

The Burial Pit of the *e n s i₂* of Gizuna (ŠID.NUN^{ki}) and the Cemetery of Ur Between the Late Early Dynastic and Early Sargonic Periods

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Abstract This article examines the available textual evidence from late Early Dynastic/Early Sargonic Ur concerning an unnamed *e n s i₂* of the northern Babylonian city of Gizuna (ŠID.NUN^{ki}). Based on a new interpretation of UET 2, Suppl. 44 and U 32450+U 32457, it is argued that a seven-day burial ceremony in honour of the ruler/governor of Gizuna was held, during which animals were sacrificed at his grave (*s u r₃-m a ḥ*). It is suggested that the body of the *e n s i₂* was interred at Ur, either in the Early Dynastic ‘Royal Cemetery’ or in the later ‘Akkadian Cemetery’. A careful review of the late Early Dynastic/Early Sargonic cuneiform tablets from Ur further reveals the existence of an organisation called Ekisa(g) (‘pleasant-place house’), which probably handled the funerary offerings presented to the men and women buried in the city necropolis. If this is correct, then Ekisa(g) may have been the Sumerian name of the burial complex commonly known as the ‘Cemetery of Ur’.

Keywords Late Early Dynastic/Early Sargonic Ur. *e n s i₂* of ŠID.NUN^{ki}/Gizuna. Cemetery of Ur. Burial ceremony.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Funerary Offerings at the ‘Great Pit’ of the *e n s i₂* of Gizuna. – 3 Who Was King? Who Was not King? – 4 Who Was Buried in the Cemetery of Ur? – 5 Conclusions. – 6 Appendix: Synoptic edition of UET 2, Suppl. 44 and U 32450+U 32457.

Dedicated to the memory of Giuseppe ‘Pino’ Viscato

1 Introduction

In a recent article, Abather Saadon and Nicholas Kraus published two large fragments (U 32450 and U 32457) of what was originally a single cuneiform tablet palaeographically dated to the late Early Dynastic/Early Sargonic period.¹ The fragments were discovered during Sir Leonard Woolley’s third season of excavations at the city of Ur, and are now housed at the British Museum in London.² The text of this fragmentary tablet provides new evidence for an unnamed ruler/governor (*e n s i₂*) of ŠID.NUN^{ki} whose existence is also known from UET 2, Suppl. 44 (IM 49817), a four-column tablet kept at the Iraq Museum in Baghdad; the latter tablet was found by Woolley in a secondary context, beneath the floors of the Edublamah, in the same findspot as U 32450, U 32457, and other Sargonic and Ur III tablets.

I am deeply grateful to Gianni Marchesi and Manuel Molina, who read drafts of this study and offered numerous comments and helpful suggestions. Text abbreviations used here are those of the Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative (<http://cdli.ucla.edu>).

¹ Saadon, Kraus 2024.

² Saadon and Kraus did not realise that the fragments belong to the same tablet and published them as separate texts (nos 6 and 10). I am grateful to Manuel Molina for drawing my attention to the entry descriptions of U 32450 and U 32457 in the catalogue of the *Ur Online* project: <http://www.ur-online.org/subject/54213/>; <http://www.ur-online.org/subject/54219/>.



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The toponym ŠID.NUN^{ki}, which occurs in the *Early Dynastic List of Geographical Names* found at Abu Salabikh (OIP 99, no. 94 iv 10') and Ebla, has been interpreted as a logographic spelling of Gizuna (MEE 3, no. 56 iv 20 = g i -z u₂-n a). In the Ur III period, a town by the same name (g i -z u₂-n a) was situated in northern Babylonia, in the general area of Tiwa, Urum, and Malgum.³ The spelling ŠID.NUN^{ki} is not to be confused with ŠID.NUN-t a b^{ki}, to be read as Giritab, a toponym also occurring in the Early Dynastic geographical list. This northern locality is attested in another pre-Sargonic text from Ur as a supplier of bitumen (UET 2, Suppl. 16 rev. ii 4'-5'), a piece of information that demonstrates the wide geographical reach of the city of the god Nanna at this stage in Mesopotamian history.⁴

UET 2, Suppl. 44 and U 32450+U 32457 belong to a dossier of ca 40 documents concerning cattle, sheep and goats, fowl, and canebrake mice expended by an unnamed institution for religious and secular purposes.⁵ The animals were:

1. destined for the Palace⁶ and its cultic needs (e.g. the worship of the king's (l u g a l) personal god);⁷
2. offered (ĝ e š t a g) for the Great Festival of Ninazu by an unnamed king (l u g a l), who also provided cattle⁸ for the GAL.UNKEN⁹ and for Enki's temple at Eridu;¹⁰
3. delivered to local institutions (e.g. the cloister of Nanna);¹¹
4. presented to gods at local shrines and donated for local festivals and ceremonies (e.g. as *mašdaria* contributions for the NE-u m (-NE-ĝ a r));¹²
5. gifted to visitors (e.g. to the unnamed son of the *ensi₂* of Šuruppag);¹³
6. supplied to local officials (e.g. to a cook);¹⁴
7. disbursed for the s u r₃-m a ħ of an unnamed *ensi₂* of Gizuna.

This brief contribution concerns the last item on this list.

³ On the possible reading of ŠID.NUN^{ki} as Gizuna, see the relevant literature collected by Schrakamp 2015, 222 fn. 255. On the location of Gizuna, see most recently Steinkeller 2022, 7-8. A reference to a man of Gizuna (ŠID.NUN^{ki}) in pre-Sargonic texts from the Umma region can be found in CUSAS 14, 74. My proposal to read obv. 4 as l u₂ s a ĝ ĝ a¹ B¹ki (Notizia 2019, 99) must be rejected; although the function of the three isolated wedges under the sign ŠID remains obscure to me, the line can plausibly be interpreted as l u₂ ŠID.NUN^{ki} (see already Schrakamp 2015, 220 fn. 235).

⁴ On the geographical horizon of Ur in the pre-Sargonic and Early Sargonic periods, see Schrakamp 2015, 222.

⁵ For a detailed discussion of this dossier based on the texts known at the time, see Visicato, Westenholz 2005. The name of the urban organisation that produced and kept these documents is unknown; according to Visicato, Westenholz 2005, 67, it may have been the temple of Nanna.

⁶ I follow Visicato and Westenholz's interpretation (2005, 66, 68) that the *e-z-gal* refers to the residence of the l u g a l and not to the temple of the city's patron deity (Nanna), as may have been the case in contemporary Girsu-Lagaš (Lafont, Lecompte 2020, 29).

⁷ For this interpretation of d i ĝ i r -l u g a l, see Visicato, Westenholz 2005, 65.

⁸ It should be noted that the king (l u g a l) only made offerings of grain-fed oxen, the more prestigious – and more expensive – sacrificial animals.

⁹ The meaning of GAL.UNKEN in the (pre-)Sargonic tablets from Ur remains unclear (Visicato, Westenholz 2005, 64; cf., e.g. Marchesi, Marchetti 2011, 103 fn. 53). For an interpretation of GAL.UNKEN as a high official responsible for the mobilisation of labourers, see most recently Steinkeller 2024, 4 fn. 2. As Visicato and Westenholz have correctly pointed out, in the context of the livestock dossier from Ur, it makes little sense that a labour recruiter – or any other high-ranking local official – would be offered cattle by the l u g a l. It is far more likely that in these texts, rather than a title or office, GAL.UNKEN designates an institution or a place. Cf. Saadoun and Kraus's (2024, 7) translation 'great assembly', without discussion.

¹⁰ The god Enki played a prominent role in (pre-)Sargonic Ur. On the sanctuary established for him at Ur by Aya'anepada, see Kraus 2024 and the remarks by Keetman (2004) and Zólyomi (2024). Interestingly, one of Aya'anepada's successors – Elili, father of Enšakuš'ana – states, in the only royal inscription ascribed to him (RIM E1.13.9.1), that he (re)built Enki's Abzu temple at Eridu.

¹¹ See CUSAS 26, 228 obv. i' 4': GA₂×GI₄-a 'n a n n a -'š e s'. This is the only attestation of this term in third-millennium sources. In Old Babylonian times, the *gagûm* is known to have been a residential institution reserved for the *nadîtu* women serving a god (see CAD G, 10-11 s.v. *gagû*). The most famous *gagûm* in second-millennium Mesopotamia was the one located in the city of Sippar, where the *nadiātu* of Šamaš resided (Stol 2016, 587-604).

¹² On the pre-Sargonic Ur month n e -UM, see Cohen 2015, 74-6, who proposes to read n e -g i r x with the possible meaning '(the month) of all braziers' or '(the month) of torches and braziers'.

¹³ See UET 2, Suppl. 45 rev. i 3.

¹⁴ UET 2, Suppl. 46 rev. i 7-ii 2.

2 Funerary Offerings at the ‘Great Pit’ of the *ensi₂* of Gizuna

According to UET 2, Suppl. 44, a total of seven goats (two female kids and five male kids) were supplied (*i₃-gid₂*)¹⁵ for the *sur₃-ma_ḥ* of the *ensi₂* of Gizuna by an official whose name is difficult to read. The scribe Lugalšuluḥku’ana acted as a *maškim*, supervising the transaction, which took place in the seventh month (*iti a₂-ki-ti*) of the pre-Sargonic Ur calendar.¹⁶ The animals, collectively designated as *udu*, came from those in the care of Šubur(tur), a fattener (*kurušda*) attested in other texts in the dossier. UET 2, Suppl. 44 also specifies that the goats were delivered to the *sur₃-ma_ḥ* of the *ensi₂* of Gizuna in seven transactions (*n-ka-m-ma-ka*), probably on consecutive days (one animal per day), a unique detail in the texts of this dossier.

The newly published tablet U 32450+U 32457, which originally had the same two-columns-per-side format as UET 2, Suppl. 44, apparently duplicates the information contained in this text, although in a slightly different way:¹⁷

1. The total differentiates between female and male kids;
2. The destination of the animals is expressed with the terminative case marker {*še*}, which is preceded by a double genitive;¹⁸
3. The professional title of the fattener Šubur(tur) is explicitly recorded.

The operative verb denoting the transfer of animals (*gid₂*), however, is the same in both texts. Either the two records refer to the same seven-day event, as I suspect, or they document different events that required the same number of sacrificial animals but took place at different times, probably in the same year.¹⁹ Since the month name in U 32450+U 32457 is unfortunately not preserved and therefore cannot be used to clarify this point, both options are possible.

Although many scholars have dealt with UET 2, Suppl. 44 over the years, no consensus has been reached on its interpretation, particularly that of lines obv. i 2, rev. i 8-ii 1, corresponding to U 32450+U 32457 rev. i 4'-5'.

UET 2, Suppl. 44 obv. i 2, rev. i 8-ii 1	U 32450+U 32457 rev. i 4'-5'
LU SUR ₃ (ḪI×AŠ) MAḪ en si ₂ ŠID.NUN ^{ki} ([-ka-še ₃])	LU SUR ₃ (ḪI×AŠ) MAḪ en si ₂ ŠID.NU[N ^{ki}]-[ka-še ₃]

The various proposals can be grouped as follows:

1. The sequence LU SUR₃ MAḪ represents a personal name, read as LU.SUR₃.MAḪ²⁰ or LU.SUR₃-ma_ḥ;²¹
2. The sequence LU SUR₃ MAḪ combines the term *udu* as a collective designation for ‘small cattle’ – as suggested by Alberti and Pomponio²² – and the personal name *sur₃-ma_ḥ*;²³
3. The sequence LU SUR₃ MAḪ combines the terms *udu* and *sur₃-ma_ḥ*, the latter denoting a type of large vessel used for a special type of offering made by the *ensi₂* of Gizuna.²⁴

My interpretation²⁵ of LU SUR₃ MAḪ en si₂ ŠID.NUN^{ki}(-ka-še₃) follows Alberti and Pomponio’s line of reasoning – and, implicitly, that of Steinkeller and Postgate – that *udu* is a general term for livestock,²⁶ but departs from their conclusions on the meaning of *sur₃-ma_ḥ*, which I understand as ‘great pit’, i.e., the burial place of the *ensi₂* of Gizuna.

¹⁵ For the meaning of *gid₂* as ‘to pass along, to transfer’ in third-millennium economic texts, see Steinkeller, Postgate 1992, 46.

¹⁶ Saadon, Kraus 2024, 8.

¹⁷ Strong similarities in content between some texts in the dossier have already been pointed out by Saadon, Kraus 2024, 5, 9.

¹⁸ According to Alberti and Pomponio’s (1986) edition of UET 2, Suppl. 44, the only lost sign in rev. ii 1 was the semantic indicator following the toponym ŠID.NUN. However, the break in the lower part of the case is wide enough even to restore *-ka-še₃*, as in U 32450+U 32457.

¹⁹ For the hypothesis that the livestock dossier covers one year of activity, see Visicato, Westenholz 2005, 63.

²⁰ Marchesi 1999, 109.

²¹ Visicato, Westenholz 2005, 69; Marchesi, Marchetti 2011, 120; Saadon, Kraus 2024, 5.

²² Alberti, Pomponio 1986, 97.

²³ Steinkeller, Postgate 1992, 18. To the best of my knowledge, no interpretation of the alleged personal names LU.SUR₃.MAḪ, LU.SUR₃-ma_ḥ, and *sur₃-ma_ḥ* has ever been suggested.

²⁴ Alberti, Pomponio 1986, 97.

²⁵ Cf. Saadon, Kraus 2024, 5 fn. 17.

²⁶ In UET 2, Suppl. 46 rev. iii 2, *udu* is used as a collective designation for both cattle and sheep.

In a recent contribution, Manuel Molina presents an overview of the third-millennium terms for ‘tomb’, ‘grave’, and ‘(burial) pit’.²⁷ Among the Sumerian words discussed by Molina, *sur₃* (‘burial pit’) features alongside *ki-ma_h* (‘exalted place’) and *e₂-ki-sa₆* (‘pleasant-place house’) as those most commonly attested in pre-Ur III and Ur III textual corpora.²⁸ The noun *sur₃-ma_h* (‘great/exalted pit’) is a hapax, clearly modelled on *ki-ma_h*, a euphemistic expression to describe burial places;²⁹ it also represents the only occurrence of *sur₃* used in this meaning in Early Dynastic IIIb documents.³⁰

The new interpretation of *sur₃-ma_h* as ‘great pit’ allow us to translate *udu sur₃-ma_h ensi₂ ŠID.NUN^{ki}(-ka-še₃)* as follows: ‘livestock for the great pit of the *ensi₂* of Gizuna’. If this is correct, then the texts UET 2, Suppl. 44 and U 32450+U 32457 either record the presentation of funerary offerings to the dead ruler/governor of Gizuna on the occasion of the Akiti festival, or attest to the performance of a seven-day burial ceremony, during which a goat was sacrificed every day at the grave of the foreign *ensi₂*.³¹ Since the geographical scope of the animal deliveries documented in the livestock dossier is limited to Ur and Eridu and does not include distant destinations,³² the offerings must have taken place in the city of Ur, with all probability in the burial ground known as Area PG, at a grave or mortuary chapel located in either the ‘Royal Cemetery’ or the ‘Akkadian Cemetery’.³³

Interestingly, another tablet from the livestock dossier (UET 2, Suppl. 17) provides evidence for an institution operating at Ur and possibly involved in funerary rites, which received the second largest single allocation of animals in the dossier: sixteen assorted sheep and goats for the Festival of the First Gift (*e₂-sa_ĝ igi-kara₂*).³⁴ The name of the institution that consumed these animals is Ekisa(g) (*e₂-ki-sa₆-e i₃-gu₇*),³⁵ a term commonly employed for ‘tomb, grave’ in third-millennium sources,³⁶ as mentioned before. Was Ekisa(g) the name of the urban institution in charge of the regular offerings presented to the dead at the necropolis of Ur? Did this name also refer to a specific cultic place or to a funerary facility of sorts?

The considerations outlined above lead us to the obvious questions of (1) who the *ensi₂* of Gizuna was, whether an independent city ruler or a governor installed by the unnamed overlord (*lugal*), and, most importantly, (2) why a foreign *ensi₂* would be buried at Ur or receive his funerary cult there. The first issue will be addressed in the next section, while the second will be discussed in § 4 below.

²⁷ Molina 2019.

²⁸ Add to these terms the verb *ki-tum₂* ‘to bury, to be buried’, attested in an Early Dynastic IIIb sale document from Adab (Mesopotamia 8, 67-75 obv. iv 1). For *ki-tum₂* ‘tomb, grave’, and *sa_ĝ-ki-tum_{2/3}* ‘grave digger’, in later Sumerian texts, see Attinger 2021, 623, 879-80.

²⁹ Molina 2019, 696.

³⁰ The term *sur₃* with the meaning ‘(burial) pit’ is attested in an Early Dynastic IIIa tablet from Fara recently published by Balke 2014 (reference courtesy M. Molina). In this text, *sur₃* followed by the anthroponym *al-lu₂* represents the name of the topographic feature identifying the location of a parcel of land; cf. the field name *a-ša₃ sur₃-ad₇* (‘field of burial(s)’) in Ur III texts (Molina 2019, 695). Both *sur₃ al-lu₂* and *a-ša₃ sur₃-ad₇* clearly refer to extramural burials.

³¹ On funerary cults and burial ceremonies involving offerings of foodstuffs and livestock in pre-Sargonic and Ur III Ġirsu-Lagaš, see Jagersma 2007, with references to previous literature.

³² Pace Saadoon, Kraus 2024, 4-5. Their restoration of UET 2, Suppl. 46 rev. i 1 as *a-^rga¹-[de₃^{ki}-še₃]*, is questionable: first, the fragmentary sign after A looks more like NE than GA, and secondly, there is hardly enough room for NE KI ŠE₃ in the broken part of the line. Also, why was one single sheep sent(?) – operative verb *ba-gid₂* – to Akkade? And on what occasion?

³³ For the use of these labels in distinguishing different layers of burials in Area PG, see most recently Hafford 2019. According to Woolley 1934, 110, who based his hypothesis on the position of the skeletons by a doorway, sheep and goats were sacrificed in the early stages of a burial ritual performed in tomb PG/1232. Other possible examples of burial ceremonies involving caprines are (1) PG/1631, where the skull of a sheep or goat was found on the broken tray of an offering table by the entrance of the tomb chamber (Woolley 1934, 132); (2) PG/1648, where bones of sheep or goats lay in the forecourt in front of the door of the tomb chamber (Woolley 1934, 134). On animal bones and other comestibles found in the cemetery of Ur, see Baadsgaard et al. 2012, 149-50. On animal remains from royal and non-royal burial contexts at Early Dynastic Ur, see most recently Greenfield 2024.

³⁴ For the meaning of *igi-kara₂* and the translation of *e₂-sa_ĝ igi-kara₂* as ‘Festival of the First Gift’, see Zettler, Salaberger 2011, 5 and fn. 13; Cohen 2015, 72.

³⁵ Other institutions that ‘ate’ animal offerings were the Palace (UET 2, Suppl. 13 rev. ii 2-3: *e₂-gal-le i₃-gu₇*) and the Great Festival of Nanna (UET 2, Suppl. 45 obv. ii 8-rev. i 1: *e₂-ma_h ⁿnanna-ke₄ i₃-gu₇*). The same expression can be found in some Early Dynastic IIIb texts from Ġirsu-Lagaš. See, e.g. VS 25, 56 obv. i 5: *ki-utu-e i₃-gu₇* ‘the Place of Utu (= a cultic place) consumed it (= one bull)’.

³⁶ Molina 2019, 695-6.

3 Who Was King? Who Was not King?

The precise dating of the livestock dossier is of paramount importance for determining the identity of the *ensi₂* of Gizuna and the unnamed *lugal*; however, reconstructing the chronology of the late Early Dynastic/Early Sargonic tablets from Ur remains a seemingly impossible problem to solve.³⁷ Various suggestions have been made concerning the identity of the king presenting offerings in the texts of the dossier: Visicato and Westenholz indicate either *Lugalkišarešdudu*, or *Lugalkisalesi*, or *Enšakušu'ana*,³⁸ according to Schrakamp, *Lugalzagesi* and *Sargon* would also be plausible candidates.³⁹ Other scholars remain more cautious: Alberti and Pomponio propose either a king of Akkade, an independent ruler of Ur, or the chief administrator of the city;⁴⁰ Saadon and Kraus believe that the tablets date to the Early Sargonic period and that the *lugal* should be identified with an early king of Akkade.⁴¹

Although a special connection between Ur, Gizuna, and its *ensi₂* must certainly have existed, too little is known about the political history of the late Early Dynastic and Early Sargonic periods to date the occurrence with more precision; nor should it necessarily be assumed that the influence of the unnamed *lugal* extended to northern Babylonia, where Gizuna was most likely located.⁴² Therefore, it cannot really be determined whether in this specific context *ensi₂* denotes an independent ruler of Gizuna, or a governor subordinate to an overlord who exercised hegemony over both Gizuna and Ur; nor can it be established with certainty whether this *lugal* was a late Early Dynastic or an Early Sargonic king. However, new information can be found in recently and previously published archival records from Ur that add to the discussion on the identity of the unnamed king.

The first piece of evidence to be considered is the late Early Dynastic/Early Sargonic tablet Saadon, Kraus 2024, 9 no. 13, which lists an unnamed *ensi₂* (*obv. ii 2*) among the providers of flour received by an individual, perhaps a local official.⁴³ It can be assumed that here the title *ensi₂* identifies the highest authority of Ur at a time of political weakness, when a non-native *lugal* exercised control over the city.⁴⁴ This reconstruction finds support in the fact that the independent Early Dynastic rulers of Ur always used the title *lugal uris^{ki}* in their royal inscriptions, even when their fathers bore the more prestigious epithet *lugal kiš^{ki}* (i.e., king of Uruk),⁴⁵ as in the case of *Mes'uĝedu* and his son *Mes'anepada* (RIM E1.13.5.1).⁴⁶ Again, a scenario involving an *ensi₂* of Ur subject to a *lugal* would fit well with any of the possible candidates (i.e., *Lugalkišarešdudu*, *Lugalkisalesi*, *Enšakušu'ana*, *Lugalzagesi*, and *Sargon*).

Another aspect that has been entirely ignored are the occurrences of the title *lugal* in the tablets from Ur datable to the Early Dynastic IIIb period. The first attestation is in UET 2, Suppl. 25, perhaps a letter or legal text, in which a 'cowherd of the king' (*un₃lugal*) is mentioned (*rev. i 3*). This finding may be significant in light of the fact that the *lugal* of the late Early Dynastic/Early Sargonic dossier

³⁷ On the difficulty of establishing a precise dating for the texts of this dossier, see Saadon, Kraus 2024, 4-5. They date the tablets to the Early Sargonic period based on their physical appearance and palaeography, and on the alleged occurrence of the toponym Akkade in UET 2, Suppl. 46 *rev. i 1* (see above, fn. 32).

³⁸ Visicato, Westenholz 2005, 64.

³⁹ Schrakamp 2015, 222.

⁴⁰ Alberti, Pomponio 1986, 17-18, 53.

⁴¹ Saadon, Kraus 2024, 4-5.

⁴² I disagree with the general view that in Early Dynastic IIIa-b documents from a Babylonian city, the mere presence of foreign city rulers designated as *ensi₂*, their family members, their servants, or of emissaries from foreign places indicates the subordinate relationship of these individuals to the local ruler or to a supra-regional overlord, regardless of the chronological framework and the context in which they are mentioned. Likewise, the reception of goods from a particular locale (i.e., a toponym) does not necessarily imply territorial control over it by the receiving party (i.e., a city-state or territorial kingdom).

⁴³ According to the photograph of the tablet, the recipient's name (*obv. ii 8*) could be read as *ur-tu₁₂-saĝ¹*. Collation of the tablet is necessary to corroborate this reading.

⁴⁴ Cf. the case of *Mes^{ki}gala*, governor (*ensi₂*) of Adab, under King (*lugal*) *Lugalzagesi* (BIN 8, 26 vi 4-8; on this text, see Marchesi, Marchetti 2011, 112-13). Note that *Mes^{ki}gala* bears the title *ensi₂* also in a dedicatory inscription incised on a statue fragment probably from Adab (RIM E1.1.9.2001). On variation in royal titles in pre-Sargonic and Early Sargonic Adab, see Pomponio 2015, 191-2.

⁴⁵ See Marchesi 2015, 145. For a different interpretation, see Sallaberger 2021, 353, who rejects this equation.

⁴⁶ However, one cannot rule out the possibility that a different use of this title applies to administrative texts, in which *Mes'anepada* may have been referred to as *ensi₂* of Ur; cf. the case of the rulers of Umma (Marchesi, Marchetti 2011, 110). At the time when *Enšakušu'ana* - son of *Elili*, king of Ur - unified southern Mesopotamia under his rule, the presence of two 'kings' (*lugal*) would have been simply unimaginable.

made offerings exclusively of cattle (see above, fn. 8), which could potentially come from royal herds.⁴⁷

The second attestation, hitherto unrecognised, is in UET 2, Suppl. 3. I propose to read lines obv. i' 1'-3' as *u₄ lugal-le / u₈ siki / 'e¹-u[r₄²-ra]*, 'when the king plucked? the wool ewes'.⁴⁸ This formulation illustrates the city ruler's control over the circulation of a valuable commodity such as wool, as was also the case in pre-Sargonic Ġirsu-Lagaš, Nadaba, and Ebla.⁴⁹ However, unlike the Ġirsu-Lagaš texts, which record the name of the ruler and the place where the plucking took place (i.e., mainly at the Palace),⁵⁰ the Early Dynastic IIIb tablet from Ur omits this information. Looking at the Early Dynastic IIIb and Early Sargonic administrative texts from Ur as a whole, it seems as if local scribes did not deem it necessary to write down the names of their political leaders (*lugal, ensi₂*), which also applies to foreign rulers (*ensi₂ ŠID.NUN^{ki}*) and to their sons (e.g. *dumu ensi₂ šuruppag^{ki}*).⁵¹

4 Who Was Buried in the Cemetery of Ur?

The last major point that remains to be addressed is the reason why the *ensi₂* of Gizuna would be buried at Ur or receive funerary offerings there. Unfortunately, the currently available sources from Ur fail to provide any conclusive answers to this question. In the following, I will put forward some hypotheses that might be worth considering; until further evidence is found, however, any reconstruction must necessarily remain in the realm of conjecture.

Examination of the surviving archival documents, some of which have been published only recently, shows that, besides military confrontations and competition for access to wealth and valuable resources, the southern Mesopotamian city-states of the Early Dynastic IIIb period could maintain peaceful relations with each other.⁵² Diplomatic and commercial exchanges shaped inter-city interaction, while instances of military cooperation against common enemies are scarcely documented.⁵³ Personal relations among the urban elites of northern, central, and southern Babylonia were further reinforced through the exchange of gifts⁵⁴ and mutual participation in major cultic events and local festivals. No doubt, with the emergence of the first territorial states in the so-called 'Proto-Imperial' period, the circulation of goods and people within these socio-political networks must have intensified considerably.⁵⁵

Administrative records from the Umma region dating from the reign of the Early Dynastic IIIb ruler Ur-Lumma offer ample evidence of official journeys undertaken for diplomatic, economic, and cultic reasons. Emissaries (*lu₂*), shipping agents (*lu₂-u₅-a*), and high dignitaries (*ensi₂-gal*; *šeš ensi₂*)⁵⁶ from localities such as Kiš, Akšak, Irisaġrig, Nippur, Adab, Šuruppag, Uruk, and Ur – just to name the most important ones – receive animals and foodstuffs in documents that record mainly offerings for the deities of the Umma pantheon and for local festivals.⁵⁷ One of these texts, CUSAS 14, 74,⁵⁸ demon-

⁴⁷ Interestingly, recent isotopic analyses of bovine teeth have shown that at least one animal found in a royal grave of Ur was not raised locally and could have come from beyond the southern Mesopotamian alluvium (Greenfield et al. 2022).

⁴⁸ The verb is reconstructed on the basis of rev. i' 1', which reads *e-u[r₄(-ra)]*. Admittedly, the visible traces in obv. i' 3' may also point to a different sign and thus to a different action performed by the *lugal*. Collation of this line is required.

⁴⁹ Sallaberger 2014, 103.

⁵⁰ Cf., e.g. VS 14, 73 rev. ii 2-4: *ensi₂-ke₄e₂-gal-la e-u₄*.

⁵¹ The only exception is UET 2, Suppl. 25, in which a servant of the *ensi₂* of Lagaš is mentioned by name and profession (rev. i 4-5); however, the nature of the record (a letter or legal text) may account for this inconsistency.

⁵² See, for instance, the brotherhood pact established between Enmetena of Lagaš and Lugalkišarešdudu of Uruk (RIM E.1.9.5.3).

⁵³ Military alliances are known from the Early Dynastic IIIa period; cf. the case of the expedition against Kiš undertaken by a coalition of southern Babylonian city-states, documented in some texts from Šuruppag (Steinkeller 2024, with references to previous literature). For a different interpretation of these texts, see Sallaberger, Schrakamp 2015, 63 and Marchesi 2015, 140. The only example known to me from the Early Dynastic IIIb period is the campaign against E'annabum of Lagaš by a coalition of northern Babylonian cities led by Zuzu, king of Akšak (Marchesi 2015, 154).

⁵⁴ Bartash 2020.

⁵⁵ See Schrakamp's (2015, 197-222) comprehensive discussion of the distribution of toponyms in pre-Sargonic and Early Sargonic archives.

⁵⁶ The titles *ensi₂-gal* ('chief steward') and *šeš ensi₂* ('brother of the *ensi₂*') were borne by individuals coming from Uruk (Notizia, Viscato 2016, 7 fn. 10). Note that the scribes of Umma use the word *ensi₂* here to refer to the ruler of Uruk – whom they would never call *lugal*. Cf. the case of Lugalsila(si), who bears the title *ensi₂ unu^{ki}* in an inscription on a vessel fragment found at Ġirsu (RIM E1.9.10.2).

⁵⁷ Schrakamp 2015, 212-21; Notizia, Viscato 2016, 6-7.

⁵⁸ See above, fn. 3.

strates that Gizuna was among the northern polities that had contacts with the southern city-states, in a period chronologically not too distant from that covered by the livestock dossier from Ur.

While Gizuna seems to have played only a limited role in the network of cities interacting with Umma in the Early Dynastic IIIb period, its *ensi₂* appears as a prominent figure in the slightly later livestock dossier from Ur. What matters here is not the absolute number of attestations in the respective textual corpora, but the context in which Gizuna and its political leader are documented.

At Ur, the *ensi₂* of Gizuna is the beneficiary of one of the largest allocations of sacrificial animals and the only distribution spanning multiple consecutive days. He was not a mere visitor, like the son of the *ensi₂* of Šuruppag, who had probably come to the city to attend the Great Festival of Nanna, and for that reason had received a couple of fat-tailed sheep as a gift to take away with him (*ba-la-ḥ₄*) after the event (UET 2, Suppl. 45 rev. i 2-4).⁵⁹

The scribe Lugalšuluḥku'ana, who supervised the disbursement for the *sur₃-maḥ* of the *ensi₂* of Gizuna, acted in the same capacity (*maški_m*) in Visicato, Westenholz 2005, 57-58 no. 2. This text lists goats to be sacrificed to the king's personal god (*diḡir-lugal*), a monthly offering that fell within the cultic activity of the Palace.⁶⁰ The precise duties of the *maški_m* officials mentioned in the livestock dossier are unclear. However, since these officials are almost exclusively associated with deliveries made to the Palace, it can be inferred that they served as collectors of animals from local institutions on behalf of the royal organisation. Therefore, one can conclude that the Palace (i.e., the king) was the main sponsor of the offerings for the tomb of the *ensi₂* of Gizuna. Since post-burial funerary offerings and the mortuary chapels where they were presented would be more correctly described by the Sumerian term *ki-a-naḡ* 'libation place',⁶¹ the event recorded in UET 2, Suppl. 44 and U 32450+U 32457 must refer to the ceremony performed at the interment of the foreign *ensi₂* in the Cemetery of Ur.

The strong connection with the city of Ur evidenced by the funerary rite in his honour does not help to clarify the obscure background of the *ensi₂* of Gizuna: either he was a native of Ur or he had foreign origins. Both options can lead to several different reconstructions.

I find it an unlikely scenario that a citizen of Ur would be installed as governor of a distant city over which the unnamed *lugal* of the livestock dossier would extend his authority. None of the possible candidates could have made such a decision for a variety of reasons, the most obvious of which is that, with the exception of Sargon and perhaps Enšakušu'ana, the other kings would not have been able to exert control over Gizuna. The possibility that the *ensi₂* of Gizuna was an independent ruler with direct kinship ties to elite families of Ur, and that such ties explain the location of his tomb, cannot be ruled out, of course, but such a scenario is equally difficult.

Regardless of the *ensi₂*'s origins and status, other possible motivations for choosing not to be buried in his home city are:

1. A special devotion to the moon-god and a desire to place his grave in close proximity to Nanna's main temple;
2. The prestige of the burial ground, i.e., the necropolis of Ur, where royalty and high-status individuals of the city's recent past were laid to rest,⁶² and where local citizens wished to place their tombs as close as possible to their kings and queens.

However, it is difficult to say with certainty whether the god Nanna of Ur enjoyed supra-regional importance in the pre-Sargonic and Early Sargonic periods, and whether his cult transcended the boundaries of the city of Ur at this time, giving rise to widespread worship and pilgrimages to his main sanctuary in Sumer.⁶³ Likewise, it is impossible to establish whether the Cemetery of Ur had become a burial site of pan-Babylonian relevance in the Early Dynastic IIIb period and in the years of the Sargonic domination, nor is there any archaeological or textual evidence to determine whether – and by whom – access to the necropolis was granted only by birth or also by status and achievements of the deceased.

⁵⁹ It goes without saying that the presence of the son of the *ensi₂* of Šuruppag at Ur does not prove, *per se*, his subordinate status to the *lugal*.

⁶⁰ Visicato, Westenholz 2005, 66.

⁶¹ This is the case, at least, in the coeval documentation from Ġirsu-Lagaš; see Jagersma 2007, 294-7.

⁶² For the identification of some of the occupants of the Early Dynastic cemetery, see Marchesi 2004. See also Marchesi, Marchetti 2011, 64-5, who argue for an Early Dynastic IIIb date for the royal tombs of Ur.

⁶³ According to Foster 2016, 137, 140, there was a special relationship between the Sargonic royal family and Nanna/Suen, which went beyond the practice of appointing Sargonic princesses as high priestess of the moon god at Ur. Note that in the Ur III period, there existed a high priestess of Nanna at Urum (Steinkeller 1999, 126), a city located in the same area as Gizuna.

A final scenario to consider is that the *ensi*₂ of Gizuna did not voluntarily choose to be buried in Ur, but that this happened out of necessity, due to external circumstances. It may well be that he lived in exile in the city under the protection of the *lugal*. Upon his death, he received a funerary ceremony worthy of a foreign dignitary and his body was placed in a grave prepared for him in the great necropolis of Ur.

5 Conclusions

In this contribution, I have examined the available textual evidence from late Early Dynastic/Early Sargonic Ur concerning an unnamed *ensi*₂ of ŠID.NUN^{ki}, a toponym identified with the northern Babylonian city of Gizuna. My new interpretation of UET 2, Suppl. 44 and U 32450+U 32457 has revealed that a seven-day burial ceremony in honour of the ruler/governor of Gizuna took place at Ur, during which animals were sacrificed at his ‘great pit’ (*sur-maḥ*), i.e., his grave. Although the exact date and circumstances of his death are impossible to reconstruct, it is fair to assume that the body of the *ensi*₂ was interred in the necropolis of Ur, either in the Early Dynastic ‘Royal Cemetery’ or in the slightly later ‘Akkadian Cemetery’.

The questions regarding the precise status of the *ensi*₂ of Gizuna – an independent ruler or a governor subordinate to a regional overlord – and the identity of the *lugal* of the late Early Dynastic/Early Sargonic tablets from Ur remain unanswered and unanswerable with the data currently available. This fact precludes a full understanding of the significance of the burial ceremony and of the reason why it took place in the city of Ur.

Finally, a careful re-examination of the texts of the livestock dossier has revealed the existence of an organisation called Ekisa(g) (‘pleasant-place house’) possibly involved in the care of the dead. If this term also had a collective meaning and could refer to multiple graves, then Ekisa(g) may have been the Sumerian name of the burial complex commonly known in archaeological and Assyriological literature as the ‘Cemetery of Ur’.

6 Appendix: Synoptic edition of UET 2, Suppl. 44 and U 32450+U 32457

UET 2, Suppl. 44			U 32450+U 32457		
obv.	i	1. 1 munus ^a š ₂ -gar ₃ 2. udu sur ₃ -maḥ en si ₂ ŠID.NUN ^{ki} 3. ba-gid ₂ 4. 1 munus ^a š ₂ -gar ₃ 5. 2-kam-ma-ka 6. ba-gid ₂ 7. 1 maš ₂	obv.	i	<i>Beginning lost</i>
	ii	1. 3-kam-ma-ka 2. ba-gid ₂ 3. 1 maš ₂ 4. 4-kam-ma-ka 5. ba-gid ₂ 6. 1 maš ₂ 7. 5-kam-ma-ka 8. ba-gid ₂ 9. 1 maš ₂		ii	<i>Column lost</i>
rev.	i	1. [6-kam-ma-ka] 2. [ba-gid ₂] 3. 1 [ma]š ₂ 4. 7-kam-ma-ka 5. ba-gid ₂ ----- 6. šu-niḡen ₂ 7 maš ₂ 7. udu sur ₃ -maḥ	rev.	i	<i>Beginning lost</i>
	ii	1. en si ₂ ŠID.NUN ^{[ki]-ka-še₃} 2. [lugal [?]]-[x ¹ -na-[] 3. [i ₃]-gid ₂ 4. [lugal ¹]-šu-luḡ-ku ₃ -an-na dub-sar 5. maškim-bi 6. udu šu šubur-kam 7. iti a ₂ -ki-ti-ka		ii	1'. 1 [] 2'. []-kam-ma-k[a] 3'. [b]a-[gid ₂] <i>Rest lost</i> 1'. ba-[gid ₂] ----- 2'. šu-niḡen ₂ 2 munus ^a š ₂ -gar ₃ 3'. 5 maš ₂ 4'. udu sur ₃ -[maḥ] 5'. en si ₂ ŠID.NUN ^{[ki]-[ka-še₃]} 6'. [lugal [?] -] <i>Rest lost</i> 1'. [lugal ¹]-šu-luḡ-ku ₃ -an-na dub-sar 2'. maškim-b[i] 3'. [udu šu ¹ [šub]ur [kuruš]da-kam =====
					<i>Rest lost</i>

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