both terms appear together in the Fara document TSS 78 col. iv 5-7: niġir-nite₆-na šu-ku₆ enku (ZAG.ḪA) 'Niġirnitena, the tax-collector's fisherman'; yet, the majority of the attested Fara writings for ŠU.ḪA cannot be securely linked with the occupation as a fisherman due to the given context.

¹⁸ See VS 25, 10 col. v 1, and in Ur III times see also PPAC 4, 266 col. i 9 and rev. i 12.

¹⁹ See DP 278 rev. ii 5, DP 279 rev. ii 10; RTC 31 col. i 6, RTC 35 rev. i 3 as well as VS 27, 93 col. ii 4 all datable to the reign of Lugalanda.

²⁰ Cf. Englund 1998, 88-90 with an overview about the various Early Dynastic lexical sources concerning lists on Fish and Birds.

²¹ The different characteristics of the fish barbels mirror the slightly palaeographic discrepancies as manifesting in the third-Millennium cuneiform signs RSP 178, 178bis and 179 representing distinct types of the Cyprinidae family commonly designated as carps; see Englund 1998, 133-5 for the sign sequence SUḪUR KU₆ and its palaeographic implications in the archaic text corpus from Uruk and Jemdet Nasr. Consequently, due to the similar basic palaeographic prototype of the signs RSP 178, 178bis and 179 all three cuneiform signs likely derived from the underlying pictogram of processed dried fish with varying types of barbels as distinctive feature. The palaeographic genesis of KU₆ as a classifier and prototypical designation of a small marine species will be dealt with in detail in Balke (forthcoming).

surely brought about the transactional adjacent classification of both professions. It is noteworthy that wool allocations, solely intended for fowlers, are usually documented on small(er) tablets, see, for example, VS 25, 49, a tablet only inscribed on the obverse that mentions rations for three fowlers and the prominent official Šubur linked to the reign of Enentarzid.²²

When assessing the number of Old Sumerian fishermen connected with the Emunus' economic organisation, the given evidence results by conservative estimation, contrary to the reckoning of Deimel,²³ in a total of securely identifiable 151 fishermen differentiated according to the specific categories and the classifying appositions in each case; yet, a certain level of fluctuation among the individual groups has been included and taken into account in the following scheme's evaluation:

Table 1 Classes of Old Sumerian fishermen in the ED IIIb Lagaš corpus

Classification	Profession	Number
š u - k u ₆ (-r̄) a b - b a (- k)	Sea fishermen	56
š u - k u ₆ (-r̄) e ₄ d u ₁₀ - g a	Freshwater fishermen	41
š u - k u ₆ (-r̄) s a š u b a ₉ -r̄ á	Net fishermen	15
š u - k u ₆ (-r̄) e ₄ d u n	Coastal fishermen	13
š u - k u ₆ (-r̄) e ₄ s e s	Brackish water fishermen	18
š u - k u ₆ (-r̄) z ú - l u m - m a	Fishermen of the date palm (groves)	8
Total		151 (≈120)

Notwithstanding, in spite of this conservative reckoning resulting in 151 (≈120) individuals classified as fishermen basically identified by personal name and further contextual specifics, changes of their name or occupational field though rather improbable cannot be entirely excluded.²⁴ Actually, there is clear evidence for cases of fishermen switching from one occupational field into another, as it is apparent, for example, in the case of A m a r - d N Á M - n u n - n a, a fisherman of brackish water, as well as L u g a l - m e - g a l - g a l, attested as a coastal fisherman and a net fisher [tabs 5-6], who in all likelihood represent the same individual according to the contextual specifics. The same holds true for E'igarasu, an overseer of freshwater fishermen, who is explicitly classified as freshwater fisherman (š u - k u₆ e₄ d u₁₀- g a) in DP 331 ii 1, but as net fisher (š u - k u₆ s a š u b a₉-r̄ á) in DP 547 vii 3 and even as fisherman of the date palm (groves) in DP 335 I 3 (š u - k u₆ z ú - l u m - m a). The given evidence relating three professional categories to one singular individual might well indicate to a reduced number of fishermen, as a matter of fact, probably 120 individuals in our corpus at least.

In addition, a couple of documents, e.g. DP 177 (IriKagina L 3), thankfully provide detailed information about the intra-group relationships of the listed fishermen and exhibit a partially familial structure of the core units. Accordingly, the fishermen's core group regularly consisted of 2-3 workers (cf. DP 177 col I 4-8), a fully-fledged fisherman named Enku, categorised as s a ĝ - d u b (lit. 'top of the tablet'), his brother II (s e s - s a - n é) and his son Eta'e (d u m u - n é) as supporting staff and substitutes respectively but with lower rations, that is to say half of the s a ĝ - d u b ration. Remarkably enough, two paleographically different number signs are used in this account, the round curvilinear sign AŠ (RSP 24) designating the full-fledged s a ĝ - d u b - worker, but the angular DIŠ (RSP 1) to specify the amount of wool rations.²⁵ Furthermore, details of the team members' origin or provenance are only seldom mentioned in the administrative corpus, chiefly by means of classifying appositions such as P N₁ l ú - d u n - a P N₂ 'P N₁ subordinate of P N₂', for example, VS 27 55 (Enentarzid 5) listing the following fishermen: u r - d n i n - m a r^{ki}, s a ĝ - ħ á b and l u g a l - p i r i ĝ as subordinates (l ú d u n - a) of the bustling sea fisherman Nesaĝ. Sometimes, apart from the professional assignment, the local origin (š u - k u₆ Ĝ í r - s u^{ki}- m e) is even specified as in VS 25 10 (col. i 2-v 2) probably from the reign of Lugalanda, listing the individuals: l u g a l - š à (- l á - t u k u), l u g a l - m e (- g a l - g a l),²⁶ l u g a l - p i r i ĝ,

²² For those external tablet-specific features as well as further contextual peculiarities see Balke (forthcoming).

²³ See Deimel 1926, 26.

²⁴ See Balke 2017, 45-8.

²⁵ See also Selz 2011, 285.

²⁶ This reference - the copy by Marzahn in VS 25 clearly shows the signs lugal-ME - was incorrectly assigned to the personal name ^ml u g a l - m è - t u r - š è - n u - š e - g a in Balke 2017, 255, but obviously represents the short form of the fisherman Lugalme-gal-gal due to the given context; generally, the mechanism of shortening of personal names are not always entirely clear (cf. Bal-

é-sig₄-zi-de, lugal-GÁNA(-zú-lum-ma-túm), ur-igi(-ama-šè), ur-(d)mes(-an-du), gu-ú, é-ì-gá-ra-sù, lugal-ġeš-búr, amar-^dsaġ-ku₅ and ur-túl subsumed as ‘fishermen from Ġirsu’ (š-u-ku₆ Ġír-su^{ki}-me). In addition, we also find elucidating adjuncts as e₄-dun umma^{ki}-kam ‘coastal (fisherman) from Umma’ (AWAS 20 xiv 14-16)²⁷ and lú unug^{ki} ‘Man from Uruk’ (AWEL 135 ii 4-5)²⁸ for Nesaġ and Lugalša(latuku), respectively, where Lugalša certainly represents a shortened form of the full name form Lugalšalatuku.²⁹ The personal identity between long and short name form is unquestionably corroborated by the record DP 191 from the first regnal year of Lugalanda, for it lists 44 fishermen of various groups as recipients of regular wool allocations among them a certain Lugalša together with the prominent fisherman Nesaġ.³⁰ Notably, this text belongs together with DP 172 (Enentarzid 3) and DP 177 (IriKagina L 3) to the small group of wool allocation records that were passed on. Unfortunately, the plenty of institutional records from Early Dynastic Lagaš provide only few information about the technical equipment and working facilities, especially the specific fishing boats that are used on canals, rivers and on the open sea (i.e. Persian Gulf).³¹ Aside from the telling record DP 334 that will be discussed in due course, two records merely allude to the delivery of four (wooden) rowing rods for boats of the fishermen (4 gi-muš má šu-ku₆) in VS 27, 76 (IriKagina L 4) col. ii 3, made of pine wood, and a list of various recipients of (wooden) rowing rods for (fishing) boats in AWL 88 (n.d.), among them the fishermen Šubur and Nesaġ (col. i 5-ii 4: 10 igi-si₄ 2 šubur má é-gal-ka-kam, 1 šubur, 3 nesaġ, šu-ku₆-me ‘10 (poles) for Igi-si, 2 (poles) for Šubur, belonging to the boats of the palace, 1 (pole) for Šubur, and 3 (poles) for Nesaġ: they all are (sea) fishermen”. Nonetheless, the singular document DP 360 (IriKagina n.d.), presumably a kind of administrative excerpt or *aide mémoire*, records the transport of 50 reed bundles from the field adjacent to a watercourse (GÁNA e₄-ús) by the sea fishermen Lugalšalatuku and Nesaġ (col. i 1-ii 1: šu-ku₆ ab-ba-ke₄-ne... mu-íl) and its subsequent counting and committal into the storehouse of the garden (col. ii 5-6: ġanun kiri₆-ka ì-ku_x(DU)) by the general inspector Eniggal (col. ii 2-4: ì-šid). One may infer from the given purport that the institutional fishermen took charge of manufacturing their reed boats or further equipment themselves including the provision with necessary working materials. The document eventually breaks off with an isolated subscript on the tablet’s reverse that reads: á u₄ 2-kam ‘wages (i.e. reed bundles) of the second day’.³² To the best of my knowledge, DP 360 represents the only archival document dealing with affairs of fishermen showing these contextual characteristics before the Ur III period.

4 The Overseers of Fishermen: A Conspectus

The publication of a comprehensive onomastic study on the Old Sumerian personal names³³ enables us to identify and retrace the specific names of those individuals in charge of each team of enlisted fishermen as well as to detect the concrete size and each group’s personnel structure. Yet, the contextual evidence only sparsely reveals details about their potential residential origin,³⁴ familial relationships or specific intra-group linkages, see, for example, DP 177 from IriKagina’s third regnal year. Generally, it should be noted that the work field of fishing has obviously been a male sphere due to absence of women

ke 2015), but as regarding the short name forms lugal-šà and lugal-me purely pragmatic reasons, e.g. the given space within the tablet’s arrangement of separated cases, seem to be pivotal to these contextual abridgements.

²⁷ See AWAS 19 col. iv 7-9 (Ukg. Ensí 1), 20 xiv 14-16 (Ukg. Ensí 1), 123 rev. 20-2 (Ukg. L 1?); CT 50, 33 rev. iv 2-4 (Ukg. Ensí 1); DCS 3 rev. vi 11-13 (Ukg. L 2), DP 112 (Ukg. L 2) col. iv 2-4; TSA 10 iv 20-v 2 (Lugalanda 6).

²⁸ This passage from the eighth regnal year of IriKagina likely represents the latest contextual mention of our protagonist that will be discussed below at length.

²⁹ See Balke 2017, 267 for additional examples of the name’s short form.

³⁰ See also DP 582 (IriKagina L 2, col. i 1-5) featuring the sea fishermen Lugalša(latuku) and Nesaġ as recipients of identical sizes of soggy subsistence field plots (aša₅ šuku / aša₅ šuku ki-duru₅) as an additional income in contrast to the ordinary fishing personnel.

³¹ This also holds true for specific details on the use and manufacture of the fishing gear, for example, the fishing nets or transport containers used by Early Dynastic fishermen. In contrast, fish records from the Ur III period provide further relevant particulars, for example, about the manufacturing of reed baskets (ḡal) by the fishermen themselves, see the Umma record SNAT-BM 260 (Š32) rev. ii 11: ḡal ku₆ dí-m-ma ‘(self-)fabricated reed baskets (for the transport) of fish’.

³² The mention of 63 reed bundles from the freshwater fisherman Damdiġirġu in col. ii 8 clearly identifies Nesaġ and Lugalša(latuku) as the renowned sea fishermen.

³³ Cf. Balke 2017 with addenda in Balke 2021.

³⁴ In this regard the administrative institutional records provide information about the overseer Nesaġ(anedug), previously from the end of Lugalanda’s reign until IriKagina’s second regnal year who is also characterised as a “coastal fisherman from Umma” (š-u-ku₆ e₄-dun-am₆ umma^{ki}-kam), e.g. AWAS 21 (IriKagina E 1) rev. col. iv 7-9.

in the relevant lists of fishermen. This situation clearly contrasts with other professional fields with both male and female representatives, for example, the groups of Old Sumerian doorkeepers and barbers.³⁵

5 The Overseers of Fishermen in Presargonic Lagaš/Ĝirsu

The following individuals are attested in the corpus of Old Sumerian records from Presargonic Lagaš in their capacity as overseers of regular teams of fishermen assigned to the sub-groups mentioned above. These persons are commonly identified by explicit designation as *ugula* ‘overseer, foreman’³⁶ or by the transactional context with a fisherman in charge of delivering compulsorily taxes, for example, the monthly duty *ku₆ banšur* ‘fish (for the) offering table’³⁷ or *ku₆ dusu* (ÍL) ‘fish basket’, a festival-specific duty.³⁸ In some cases the overseers of squads of fishermen have been obligated to deliver the ‘Lu₅-gu’-tax,³⁹ a kind of repayment only imposed on shepherds, gardeners, and fishermen occurring in the contextual phrases: *lu₅-gu è-a* ‘issued L.-taxes’ and *lu₅-gu AK* ‘accomplished L.-payment’.⁴⁰ In addition, the overseer *Lugalšalatuku* even fulfilled the obligation to render a certain amount of fish as part of the regular festival provisions called *mašdari’a*, see, for example, DP 333 (IriKagina L 5) rev. ii 1-iii 4: *120 ubi^{ku₆}, 5 nu-TAR^{ku₆}, maš-da-re-a-am₆, lugal-šà-lá-tuku, šu-ku₆ ab-ba-ke₄ iti 8 til-la-a-a, mu-ku_x (year) 5* ‘120 U. fish, 5 non-porcupine fish(?) is the *mašdare’a*-duty of *Lugalšalatuku*, the sea fisherman, when 8 months had ended, has brought it in’,⁴¹ a particular duty that commonly affected high-ranking officials.⁴² Regarding the ‘LUL-gu’ deliveries, this levy might have been well imposed complementarily to the *mašdari’a*-delivery affecting only institutional personnel of lower-rank, but of essential importance for the supply of the *Emunus*. Equally structured records as AWEL 189 (*Lugalanda* 2) that mention *mašdari’a* deliveries of temple chief administrators and AWEL 190 (*Lugalanda* 4) dealing with the delivery of the L.-repayment by an animal fattener seem to support this hypothesis. If the assumption that both regular duties can be interpreted – at least roughly – as closely connected complimentary means of contributions to communal feasting incorporating a larger portion of the population is correct, Prentice’s general appraisal of the *mašdari’a* institution as return gift in the broader context of economic exchange mainly restricted to a social elite cannot be unquestionably adhered to. Returning now to the role of the Old Sumerian fishermen in the city-state of Lagaš, the administrative records from the *Emunus*, the ruler’s wife institution, evince an unexpected high number of chief overseers strengthening the role of fishing as a crucial economic factor. Apart from *Lugalšalatuku*, the following individuals are attested in varying frequency as overseers of fishermen squads in the corpus under consideration presented in the following overview:⁴³

Lugal-šà-lá-tuku / šu-ku₆ ab-ba(-k) / ugula-bé
 Ne-saĝ / šu-ku₆ ab-ba(-k) / ugula-bé
 Šubur / šu-ku₆ ab-ba(-k) / ugula-bé

³⁵ See Karahashi 2016 for further details and relevant textual references.

³⁶ For the rare attestation of a ‘commanding official, superior overseer’ (*gal-ùĝ*) as in charge of fishermen see AWL 3 col. iv 2-4, reading: *1 (bùr) en-zi, gal-ùĝ, šu-ku₆-e-ne* ‘6.48 hectares (for) Enzid, the commanding official of the fishermen’, datable to the *Lugalanda*’s first regnal year. The same official also occurs in this role in DP 462 (*Lugalanda* 6) ii 6 as superior overseer of carriers of trunks (*gal-ùĝ íl-ne*).

³⁷ Instead, texts about official fish deliveries from Lagaš II Ĝirsu mention levies for the ‘table of the king’ (*banšur lugal*), e.g. Maiocchi, *Visicato* 2020, no. 385 (BM 88527) obv. 6’.

³⁸ As is clearly shown by the *pišaĝ-dub-ba tag* AWEL 275 (IriKagina L 4), the term *ku₆ sa numun_x (ZI&ZI)-a-ka* ‘fish of weir baskets’ (col. ii 1) delivered by the freshwater fishermen designates a kind of container and no special obligation fulfilled by the freshwater fishermen comparable to the sea fishermen’s regular duties *ku₆ banšur* or *ku₆ dusu* (ÍL). It is noteworthy that the record VS 25, 52 from *Lugalanda*’s fourth regnal year mentions the mandatory delivery of 3,900 pieces of *sumaš* fish by the chief sea fishermen *Nesaĝ*, *Lugalša* (*llatuku*) and *Galatur* classified as *dusu* (ÍL) *sumaš^{ku₆}-ka m* (obv. i 5-rev. i 1).

³⁹ See in detail Pomponio 1982 and Rosengarten 1960, 56-60.

⁴⁰ In contrast to Pomponio, I consider this compensation (re)payment as an institutional means of balancing the seasonally fluctuating revenues of certain relevant professional groups, possibly intended complementary to the *mašdari’a*-duty of high-ranking officials. The phrase itself is probably derived from the verbal stem /*lug, lug_x[LUL]*/ ‘to dwell, pasture (of animals)’ as a deverbal noun with suffixed /*u*/ as in later *daĥ-ĥu* ‘added’ (< *daĥ* ‘to add’) copiously attested in Ur III texts.

⁴¹ See also TSA 50 (IriKagina L 6) col. iii 1-4: *maš-da-re-a-am₆, lugal-šà-lá-tuku, šu-ku₆ ab-ba-ke₄, mu-ku_x* ‘It is the *mašdare’a*-delivery; *Lugalšalatuku* the sea fisherman has delivered it hither’.

⁴² For detailed discussions of the term itself and its economic and social implications at Early Dynastic Lagaš/Ĝirsu see Rosengarten 1960; Selz 1995; and especially Prentice 2010, 187-203, including an overview about the history of research (see p. 188).

⁴³ For concrete textual evidence see the various tables below; however, there is no explicit designation as an overseer (*ugula*) in each case, but rather structural criteria in some cases such as the acting role in delivering and fulfilling the catch obligations.

Lugal-me-gal-gal /⁴⁴ šu-ku₆ e₄ dun, šu-ku₆ e₄ du₁₀-ga / ugula-bé
 Nam-maḥ-né / šu-ku₆ ab-ba(-k) / ugula-bé
 Ú-du / šu-ku₆ e₄ du₁₀-ga / ugula-bé
 É-ì-gá-ra-sù / šu-ku₆ e₄ du₁₀-ga / ugula-bé
 É-sig₄-zi-dè / šu-ku₆ e₄ du₁₀-ga / ugula-bé
 Amar-⁴nám-nun-na / šu-ku₆ e₄ ses / ugula-bé
 Gala-tur / šu-ku₆ e₄ ses / ugula-bé
 É-úr(-bé-du₁₀) šu-ku₆ gána gú-edin-na(-k) / ugula-bé⁴⁵
 Lugal-tigi_x(É.BALAG)-né-du₁₀ / šu-ku₆ ab-ba(-k) / [ugula-bé]

As the given charts below (see tables 1-7) clearly show, the included overseers cover all the known professional categories and sub-categories even though not providing the same range of contextual evidence, as in the case of Lugalšalatuku and Nesaġ(anedu).⁴⁶ The former's textual evidence is given below (see the scheme below) in chronological order with additional notes regarding his administrative involvement:

Table 2 Scheme of the chronological evidence of Lugalšalatuku in the archive of the É-munus

Rulership year	Textual evidence	Commodity / transaction
Enentarzid 2	DP 283	Sea fish, tortoises, fish oil
Enentarzid 3	DP 172	Allotment of wool to his squad of 5 subordinates
Lugalanda 1	DP 284, 334; VS 14, 20	Sea fish and seaweed(?) as fish tax
Lugalanda 2	DP 278; RTC 35	Filleted fish, moistened fish
Lugalanda 3	DP 279, 282, 290	Sea fish, tortoises, fish oil
Lugalanda 4	VS 14, 158 (= AWL 186)	Moistened fish (as) deficit of his monthly delivery for the offering table (ku ₆ bašur)
Lugalanda 5	VS 25, 29, 53 ⁱ	Sea fish, filleted carp fish as tax for the malt-eating festival of Nanše
Lugalanda 6	-----	-----
IriKagina E	-----	-----
IriKagina L 1	VS 25, 70	Distribution of plots of land to overseers of fishermen
IriKagina L 2	DP 120	Mention of his brother and his father
IriKagina L 3	DP 280, 281, 318; VS 14, 24; VS 27, 83	Mention of deficits (fish and fish oil) of the prior and current year concerning the dušu-taxes of L. and Nesaġ; subscript: sa r-r-u-a m ₆ "it is a duplicate"
IriKagina L 4	AT 1	Delivery of fish taxes by several sea fishermen on the festival of Nanše
IriKagina L 5	DP 333	Delivery of sea fish for the offering table and a second delivery as fulfillment of mašdare'a duty
IriKagina L 6	VS 25, 17; TSA 50	Monthly delivery of sea fish for the offering table
IriKagina L 8	AWEL 135	Mention of Lugal-š[à] ⁱⁱ lú Unug ^{ki} ; attribution uncertain

ⁱ Both records mention him as the fisherman solely responsible for the delivery of sea fish.

ⁱⁱ According to the photograph (cf. <https://cdli.mpwg-berlin.mpg.de/P221904>) the rhomboid shape of the sign ŠAG₄ is nearly certain though an absolute identification with the same-named fisherman cannot be ascertained due to the lack of any professional attribution.

⁴⁴ Among this group only Lugalmeagalgal consistently occurs as a fisherman throughout his contextual evidence albeit with occasional transition into one of the sub-groups.

⁴⁵ See AWL 148 col. iii 3-5: é-úr ugula e-da-de₆ "E'ur, the overseer, has brought it (i.e. 310 filleted carps as catch of the Gu*edinna fishermen) along".

⁴⁶ The contextual evidence identifies him as a coastal fisherman from Umma and the son of a certain Piriġkura (DP 120 iv 1); see Balke 2017, 306-7 for details of his professional career.

6 The Professional Career of Lugalšalatuku

Hereafter, the specific career of the reputable sea fisherman named Lugalšalatuku shall be largely illuminated in chronological order of the datable textual evidence. His personal name contains the well-known Old Sumerian name-pattern denoting ‘The King feels pity for him (i.e. name-bearer)’ and belongs to the most popular proper names within the Old Sumerian onomasticon borne by more than 9 individuals.⁴⁷ Apart from the name’s full form the overseer under consideration also appears, as has been already illustrated in the preceding section, more than 15 times as shortened Lugal-ša.⁴⁸ The earliest secure evidence for a fisherman named Lugalšalatuku comes from the second regnal year of Enentarzid, see, for example, DP 283.

DP 283 (Enentarzid 2): the record mentions in col. i 1-5 Lugalšalatuku, the sea fisherman, as the deliverer of the following commodities: 18 gún ubi^{ku₆} (RSP 179), 5 gir^{ku₆}, 30 ba, 1 dug ì-ku₆ lugal-ša-lá-tuku ‘540 kg carp fish, 5 pig fish, 30 turtles, 1 jar fish oil (from) Lugalšalatuku, (the sea water fisherman)’; further textual evidence from Enentarzid’s reign also mentions him, but either without definite assignment to the sphere of fishing, such as in ITT 5, 9230 (undated) or ITT 5, 9231 (Enentarzid 3) or with diverging profession as in DP 172 (Enentarzid 3) designating him as gal-nar ‘chief musician’. If we trace back the relevant evidence in the context of fish deliveries in chronological order, the sea fisherman Lugalšalatuku appears in the following specific telling records.

DP 284 (Lugalanda 1); VS 14, 20 (Lugalanda 1): particularly, the latter text contains a crucial key information about the nature of fixed supply obligations for the Old Sumerian fishermen and the way, possible deficiencies were administratively managed, see col. i 1-ii 3: 15 giġ₄ kù Ne-saġ, 10 Šubur, 10 Lugal-ša-lá-tuku, 5 Nam-maḥ-né, šu-ku₆ ab-ba-me; ku₆ pi saġ_x ġar-ra-šè nu-mu-de₆-a-ka-nam ‘15 shekel silver (at the expense of) Nesaġ, 10 [shekel silver] Šubur, 10 [shekel silver] Lugalšalatuku, 5 [shekel silver] Nammaḥne: they are sea fishermen; because they had not sufficiently delivered fish according to the fixed (amount of) boxes, (it was placed on their debit account by the general inspector)’.⁴⁹ A similar expression referring to a fixed obligation of supply is mentioned as du-su gu-ba ‘fixed D-tax (of the sea fishermen)’ in the record DP 294 from IriKagina’s second regnal year that lists specified numbers of fish varieties to be delivered as individual catch quotas. Passing on to the remarkable text VS 14, 158 from Lugalanda’s fourth regnal year which contains both terms of fixed taxes for the sea fishermen together, ku₆ banšur and ku₆ dusu.

VS 14, 158 (Lugalanda 4):⁵⁰ the text records the current arrears of Lugalšalatuku relating to these mandatory regular deliveries, see col. ii 3-iii 3: 1410 ku₆ dar-ra, 60 ba, lá-u_x ku₆ dusu-ka-kam, 1740 ku₆ e₄ dé, lá-u_x ku₆ banšur-ka-kam, lugal-ša-lá-tuku ‘1410 filleted fish, 60 tortoises, is the deficiency of the dusu fish tax; 1740 moistened fish, is the (explicit) deficiency of the fish delivery for the banquet table from Lugalšalatuku; his (and Nesaġ’s) accounting shortfall was then placed on their debit account by Eniggal, the general inspector (see col. ii 2-7) and principally acknowledged by the ruler’s wife Baranamtara (see col. iii 1-4).

VS 25, 29 (Lugalanda 5): in this record Lugalšalatuku, the sea fisherman, delivers the fish taxes ku₆ dusu (ÍL) for the malt-eating festival of Nanše consisting of 5 porcupine fish and 9 1/6 loads of filleted carp fish;⁵¹ see col. ii 1-iii 3: lugal-ša-lá-tuku, šu-ku₆ ab-ba-ke₄, ku₆ dusu (ÍL) ezem munu₄ gu₇ ‘nānše-ka ‘Lugalšalatuku, the sea fisherman, delivered the dusu fish tax for the festival ‘malt-eating’ of Nanše’ (year) 5; this record as well as VS 25, 53 from the same regnal year mentioning his delivery of the regular taxes for the offering table represent brief transactional memoranda as indicator of the obligation’s completion by the supervising overseer. As regarding its content both documents differ from one

⁴⁷ See Balke 2017 for an exhaustive list of attestations and related patterns as well.

⁴⁸ See Balke 2017, 267 for the specific evidence; however, the attestations of shortened Lugal-ša, the surveyor, have surely to be assigned to Lugalšalatuku as its full form and not to Lugalšasù to be corrected in Balke 2017, 267 s.v. “mlugal-ša-sù” “King with a far-reaching heart”.

⁴⁹ See Balke 2006, 214 with fn. 935 and Balke 2015, 96-7 for the dimensional morpheme sequence /-akanam/ </ak_{GEN} + (a)na-na-(à)m_{INDEF-PRO}/ whose full form is attested with the personal name ġá-ka-na-na-m-ḥé-tìl “May he live because of me”.

⁵⁰ Published by Bauer 1972 as no. 186.

⁵¹ According to DP 283 (Enentarzid 2) 6 éše-ban (lit. ‘thread-ban’) is equivalent to 1 gú(-n) (= 30 kg) that results in 1 éše-ban = ca 5 kg; for this relation see also Selz 1995.

another by referring to different kinds of taxes and relating festivals (e₂em mu₄gu₇dnanše vs. iti e₂em ^dli₉-si₄-na) as well as the supplemented acknowledging subscript of queen Baranamtara. Due to the absence of contextual evidence from Lugalanda's last regnal year and IriKagina's initial year as Ensi(k) the next datable trace of Lugalšalatuku appears in the year IriKagina L 1 exemplified by the record vs 25, 70 (IriKagina L 1).

vs 25, 70 (IriKagina L 1): this document records the distribution of plots of land to various groups of professional designations of low-ranking and high-ranking social status, among them Lugalša(latuku) and Nesaĝ as overseers of the sea fishermen and Udu, an overseer of the freshwater fishermen (col. iii 1-8) who receive plots from the field (named) 'narrow hillock' (du₆ sír). Another noteworthy document from the same regnal year, DP 334 (Irkagina L 1), though disregarding our main protagonist, represents a sparse piece of evidence about fishing boats as equipping for the staff of fishermen. Therefore, seven fishermen including Kitušlu, a 'blinded' employee (ig₁-nu-du₈),⁵² have four boats at their disposal (7 lú, má-bé 4-am₆) and are subsequently classified as 'fishermen of the Emunus' (š_u-ku₆ é-mu₆-me) temporarily living with Elu, a city administrator (ug₆ula iri(-k)). From the absence of Lugalšalatuku one can surely infer that he was not directly linked to the branch of the net fishermen or the fishermen of the Gu'edinna in his daily working scheme.

DP 120 (IriKagina L 2): in this remarkable record we find the rare contextual reference to the descent and family relationships of Lugalšalatuku; accordingly, the text mentions a certain Urtulsaĝ designated as a brother of L. (se₃ lugal-šà-lá-tuku, rev. col. i 3-4) and, in addition, Enkisalsi⁵³ and Šubur⁵⁴ as two possible fathers of a person named lugal-šà-lá-tuku. Due to his professional assignment to the category of sea fishermen and fishermen of brackish water, respectively,⁵⁵ the latter one may well represent the more likely candidate. Interestingly, he is classified as a fisherman in our corpus,⁵⁶ and thus can be possibly linked with Lugalšalaku. Consequently, there is convincing evidence for the assumption that fishing might well have represented a permanent traditional profession in his family. Accordingly, this familial connection would identify the fisherman E'eana'AK, the son of Urtulsaĝ, attested in AWL 139 (IriKagina L4)⁵⁷ as the nephew of Lugalšalatuku and thus support the hypothesis of fishing as a tradition-related occupation.

DP 280 (IriKagina L 3):⁵⁸ this record, according to the subscript an acknowledged transcript and duplicate (sar-ru-am₆) of the original DP 281 (IriKagina L 3), endorses ample deficits of the prominent sea fishermen Lugalšalatuku and his colleague Nesaĝ from the last, the previous and the current year (lá-u_x im im-ma-kam, lá-u_x im-ma-kam, lá-u_x mu-a-kam); after the transfer to a separate accounting tablet, the deficits were booked to their unbalanced account (gú-ne-ne-a e-ne-ĝar) and then pooled together (téš-téš-a e-ĝar) by Eniggal the general inspector. The reason for the accumulation of such an enormous shortfall is not explained in detail, but worsened catch quota, for example, by adverse weather conditions might play a crucial role. The significant copular subscript sar-ru-am₆ contains the de-verbal noun /sar-ru/ 'duplicate' from verbal sar 'to write' with the rare derivational suffix -'u/⁵⁹ and denotes a specific archival note referring to a textual duplicate and/or a draft.⁶⁰ Moreover, a further relevant document, BIN 8, 357 (IriKagina L 3), particularly records the rare obligatory delivery of an oil levy for the festival 'malt-eating' of Nanše by Lugalša(latuku), the sea fisherman, comprising 7 sila of fish oil (col. i 1-2: 7 silà ì-ku₆ ì dusu). Afterwards this oil is (addi-

⁵² See Balke 2017, 221 for a detailed overview, but add the complete reference.

⁵³ See Balke 2017, 158-9 s.v. "en-KISAL/ĝipar_x-si" for contextual references.

⁵⁴ See Balke 2017, 390-2 s.v. "šubur-tur and šubur", respectively, regarding his professional career as a fisherman.

⁵⁵ See Balke 2017, 391-2 for specific references.

⁵⁶ See Balke 2017, 448-9 for specifics on his career as a fisherman.

⁵⁷ AWL 139 rev. i 1-3: é-e-a-na-a₅ dumu ur-túl-saĝ-ke₄ mu-de₆ "E., son of Urtulsaĝ, has brought it (i.e. fish) in".

⁵⁸ Further relevant documents from IriKagina's third regnal year are DP 318, VS 14, 24 (AWL 133 and VS 27, 83, each featuring the sea fisherman Lugalšalatuku).

⁵⁹ Further examples for this rare noun formation are: lá-u_x (NI) "deficit, shortfall" derived from verbal lá' "to be short", lu₅-gu from the plural verbal lu₅(-g) "to pasture, to live (of animals)" and da ħ-ħu "added" from verbal da ħ "to add", the latter exclusively attested in Ur III documents, e.g. MVN 13, 618 rev. col. ii 18; AS 07).

⁶⁰ See also AWEL 91 (Lugalanda 2) rev. ii 4, 129 i 4, 298 (IriKagina L 4) rev. iii 1, VS 27, 9 (IriKagina E 1) rev. iii 1, DP 194 (IriKagina E 1), rev. ii 9, 246 (Lugalanda 3) rev. i 2, 248 (Lugalanda 5) rev. i 1, 330 (IriKagina L 3) rev. ii 1; this interesting archival phrase will be discussed in detail by the present author in a forthcoming study on aspects of a physical kind of accounting.

tionally) poured out by Eniggal, the general inspector, onto a boat caulked with turnip exudate at the shipyard (col. iii 2-iv 2: má lu-úb du₆-a ki umum-ma ì-dé).⁶¹

AT 1 (IriKagina L 4): this exceptional and unique administrative record is the only example of a so-called *Hüllemtafel*, a clay tablet with an envelope, in the Early Dynastic archive of the Emunus mentioning fish deliveries (ku₆ dusu-kam) by the sea fishermen: Nesaġ, Lugašalatuku, Amar-^dNamnun, Galatur and Saġġaba; the seals reads: “On the [festival] of Nanše (from) the sea fishermen” and “Eniggal, scribe of the Emunus”. Since the use of an envelope usually served the purpose of confidentiality and authentication, its use for an administrative transaction regarding the sea fishermen may well indicate the economic importance of fishing in general and its contribution to the cultic festivals in particular. From the same regnal year comes the instructive document TSA 47 that lists two large groups of fishermen, 21 sea fishermen and 23 freshwater fishermen who both (?) were removed from the accounting data of the palace (du b é-gal-ta e-ta-sar)⁶² and then certainly transferred to the institutional accounting of the é-munus. This transaction fits in with the findings already made by Maekawa⁶³ who noticed minor changes in the institutional organisation of the Emunus during the reigns of Lugalanda and IriKagina. Although the senior chief sea fishermen Lugalšalatuku and Nesaġ are usually on equal terms as regarding their status, it is strikingly Nesaġ who appears in the role of the overseer in charge of the group of sea fishermen.⁶⁴

DP 333 (IriKagina L 5): this record uniquely covers the joint delivery of fish of various differently prepared fish species for the offering table (ku₆ banšur), more precisely 527 pieces (col. i 1-iii 1), as well as the mašdare’a-duty (maš-da-re-a-m₆) amounting to 175 pieces of fish; both obligations are delivered and thereby fulfilled by Lugalšalatuku, the sea fisherman, after 8 months had elapsed (rev. col. i 3-iii 4: lugal-šà-lá-tuku, šu-ku₆ ab-ba-ke₄ iti 8 til-la-a-a, mu-ku_x (DU)). It is noteworthy to point out that on the one hand the quota of his mašdare’a tithe roughly corresponds to one third of the regular amount for the offering table and, on the other hand, an adequate time limit to accomplish his obligations had been granted to him. From the same regnal year of IriKagina comes the instructive text DP 313 (IriKagina L5) that records a two-part delivery of filleted and moistened sea fish by Lugalšalatuku designating him on the reverse as ‘fisherman of (the goddess) Bawu’ (col i 1: šu-ku₆ ^dBa-Ū-ka-kam) whose regular levy is taken over by an unnamed deputy fish inspector (col. i 2-3: enku-ús-ke₄ ba-de₆).⁶⁵

The same distributional pattern as in DP 333 but with reference to the dusu-duty (ku₆ dusu[ÍL]) is mentioned in the following record, TSA 50, from IriKagina’s sixth regnal year.

TSA 50 (IriKagina L 6): the present text lists loads of filleted carps, sickle fish, U-fish, barbels and further marine species (obv. col. i 1-ii 1) as the amount of the fishermen’ dusu-obligation followed by loads of filleted U-fish, and 250 moistened and salted pieces of fish spawn(?) as Lugalšalatuku’s individual mašdare’a donation (col. ii 3-iii 1); due to the different types of measures and scale units used within the fish corpus very often the total amounts given in the respective documents cannot be proper-

⁶¹ In contrast to Selz 1993, 574 and Selz 1995, 60 fn. 271 who connected ki umum (DÉ)-ma “place of lament for the dead” with the Early Dynastic funerary cult, an interpretation as “workshop, shipyard” (see CAD M/2, 195-7 s.v. “*bīt mummi*”) seems equally plausible; otherwise the caulking of boats by means of plant fibres or vegetable exudates is well-known in the history of ancient boat building techniques.

⁶² A similar transfer of 71 individuals is recorded in DP 140 (IriKagina L 1); as for this restructuring process within the Emunus see Balke 2021 referring to groups of female wool workers.

⁶³ Cf. Maekawa 1973-74, 114-17.

⁶⁴ Another interesting document from the same regnal year, AWEL 52 (IriKagina L 4), records barley rations for those holding plots of subsistence land among them Lugalšalatuku and several other fishermen (rev. col. ii 5), and furthermore shows visible examples of the peculiar archival check mark kúr (PAP) “ticked off, changed” subsequently added by the scribes during the final verification of the recorded transaction; for this aspect of a physical kind of accounting see Balke 2023 (forthcoming).

⁶⁵ The rare Old Sumerian profession enku(-f) ús “deputy fish inspector, tax collector” is also attested in DP 321 ii 2-3 (IriKagina n.d.) mentioning a certain Alulilla, who gathered various marine species from (lit. with) the acting fishermen Urniġar, Kine and Lugaligi (rev. col. i 3-ii 1: ur-niġar-da ki-né, lugal-igi-bé ba-da-kar). For this specific context and the involved dimensional comitative construction see Balke 2017, 248 and fn. 739 and 2006, 102 with fn. 434. Regarding the administrative role of the enku(-f) in Early Dynastic Mesopotamia, the textual evidence clearly suggests that he played a major role in the transactional procedures of fishing acting as an intermediate official between the institutional fishermen as suppliers and official storage facilities linked with the Emunus.

ly compared to one another and thus incorporated into an internal equivalence⁶⁶ or value relation for all species of fish, whether sea fish or freshwater fish.⁶⁷ Since fish was usually measured by capacity units or piecewise, the use of *gú n* ‘load’ or its sub-unit *ešé-ba-an* ‘rope-ban’ as in DP 283 implies a kind of reed container as means of transport. At any rate, the plausible interpretation of *ŠĒ-ba-an* = /*ešé-ba-an*/ “rope-ban (measure)” by Selz would establish an Early Dynastic ratio between weight and capacity units as 6 *silà* = 10 *mina*⁶⁸ whereby 1 *ešé-ba-an* is equivalent to 1 *bán* and thus 6 *silà* at Presargonic Ġirsu/Lagaš.

A further document, VS 25, 17, from the same regnal year is of special interest in this context, especially from a syntactic point of view and its diverging contextual structure.

VS 25, 17 (IriKagina L 6): this record features both most prominent sea fishermen, Lugalšalatuku and Nesaġ, who accomplish the obligatory delivery of various fish species for the offering table (*ku₆ ba n š u r*), 1,065 pieces by Lugalšalatuku and 1,089 pieces by Nesaġ to be precise, respectively. Interestingly, the transaction is not specified by a finite verbal construction as the usual *mu-ku_x* (DU) ‘he has delivered, brought in it’ but by a copular clause consisting of a nominal predicate and suffixed genitive case as well as enclitic copula (/PN-(a)k-a m/ ‘These (i.e. fish) are of Lugalšalatuku’ (col. iii 4); only afterwards the finite verbal form appears in the temporal adjunct: *iti siki-ba-a mu-ku_x* (DU) ‘in the month of the wool allocations they have delivered it’. The final section (rev. col. i 4-ii 2) contains the infinite verbal complement /á è-è-dè/: *en-na-u₄-ġu₁₀ á è-è-dè e-na-šid* (Eniggal, the general inspector) has counted out it (i.e. the fish) to Enna’uġu to pay out the wages(?).⁶⁹ The official Enna’uġu⁷⁰ who is classified as a sea fisherman as well (e.g. DP 300 ii 4), but is overwhelmingly assigned to the group of *lú igi níġin* ‘municipal controllers’⁷¹ usually representing members of the upper social stratum, for example, in the telling records AWL 143 (IriKagina L 5) and especially DP 341 (IriKagina L 4). The latter one explicitly mentions him (i.e. Enna’uġu) as the official in charge of holding the fish (meant) for paying out the wages (?) in custody (col. ii 3-rev. i1: *ku₆ á è-è, en-na-u₄-ġu₁₀ a m₆-da-ġál-la-a m₆*). This text is also remarkable in other respects because both ruler (i.e. IriKagina) and empress (i.e. Sasag) are introduced by their official titles (*én sik: mu nus*) as responsible for having concertedly established 1,260 pieces of (moistened) fish as food offering (*nid ba¹-šè ì-kéš e*) subsequently to be transferred to Enna’uġu for temporary keeping.

Passing on to the probably latest evidence of the protagonist Lugalšalatuku, the record AWEL 135 from IriKagina’s eighth regnal that mentions the reception of barley grits (*da bin*) by him.

AWEL 135 (IriKagina L 8): this record represents to the best of my knowledge the latest datable evidence for the prominent fisherman Lugalša(latuku), even though the context itself does not evince any direct reference to the sphere of fishing. On the contrary, a certain *lugal-šà* is designated as a ‘man from Uruk’ (*lú unu^{ki}*) who receives a certain amount of barley grits (col ii 3: *2 barig, 4 bán da bin*). If we hypothesise an identity with the prominent overseer of sea fishermen in this case, he came from the same city as his equally prominent colleague Nesaġ. However, due to the documentary decrease towards IriKagina’s end of reign the traceability of his individual career as well as transactions regarding fisheries is mostly petering out. The similar but undated record AWEL 130 (IriKagina L n.d.) equally mentions the cupbearer Šešludug in his role as bailiff (*maškim*) together with two distinct individuals named Lugalša(latuku) who consumed the amount of barley grit and who are classified as “elite guards” (*agà-ús*), a kind of military squad very likely directly subordinated to the ruler (i.e. IriKagina).⁷² Unfortunately, we can only speculate whether one of these individuals is the prominent

⁶⁶ An exception is the equivalence relation between the scale units *ĒŠ-ba-an* and *gú(-n)* “load capacity”, for which according to DP 283 an equivalence relation 6 (*ĒŠ-ba-an*) corresponds to 1 *gú* (i.e. 30 kg); see Selz 1995a for further details.

⁶⁷ See already Bauer 1998, 545 for the problem of an exact precise appraisal of the institution’s revenues based on delivered fish.

⁶⁸ However, this interpretive approach may well conflict with the later emergence of *gú n* ‘talent, load’ as an official standardised weight unit from the Sargonic period onwards. See the overview given by Powell 1990.

⁶⁹ For an overview about the suggested explanations of this specific phrase see Bauer 1998, 549.

⁷⁰ See Balke 2017, 164-5 for an exhaustive list of his contextual references.

⁷¹ The fact that Enna’uġu frequently appears without an explicit professional attribute on one side, and on the other side is consequently attributed to the social class of ‘controllers’ (*lú igi níġin*) might well indicate to an original professional designation that developed into a more general social class term. Accordingly, Enna’uġu is also included in those documents, namely, AWL 68 (Lugalanda 4), DP 132 (Lugalanda 5), DP 133 (IriKagina L 1), DP 226 (Lugalanda 4), MLVS 8 (IriKagina L 6) and TSA 50 (IriKagina L 6), listing a large group of 40 till 50 of the highest officials who are obliged to deliver cultic pure milk and malt.

⁷² See Prentice 2010, 71.

fisherman of the same name, actually,⁷³ who may have been drafted into military service at the end of IriKagina's reign. Nevertheless, it remains a quite conceivable assumption against the background of the political developments towards the end of IriKagina's reign.

7 Conclusion

If we pursue now the collected evidence of Lugalšalatuku's professional career as an overseer of fishermen in the ancient city-state of Ĝirsu/Lagaš in chronological order according to the elaborated given evidence in the preceding section, we can securely cover a period from the second regnal year of Enentarzid till the sixth, possibly the eighth regnal year of IriKagina comprising a period of 15 years at the minimum and 18 years at most. Regarding his contextual occurrences, the frequency extremely increased during the reign of IriKagina in contrast to Lugalanda from previously 18 to 54 (or 55) attestations with peaks in IriKagina's fourth and sixth regnal year slightly declining during the fifth regnal year.⁷⁴ This development might well be connected to the grown economic and social importance of fishermen and fishing in general, particularly during the culminating border conflict between Lagaš and Umma and, as a result, the grown supply of the population in the end of IriKagina's rulership. To sum up, his enduring career identifies him, together with his colleague Nesaĝ, as the most prominent and, presumably, most senior sea fisherman linked to the institution of the Emunus. However, the increased involvement of Lugalšalatuku as an acting overseer of the sea fishermen during IriKagina's sixth regnal year obviously points to his enhanced importance by contrast with his colleague. His prominence and social esteem are distinctively underlined by two essential characteristics, his affiliation to the group of holders of sustenance land (lú šuku dab₅-ba), and his contribution of catch quota as the fishermen' (or his own) mašdare'a donation. However, it is not evident in each case and documented transaction, whether he generally acted representative for all sea fishermen and the squads supervised by himself, particularly when they are not explicitly mentioned by name, or if he acted independently as a private individual in several matters, for example, when delivering the mašdare'a donation. The documents DP 120 and AWL 139, the latter one from IriKagina's fourth regnal year, reveal insights into his closer relatives, namely about his brother Urtulsaĝ, a freshwater fisherman, whereas the latter in col. iv 1-3 mentions his nephew É-e-a-na-a₅, a freshwater fisherman likewise. This evidence certainly allows the reliable conclusion that Lugalšalatuku originated from a family environment characterised by a deep professional fishing tradition. Furthermore, he presumably started his professional career as an ordinary 'fisherman from Ĝirsu' (š-u-ku₆ ĝír-su^{ki}), as it is evident from the text VS 25, 10 (Lugalanda 1³),⁷⁵ which reports the catch quotas of several fishermen for two days (u₄ 1-kam; u₄ 2-kam). Lugalša(latuku) himself delivers the following items: 15 gi agargara^{ku₆} ab-ba, 20 zà ubi^{ku₆}, lugal-šà (col. i 1-3) '15 gi (i.e. 45 metres)⁷⁶ sea fish-spawn, 20 slices(?) U.-fish (from) Lugalša(latuku)'.

Unfortunately, because of the drastic decline of the written institutional documentation towards the end of the Early Dynastic Period in the city-state of Lagaš, we are incapable of tracing back the professional career of Lugalšalatuku beyond the limited textual evidence from the archive of the Emunus and the fish corpus, respectively. Moreover, there is no further evidence from other than administrative transactions that illuminate his career in detail. Although there are cogent textual references for fishermen switching from one sub-category to another, conclusive evidence for a change of profession⁷⁷ or even a change of name is lacking in his case. In addition, there exists no textual reference that would securely connect him with a different professional attribution than as a fisherman, as it is well-known, for instance, from Eniggal, the institution's renowned general inspector (n-u-bànda),

⁷³ Alternatively, an identification with a cook or scribe of the same name is equally suitable in this case.

⁷⁴ This observation completely accords with the general increase of the institutional personnel since Enentarzid's second regnal year during IriKagina's reign, particularly, during this specific period; cf. the data collected in Selz 1995c, 50-63.

⁷⁵ According to the mentioned individuals and the onomastic evidence from similarly structured records (e.g. DP 174; AWEL 276) as well the collective involvement of fishermen and fowling this record most likely comes from the very beginning of Lugalanda's reign.

⁷⁶ The use of length measures when dispensing fish levies may be based on the length of the fish body itself, particularly, if only one piece of a specific species is delivered, e.g. a-dar-tún^{ku₆}, or on smaller fish species lined up in a row for the purpose of being sized.

⁷⁷ However, in RTC 35 (Lugalanda 4) he is exceptionally assigned to the class of net fisher (col. ii 6-iv 2: š-u-ku₆ sa šu ba₉-fá-me).

who is designated in some records from the reigns of Lugalanda and IriKagina⁷⁸ as ‘scribe of the Emunus’ (dub-sar é-munus) and ‘scribe of the (temple of) Bawu’ (dub-sar ⁴Ba-Ú), respectively. Coming back to the unique record AT 1, the only example of a sealed tablet with its envelope, a so-called ‘Hüllentafel’ from Early Dynastic Lagaš, it becomes not instantly clear, why this specific administrative transaction should require a sealed envelope, a feature usually meant as means of confidentiality. Therefore, this singular practice might have served either the purpose of verification by Eniggal, the prominent scribe of the Emunus, or directing the focus on the dusu-tax (ku₆ dusu-kam) consigned for the ‘festival ‘malt-eating of Nanše’ by 5 sea fishermen, among them Lugalšalatuku.⁷⁹ The noticeable involvement of fishermen elucidates by all means their principal role within the institutional personnel even though the transaction’s exact background remains obscure after all. Nevertheless, it underscores the importance of fishery as an economic branch in general and Lugalšalatuku as one of its outstanding representatives.

Notwithstanding the still existing obstacles, for example, the scarce textual reference to the further processing of freshwater fish and sea fish, the fishermen’s technical equipment or the storage facilities,⁸⁰ biographic approaches as undertaken by the present author constitute valuable baselines for further studies. Thereby, the extension of the textual evidence to the administrative text corpora from other Early Dynastic sites, especially from Umma and Adab, might well turn out as even more fruitful. A meticulous study on the nearly 50 marine species from freshwater, brackish water and marine habitats attested in the Old Sumerian administrative text corpus, which remains a major desideratum, supplemented by contextual references and accurate palaeographic classification⁸¹ will provide further insights into the administrative bookkeeping and procedures of the Old Sumerian fishing branch and the involved fishermen.⁸²

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⁷⁸ See AT 1 (IriKagina L 4) (seal) 1:1-2; DP 15 (seal) 1-2, DP 16 (seal) 1-2, DP 17 (seal) 1-2, DP 18 (seal) 1-2; AWL 138 (IriKagina L 4) col. ii 1-2 (Delivery of fish by himself?); AWEL 324 (seal) 1-3 (dub-sar ⁴Ba-Ú), AWEL 325 (seal) 1-3 (dub-sar é-munus).

⁷⁹ The two seals read: ‘On the (festival of ‘malt-eating’) of Nanše, (delivery) of the sea fishermen’, and ‘Eniggal, the scribe of the Emunus’.

⁸⁰ Four storage locations are chiefly mentioned in connection with deliveries of fish: é-ùr-ra(-k) ‘attic storage structure’ (DP 323 iii 5), é-ùr-ku₆(-k) ‘attic fish storage structure’ (DP 308 iii 1), é é-bar ⁴bilgames-šè fú-a ‘warehouse built along the exterior of the Gilgames temple’ (DP 286 iii 5) and é-níġ-gur₁₁-ra(-k) ‘depot’ (DP 300 ii 1, iii 7); the third one is obviously an interim storage location for the fishermen of the Imaḥ-canal, the latter generally meant for various goods and direct consignments by Eniggal.

⁸¹ Attempts of classification and identification will primarily rest on the collected data on the marine fauna in Heckel 1843 and Freyhof et al. 2021.

⁸² See Balke, forthcoming.

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Tables

Table 1 Chronology of the Late Early Dynastic period in the city-state of Lagaš/Girsu

Ruler	Queen	Years	Kinship	General Administrator
1 Enentarzid c. 2336-2331 ^{±30}	Dìm-tur	5 (6?)	Son of Dudu(?) (saĝĝa ^a Ningirsu)	Šubur-tur
2 Lugalanda c. 2331-2324 ^{±30}	Bára-nam-tar-ra	6	Son of no. 1	Šul-me-šár-ra-DUEn-ig-gal
3 IriKAgina c. 2324-2314 ^{±30}	Sa ₆ -sa ₆	8 (+2?)	Father-in-law of no. 2	↓

Table 2 Chief sea fishermen

Overseer sea fishermen	Date	Team size (ses)	References
Lugal-šà-lá-tuku	Ukg. L 3 / L 4 Lugalanda 1	Ses-bé: 7	DP 177 (Ukg. L 3) TSA 47(Ukg. L 4)
Ne-saĝ	Ukg. L 3 / L 4 Lugalanda 1	Ses-bé: 9	DP 177 (Ukg. L 3) TSA 47(Ukg. L 4)
Šubur	Ukg. L 3 / L 4 Lugalanda 1	Ses-sur _x -ra: 5 ⁱ	DP 177 (Ukg. L 3) TSA 47(Ukg. L 4) DP 191 (Lug. 1)
Nam-maĥ-né	Lugalanda 1	-----	AWL 183 ii 1 ⁱⁱ
Lugal-tigi _x (É.BALAĜ)-né-du ₁₀	Enentarzid 2	-----	DP 283

ⁱ The phrases ses-bé and ses-sur_x(ERIM)-ra 'team(-brother), squad' are used synonymously here, ses-bé representing the abbreviated form; alternating ses-sa-né vs. du mu-né in DP 177 col. i 6-8 indicates that Il and Eta'e must be related here and not just working team members.

ⁱⁱ Nammaĥne only appears once in this specific role, otherwise mainly attested as maltster, gatekeeper, and messenger (see Balke 2017, 301-2 for additional instances), but in AWL 183 (VS 14, 20) in a leading role together with other securely identified overseers who were obviously incapable of fulfilling the strict delivery commitments; this is explicitly expressed by the phrase: ku₆ pi saĝ_xĝar-ra-šè nu-mu-de₆-a-ka-nam 'because they (i.e. sea fishermen) have not delivered the determined (amount) of fish in accordance with the boxes (supplied)' (col. ii 3). For the Old Sumerian suffixed construction /(a)kanam/ later replaced by the suffixed morpheme sequence -/akeš/ see Balke 2006, 212-14 and fn. 935.

Table 3 Chief freshwater fishermen

Overseer freshwater fishermen	Date	Team size (ses)	References
Lugal-me-gal-gal	Ukg. L 3/L 4	4 ⁱ	DP 177 (Ukg. L 3) TSA 47(Ukg. L 4)
Ú-du	Ukg. L 3/L 4	11	DP 177 (Ukg. L 3) TSA 47(Ukg. L 4)
É-ì-gá-ra-sù	Ukg. L 3/L 4	8	DP 177 (Ukg. L 3) TSA 47(Ukg. L 4)
É-sig ₄ -zi-dè	Lugalanda 6	6	RTC 54 (Lug. 6)

ⁱ In TSA 47 the rubrum ses-bé or ses-sur_x-ra is missing, but the context clearly identifies these individuals as overseers who, according to the given onomastic evidence, are to be ascribed to the reign of IriKAgina in all probability.

Table 4 Chief brackish water fishermen

Overseer: brackish water fishermen	Date	Team size (ses)	Reference
Amar- ^d nám-nun-na	Ukg. L3	5: lugal-KA-gi-na é-igi-íl é-ki ur-zú-si amar- ^d nám-nun-na	DP 177 (Ukg. L3)
Gala-tur	Ukg. L3	2: ur-ki gala-tur	DP 177 (Ukg. L3)

Table 5 Chief coastal fishermen

Overseer: coastal fishermen	Date	Team size (ses)	Reference
Lugal-me-gal-gal	Ukg. L3	6: šubur lugal-mu-šè-ĝál ur- ^d nin-dara ne-saĝ lugal-Lagaš ^{ki} lugal-me-gal-gal	DP 177 (Ukg. L3)

Table 6 Chief net fishermen/fishermen of the Gu'edinna

Overseer: net fishermen/ fishermen of Gu'edinna	Date	Team size (ses)	Reference
Lugal-me-gal-gal	Ukg. L3	6: šubur lugal-mu-šè-ĝál ur- ^d nin-dara ne-saĝ lugal-Lagaš ^{ki} lugal-me-gal-gal	DP 177 (Ukg. L3)
Lugal-me-gal-gal	Ukg. L3	4: ur- ^d nin-ĝír-su ur- ^d igi-ama-šè lugal-á-na šubur	DP 139 (Ukg. L3) Summarised as 10 šu-ku ₆ gana gú-edin-na-ka in rev. col. ii 1
Nir-ĝál	Lugalanda 1	-----	DP 191 (Lug.1)
É-ùr(-bé-du ₁₀) ¹	Ukg. L6	-----	AWL 148 col. iii 3-5: é-ùr ugula e-da-de ₆

ⁱ The overseer E'ur, a short form of E'urbedu written é-ùr-bé-du₁₀, is probably identical with a shipbuilder bearing the same name (see Balke 2017, 145), and, according to the given onomastic evidence, only indirectly linked to the branch of fishing. The record itself refers to four separate deliveries of fish without explicitly naming those individuals included into this squad of fishermen.

Table 7 Chief fisherman of the date palm (groves)

Overseer: fishermen of date palm (groves)	Date	Team size (ses)	Reference
Gu-ú	Ukg. L3	7: lugal-geš-búr ša-nu-ĝál é-ì-gá-ra-sù á-nu-kúš ur-šu-íl-la lugal-igi gu-ú	DP 335 (Ukg. L3)