SUMERIAN "CHILD"

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Abstract

This article studies Sumerian terms for minors (d u m u, d i₄ - d i₄ - l a₍₂₎ and l u₂ t u r - r a) in texts of various genres to define their precise meaning and relationship to kinship and age-grade terminologies. The author argues that d u m u is essentially a kinship term "son/daughter, one's own child, offspring," which lacks any age connotations. In contrast, d i₄ - d i₄ - l a₍₂₎ designates children as an age grade. As in other languages, words for children as kinship and children as minors often exchange their semantic domains. L u₂ t u r - r a, lit. "minor" is another age-grade term. In contrast, it has a pronounced social connotation and denotes those under patriarchal or professional authority, including children, youths, and young unmarried, or even recently married, individuals, as well as junior professionals.

1. Introduction

The word d u m u is regarded as the ultimate Sumerian designation for "child."[1] Editions of cuneiform texts and secondary literature alike translate it either as "child" or "son," or as both. It often appears as "child" in the main body of a publication while the same word is translated "son" in an index or a glossary. The synonymous use of *child* and *son/daughter* in cuneiform scholarship reflects the everyday speaking practice of many modern European languages. This, however, blurs the meaning of this term in a specific context—it remains often uncertain what is meant in a Sumerian text: a kinship relationship or an age grade. The uncertainty in the interpretation of d u m u and other Sumerian words associated with childhood creates considerable challenges for the accurate interpretation of Sumerian written records. It also obscures children as an age group in Sumerian society.

Discussions of terms for children have appeared sporadically in the previous scholarship.[2] However, these studies largely do not take into consideration scholarship on kinship and age terminologies in linguistics and in social and cultural anthropology. Relying on this and Sumerian texts, my aim is to identify the accurate meaning of the terms for "pre-adults" in specific contexts. This will allow to place these Sumerian words into the respective sets of kinship and age.

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2. For examples, see Wilcke 1985: 215–19; Farber 1989: 132–44; Harris 2000: 7–23.

2. Children in Kinship and Age-Grade Nomenclatures

In modern everyday English, one uses the word "child(ren)" to refer to (1) people of the prereproductive stage under parental or guardian control on the one hand and (2) offspring, "sons" and "daughters" of a person on the other. This usage confuses two distinct social ideas: that of age and that of kinship. The context dictates the meaning of the word: "mother and child" means "mother and her offspring (son or daughter)," whereas "children and adults" refers to two age grades. Despite the common phenomenon of polysemy, English *child* cannot have conveyed both ideas originally. Swadesh argues that nowadays it designates age grade.[3] Others argue in the same vein: *child* in English and similar words in other languages, while being age grades, enrich kinship terminology of these languages (Keen 2014: 3). This means that "child" is principally (1) an age grade, while its meaning as (2) a kinship term is a secondary semantic development.

We can compare kinship terms "son" and "father" with an apple and a pear, whereas their age-grade terms "child (=minor)" and "adult" can be compared with their colors, green and red. An apple will always remain an apple: a son remains always his father's son. However, an apple may become red ("adult") and, later, even brown ("elderly"). Hence, although these terms are compatible in the sense that they all may apply to a single individual, kinship and age terminologies reflect two distinct social ideas and the respective lexical means to represent them.

Let us explain what these age grades and kinship terms are. *Age grades* are "formalized age strata, each involving a distinctive array of social roles" (Kertzer 1978: 368). In simple words, they are stages in one's life, life phases. Rites of passage often (but not always) mark transitions from one life phase to the next in most traditional societies. Ralph Linton (1942: 593) identified seven universal terms for four universal age grades: (1) "infant" (genderless), (2) "boy" and "girl," (3) "adult man" and "adult woman," (4) "old man" and "old woman."

Alfred Radcliffe-Brown (1929: 21) added to this list "youth" and "whatever it may be," emphasizing the possibility of more than just four age grades in a given culture.[4] Grove and Lancy (2015) noted considerable differences among cultures in this respect. They cite as few as three and as many as twenty-four phases between the birth and puberty or betrothal, that is the period of "childhood," in various cultures, including terms such as "the one who sits/creeps/is carried/stands/teethes/goes fully (for water or firewood)," etc. However, six stages in one's life are universal according to Grove and Lancy. Their nature is a mixture of biological, psychological (behavioral), and social factors:

(1) Birth and the "external womb" takes usually the first three months after birth.
(2) Joining the community as a human.
(3) Separation/weaning happens usually around age three. This is the end of "infancy" or "early childhood" in modern terminology.
(4) "Middle childhood": children begin to contribute to the family economy with their labor; gender differentiation occurs (5/7–12/17 years).
(5) "Youth": puberty and onset of adolescence, proficiency in survival skills and other traditional techniques; seclusion for girls; "gangs" for boys, who work *gratis* for the community and its "big men" (12/17–after marriage);
(6) Adulthood: marriage or, more precisely, the birth of the first child for women marks the onset of this age grade. The rule often applies to men as well. Grove and Lancy (2015: 512) see the elderly as the elite subgroup among adults: "outside the contemporary bourgeoisie, societies are organized as gerontocracies."

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3. Child is a "young person" rather than a "relationship term" (Swadesh 1952: 456).

4. One should differentiate strictly between age grades and age classes (or age sets). The latter include individuals who are initiated at the same time and, remaining members of this particular age class/set, they pass through one age grade to another in the course of their lives (Radcliffe-Brown 1929: 21; Bernardi 1985: xiii). This latter type of social classification is characteristic of many "primitive societies" and is (presumably) absent in early historical Mesopotamian societies. The distinction between age grades, age sets and generation sets often remain often blurred or imprecise in anthropological literature; see Ketzer 1978.

However, old age leads to the decrease of individual prestige in many societies despite veneration of the elderly (Linton 1942: 602–3). Therefore, one can speak about seven age grades in total. In the following, I will show that, despite this elaborate classification, early Mesopotamians "followed" the four-tier system identified by Linton.

Kinship terminology is another important approach to classify members of society. Kinship terms ("son," "father," etc.) do not have age connotation. Any person designated by any kinship term may be unborn, an infant, a child, a youth, an adult, an elder, or even dead. The divergence between kinship grades (generations) and actual biological age is common in many societies, for example, a child may be a grandfather to his elderly grandson (Needham 1966: 8–9, Rivière 1966). This means that kinship is *relative* to age and vice versa.

Another important difference between kinship and age-grade terms is that the former requires two persons, an *ego* and another person: father and son, grandson and grandfather, etc. Age-grade terminology, however, does not require an *ego*: each society has its generally accepted concepts about who should be regarded and addressed as a child, adult, or elder. Kinship terms classify members of genealogically linked individuals, but age-grade terminology classifies a larger body of genealogically unrelated persons: the whole society.

Both kinship and age-grade nomenclatures belong to a larger group of terms that Elman Service (1960) labeled as *status terminology*. Reconciling the theories of Lewis H. Morgan and Alfred Radcliffe-Brown on the nature of kinship terminology, he differentiated between four groups of status terms. Service based his division on the distinction between *familiaristic* vs. *nonfamiliaristic* on the one hand, and *egocentric* (a social position of an *ego* relative to another particular person) vs. *sociocentric* (a social position of a person relative to the society in toto) on the other. As the result, he arrived at an evolutionary model related to the growth of social, political, and economic complexity in four stages. Service argued that whereas a small isolated endogamous society can function with only the first group of terms, a complex state-based society requires all four. It is true that the societies of the hundred-hectare third-millennium southern Mesopotamian cities would not have done without multiple classificatory systems to describe its members. Besides gender and age terminology, various other nomenclatures, including origins, professional titles and offices, and legal as well as socioeconomic classes became essential both for administrative recording and for colloquial everyday usage.

Service did not discuss the status of age-grade terminology in his outline. He listed examples "Your old man" and "My kid" within the *egocentric-familiaristic* group. However, when used without possessive pronouns, these terms designate age grades—the elderly and children respectively. By this, they are sociocentric-nonfamiliaristic and refer to societal groups that are not based on kinship. A "grandfather" is always someone's grandfather. In contrast, "an elderly man" implies that a person belongs to the societal group of *aged people*, whatever this may mean in a given society.

The considerations by Service are helpful in the analysis of kinship and age terminologies in ancient Mesopotamian written records, since they mark the "social distance" between the ideas of kinship and age groups. A person classifies individuals in his immediate social milieu by kinship terminology. This approach is less reliable when moving outside of this limited circle of people. Age terminology comes into use in this case. Both systems of nomenclature—that of kinship and that of age grades—serve a utilitarian aim: an *ego* identifies prospective marriageable individuals (Rivière 1966: 49–51). The centrality of marriage and reproduction in human's life stressed by anthropologists finds its support in Sumerian written data, for which see § 6 below.

With these theoretical and methodological considerations in mind, let us exemplify two sets of terms—kinship and age grades—in various languages. In Greek, υἱός and θυγάτηρ are "son" and "daughter." One Greek word for "child," τέκνον, is derived from the verb τίκτω "to beget; to produce, generate, cause" (Beekes and van Beek 2010: 1528, 561, 1460, 1484 respectively). Other Greek words for "child," a pair παῖς and παιδός, originate from the Indo-European root *peh_2- "to be little" (Beekes and van Beek 2010: 1142–43). Greek is exemplary in this respect since it exhibits two common patterns to build words for "child." The first is "child," literally "the one born," the second is "child," literally "the small one."

In Latin, *filius* and *filia* are "son" and "daughter," whereas *puer* and *puera* stand for children of each sex. The latter are of the same PIE root "to be small" as the Greek words (Vaan 2008: 219, 496). Another Latin word of the same root that applies to infants is *parvulus* "very small, tiny" (Vaan 2008: 219, 496).

In other languages, German *Kind*, English *child*, and Slavic *čędo* are reconstructed as *ǵenh₁-to-* "to be born" plus a suffix.[5] Needless to say, all these languages possess separate words for "sons" and "daughters."[6]

The distinction between kinship and age terms existed in ancient Near Eastern languages as well. *Mārum, mārtum* in Akkadian and *bn, b(n)t* in most Semitic languages are the words for "son" and "daughter." By contrast, Akkadian built terms for "child(ren)" on the root *ṣḫr*, "to be small:" *ṣeḫru(m)*, literally, "small," *ṣuḫāru*, "(male) child, adolescent" and *ṣuḫru(m)*, "children; youth (collectively)."[7] Akkadian derivatives from *walādu(m)*, "to give birth," such as *(w)ildum, ilittu,* and *lidānu* are sometimes contextually translated as "children." However, as opposed to other Semitic languages, their usage in Akkadian was limited to animal youth, children of slaves, bastards, and, figuratively, to the offspring of divinities. Hence, strictly speaking, the *wld*-words designated "offspring," "progeny," and "brood," and were semantically closer to kinship terminology.

The case of Akkadian is atypical among Semitic languages. Arabic *wld* and Ugaritic and Hebrew *yld* show that the Semitic word for "(small) child" is derived from the root "to give birth." I expect that the reason why the root *wld* is marginalized in favor of *ṣḫr* in Akkadian is because of the so-called Sumero-Akkadian linguistic area that resulted in mutual influences.[8] This allows us to hypothesize that the Sumerian word for "child (=minor)" may have a literal meaning "small" too. The following discussion confirms this assertion.

Just as in Semitic languages, Egyptian *mś*, "child," conveys the idea of birth and procreation.[9] The same applies for Hurrian *hani(kki) < han-*, "to give birth, beget,"[10] and *futki < fud-/futt-*, "to beget, create" (Richter 2012: 332–33), are the words that are contextually translated as "child," although a comparison with Akkadian derivatives of *wld* would be more appropriate. The meaning "to procreate, to generate" is also evident in the Elamite word *ma-ul-(la/-li)*, "male/female child, baby," probably literally "creation."[11] Unfortunately, Hittite cannot contribute to the present discussion since the use of Sumerograms conceals the native words of the terminology under discussion here.[12]

This overview indicates that virtually any language has separate lexical means to express the idea of *child* as age group and *child* as kin. There are two basic patterns to build the words for minors. A child is either "a small one" or "the one that has been born, created." This suggests that the Sumerian word d u m u may be either "child (= minor)" or "son," but not both. Since bilingual cuneiform vocabularies invariably translate it as *māru(m)*, "son," and not as *ṣeḫru(m)*, "small; child," the answer is quite straightforward. However, before embarking on the quest for "real" words for "child" in Sumerian, it is necessary to provide a comprehensive overview of the kinship term d u m u.

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5. Kroonen 2013: 288. Another Proto-Germanic word for child is *barna-* < PIE *bher-* "to carry" (p. 53). Another Slavic word is *dětę* which is a derivate of the PIE root *dheh₁-*, "to suck, to suckle," and is cognate to Latin *fētus* (Derksen 2008: 88, 104–5) illustrating another semantic pattern to build words for "child."

6. See Hettrich 1985 for PIE kinship terminology.

7. Farber 1989: 132 + n. 1 suggests that another word, *ṣeḫḫeru*, was expressed by the logogram TUR.TUR or as a syllabically written Sumerian word d i₄ - d i₄ - l a ₂ in bilingual texts.

8. See Edzard 2003: 173. See p. 177 for the formation of plural adjectives and the relation between TUR-TUR and *ṣeḫḫerūtum*.

9. Lipiński 1997: 85, *mśl*, "to give birth."

10. Richter 2012: 125–26. See also Watson 2002: 16 n. 16 for this as a traveling word.

11. Hinz and Koch 1987: 863 sub *ma-lak* and 903 sub *ma-ul* f. The etymology of *the* probable Elamite word for "child," *puhu* is uncertain; see ib.: 230 and 361. The words for "son" and "daughter" in Elamite were *šak* and *pak* (pp. 1110 and 105).

12. Hoffmann 1992 argues that TUR-*la-* conceals the word *pulla-* that was used as both "son, daughter" and as age category "child." However, the Chicago Hittite Dictionary rejects this reconstruction; *CHD* P: 374 E₂ *pull*[*a-()*…].

3. The Late Uruk TUR sign

The sign TUR stands for the substantive d u m u, "son," as well as almost any adjective of the semantic field "to be small, minor." This suggests that ancient scribes regarded both as related categories. But what do we know about the original meaning of TUR?

The sign depicts a bilateral object resembling headphones with pointed attachments below.[13] A diachronic comparison of its graphics indicates that its "classical" form had developed from the "ear pads" whereas the "headband" shrunk and was subsequently completely ignored. It is a clear indication of the fact that scribes at that point were no longer aware of the original object depicted by the sign.
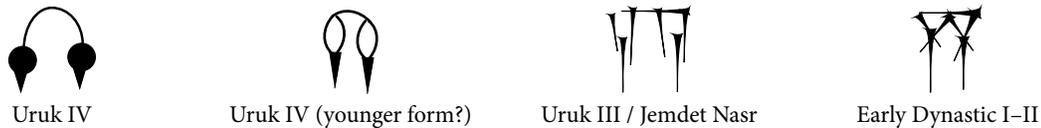
| Uruk IV | Uruk IV (younger form?) | Uruk III / Jemdet Nasr | Early Dynastic I–II |

Fig. 1. The graphic evolution of the sign TUR[14]

This identity of the original object behind the pictogram remains uncertain. The meaning of TUR remains equally enigmatic in the earliest logographic accounts of the Uruk IV period (ca. 3350–3100 BCE), where it is already present. In contrast, administrative accounts of the following Uruk III/Jemdet Nasr date (ca. 3100–3000 BCE) document a complementary use of the signs GAL and TUR. They qualify food and beverages.[15] This prefigures the omnipresent "large–small" dichotomy in later Sumerian sources.

Lexical data offer a parallel to this usage. The attributes GAL and TUR qualify an official IM in the lexical composition *Archaic Lu A* 35–36 (*ATU* 3: 76). None of the Uruk IV manuscripts of this list preserve these lines. This does not exclude the possibility that both lines were originally there. Nevertheless, relying on the available evidence, the meaning of TUR as "small, minor" can only be confirmed with certainty for the Uruk III period onwards.

Several Uruk III lists of personnel recorded various categories of children (minors). All of them used the TUR sign qualified by other signs.[16] Bartash (2015) suggests that it conceals the word d u m u. However, there are considerations for and against this proposal.

The comparison of the terminology for animals and humans in Uruk III accounts and beyond suggests an explicit influence of the former on the latter. For example, the alleged adults of the Uruk III lists appear as AL(m a h $_2$), which is reminiscent of Sumerian m a h $_2$ in connection to mature animals. Similarly, TUR-N$_{57}$+U$_4$, "child in the nth year," in Uruk III personnel accounts has parallels in ANIMAL-N$_{57}$+U$_4$ and ANIMAL-*n*, "animal of n years," in contemporary and later animal records.

The argument for d u m u is supported by the fact that TUR appears in the syntactical position that must be taken by a substantive in Sumerian. By this, d u m u - 1N$_{57}$+U$_4$, "son in the first year," may be compared to a b $_2$ - 1, "cow of one year." However, if we rely on the internal logic of Uruk III accounts, the parallelism between m a h $_2$, "mature (= "adult")," and TUR suggests that the latter must designate "young, small" or the like. The question as to whether it is Sumerian t u r or some other word is of no importance for the present discussion. Since none of the

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13. The sign is ZATU 562; *UET* 2 sign list no. 415; LAK 528, aBZL 393; and MZL 255.

14. Examples from left to right: *ATU 5* pl. 15 W 6756,c obv. ii 2; *ATU 6* pl. 25 W 13662,q+ obv. ii 3; *CUSAS* 1: 10 obv. ii' 4; *UET* 2: 53 obv. ii 4.

15. See SILA$_3$×ŠU, probably a variety of food, in the unpublished document IM 023445,03 = W 15878,l (CDLI no. P002464) rev. i 1a, 1b1 and 1b2. It is qualified as GAL and TUR. For beverages, see *MSVO* 3 nos. 2, 3, 7, and 11 where a beer (ŠENb) appears with the same attributes. See Englund 1998: 192, n. 439, 203 and 2001: 34–35 for the discussion. He shows that GAL and TUR refer not to the size of the jar but to the proportion of ingredients used in its preparation.

16. See Vaiman 1974; Englund 2009; and Bartash 2015.

Late Uruk documents testifies the use of TUR in the patronymic construction d u m u PN "son of PN," this leaves us with a single certain meaning of TUR in the texts of this date, namely, "little, small, minor."

4. dumu

The subsequent Early Dynastic I–II period is characterized by a new or, more precisely, by a considerably modified orthography. Here, TUR is documented in the values typical for all subsequent periods of the Sumerian scribal tradition such as d u m u and b a n d a $_3$.[17] Starting from the Pre-Sargonic period, TUR as d u m u becomes the standard designation of underage children of female workers in central urban households of Mesopotamian and Syrian cities.

Glosses in Old Babylonian and later lexical texts confirm the approximate phonemic structure /d u m u/.[18] There are occurrences of the phonetic writing d u $_5$- m u, but these are limited to passages in the gendered Emesal sociolect (see Schretter 1990: 166–67, no. 79). The fact that both standard Sumerian and the Emesal forms are identical is suspicious. There are unfortunately no early sources such as, for example, the *Ebla Sign List* that elucidate the pronunciation of the word when Sumerian was still a spoken language (*MEE* 3, p. 191–92).

As was the case with other words built on the pattern C_1uC_2u, d u m u was a primary noun in Sumerian. A high number of words for animals is noticeable among them.[19]

Coming to the usage of d u m u in administrative, legal, and literary compositions, the available references to this word allows the following summary of its contextual meanings (usages):

(1) Kinship term "son/daughter, one's child, offspring." The construction PN_1 d u m u PN_2 "PN_1 son/daughter of PN_2," and PN_1, PN_2 d u m u - (a) - n i "PN_1, PN_2 (is) his/her son/daughter" illustrates most clearly the original meaning and the *Grundbedeutung* of d u m u. The absolute majority of references of d u m u in Sumerian texts has this meaning.

Some may argue that the presence of d u m u (g a b a / g a) "(breast/milk) *dumu*" in the age and gender scheme employed by the administration to record human resources (ĝ u r u š, g e m e $_2$, d u m u, etc.) implies that d u m u is "child" as age grade. This however, is a simplification. First, the common presence of servile female workers (lit. "lasses" g e m e $_2$) in the contexts with d u m u (g a b a / g a) shows that all these children are their own children. Second, this administrative age and gender terminological set exhibits definite signs of artificiality, for which see § 6. Third, the substitution of the term d u m u by the terms for young animals š a $_3$- d u $_{10}$ (Pre-Sargonic Ĝirsu), a m a r g a b a (Sargonic Nippur), and a m a r - k u $_5$ (Ur III, passim) in cases where minors, preadult are meant shows that scribes sometimes consciously avoided a semantically ambiguous d u m u specifically to record children as minors. Finally, the phrase d u m u n u - s i k i "orphan son/daughter" in Sargonic "ration lists" from Nippur and several Old Babylonian Sumerian literary compositions should not lead to the conclusion that d u m u stood for "child"—how can a "son/daughter" be an orphan? This would be anachronistic. Scholars agree that words that we translate as "orphan" designated children without fathers. Our modern notion of orphans as a completely parentless child does not appear before the sixth century CE.[20]

(2) The second(ary) meaning of d u m u was "son/daughter = a member of an organization or a body of people." For example, d u m u N i b r u ^{ki}, "son of Nippur" (citizen of Nippur), d u m u e $_2$- g a l, "the son of the palace" (palace

17. For d u m u, see *UET* 2, 274 obv. i 3–4 (1 L u g a l - a m a r d u m u Z a $_7$: n a) and Gelb, Steinkeller, and Whiting 1991: 46 no. 12 (see below). B a n d a $_3$ appears passim in n u - b a n d a $_3$ "supervisor."

18. For d u - m u in lexical lists see, e.g., *OB Nippur Ea*, 469, *MSL* 14: 50.

19. Nominal stems of this pattern are relatively rare: b u r u $_4$^{mušen} "a bird," d u s u $_2$ "donkey-onager hybrid," g u - d u "buttocks," ^{peš2}h u l u "a rodent," k u š u $_2$^{ku6} "an aquatic animal," m u n u $_4$ "malt," ^{ĝi}m u r u $_x$(GI) "a reed mat," s u k u $_5$ "pole," š u d u $_3$ "prayer," š u - l u $_2$/n u^{mušen} "a bird," t u m u "wind."

20. Fitzgerald 2016: 30 with further references.

dependent), etc. Obviously, this secondary meaning uses the original meaning of dumu as kinship term in a figurative sense by analogy to designate a bond between a person and a larger social entity.

Both usages of dumu—the primary and the secondary—comply with the rule of any kinship term: it cannot appear alone in a text. There is always a parent or an organization related to the dumu in the same context.

A statement regularly appears in the literature that both dumu and dumu nita$_{(2)}$ stood for "son," while dumu munus meant "daughter." However, this is a misconcept rooted in the structural difference between Sumerian on the one hand and English, German, and other languages of modern scholarship on the other. The grammatical category of gender in Sumerian differentiates between animate vs. inanimate, whereas modern European languages differentiate between male and female. What an English speaker calls *son* and *daughter*, Sumerians called dumu, a kinship term for immediate offspring regardless of biological gender. Sumerian is not unique in this respect. Other structurally similar languages possess only a single lexeme to convey the kinship relationships "son/daughter."[21] Despite the fact that scholars often render these words as "child" due to the lack of adequate parallels, we need to stay aware of its real semantics as "son/daughter."

In contrast, dumu nita$_{(2)}$ and dumu munus are *dilexemic* kinship terms. They are common in other languages that lack sex-based grammatical gender.[22] These additional gender attributes are redundant if the biological gender in clear from the context. For example, ur-saĝ ^{d}Gilgameš$_2$ dumu ^{d}Nin-sumun$_2$-ka za$_3$-mi$_2$-zu du$_{10}$-ga-am$_3$, "O warrior Gilgamesh, *son* of Ninsumun, your praise is sweet!",[23] or ^{d}Ba-U$_2$ munus sa$_6$-ga dumu An-na "BaU, beautiful woman, *daughter* of An" (RIME 3/1.1.6.). A much earlier example is found on the "Ušumgal Stela," where the following subscript follows a depiction of a woman:[24] ^{d}X-igi-GI-Abzu dumu Ušum:gal <…>, PN, *daughter* of Ušumgal…. Douglas Frayne offers the same interpretation of dumu as "daughter" appearing adjacent to the figure of the daughter of Ur-Nanše. Other examples in Early Dynastic royal inscriptions corroborate the argument that dumu is as much "daughter" as it is "son."[25]

The attributes nita$_{(2)}$ and munus are, therefore, facultative and appear mostly in two cases. First, when the knowledge of the biological sex is required but not clear from the context. This is often the case in administrative and legal records, that is "official" Sumerian, which, as any other language of administration, differs considerably from the vernacular.

Second, dumu nita$_{(2)}$ and dumu munus appear in texts explicitly or allegedly influenced by Semitic-speaking scribes, who (consciously or unconsciously) introduced their distinction between grammatical masculine and feminine genders. No Early Dynastic Sumerian royal inscription mentions dumu nita$_{(2)}$ / munus, but this was used as a logogram in an Akkadian royal inscription from the Semitic-speaking Mari (RIME 1.10.11.2002 [p. 318]).

The reduplication of the stem dumu is another common morphosemantic phenomenon although its interpretation is made difficult by two factors. The first is graphemic in nature: the writing TUR-TUR can stand for dumu-dumu, di$_4$-di$_4$-(la) or tur-tur. The second issue concerns the unending debate about the semantics of reduplicated nominal stems in Sumerian. Thus, dumu-dumu is variously interpreted as "children," "all the children," "two children," "individual children," etc. (Jagersma 2010: 115, 126, 163). The reduplication of a nominal stem often conveys plural semantics in structurally similar languages.[26]

To summarize the discussion concerning dumu, its kinship semantics is evident also in the composite word nam-dumu. From the Pre-Sargonic period on, it refers to the total number of offspring. The component nam-

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21. See Needham 1966: 6, 11, 16. "C(hild)" is the anthropological abbreviation for this "son/daughter" term; "S(on)" and "D(aughter)" are used for languages which distinguish the gender of offspring.

22. See Keen 2014: 5 for examples of the pattern "CHILD"+MALE/FEMALE.

23. *Gilgameš, Enkidu and the Netherworld, Ur version* 18'; see Gadotti 2014: 242.

24. Gelb, Steinkeller, and Whiting 1991: 46 no. 12 D.

25. See RIME 1.9.1.2 (pp. 83–84) with further references. For dumu as "daughter" in other inscriptions, see pp. 88, 240, 301, 371, 424.

26. For example, in Warlpiri of northern Australia: *kurdu-kurdu* "child"+"child" = "children" (Riemer 2005: 371, 387).

imparts collective rather than abstract semantics to this composite lexeme: "all sons and daughters, offspring (collectively)." An Old Babylonian lexical composition clarifies e$_2$ nam-dumu-na as bīt(E$_2$) ma-ru-ti "the house of those with the status of son/daughter" (Civil 2010: 42 iv 139). The Babylonian lexicographer disregarded the possessive suffix of the Sumerian expression. Nam-dumu-na is "the status of *his* son/daughter" /nam=dumu=(a)n(i)=a(k)/;[27] "he" is, of course, the ruler.

5. Children in Lexical Texts

The extant lexical data illustrates that dumu was fundamentally a kinship term. The structure of these lists shows that Babylonian lexicographers drew no clear borders between kinship and age grade terms. In particular, they placed lexemes associated with various aspects of life cycle after the respective genealogical level: terms for children appear in the section on sons and daughters, terms for the elderly are found in the section on grandparents, etc. This is hardly surprising considering several factors. The first is lack of advanced methods of linguistic and anthropological analysis in ancient Mesopotamia. The second factor is the natural enrichment of kinship terminology by age grade words discussed above. Finally, early Mesopotamian society, as any "traditional" one, put emphasis on kinship relationship. This is especially important in cases of the central social and legal institutions of marriage and of inheritance.

The earliest and most valuable source for the present discussion is the monolingual Sumerian lexical list known either as *Old Babylonian Proto-Lu* (MSL) or *Old Babylonian Nippur Lu* (DCCLT).[28] It includes the most comprehensive Sumerian list of terms that belong to the semantic domain of "human offspring" (*MSL* 12: 45–46).

The lexicographers placed terms that designated minors inside the section that concerned dumu, "son/daughter." The *dumu* section is preceded by segments concerning ama, "mother," šeš, "brother," and nin$_9$, "sister." All follow the same mixed semantic-acrographic logic. The following is a discussion of the individual entries of the *dumu* section. Although the text is unilingual, evidence from later lexical texts provides Akkadian equivalents in many cases.

(352) dumu, Akk. *mārum* "son."

(353) tur, unclear, probably *ṣeḫrum* "small; child."

(354) tur-tur, "the small one(s), child(ren)." This is compared with *ṣeḫḫerum* "very small," *ṣeḫḫerūtu* "the small, the young," *ṣuḫāru* "(male) child," *daqqum* "small (child)," and *daqqūtum* "small (children)" in lexical lists.[29] This is clearly an age category.[30] The syllabic writing tu-ur-tu-ur in *OB Nippur Diri* 57 distinguishes it from di$_4$-di$_4$-la$_2$.

(355) TUR-TUR. It is either an artificial entry for female children by Babylonian scribes or a different Sumerian word, for example, dumu-dumu, "son's son = grandchild."[31]

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27. Nam-dumu-na appears alone at the beginning of *Old Babylonian Proto-Lu* after lugal, "king" and dumu lugal, "king's son" (*MSL* 12: 33). Unfortunately, it is lacking in the later bilingual version of the composition and hence its Akkadian equivalent remains unknown. In contrast to nam-dumu, which is always compared with Akkadian *marūtu*, the word nam-dumu-na never appears with an Akkadian equivalent in lexical sources as far as I am aware.

28. The only known earlier lexical list that has a section on sons appears in the *Acrographic List A* from Ebla, lines 1008–1111 ("Vocabulario di Ebla," *MEE* 4: 129, rev. xiii 31–34). It has dumu zi, "true, rightful offspring," dumu nita, "son," dumu munus, "daughter," and TUR. The latter may be "small," or "child," or both.

29. See *OB Nippur Diri* 57–62 (*MSL* 15: 14–15) and lexical sections in *CAD* Ṣ: 174 for *ṣihhiru* and *ṣihhirūtu* and 231 for *ṣuhāru*.

30. See Civil 2008: 65, fn. 131 for ze$_2$-er-ze$_2$-er as the Emesal variant of TUR-TUR "(very) small people."

31. P450852 obv. ii' 8' (*Ura* 1). In fact, this may be a calque from Akkadian. Sumerian kinship terminology requires further study.

(356) di_4-di_4-la_2 is equated with Akkadian *ṣuḫārum* "child" and *daqqum* "small (child)."[32] The reading of TUR in di_4-di_4-($la_{(2)}$) is supported by glosses and variants in lexical and literary compositions.[33] The semantic shade between tur-tur and di_4-di_4-la_2 is difficult to grasp.

(357) di_4-di_4-la_2 hul_2 "a happy child." See Harris (2000, 13 + n. 55) for a fuller form di_4-di_4-la_2 $ša_3$ hul_2-la, "a child with a happy heart," in Sumerian literary compositions. Here, hul_2 is *ḫadû* "to be glad, happy." However, consider a possibility of hul_2 = *nuāḫu* "to be(come) quiet," which makes sense especially with crying babies. See Farber 1989: 141.

(358) $dumu$ $nita_2$ "son." Both $ibila$(TUR.UŠ) and $dumu$-$nita_2$ are equated with *aplu*, "heir, (oldest) son," *māru*, "son, descendant, offspring," and *šumu*, "name, offspring," in lexical lists. As legal, kinship, and quasi-kinship terms respectively, they have no age implications.

(358a) $ibila$(TUR.UŠ), "heir." A loanword from Akkadian *aplum*, it was always rendered by this word in the lexical tradition. This word belonged to the legal terminology concerned with inheritance rights.

(359) $dumu$ $munus$, "daughter," Akkadian *mārtum*.

(359a) $ibila$ $munus$, "heiress." Evidently, the term is an artificial creation of Semitic-speaking scribes for paradigm leveling with $ibila$. See the discussion on the specific use of $dumu$ $nita_{(2)}$ and $dumu$ $munus$ above.

(359b) $dumu$ a_2-e_3-(a), "foster-child," literally "son/daughter that has been reared, brought up, fostered." A_2-e_3 is equated with the Akkadian terms *liqûtu*, "adoptive child" and *tarbûtu*, "status of a foster child."[34]

(360) $hibiz$(TUR+DIŠ). This is a term of uncertain meaning, equated with Akkadian *aplum* "heir." The word may share the morphological structure of $henzer$; see below.

(361) $genna$(TUR+DIŠ) is explained by Akkadian terms for babies.[35] The writing TUR+DIŠ is reminiscent of the Late Uruk grapheme TUR-$1N_{57}$+U_4 for children in their first year. It is difficult to unravel the nuances of the semantic differences between $genna$ and other Sumerian terms for babies such as $bunga/u$(UŠ.GA) and $lalla$(LA_2.LA_2). These were probably colloquialisms and their absence in Sumerian administrative and legal documentation is hardly surprising.

(362) TUR+DIŠ tur is unclear. Compare TUR.TUR.DIŠ = $hibiz$ in *CAD* $Š^2$ p. 317 sub *šerru*. The interpretations $hibiz$ tur or $genna$ tur ("small baby") are unlikely.

(363-364) $dumu$ $nita_2$/$munus$ $gaba$, literally "son/daughter (of) the breast." This was the standard term for babies in Ur III records. The Akkadian equivalent *mār/mārat irtim* appears in the Old Babylonian period in the South and at Mari.[36]

(365) TUR.UŠ. The writing is the same as in $ibila$. However, the underlying word is probably different.

(366) $bunga/u$(UŠ.GA), "baby." Volk (2004: 89 with n. 115) suggested that this term referred to breastfed infants. No Akkadian equivalents are known.

(367) ga-ti-(ba/bi) gu_7-gu_7 is obscure, although "milk" (ga) and "eat" (gu_7) remind of babies.

(368) HAR-ra-tu-da. Selz (2011: 83–84) analyzed it as ur_5-ra tu-da "born in debt," a designation of slaves that usually appears in the writing HAR.TU.[37]

(369) $henzer$(IGI.DIM) was equated, in later traditions, with Akkadian words for children and babies.[38] It appeared either as an element in personal names or in the term tug_2-$henzer$ outside the lexical tradition. Molina (2014: 149–50) interpreted this textile term as "garment for children." Selz (2011: 84) argued that $henzer$

32. "OB Nippur Diri" 63–65 (*MSL* 15: 14–15).

33. For example, see *Nabnītu* IX, 106 for di_4di-di_4di (*MSL* 16: 120) and *OB Nippur Diri* 63–65 for TUR-TUR-la_2 = di-id-la_2 (*MSL* 15: 14). For di-di-$la_2^!$ in one manuscript of *The Farmers Instructions*, see Civil 1994: 66.

34. *CAD* L: 208, T: 225.

35. *Šerru*, "baby, infant, small child" (*CAD* $Š^2$, 317) and *lakû*, "suckling, young; infant, suckling child" (*CAD* L: 45–46).

36. Note different terms for babies in Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian; see Stol 2000: 181 n. 61.

37. This supports the etymology of the Sumerian word for "slave" */urdu.d/ as originally proposed by Joachim Krecher (1987).

38. *OB Nippur Diri* 148–148b: *ṣeḫrum*, "small," *la'û*, "small child, baby" and *ṣuḫārum*, "(male) child."

was an adverbial substantive that literally meant "may one tear him (the child) out;" note the similar Akkadian expression *šilip rēmim* in adoption documents from Old Babylonian Sippar.[39] This would suggest that h e n z e r designated adopted babies. However, compare a similarly sounding word m u z e r (^mu-ze2-er MUNŠUB) = *šabsūtu* "midwife" and "shaver" two-in-one.[40] In this context, Stol reminds me of the widespread practice of shaving the first hair of babies as a *rite du passage* that marks a transition into the next age grade (Grove and Lancy 2015: 508). Relying on these considerations, it is possible to interpret the verbal stem in both h e n z e r and *m u (n) z e r as z e / s e₁₂, "to cut."[41] By this, h e n z e r may have designated babies whose hair has been cut, thus marking the end of a precarious period following birth. Alternatively, *m u (n) z e r referred was literally "she has cut it (= the umbilical cord)" > "midwife." Tu g₂ - h e n z e r are then swaddling clothes or similar.

(370–370a) IGI.DIM, other Sumerian words must hide behind this grapheme. The section ends with two pairs of terms for free and unfree male and female adults (n i t a₂ a n d m u n u s and a r a d₂ a n d g e m e₂).

Which of these terms designate children as an age group? The following section shows that these were d i₄ - d i₄ - l a₂ and t u r - (t u r). Contrary to lexical lists that do not include a separate section for age terminology, there are literary sources that demonstrate a remarkable level of reflection on matters of age differentiation in early Mesopotamian societies.

6. d i₄ - d i₄ - l a₂ "Child" and Age Grades in *The Heron and the Turtle*

The evidence in this section corroborates the data of the lexical texts that d i₄ - d i₄ - l a₂ was the word for "child" as an age grade in Sumerian. It appears in writing with the final -l a before the Old Babylonian period. The lexical data suggests its phonemic structure /didla/. Grammatically, it was a perfective participle of the de-adjectival verb t u r "to be small." According to Jagersma (2010: 276) it was formed by reduplicating the stem, /tur=tur=a/ > /di(l=) dil=a/. This word was not reserved for children only: it denoted any small being or object such as, for example, the small lapis lazuli stones that Inana put on her neck before departing for the Netherworld.[42] As an adjective, it usually qualified a noun.

The most explicit example of d i₄ - d i₄ - l a₂ as "child (=minor)" appears in the Sumerian fable *The Heron and the Turtle*. Segment A of this composition includes a complete set of terms of gendered age grades, thus describing the whole life cycle.[43]

The lines share a similar structure: each gendered age grade is a metaphor for a type of reeds. Three additional lines compare the ruler Gudea (of Lagaš), an unnamed king and a king's son to other reeds. Although it is debated whether this text dates back to the third millennium BCE,[44] it seems to create an authentic picture of how third-millennium BCE early Mesopotamians viewed their society in terms of age and authority, two concepts closely related in every society.[45]

39. For *šilim rēmim*, see Veenhof 1994 with previous literature.
40. Stol 2000: 172 n. 11 with references to lexical data.
41. See Molina and Such-Gutiérrez 2004 for a comprehensive discussion of this verb.
42. *Inana's Descent to the Netherworld* 19 (Sladek 1974: 105).
43. See already Stol 2016: 82.
44. See Peterson 2007: 280–81 and critique by Michalowski 2013: 194–95.
45. Unless this composition is not a purely scholastic work by the Old Babylonian *edubba* in Nippur. See a critical assessment of the "Sumerianness" in the "Sumerian literature" by Rubio 2016.

Several publications provide transliterations and translations, rarely an analysis.[46] I follow the transliteration, with some improvements, in the recent edition by Jeremiah Peterson, which provides a helpful philological commentary.[47] The major discrepancy is in lines 15–16, for which see below.

12	^{u2}ku-mul tur-tur ki-ta nam-ta-an-e$_3$ nam-di$_4$-di$_4$-la$_2$ du$_{10}$-ga-am$_3$	The little cumin (?) plants sprouted from the ground: they are good children.
13	gi-en$_3$-bar tur-re muš$_3$ nam-dub-dub nam-ki-sikil du$_{10}$-ga-am$_3$	The *enbar* reeds[48] are braiding (their) hair: they are good maidens.
14	gi-ub-zal iri-bi-da nam-da-sa$_2$ nam-ĝuruš du$_{10}$-ga-am$_3$	The *ubzal* reeds compete with the city: they are good lads.
15	gi-pe-el-la$_2$ ur$_2$-ra saĝ-še$_3$ nam-ib-dul e$_2$-gi$_4$-a du$_{10}$-ga-am$_3$	The *pella* reeds are covered from head to toe: it is a good daughter-in-law/bride.
16	^{gi}pe-el-la$_2$ ur$_2$-ra saĝ-še$_3$ nam-ta-ab-gi$_4$ dumu ban$_3$-da du$_{10}$-ga-am$_3$	The *pella* reeds turn (?) from head to toe: it is a "junior son" (groom ?).
17	^{gi}gašam-e ki am$_3$-gurum-e nam-ab-ba du$_{10}$-ga-am$_3$	The *gašam* reeds bend to the ground: they are good old men.
18	gi-zi ni$_2$-bi-a nam-mu-un-šu$_2$ nam-um-ma du$_{10}$-ga-am$_3$	The *zi* reeds drop down by themselves: they are good old women.

The metaphors of this passage are of biological nature and quite straightforward. They describe the life of a person from infancy to old age with its unpleasant effects on one's organism. The focal point of life, marriage, appears in lines 15–16. Peterson argues that e$_2$-gi$_4$-a and dumu ban$_3$-da are "daughter-in-law" and "junior son" respectively. These are correct literal, lemmatical interpretations. However, let us try to see what the author of this poem wanted to communicate by using this pair of words.

The interpretation of e$_2$-gi$_4$-a, Akkadian *kallatum*, as either "daughter-in-law" and "bride" is commonplace. Two English words for two social concepts try to render a single Sumerian one. But Sumerian kinship terminology did not necessarily match the Eskimo-type kinship nomenclature characteristic of most modern societies in Europe and Northern America. Civil (1975: 142) suggested that it may in fact represent the Hawaiian type, since šeš and nin$_9$ describes siblings and cousins alike.

E$_2$-gi$_4$-a represents a kinship concept that is grounded in specific social norms. Tenney (2011: 74–75, 85) has provided a valuable analysis of Middle Babylonian rosters of servile workers, demonstrating that *kallatu*s entered the families of their future husbands as adolescents or even children and lived there for some years before actual marriage. The literal meaning of the Sumerian term is quite straightforward. "She who is confined to the house (of the father-in-law)" (Civil 2011: 255) were female youth upon their betrothal.

The case with dumu ban$_3$-da is more challenging. Its literal meaning "younger, junior son," in contrast to "elder son," is evident in a number of Sumerian literary compositions.[49] There are other kinship terms built in the same fashion: for example, nin$_9$ ban$_3$-da, "younger sister" (Civil 2011: 249 §B3).

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46. See *ETCSL* c.5.9.2; Gragg 1973, 1997; Black et al. 2004: 235–40; and Wilcke 1974: 228, 230–31 for an analysis of the poetics of the passage.

47. Peterson 2007: 296–97, 310, 331–38.

48. For the terms en$_3$-bar and ub-zar (next line) referring to an early stage of reed's growth, see Peterson 2007: 332–35 with further references.

49. In the *Ur Lament* 378, 380: ama ^{d}Nin-gal gu$_4$-gin$_7$ tur$_3$-zu-še$_3$ udu-gin$_7$ amaš-zu-še$_3$ / dumu ban$_3$-da-gin$_7$ ama$_5$-tu-še$_3$ nin-ĝu$_{10}$ e$_2$-zu-še$_3$ (Samet 2014: 74); "Mother Ningal, (return) like an ox to your cattle pen, like a sheep to your sheepfold! Like a junior *child* to your women's quarters, my lady, to your house!" In the *Nippur Lament* 286–287, the pairs šeš ban$_3$-da / gal-la and dumu ban$_3$-da / gal-la (Tinney 1996: 120–21) were used to show the reverence and care in relationships between the older and younger siblings in a family. These terms should not be confused with dumu šeš-gal / ban$_3$-da "sons/daughters of elder/younger brother" (e.g., in *The Home of the Fish* 17; see Civil 1961: 156–57).

However, the logic of the *The Heron and the Turtle* assigns a contextual meaning "groom" or "(to be) married man" to $dumu \ ban_3$-da. The problem is that we do not know the Sumerian word for "groom," or, similarly to e_2-gi_4-a, a separate word for this concept did not exist. By comparison, the Akkadian word *ḫatānu* covers three social roles in English language and social practice: (a) son-in-law, (b) brother-in-law and (c) bridegroom. Relying on the example with the "daughter-in-law/bride" above, one would expect Sumerian $mussa$ to represent this concept. However, this would be the perspective of the bride's father. In contrast, the description of the age grades in *The Heron and the Turtle* may be a depiction of an ideal household that included individuals of all age grades. It was headed by a *paterfamilias* and cohabited by his sons with their wives. Hence, one possibility to interpret this passage is to assume a patrilocal residence of a newlywed couple, where $dumu \ ban_3$-da is the "younger son" of the paterfamilias. The available data suggest that the wedding took place at the house of the bride's father, and then the young couple moved to the house of the groom's father (Stol 2016: 109).

The poem *Curse of Agade* 10–11 offers an interesting usage of $dumu \ ban_3$-da: $lu_2 \ tur \ gibil$-$bi \ e_2 \ du_3$-u_3-gin_7, $dumu \ ban_3$-$da \ ama_5 \ ĝa_2$-$ĝa_2$-gin_7 "Like the "minor" building (his) house anew, like a "junior son/daughter" establishing the women's quarters (within it).''[50] Relying on the context, this passage describes the launching of a new household by a young (to be married) person called $lu_2 \ tur$, for whom see below. This term is used as a synonym with $dumu \ ban_3$-da. This usage is in line with that of *The Heron and the Turtle*, where $dumu \ ban_3$-da is practically "groom." Naturally, the protagonist in the *Curse of Agade*, goddess Inana cannot be "groom" owing to her gender. Despite this, she *can* "build" a house. As Matuszak (2016: 240) has demonstrated, the action $e_2 \ ... \ du_3$, "to build a house," in connection with female protagonists refers to competent matrons who provide stability and efficient management of their households. Despite this gender difference in the usage of $dumu \ ban_3$-da in these two compositions, this term inevitably refers to young people at the beginning of a new stage of life—the married life.

$Dumu \ ban_3$-da and e_2-gi_4-a as signifiers of the onset of this age grade in *The Heron and the Turtle* were originally kinship terms. Anthropological literature is full of examples where kinship terms enrich age grade terminology and vice versa. However, it is worth pondering the question why the author of the composition used precisely *these* terms in *this* context. As stated before, the author marks the beginning of a new life phase: the wedding ceremony acting as a *rite du passage* allows these individuals to take another step on the age grade ladder and begins their social and legal adulthood. The use of these terms instead of "man" and "woman" or "wife" as in Ur-Namma's law collection or other legal sources is a literary device. Without $dumu \ ban_3$-da and e_2-gi_4-a as *pars pro toto* for the adult married individuals, this passage would be stale.

Another point of interest is the interpretation of the nam- with age grades in *The Heron and the Turtle*. Whereas it is tempting to understand them as abstract nouns "childhood," "adulthood," etc., several considerations impede this interpretation. The first is the metaphorical comparison of *groups of people* with reeds. People are as plentiful as reeds in a marsh in the eyes of the Mesopotamian poet. The second consideration is that the usage of nam-AGE GRADE is identical to that of nam-$dumu$ discussed, which refers to *all actual* sons and daughters of an individual. The concrete semantics of nam- in all these cases is also evident in the construction $ugula \ nam$-NUMBER "overseer of (a group of) *x* (individuals)" (*OB Nippur Lu* 175–178).

Now we can proceed to the evaluation of the passage in *The Heron and the Turtle* from the socio-anthropological perspective. It is astonishing how well it corroborates Linton's argument concerning the universal nature of seven terms making a four-tier system of age grades. Di_4-di_4-la_2 is the only genderless term and three other age grades are gendered. Same as in other cultures, age grades reflect mixed biosocial life phases centering on matrimony and reproduction. The first age grade includes individuals of prereproductive age, children. The second grade includes adolescents and young adults from the biological perspective. The third age grade is of social nature: the society

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50. Line 10 in the composition is not an original one but stems from the line 532 in the *Gudea Cylinder A*: $lu_2 \ tur \ gibil$-$bi \ e_2 \ du_3$-gin_7. Here, the ruler Gudea is a metaphorical young man.

allows two adults to have sex and bear children. The final age grade is associated with the cease of reproductive function, which is especially well marked in case of women.

	♀	♂	Age grade	Reproductive ability
1	di$_4$-di$_4$-la$_2$		Children (= minors)	Prereproductive
2	ki-sikil	ĝuruš	Unmarried adolescent individuals	(Onset of the) reproductive age
3	e$_2$-gi$_4$-a	dumu ban$_3$-da	(To be) married individuals	Social sanction for sexual intercourse and having children
4	um-ma	ab-ba	Elderly	Postreproductive age

Fig. 2. Human age grades in *The Heron and The Turtle*

ki-sikil "maiden" and ĝuruš "lad" represent the second "pre-adult" age grade. Although ready to procreate biologically, these individuals are still "minors" from the social perspective since they are not married. This fact is evident in the law collection of Ur-Namma. Civil has shown recently that dam ĝuruš-a, lit. "the spouse of the lad," refers to the betrothed girl.[51] Hence, both the "lad" and his "spouse" are practically unmarried and do not belong to the age grade of free adult people, who are expressed in the laws by the terms lu$_2$ "person (= married man)" and dam "spouse (= married woman)."

Relying on the previous discussion, the following table provides a preliminary assessment of Sumerian terminology of age grades of free individuals:

	♀	♂	Age grade
1	di$_4$-di$_4$-la$_2$ "little one"		Infants and children
2	ki-sikil "maiden"[52] and dam ĝuruš-a "betrothed girl"	ĝuruš (tab-ba-nu-zu) "lad (who has not known partner)"	Unmarried adolescents and adults
3	dam "spouse" (< kinship term)	lu$_2$ "person, man"	Married adult individuals
	munus "female"	nita$_{(2)}$ "male"	
4	um-ma "old woman"	ab-ba "old man"	Elderly[53]

Fig. 3. Sumerian human age grades[52][53]

These terms should not be confused with the nomenclature of Sumerian administrative records. The artificial nature of the latter is evident in (1) a free mixing of kinship and age grade terms, (2) the influence of the terminology for animals,[54] and (3) devising such hideous terms as "old lass." Labor value of an individual is the focal factor in the classification of people:

51. Roth 1995: 17, 32: *Laws of Ur-Namma* §7 and *Laws of Lipit-Ištar* §30 and Civil 2011: 256.
52. Or "virgin" *ardatu* of lexical lists; see Stol 2016: 14.
53. Both terms seem to originate in the Semitic kinship terms ʾummum "mother" and ʾabum "father."
54. This will be discussed in detail elsewhere.

	♀	♂	Age-labor grade
1	dumu-ga (munus) "female milk(-fed) child" dumu-munus gaba "female breast-child"	dumu-ga (nita$_{(2)}$) "male milk(-fed) child" dumu-nita$_{(2)}$ gaba "male breast-child"	Babies (labor value = 0)
2	dumu-munus "female child"	dumu-nita$_{(2)}$ "male child"	Children (of exploitable and nonexploitable ages)[55]
3	geme$_2$ "lass"	ĝuruš "lad"	Full output workers disregarding actual age
4	geme$_2$ um-ma "old lass" geme$_2$ šu-gi$_4$ "old lass"	ĝuruš šu-gi$_4$ "old lad"	Elderly workers of limited labor value

Fig. 4. Age grades in Sumerian administrative records

The same official jargon appears with some improvements in administrative records of later periods. Middle Babylonian rosters of servile laborers divide people into following age grades: (1) elderly (ŠU.GI), (2) adults (GURUŠ/SAL), (3) adolescent (GURUŠ/SAL.TUR), (4) older children (GURUŠ/SAL.TUR.TUR), (5) weaned children (*pirsu/pirsatu*), and (6) babies (DUMU(.SAL).GABA).[56] Evidently, the minute division of "preadults" into four categories instead of the usual two is related to the organization and the (non)exploitation of their specific subgroup.

Let us come back to the fig. 3 and try to answer the question, how old these "children" (di$_4$-di$_4$-la$_2$) were. Any traditional society shows no interest to absolute age in years, which makes any such assessment challenging. Another factor is gender: the same age grade may begin in a different time for males and females. Milton Eng (2011: 127) reconstructs the life stages of a male person in ancient Israel as follows: (1) "infant" (0–3 years), (2) "boy" (3–13), (2) "young man" (13–25), (4) "mature, old" (25–60), (5) "old age" (60–70 years), (6) "extreme old age" (70+). However, while there is a separate word for infants (*yeled*), there is only one word for two of Eng's categories "boy" and "young man" (*naʿar*).

This analogy highlights a possibility to propose the temporal limits of the age grade di$_4$-di$_4$-la$_2$ in *The Heron and the Turtle*. If ki-sikil and ĝuruš correspond to adolescents and young unwed or recently wed individuals—ca. 12/14 to ca. 25 years for men and ca. 12 to 18 years for women—di$_4$-di$_4$-la$_2$ must include all children from infancy to puberty around 12/14.[57] Let us consider further evidence on di$_4$-di$_4$-la$_{(2)}$.

The Home of the Fish 18–19 refers to members of a paternal household (Civil 1961: 156–57). One pair of terms designates age grades: di$_4$-di$_4$-la$_2$-zu, "your children (=minors)," and gal-gal-zu, "your grown-ups." Another pair recalls the immediate kin: dam-zu, "your spouse," and dumu-zu, "your son(s)/daughter(s)." The first case delivers the most general approach to describe a group of individuals in terms of age: children and adults. Again, this confirms that di$_4$-di$_4$-la$_2$ is the Sumerian word "child" as minor.

Other compositions suggest that di$_4$-di$_4$-la$_2$ were babies or infants. For example, it is the *Lament for Ur* 228–230 (Samet 2014: 105, 192):

um-ma ab-ba e$_2$-ta nu-e$_3$	Elderly women and men who did not leave their houses were overcome
izi mu-ni-in-si$_3$-si$_3$-ge$_5$-eš	by fire.

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55. Reflected in the amounts of barley allocations.

56. See Brinkman 1982: 2; Harris 2000: 7; and Tenney 2011: 13.

57. According to Martha Roth (1987: 747), marital age was about 15–18 for women and about 30 for men during the Neo-Babylonian period.

58. I.e., the *didilas*: note the causative =n=da= in the verbal form.

di_4-di_4-la_2 ur_2 ama-ba-ka nu_2-a ku_6-gin_7 a ba-an-tum_2	Children lying/sleeping in their mothers' laps were carried off like fish by waters.
$emeda_2$ lirum kalag-ga-bi lirum ba-an-da-du_8	Nursemaids with a strong embrace were forced to release the embrace (of them).[58]

The first detail that grasps attention is the fact that *didila*s lie or sleep on their mothers' laps. Secondly, the presence of the e m e d a favors the interpretation of *didila* as infants. E m e d a denoted "nursemaid, dry-nurse" in the strict sense of the term, Akk. *tārītu*, "the one who rears (the child)," in contrast to e m e d a g a-la_2, Akk. *mušēniqtu*, "the one who breastfeeds." Stol (2000: 181–82), however, has demonstrated that rearing and breastfeeding were used as synonyms and both lasted about three years. Hence, the *Lament for Ur* uses di_4-di_4-la_2 to denote breastfed babies.

However, it would be uncritical to take this usage at face value. One should keep in mind that the *Lament for Ur*, as any other literary text, exploits various literary devices. In this case, it is hyperbole: the author deliberately undermines the age of children. This is not the only Sumerian composition that contrasts very young and very old and avoids any in-betweens. Their authors aimed to portray a catastrophic event in which everyone from tiny babies to seniors barely capable of movement perished without any hope for escape.

Administrative documents confirm the meaning "child (=minor of any age)" of di_4-di_4-$la_{(2)}$. It was the word used for royal offspring at Pre-Sargonic Ĝirsu (see below). Additionally, di_4-di_4-la appears as a category of labor together with adult male workers (ĝuruš) in Ur III texts. For example, *TRU* 378 records ĝuruš and di_4-di_4-la who were hired to hoe fields. It is hardly surprising that di_4-di_4-la performed less work than the adults, but, of course, babies did not labor in the fields. These children must have been strong enough to do their share of work, which emphasizes the hyperbolic usage of *didila* in the *Lament for Ur*. These Ur III references to child workers open a new vista in the understanding of the grapheme TUR-TUR in earlier labor accounts. More passages than we think may refer not to "sons/daughter" (d u m u-d u m u) but to "children (= minors)" (di_4-di_4).[59]

7. Kinship and Age: The Switch of Semantic Domains

The exchange of meanings between two words that are related in social practice is a universal phenomenon. One of the common examples are the words "son" and "child (= minor)." *My children work in Boston*: a person speaks about his/her adult sons/daughters. Other examples: Greek παῖς "child" designates (a) an individual below the age of puberty and (b) one's own immediate offspring. Similarly, in the Bible Hebrew *yeled* mostly designates (a) babies but (b) much more rarely it means "son, offspring" (Eng 2011: 87–88).

A fine example of this process appears in administrative texts from Pre-Sargonic Ĝirsu. There, lu_2 di_4-di_4-la-n e, "little persons," specifically denotes royal children and Selz (1993: 69) has demonstrated its synonymic use with d u m u-d u m u-n e "(royal) sons/daughters." Both appear in the construction še-ba lu_2-di_4-di_4-la-ne-(k) / d u m u-d u m u-ne-(k) "barley rations for the children / the sons/daughters," which refers to dependents of the household of the royal children. Other synonyms of royal children in the same archive are n a m-d u m u "all sons/daughters (collectively)" and lu_2 t u r-(r a) "minors." Here, scribes used the kinship terms n a m-d u m u and d u m u-d u m u, the age grade d i-di_4-la and a term with a complex semantics lu_2 t u r as synonyms to denote the same body of people—the royal offspring some (if not all) of whom must have been adults.

This process of semantic exchange "child (age grade) > son (kinship)" is more common than the reverse one. The latter appears only in specific contexts. English *son* may refer in colloquial to individuals younger than the speaker. Similarly, *grandpa* may apply to every elderly man. As we have seen, in Sumerian administrative accounts

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59. E.g., in the Early Dynastic and Early Sargonic documents *CUSAS* 26: 69 obv. ii 4 (2 TUR-TUR-n i t a) and *CUSAS* 35: 483 obv. i 5 (8 TUR-TUR), where the absence of mothers ($geme_2$) allows this interpretation.

of personnel (i.e., not in the colloquial Sumerian), d u m u, "son/daughter, offspring," practically becomes an age grade.

This noteworthy but commonplace phenomenon of the exchange of semantic domains among kinship and age grade terms should not lead to the conclusion that early Mesopotamians confused kinship and age statuses. The data strongly suggests that they viewed their society as consisting of families organized by kinship relationships on the one hand and of four age grades on the other (children, youth, and young unmarried or recently married adults, adults, and elderly people), not to mention other approaches such as legal classes (slaves and free citizens), professional occupations, etc.

8. lu₂ tur-ra "Minor"

The primary adjective t u r - (r a) "small" is the Sumerian word for preadults that has a cluster of related meanings. Whereas the difference between d i₄-d i₄-l a₍₂₎ "child" and the following age grades roots in the ability to reproduce, most of the usages of (l u₂) t u r-(r a) carry pronounced social implications. Its usage in many respects is similar to that of Akkadian *ṣuḫārum* and *ṣuḫartum*, which, depending on the context, means "child (= minor)," "boy" and "girl," or "(male/female) servant."

Similarly to d i₄-d i₄-l a₍₂₎ "small one, child" and b a n d a₃ "young, junior," g a l / g u-l a "big" is the antonym of t u r-r a. This opposition simplifies the age grade structure to two basic tiers: the little ones (children) and the big ones (adults). We find this in the Old Babylonian Forerunner to the incantations series *Udug-hul*, where this usage has clear biological semantics (Geller 1985: 140–41; Ni 630: 47).

Several literary compositions explicitly relate l u₂ t u r "little one" to various periods of childhood. *Nanše Hymn C*, fragment C 16 compares the twitter of the š e g š e g bird with a crying l u₂ t u r. This usage is common in incantations to pacify babies, where it is compared to *ṣeḫrum*, the Akkadian word for infants and small children (Farber 1989: 133–36). L u₂ t u r in the meaning as age grade "early childhood" appears also in the *Rulers of Lagaš* 14–16. Here, a one-hundred-year infancy is followed by another one hundred years of rearing (b u l u ĝ₃) a child, its "middle childhood" in modern terminology.

T u r-(r a) as a term for age grade "children" appears in archival records too. To begin with, we have it in logograms ⁽ˢᴬᴸ⁾TUR.RA or SAG(.SAL).ARAD₂.TUR.RA to designate slave children in Old Babylonian documents (see Rositani 2003: 112–13) These logograms designated weaned children since DUMU.GABA was the writing for breastfed babies. Hence, TUR.RA denoted "minors" as pre-adults in these records. The crucial detail is a clear differentiation between "own children" (DUMU, *mārum* "son") on the one hand and children of foreigners and slaves on the other hand.[60]

The same holds for earlier periods. For example, two s a ĝ n i t a t u r-t u r "slave minors (= boys)" appear in a Pre-Sargonic document that records slave trade between the cities of Ĝirsu and Der (*DP* 513: rev. i 3). This fact illustrates one of the many factors why Sumerians preferred d u m u instead of t u r or d i₄-d i₄-l a to record children in administrative records. D u m u were children whose kinship relationship mattered to the administration of the central households who needed to map a person in the kinship structures of a community. By contrast, no one cared about the kinship of these two slave boys.

The meaning of t u r-(r a) in Sumerian archival records was not limited to the children of slaves only. Daniel Foxvog has drawn author's attention to the fact that several Pre-Sargonic accounts from Ĝirsu refer to two princesses as l u₂ t u r-(r a) "minors, children, girls."[61] This illustrates for another time the phenomenon described in

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60. Suggestive in this respect is also a designation of a young slave as *šinipu*, "two-thirds (size of an adult)," in one Old Babylonian document; see Stol 2011: 565.

61. s a₂-d u₁₁ k a š g e₆-k a m, l u₂ t u r-k a m "It is a regularly delivery of dark beer for the palace, for the minors" (*DCS* 6: iv 8'–9') appears in another document as s a₂-d u₁₁ k a š g e₆-k a m, G e m e₂-ᵈN a n š e / M u n u s-s a₆-g a (Selz 1993: 316, no. 29 iv 14–15, v 10–11).

the previous section. The mechanism of the semantic shift in this case is as follows: ruler's "offspring" (dumu-dumu) > "little ones (= children)" (di_4-di_4-la) = "minors" (lu_2 tur-(ra)).

The second and no less important usage of lu_2 tur stresses relative age or, more commonly, subordinate status. As an example of the former case one may cite the Sargonic archival text from Adab, *SCTRAH* 84, which mentions two persons by the same name (Molina 2014: 106). An attribute tur "junior," an indication of a relative age, appears after the second namesake.

Many more texts relate lu_2 tur to subordinate professional, familiar, etc. statuses. The semantics "junior" in professional titles is evident in examples of dub-sar tur-tur-(me) "junior scribes" in Ur III accounts (passim in Mander 1994). A professional and quasipatriarchal authority over lu_2 tur is evident in a literary composition *Supervisor and Scribe (Edubba C)* 54–55.[62] Here it is contrasted with age grade "person, man" (lu_2), which denotes free adults with full legal rights. The message of the text is lucid: a student scribe was a "minor" during his studies since he was under the quasipatriarchal authority of a master scribe, but he becomes a "man" after graduation. A teacher addresses his student in the same manner in *Edubba A ("Schooldays")* 70, 81 (Kramer 1949: 206).

Probably the most obvious example of lu_2 tur-(ra) as person under patriarchal authority appears in a proverb YBC 7351 cited in Matuszak (2017: 363): <…> ibila tur-ra / e_2 ad-da-na-ka / ib_2-ta-an-sar-re nig_2-gig ^{d}Nin-urta-ke_4. A slightly modified translation is: "<…> an heir (= first-born) who chases a *minor* (younger brother) out of his father's house—(it is) an abomination to Ninurta." This means that (a) the heir (usually the first-born son) should not expel his younger brother(s) from the household once the father is dead, and (b) the elder brother begins to exercise the role of the *paterfamilias*. From then on, the heir's brothers are his dependents (tur-ra), and he is their legal guardian and representative.

Several Sumerian literary compositions exemplify the usage of lu_2 tur as minor in biological (adolescent, young) and the social (a person under patriarchal authority) senses. The term appears multiple times as lu_2 tur (sa_6-ga) "(beautiful) young one" in the myth *Enki and Ninhursaĝa* describing goddesses with whom the god Enki had his incestuous sexual adventures.[63] The context illustrates clearly that lu_2 tur designated unmarried young adult females. As Gadotti (2009: 76) has argued, "a father has nonconsensual intercourse with his *young and virgin* daughters" in the first case [emphasis—*V.B.*]. In another story about rape, *Inana and Šukaletuda*, lu_2 tur refers not to the victim but to the perpetrator. The gardener Šukaletuda is a "young one" (Volk 1995: 191). The presence of his father shows that lu_2 tur makes sense in the context of an authority.

In *Enlil and Ninlil* 10–11 (Behrens 1978: 213–27; Cooper 1980: 184–88), this deity pair were designated as ĝuruš tur and ki-sikil tur, which is reminiscent of the age grade of youth in *The Heron and the Turtle* and terms for adolescents in Middle Babylonian rosters (GURUŠ/SAL.TUR). By using the attribute tur, the author of *Enlil and Ninlil* wanted to stress the fact that both Enlil and Ninlil were teenagers and virgins at their first intercourse.[64] The latter is evident in the Ninlil's case in lines 30–31. Hence, all these terms—lu_2 tur (both sexes), and ĝuruš tur / ki-sikil tur, are used as synonyms to describe young people (a) without sexual experience and (b) under patriarchal (or matriarchal, in cases when the goddesses consult their mothers) authority.

By contrast to these three stories about rape, the intercourse by a lu_2 tur is sanctioned by matrimony in the above-cited passages in *Gudea Cylinder A* and the *Curse of Agade*. The frequent appearance of lu_2 tur "young one" with ama_5 "women's quarters" in Sumerian literary compositions is hard to overlook. In *Enlil and Sud* 78, the goddess Sud is lu_2 tur as a bride of Enlil. She appears in the context of "women's quarters." As I have argued elsewhere, "women's quarters" represented the part of any household reserved for women and for rearing children (Bartash 2014).

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62. u_4-bi-ta lu_2 tur he_2-me-en-na i_3-ne-$eš_2$ saĝ-zu il_2 / šu-zu lu_2-ra mu-da-an-gi_4-gi_4-in a-ra_2-bi-$še_3$ DU-mu-un (*ETCSL* c.5.1.3: 54).

63. See Attinger 1984a, especially the index on p. 51.

64. ki-sikil tur is compared with Akk. *batultu* in lexical texts, "the word used for a marriageable virgin" (Stol 2016: 9).

Finally, several compositions use l u₂ t u r - (r a) "little one" as a term of endearment. This is not unique. Most, if not all, languages exhibit the same phenomenon. "Smallness" is somehow always related to dearness, "sweetness." The term "(my) little one" appears in the context of either (a) parent-child relationship or (b) lovers relationship. Note that only women are "little ones." Men are usually not eager to be addressed "little."

The "parent-child" group includes references in *Inana and Ebih* 113 (father An addresses his daughter Inana), *Gilgamesh and the Bull of Heaven* 5, 38, 47 (the same), *Nanna's Journey to Nippur* 320 (father Enlil to his son Nanna), the *Iškur Ershemma* no. 184 (father Enlil or An addresses his son Iškur)[65] and *Ningublaga A* 30–31 (Enlil speaks to his son Ningublaga; Peterson 2011: 321). These data strengthen the argument that l u₂ t u r described relationships of authority and shows that these relationships involved two persons, a "minor" and a "master."

An example of the "male and female lovers" group is *Dumuzi-Inana C* 3, where Dumuzi addresses his "sister" (= lover) Inana.

In summary, (l u₂) t u r - (r a) "little, minor" was not semantically as multifaceted as it may seem. It was never applied to adult persons with families or to elderly persons (tiers 3 and 4 in the age-grade system). Neither do we find any signs that anyone of high status or authority or high (professional) competence was addressed in this manner in Sumerian written records. (L u₂) t u r - (r a) had several closely related meanings, which could apply *simultaneously* in a given context:

(1) (L u₂) t u r - (r a) was a basic age grade "minor" as an antonym to "adults" (g a l). The first includes children of any age. The second includes adults of any age. The exact temporal or biological boundary between two is not certain. However, relying on the following usage, it seems likely that the category of (l u₂) t u r - (r a) "minors" is identical with two first age grades of *The Heron and the Turtle*: children (d i₄ - d i₄ - l a₂) and unmarried youth and adults (0–15(female)/25(male) years).

(2) (L u₂) t u r - (r a) were individuals under authority. (A) The primary usage includes youth and young adults who are still unmarried or prepare for this *rite du passage*. (B) The secondary usage identifies individuals who have not yet reached the full professional status, such as junior scribes and similar.

(3) (L u₂) t u r - (r a) was a term of parental endearment. The relationships of authority played a crucial role in this case too.

Relying on this analysis, English "minor," "boy" and "girl" seems to be the most adequate renderings of this Sumerian word in case of 1 and 2A and "junior" in case of 2B.

9. Conclusions

Previous scholarship in linguistics and social and cultural anthropology has identified two principal sets of terms to describe the status of an individual in a society. The first are kinship terms, such as "son," "father," etc. The second includes informal age grades that describe life phases: "child," "adult," etc. Terms of one group may migrate into another group and, thus, acquire modified meanings.

The traditional translation of Sumerian d u m u as "child" is a simplification. The analysis of Sumerian texts of all genres unequivocally demonstrates that it is a kinship term. Its accurate monolexemic translation into English is impossible because Sumerian lacks the grammatical distinction between female and male genders. D u m u conveys the idea of human offspring, biological or adopted, a "son-daughter."

The original and common writing of d u m u is sign TUR. Its use in Late Uruk texts suggests that (one of) its original meaning(s) was "small, little, minor," which was supposed to be t u r in Sumerian. In contrast, its reading d u m u, "son/daughter," is documented for the first time in the records of the following Early Dynastic I–II period.

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65. Cohen 1981: 58–59 ll. 13–14 and Kramer 1990: 256 rev. i 8–9.

The usage of d u m u is for the most part identical with its Akkadian equivalents *mārum*, "son" and *mārtum*, "daughter." The principal and original meaning of d u m u is "son/daughter, human offspring." Administrative records often use d u m u as a quasi age grade. However, the presence of alleged mothers in these contexts suggests keeping in mind that these individuals are not simply "children" but "sons/daughters, one's own children."

The secondary meaning of d u m u is "son/daughter (member of a body or people)." Phrases such as d u m u e_2-g a l "son/daughter of the palace (= palace dependent)" exemplify this usage. This fictive kinship established the social link between a person and a larger body of people unrelated by kinship but maintained on the economic, legal, etc. basis.

The principal and the secondary meanings of d u m u comply with the rule of a thumb in kinship terminologies: d u m u never appears alone. There is always a parent or a "parent" in the same text.

Lexical lists confirm that d u m u was a kinship term, registering several words for "child" as a minor, including di_4-di_4-$la_{(2)}$ and t u r - (t u r).

The Sumerian literary composition *The Heron and the Turtle* exemplifies the universality of the four-tiered system of age grades proposed by Linton. Again, it confirms that di_4-di_4-$la_{(2)}$ was a Sumerian word for "child" as a minor. The upper temporal limit of this age grade is puberty.

The second age grade is "youth" (k i - s i k i l, "maiden," and ĝ u r u š, "lad"), which designated unmarried individuals of any age. Metaphorically expressed by terms e_2-gi_4-a, "daughter-in-law/bride," and d u m u b a n$_3$-d a, "junior son (= groom)," the next age grade represents married people, lu_2, "person," and $nita_{(2)}$ for men, d a m, "spouse" and m u n u s, "woman" for women. The final age grade of the elderly was represented by a b - b a, "old man" and u m - m a, "old woman."

The age grade logic of *The Heron and the Turtle* centered on the biological concept of reproduction on the one hand and the social institution of marriage on the other. However, contrary to our modern dualist perspectives, ancient Mesopotamians regarded these concepts as inseparable.

As in other languages, kinship and age-grade terms exchange their meanings. This is why d u m u, "son/daughter" becomes "minor" and di_4-di_4-$la_{(2)}$, "little one (= child)," becomes "offspring" in some contexts.

Lu_2 t u r - (r a) is arguably the most complicated word for pre-adults in Sumerian. Despite a deceptive polysemy of this word, it always designated a person of subordinate status, whether biological, social, or professional. It may be a child, youth, or young unmarried adult (age grades), offspring (kinship), professional status, or even age of one person in comparison to that of another person.

The one and a half-century scholarly adventure of Sumerology and the rapidly expanding corpus of Sumerian texts have resulted hitherto in the intimate acquaintance of the scholarly community and laymen with every Mesopotamian god and king. In contrast, our knowledge of how the societies of early Mesopotamia were organized and functioned on the human level remains vague and clichéd in almost every handbook. Further analytic and synthetic studies based on the flood of cuneiform texts and the progress in other branches of humanities and social sciences are necessary to clarify basic societal structures and relationships—including kinship and age groupings—on the way towards a credible social history of early Mesopotamia.

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