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GASUR IN THE SARGONIC PERIOD (2334–2154 BCE)

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Introduction

The PhD thesis offers an attempt at reconstructing political and socio-economic life at Sargonic Gasur, the major city center in Northern Mesopotamia at the time (2334–2154 BCE). The ancient Gasur (modern Yorgan Tepe) was located near the modern city of Kirkuk (Iraq). As a prominent administrative and agricultural center, it was of utmost importance for the Sargonic kings who were able to unite southern and northern Mesopotamian cities under one rule for the first time in the history of the Ancient Near East.

The Sargonic period is considered the time of dramatic political, social and cultural changes in Mesopotamia. One of the major innovations brought in by the Sargonic kings was the massive use of Akkadian as the language of economic and legal documents, royal inscriptions, letters, and even (although, admittedly, to a much lesser extent) literary compositions. The number of presently known Sargonic tablets has gone over ten thousands, with about a third of them published within the last fifteen years. This alone calls for a re-evaluation of the current historical reconstruction of the whole period.

The object of the study. The dissertation is based on the data of a corpus of more than two hundred cuneiform documents¹, written in the earliest known dialect of the Akkadian language. They were discovered during excavations at the site of Yorgan Tepe in the late 1920s and early 1930s and are now part of Iraqi and American museum collections. The Gasur corpus stands out from other Sargonic corpora, primarily because over 90 percent of the extant sources for this period stem from Southern Mesopotamia. At the same time, excavations in northern Mesopotamia yielded no comparable archives. Written sources from this region (that would later form the core of the Assyrian kingdom)² are represented only by documents from Aššur and Gasur. The Aššur corpus with its twenty texts³ (fourteen of them are still unpublished) is relatively small compared to the Gasur one, the latter being far more representative and varied in terms of contents. Moreover, the Gasur corpus is the only Sargonic corpus (beside the Aššur one) mentioning the city of Aššur.

The scarcity of written evidence from this region makes the Gasur archive our primary source for the history of the lands to the north and northwest of the Tigris River in

¹ Henceforth “Gasur archive” / “Gasur corpus.”

² As of the Middle Assyrian period this region is referred to as *māt Aššur* (i.e. “the Assyria proper”) in cuneiform sources, see John Nicholas Postgate, *The Land of Assur & the Yoke of Assur: Studies on Assyria, 1971-2005* (Oxford: Oxbow, 2007), 203–204.

³ These include three royal inscriptions, a land sale document and fourteen other texts that were discovered in 1912 at Aššur by the excavators, see Hans Neumann, “Aššur in altakkadischer Zeit: die Texte,” in *Assyrien im Wandel der Zeiten*, eds. Hartmut Waetzoldt and Hans Hauptmann (Heidelberg: Heidelberger Orientverlag, 1997), 133–138.

the IIIrd millennium BCE. Moreover, the proximity of Gasur to the Diyala region, a findspot of the numerous texts written in Sargonic Akkadian, and to the supposed location of the capital of the kingdom – Akkade⁴ – only adds weight to the testimony of the Gasur material.

The subject of the study is the nature and functions of the economic structure that produced the Gasur documents. The fact that these documents are closely related in terms of chronology, prosopography and economic activities covered, suggests that such a structure indeed existed and was held accountable for agricultural work in Gasur and its vicinity, and even beyond (likely in the whole region of the Lesser Zab).

Although the reconstruction of Gasur economic life is important on its own, as it provides an additional glimpse at the principles at the core of the economic organization of the Sargonic kingdom, it is also of exceptional interest as a comparative material. It testifies that there were differences in agricultural practices in the South and the North, the two regions of Mesopotamia known to have differed significantly by natural and climatic conditions. In this sense, the Gasur archive is a unique evidence of how the economy was organized in the region with predominantly rain-fed agriculture in the Sargonic period.

The purpose of the study is, therefore, to offer a reconstruction of socio-economic life at Gasur in the Sargonic period in as much detail as is allowed by the evidence of our sources.

Although Gasur material is of utmost importance for the study of the history of the region in the Sargonic period (especially since any serious alternative is lacking), much of lacks a proper edition: the only group of Gasur texts that received a thorough scientific treatment (having been translated and commented on multiple occasions) is the epistolary texts.⁵ This is why preparing an exhaustive up-to-date commented edition of the Gasur texts was seen as the most essential of the *research tasks* of this PhD project. In addition to this, the tasks (i.e. the steps needed to achieve the study's main aim) include

- establishing and a thorough analysis of prosopographic links within the archive;

⁴ Although Akkade is yet to be located, the evidence points towards the confluence of Tigris and tributary, the Udheim river, see Walter Sommerfeld, “Die Lage von Akkade und die Dokumentation des Jahrtausends,” in *Entre les fleuves – II, D’Aššur à Mari et au-delà*, eds. Eva Cancik-Kirschbaum and Nele Ziegeler (Gladbeck: Pewe-Verlag, 2014), 165–170. For an exhaustive analysis of the III-I millennium data pertaining to the possible location of Akkade see Eva Cancik-Kirschbaum and Nele Ziegeler (eds.), *Entre les fleuves – II, D’Aššur à Mari et au-delà* (Gladbeck: Pewe-Verlag, 2014).

⁵ See Burkhart Kienast and Konrad Volk, *Die sumerischen und akkadischen Briefe des III. Jahrtausends aus der Zeit vor der III. Dynastie von Ur* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1995), 180–190.

- identification of the administrative body that was in control of the economic life in Gasur and its associated settlements;
- identifying and describing structural elements of this administrative body;
- a thorough analysis of the connections between Gasur and the settlements under its economic influence, as well as those between Gasur and the cities of the Sumerian South on one hand, and between Gasur and the capital of the Sargonic kingdom Akkade on the other.

The relevance of the research topic is due to several factors. One of the most important of them is that the amount of the written sources available for study has increased dramatically within the last fifteen years,⁶ which led to a significant expansion in the scholarly understanding of the realities of the period. Moreover, notable progress was made in the study of the Sargonic dialect, which allowed for better understanding of the texts and their linguistic setting. In view of the latest advancements of the Sargonic studies, the data yielded from the Gasur texts allows for a new assessment of the city's role in the life of the Sargonic kingdom. This data is also of particular relevance for the reconstruction of the early stages of the history of the region, which later became Assyria, and whose history in the IIIrd millennium BCE is still obscure.

The Sources

The work is based on a corpus of 213 Sargonic documents written mostly in Akkadian. They were discovered during the American-Iraqi excavations at Yorgan Tepe in the early 1930s. Of these, 212 were published in 1935 in drawings (a translation was provided for only seven texts in the preface). An additional, previously unknown Gasur text, which I was able to locate while working with the Harvard part of the archive, is being published for the first time. Currently, the Gasur material is divided between the Harvard Semitic Museum and the Iraqi Museum in Baghdad.

The archive includes texts of various genres. The majority of the Gasur texts are economic records dealing with the allocation of resources and full-cycle agricultural activities in Gasur and its satellite settlements. These documents not only yield information on agricultural management in the region, but also provide insights regarding the city administration and its connection to the capital and the ruling dynasty. Preparations for the

⁶ See Aage Westenholz, "What's new in town?" in *Opening the Tablet Box. Near Eastern Studies in Honor of Benjamin R. Foster*, eds. Sarah C. Mellville and Alice L. Slotsky (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 453–462.

royal visit to Gasur (that are reflected in several texts of the archive, letters included) can be seen as the clearest manifestation of his connection.

In addition to economic records, the archive includes a relatively small corpus of letters, as well as several legal documents and school texts.

Letters constitute a small but important part of the corpus and are closely related to the economic records, providing a deeper perspective on some of the events and realities reflected in the latter.

Legal documents are poorly represented in the archive. Since they are not linked to other Gasur documents by prosopography, it can be assumed that they were either private rather than institutional, or (more likely) that they belong with the school tablets and should be interpreted as exercises (model documents).

A group of school texts (i.e., exercises in cuneiform writing) also stands out as part of the archive. Texts of this genre normally lack prosopographic links that could connect them to other documents, but their presence in the archive suggests that there likely was a scribal training center in Gasur that offered both basic and advanced tuition.

In addition to the Gasur documents themselves, we use a number of additional sources dating back to the IIIrd millennium BCE. These sources highlighting the relationship between Gasur and other Mesopotamian cities, both in the South and in the North include

- the seal inscription (from an imprint on clay bulla found at Tell Brak)⁷ that mentions Yitbe-Labba, the *ensi* of Gasur;
- the inscription of Ititi, the ruler of Aššur,⁸ regarding the conflict between Aššur and Gasur;
- a number of Early Sargonic and Early Dynastic documents from Adab,⁹ Sangub¹⁰ and Umma;¹¹

⁷ RIME 2.5.1, see Douglas Frayne, *The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods. Vol. 2. Sargonic and Gutian Periods* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 240.

⁸ A.O.1001, see Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Third and Second Millennium B.C. (To 1115 B.C.). The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia: Assyrian Periods* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 7.

⁹ L'uomo 18, see Giovanni Pettinato, *L'uomo cominciò a scrivere. Iscrizioni cuneiformi della Collezione Michail* (Milano: Electa, 1997), 18; CUSAS 26, 80, see Aage Westenholz, *Miscellaneous Early Dynastic and Sargonic Texts in the Cornell University Collections* (Bethesda: CDL Press, 2018), 88.

¹⁰ BIN 8, 214, see George Hackman, *Sumerian and Akkadian Administrative Texts: From Predynastic Times to the End of the Akkad Dynasty* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958), 214.

¹¹ TTIM 24, see Piotr Steinkeller, *Third-Millennium Legal and Administrative Texts in the Iraq Museum*, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 49.

- some post-Sargonic documents (dating back to the 3rd dynasty of Lagash¹² and the 3rd dynasty of Ur¹³) from Girsu suggesting that the ties between Gasur and the cities of Southern Mesopotamia survived the collapse of the Sargonic kingdom.

In order to create a deeper perspective, the Eblaite sources (chronologically preceding the Sargonic period) are accounted for as well. For the same reason pertinent data from the Old Assyrian texts that presumably mention Gasur is also considered, especially since this information is the last thing we know about Gasur in the Pre-Nuzi era (14th century B.C.).¹⁴

Since over 90 percent of the Gasur texts have only been published in autographs, a detailed study of the cuneiform originals was a necessary step in preparing the edition of the corpus. As is well-known, working with the clay tablets has a number of peculiarities due to the specific material of which they are made. As it happens, tablets can break and fragments may fall off, so often, before one is actually able to start reading a tablet, they must search for joins.¹⁵ In the case of the Gasur archive, the situation is complicated by the fact that the texts are housed in two different museums, so a cuneiform tablet may be in the US and its joining fragment in Iraq, and then the only way to identify them is comparison by photo.¹⁶ While working on the corpus the author was able to identify seven previously unknown joins (including three long-distance ones), which reduced the total number of texts from 222 to 213.

¹² RTC 236, see François Thureau-Dangin, *Recueil des tablettes chaldéennes* (Paris: Leroux, 1903), 236.

¹³ TCTI 2, 2689, see Bertrand Lafont and Fatma Yildiz, *Tablettes cunéiformes de Tello au Musée d'Istanbul, datant de l'époque de la IIIe Dynastie d'Ur. Tome II. ITT II/1, 2544-2819, 3158-4342, 4708-4714* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1996), 57.

¹⁴ Nuzi was the name of a Hurrian settlement that occupied Yorgan Tepe in the second half of the second millennium BCE. Most of the documentation that we have from this period dates back to 15–14th centuries BCE, when Nuzi was under the rule of the neighboring city of Arrapha (modern Kirkuk). See Gernot Wilhelm, “Nuzi. A. Philologisch,” *Reallexicon der Assyriologie und vorderasiatischen Archäologie* 9: 636–639.

¹⁵ Joins are cuneiform fragments that originally belonged to a single tablet. There are direct/indirect and simple/distant. The first dichotomy refers to the physical compatibility of fragments: direct joins are those that can be merged along the break line, whereas indirect joins are those that belong to the same tablet (by color, size, ductus, and content), but cannot be physically put together as they were broken off different areas. Simple joins are those identified within the same museum collection. Unlike simple joins, distant joins are formed from fragments from different museum collections.

¹⁶ The photos of the tablets from the Semitic Museum were taken by the author in 2008, while the photos of the Iraqi part of the archive were provided by Prof. Walter Sommerfeld (Marburg), who worked with the Gasur texts in the mid-1980s.

In addition to that, the author was able to identify a previously unknown text that was found with the rest of the Gasur archive, but was not included in the original publication in 1935. The text belongs to the Harvard Semitic Museum cuneiform collection and is published (with the permission of the keeper of the collection) in the appendix to this dissertation for the first time.

Literature review

The first articles utilizing individual Gasur documents came out in the early 1930s, even before the corpus was published as a whole. In 1931–1932 Meek published one of the Gasur letters and the famous map,¹⁷ which has been recognized as one of the earliest documents of this kind in history. In 1932, Meek dedicated another work to the latter.¹⁸ Three years later, he also published the texts of the archive in copies, providing them with a brief introduction that provided not only linguistic, but also historical and cultural commentary (including a discussion of the dating of the archive and the ethnic composition of the population of Gasur in the era of the creation of the texts).¹⁹ In general, it should be noted that the publication of the corpus was carried out at a high level by the standards of the time. The number of known Sargonic texts at the time of the preparation of the work by Meek was relatively small. The corpora published by then only included the ones from Girsu,²⁰ Umma²¹ and Susa²² (all written mostly in Sumerian).²³ This (as well as the absence at that time of any specific works on the grammar and vocabulary of the Sargonic dialect)²⁴ could not facilitate

¹⁷ Theophile J. Meek, “The Akkadian and Cappadocian Texts from Nuzi,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 48 (1932): 2–5.

¹⁸ Theophile J. Meek, “Some Gleanings from the Last Excavations at Nuzi,” *Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 13 (1933): 1–11.

¹⁹ Theophile J. Meek, *Old Akkadian, Sumerian and Cappadocian texts from Nuzi* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935).

²⁰ François Thureau-Dangin, *Recueil des tablettes chaldéennes*; François Thureau-Dangin, *Inventaire des tablettes de Tello, conservées au Musée Impérial Ottoman. Tome I: Textes de l'époque d'Agadé* (Paris: Leroux, 1910); Henri de Genouillac, *Inventaire des tablettes de Tello, conservées au Musée Impérial Ottoman. Tome II: Textes de l'époque d'Agadé et de l'époque d'Ur* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1911); Henri de Genouillac, *Inventaire des tablettes de Tello, conservées au Musée Impérial Ottoman. Tome V: Époque presargonique, époque d'Agadé, époque d'Ur* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1921).

²¹ Mikhail V. Nikolsky, *Dokumenti khoziaistvennoy otchetnosti drevneyshey epokhi Khaldei iz sobraniya Nikolaya P. Likhatchova* (Saint-Petersburg: Tovarischestvo Golike i Vilborga, 1908).

²² Leon Legrain, *Tablettes de comptabilité, etc. de la dynastie d'Agadé* (Paris: Leroux, 1913).

²³ This applies mainly to the texts from Girsu and Umma. The Susa texts (much fewer in number, compared to those from Umma and Girsu) contain more Akkadian forms.

²⁴ The first grammatical description of the dialect was made by Gelb (Ignace J. Gelb, *Old Akkadian Writing and Grammar*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1961)), who

the task of the publisher. At the same time, Meek managed to not only correctly attribute the texts as belonging to the Sargonic era, but also to offer a completely adequate translation of the most important of them (primarily letters); many of his interpretations are of relevance even today. At the same time, the drawings of cuneiform tablets made by Meek for publication represent its most vulnerable side: copies of texts do not exactly follow the originals especially when it comes to sign shapes and spacing.

After the corpus was published, the work on the texts of the archive went in several directions, including the publication / description of individual groups of texts, the study of individual texts (groups of texts) in connection to specific problems, as well as a description (usually brief) of the Gasur economy in the general context of the early Mesopotamian economy.

Most of the publications of the first type are focused on the letters that constitute the most thoroughly studied group of texts within the Gasur corpus. Meek was the first to transliterate and translate the best preserved of the Gasur letters in his preface to the publication volume.²⁵ Later, in 1976, the Gasur corpus was evaluated by Kraus in his study of the Sargonic epistolary formulary.²⁶

The period of intense interest in Old Akkadian letters in general and Gasur letters in particular falls on the first half of the 1990s. In 1990, van der Westhuizen published a transliteration, translation and a small commentary on the letter, which, due to its poor state of preservation, was dismissed by Meek.²⁷ Three years later, in 1993, Mikhalowski published six Gasur letters in transliteration and translation in his book on the Mesopotamian epistolary corpus of the 3rd millennium BCE.²⁸ A while later, in 1995, a joint work by Kienast and Volk on Sumerian and Akkadian letters of the 3rd millennium BCE was published.²⁹ Presently, this book is the most reliable edition of the Sargonic epistolary texts that includes the commented edition of all Gasur letters (including the previously unpublished join HSS X 121+127, established by Westenholz).

also penned the first dictionary of Sargonic (Ignace J. Gelb, *Glossary of Old Akkadian* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1952)).

²⁵ Theophile J. Meek, *Old Akkadian, Sumerian and Cappadocian texts from Nuzi*, xviii–xxii.

²⁶ Fritz R. Kraus, “Einführung in die Briefe in altakkadischer Sprache,” *Jaarbericht van het Voor-Aziatisch-Egyptisch-Genootschap Ex Oriente Lux* 24 (1975–1976): 74–104.

²⁷ Jasper P. van der Westhuizen, “Seven More Old Akkadian Letters,” *Acta Sumerologica* 12 (1990): 262.

²⁸ Piotr Michalowski, *Letters from Early Mesopotamia* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), 34–36.

²⁹ Burkhardt Kienast and Konrad Volk, *Die sumerischen und akkadischen Briefe des III. Jahrtausends*.

Westenholz's article on scribal training in the Sargonic period also falls under the category of the publications of the first type.³⁰ In his contribution, Westenholz provided an annotated copy of each of the pertinent texts. The annotation included the description of a text's content, as well as some observations regarding its compilation principles, and (in some cases) a fragmentary transliteration of meaningful passages. In addition to this, Gasur school texts were used by Veldhuis in his study of the scribal curriculum. In his opinion, some of them can be characterized as "non-standard exercise texts".³¹

One of the earliest publications of the second type is the work of H. Lewy on volume, length and area the measures as attested in the texts from Gasur.³² Gelb's pioneering article, which laid the foundations for a modern understanding of the Mesopotamian ration system, which is largely based on the data of Gasur documents, belongs to this category as well.³³

The most recent publications based on the Gasur material can be attributed to this group as well. Among them are the works of Visicato pertaining to the journey of a Sargonic king to Gasur,³⁴ and to the Gasur scribal community, which he studied as a part of his investigation of the role of scribes in ancient Mesopotamian society.³⁵

Publications of the third type began to appear in the early 1950s due to the increased interest of researchers in studying the socio-economic aspects of ancient Mesopotamian history. Following this trend, the first brief sketch of Gasur's economic life written by Tyumenev as part of a general study on institutional households appeared in 1956.³⁶ According to his assessment, the economic life of Gasur was under the control of the royal administration and thus was highly centralized.³⁷ A similar conclusion regarding the Gasur

³⁰ Aage Westenholz, "Old Akkadian School Texts: Some Goals of Sargonic Scribal Education," *Archiv für Orientforschung* 25 (1974): 95–110.

³¹ Niek Veldhuis, *History of the Cuneiform Lexical Tradition* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2014), 313.

³² Hildegard Lewy, "On Some Metrological Peculiarities of the Old Akkadian Texts from Nuzi," *Orientalia* 20 (1950), 1–12.

³³ Ignace J. Gelb, "The Ancient Mesopotamian Ration System," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 24 (1965): 230–238.

³⁴ Giuseppe Visicato, "The Journey of the Sargonic King to Assur and Gasur," in *Proceedings of the XLVE Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale: Held in July 1998 in Cambridge, Mass. and New Haven, Conn.*, eds. Tzvi Abusch et al. (Bethesda, Md: CDL Press, 2001), 467–473.

³⁵ Giuseppe Visicato, *The Power and the Writing: Early Scribes of Mesopotamia* (Bethesda: CDL Press, 2000).

³⁶ Alexandr I. Tyumenev, *Gosudarsvennoe khoziaystvo drevnego Shumera* (Moskva–Leningrad: izdatelstvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1956).

³⁷ *Ibid.* 237.

economy can be found in Jawad's study on the emergence and development of urban settlements in Northern Mesopotamia that appeared ten years later.³⁸

Foster who used the Gasur archive in his study of the principles of institutional land use in the Sargonic period³⁹ provided a more detailed reconstruction of the city's economy at the time. He argued that the Gasur texts were produced within an institution (under the management of the cadastral official Zuzu (Zu-zu SAG.SUG₅)) that was accountable to the royal administration. Foster also developed a classification for the economic records of the Sargonic era and defined the Gasur archive as one produced by a household of local importance.⁴⁰

There can be no doubt that Foster's results opened a new page in the study of the socio-economic history of Gasur. At the same time, it should be kept in mind that his works on Gasur are focused primarily on the cadastral texts that comprise about ten percent of the corpus. Moreover, the methodology of those works is the one of quantitative history that became widely popular in the USA in the 1980s in the wake and rapid evolution of computer technology. One of its key principles is the application of statistical analysis methods to the data from the historical sources. This approach is only fruitful when working with large corpora that provide extensive data sets. In the case of relatively small archives like the one from Gasur it is of limited value because it only provides the basic outline of a case (see below) without any potential of zooming in further to get a detailed view.

The unpublished dissertation of R.V. Dzharakian with the title "Cuneiform archives from Yorgan-Tepe and Tell Himrin (the ethnic profile and the socio-economic situation)"⁴¹ that was defended in 1994 at the Institute for Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg, should also be attributed to the works of the third type.

This dissertation provides non-commented translations of the texts of both archives and offers their comparative analysis, mostly in what pertains to the ethnic composition of

³⁸ Abdul J. Jawad, *The Advent of the Era of Townships in Northern Mesopotamia* (Leiden: Brill, 1965), 91–92.

³⁹ See Benjamin R. Foster, "Administration of State Land at Sargonic Gasur," *Oriens Antiquus* 20 (1982): 39–48; Benjamin R. Foster, "Archives and Record-keeping in Sargonic Mesopotamia," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie* 72 (1982): 1–27; Benjamin R. Foster, *Administration and Use of Institutional Land in Sargonic Sumer* (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1982); Benjamin R. Foster, "People, Land, and Produce in Sargonic Gasur," *Studies on the Civilization and Culture of Nuzi and the Hurrians* 2 (1987): 89–107.

⁴⁰ Benjamin R. Foster, *Archives and Record-keeping*, 9.

⁴¹ Rusan V. Dzharakian, "Klinopisnye arhivy Yorgan-Tepe i Tell-Himrina (etnichesky siostav i ekonomicheskoe polozhenie naseleiya)" (PhD diss., Institute for the Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Saint-Petersburg, 1994).

the population at Yorgan-Tepe (ancient Gasur) and Tell Himrin (ancient Awal). In this work the economic life at Gasur and Awal is studied within the dichotomy of "communal economy" vs. "state economy", a paradigm that was first applied to Mesopotamia by A.I. Tyumenev⁴² and I.M. Diakonoff.⁴³ According to Dzharakian, the Gasur economy was a communal one and the Gasur household was not integrated into the economic system of the Sargonic kingdom.

The dissertation being submitted differs from that of Dzharakian in many ways, most fundamentally in what concerns methodology and the principles of philological analysis. The translations of the Gasur texts as found in Dzharakian's study require major updates, because there has been a dramatic increase in sources over the past two decades and a radical expansion of our understanding of the Sargonic dialect.

Translations of texts presented in the Appendix to the dissertation being submitted account for these changes (as well as for the numerous joins identified by the author and unknown to Dzharakian). Moreover, the edition of the texts in the Appendix was prepared using the original tablets (the Harvard part of the archive) and their photos (the Baghdad part of the collection); in contrast to Dzharakian's based solely on the copies of the tablets published by Meek back in 1935.

The main differences in methodological approach between Dzharakian and the present author is that Dzharakian uses the Gasur onomastic data solely for the reconstruction of the ethnic profile of the archive and pays little attention to prosopography that has proven to be a powerful tool for the study of the economic life at Gasur. This lack of interest in establishing prosopographic links between individuals that form economically significant working units, Dzharakian's reconstruction differs significantly from the one proposed in the present study, especially in what pertains to the assessment of Gasur's role in the economic life of the Sargonic kingdom.

The methodology

Methodologically, this dissertation relies on the general principles of historicism, scientific objectivity and consistency. In general, the preference was given to classical methods of source criticism, historical-philological and prosopographic analysis. In order to achieve the goals of the present study (see above), the author developed a multi-step approach that can be described as follows:

⁴² Alexandr I. Tyumenev, *Gosudarstvennoe hoziaystvo drevnego Shumera*.

⁴³ Igor M. Diakonoff, *Obschestveny i gosudarstvenny storoy drevnego Dvurechya* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Vostochnaya Literatura, 1959).

- 1) While preparing the edition of the texts it was deemed necessary to rely primarily on the cuneiform originals and the photos of the tablets rather than solely on Meek's copies, since it is crucial for collations and the identification of joining fragments (both direct and long-distance ones). At this point, the copies of the texts were checked against the originals to confirm the readings of individual signs and their sequences, and the fragments that originally belonged to the same tablet (the joins) were established.
- 2) After that, the commented edition of the corpus could be prepared. The author aimed at making it a useful tool that could be utilized on its own, as a fix for the current state of affairs when only a handful of Gasur texts being available in translation and with an exhaustive commentary, while the majority of them are still available in Meek's autographs only.
- 3) Then thematically related texts were split into groups and subjected to preliminary analysis. This allowed outlining the thematic scope of the archive and evaluating its potential for historical reconstruction.
- 4) The preliminary treatment outlined above gave way to deeper analysis based on the combination of the prosopographic and systemic approach. Their joint use seemed promising for several reasons. The prosopographic approach involves the description of individual and collective biographies based on the information that pertains to individuals (or groups) mentioned in the texts of the archive. Not only does it allow a further calibration of the text groups, it also provides links between them. Moreover, prosopographic analysis has proven to be crucial for defining the economic structure that produced the archive. At the same time, the systemic approach allowed examining the Gasur household as an economic system, both in what pertains to the ways it operated on the inside, as well as to its links to the outside world, e.g. to the local administration and the imperial bureaucracy.
- 5) Further, the use of non-Gasur sources that mention the city adds a new dimension to the results obtained and makes it possible to assess the real significance that Gasur had in the period under study.

The approach outlined above has had its impact on the structure of the dissertation that includes the Introduction, the main part divided into four chapters, Conclusions, the Appendix, and the Bibliography (including the list of sources used).

The Introduction formulates the goals and objectives of the study, justifies its relevance, gives a description of the corpus of sources, provides a historiographical analysis,

outlines the methodology of research, and describes the scientific and methodological apparatus.

The first chapter entitled “The general characteristics of the Gasur archive” contains general information about the corpus on which the work is based. It examines the Gasur archive in its archaeological context, describes the circumstances of its publication (in autographs) and its subsequent distribution between two museum collections (the Harvard Semitic Museum and the Iraq Museum). Also, it gives an overview of the joins, both simple and long-distance ones, discovered by the author (altogether ten joins were found, which resulted in the decrease of the original number of texts from 222 to 213). In the first chapter, the Gasur archive is also studied in its chronological and geographical perspective. The chronological data provided by the texts is evaluated in a special section (with the conclusion that the archive likely dates back to the second half of Naram-Suen’s reign). Another section is devoted to the study of the geographical horizon of the Gasur archive, i.e. the city’s relationship with its satellite settlements as well as with its more distant neighbors. The mentions of the city in the IIIrd millennium non-Gasur texts (including the Eblaite and the Old Assyrian material) are presented here for the first time as well.

The second chapter (“The Gasur archive as an archive of an agricultural bureau: the administrative dimension”) provides a description of the administrative structure that brought the archive to life. This institution that has been labeled the “Gasur agricultural bureau” by the author of the present study, was engaged in the management of land plots, and also coordinated agricultural work not only in Gasur, but also in the nearby settlements under its economic influence.

Since Gasur was located above the 300-mm isohyet, rain-fed farming methods had to play an important role in its agriculture. However, non-irrigated farming could not have provided consistently high yields, which was dealt with by working an increased number of land plots (i.e. the land was used extensively rather than intensively). Analysis of the spatio-temporal context of the archive demonstrated that Gasur was in the center of a network of settlements that were economically dependent on it. It is even possible that Gasur was the largest administrative center in the region extending from Little Zab to the Diyala valley. Such a status would be in agreement with the available data pertaining to the contacts between Gasur and the largest cities of the South, both in the Sargonic era and in times of the II dynasty of Lagash. The high importance of Gasur for the Sargonic kingdom is also confirmed by the contacts of the Gasur agricultural bureau with the royal administration and the members of the ruling dynasty.

The third chapter (“Economic life at Sargonic Gasur: an overview”) examines the economic sectors that were part of the responsibility of the Gasur agricultural bureau, including the organization of field work, distribution and processing of grain, as well as animal husbandry. Much attention is given to the study of the activities of people who are called ENGAR (lit. ‘farmer’) in the texts of the archive. They not only supervised the agricultural work in the settlements within the Gasur economic network, but also were involved in the processing of grain (including the grain intended for rations) and in the activities performed for the benefit of the royal household.

Since the agricultural service was located in Gasur and the centers of agricultural production at a distance from it, the scribes needed to be constantly in contact with those who were in charge of the local affairs, i.e. with the *engars*. These people acted as intermediaries between the bureau and local production units (it is no coincidence that each of the *engars* is associated with a particular settlement). These people probably had nothing to do with the immediate cultivation of the land. Rather their duties must have included receiving resources from the agricultural bureau and their further distribution among the field workers, organizing field work, controlling the harvesting and processing of crops, and, finally, delivering grain and grain products to Gasur. In addition, several economic terms are specifically associated with the *engars* in Gasur texts. These terms are nearly unknown outside Gasur, with only a few attestations at Sargonic Adab. Among them are ŠE ŠU.KAD_x RI.(A) ‘(a category of grain),’ MUN.ŠÀ ‘a fixed ration’ and ÉŠ.GÀR LUGAL ‘a royal work assignment’. A detailed analysis of these terms, as well as their exhaustive discussion and interpretation is offered for the first time in this dissertation study. The results obtained can be summarized as follows:

- The term ÉŠ.GÀR LUGAL (‘a royal work assignment’) has only been attested in the context of plowing in non-Gasur texts. In contrast to this, the Gasur scribes used the term exclusively in connection to the procession of grain by the *engars*. Such use may indicate that the *engars* were responsible for doing this kind of work for the palace. It is not clear, however, how often the *engars* had to perform this duty: it cannot be excluded that the work was of a one-time (perhaps, in connection with a royal visit) rather than permanent nature.
- The *engars* of Gasur were associated with specific amounts of grain called ŠU.KAD_x RI.(A). Both the etymology of the term and its exact meaning are obscure. Outside the Gasur corpus it is only found once, in Sargonic Adab, which suggests that this phenomenon was not a local feature. As the Gasur texts show, the term ŠU.KAD_x RI.(A) could be applied to both incoming and outgoing grain. The local households

associated with *engars* are mentioned as the only source of ŠU.KAD_x RI.(A) in the Gasur corpus. The grain was usually received by the scribe, who worked for the agricultural office. After that it could be spent on various purposes, e.g. to be given out as seeding grain, to be used for raw rations or to be handed over to trading agents (probably as merchandise). Since the *engars* were associated with both production and consumption of ŠU.KAD_x RI.(A), they had to keep balanced accounts. The cadaster office also kept track of the expended ŠU.KAD_x RI.(A) in the form of spreadsheets.

All this suggests that ŠU.KAD_x RI.(A) was the part of the institutional income that was used by the office to keep the system running. After all the expenses were covered, the surplus of ŠU.KAD_x RI.(A) could be sold by the merchants, who worked in cooperation with the office.

- The term MUN.ŠÀ ‘a fixed ration’ is applied in the corpus to both grain and semolina (a type of fine groats which was obtained from barley or emmer). Thanks to the publication of Sargonic texts from Mashkan-ili-Akkade (modern Umm-al-Hafriyat) it became possible to establish the Akkadian equivalent of this term, namely *mūš(š)aqum*. Both MUN.ŠÀ and *mūš(š)aqum* have no clear Sumerian or Akkadian etymology: the literal translation of MUN.ŠÀ (MUN ‘salt’ + ŠÀ ‘heart’) yields no plausible meaning, while none of the known Akkadian verbs can be seen as a credible source of *mu-ša-qum*. Comparison of the Akkadian *mūš(š)aqum* with the phonetically and semantically close Eblaic form *mu-ša-gu-um* ‘fixed food ration’ (**mawtaqum* < **wtq* ‘to be permanent, reliable’) allowed the author to suggest a compelling Semitic etymology for the Akkadian term, which, in turn, gave way to interpreting MUN.ŠÀ as a pseudo-logogram based on *mūš(š)aqum* ‘food ration of fixed volume’.

Finally, **the last chapter** (“Royal presence at Gasur”) explores the connections of Gasur with Akkade, the capital of the Sargonic kingdom, and with the members of the royal family. It is centered on the short-term visit of a Sargonic king (most probably Naram-Suen) to Gasur. Separate sections discuss the officials of the central administration and those who were directly in the royal service in order to determine the intensity of the state’s involvement into Gasur affairs and to assess the significance of Gasur for the Sargonic kingdom.

The Conclusions section summarizes the results of the study and checks them against the set objectives.

The Appendix to the dissertation includes a complete and up-to-date edition of the Gasur texts that accounts for all the joins and collations. Each text is provided with a transliteration, translation, and an exhaustive philological and factual commentary.

The dissertation also includes **the Bibliography** (including the list of sources), a list of illustrations, a list of tables, a list of diagrams, and a list of maps.

Scientific novelty of the study

Most of the new results presented in the study were achieved through work on the corpus (these include joins, collations, new readings, clarification of previously uninterpreted Sumerian and Akkadian terms), and in the course of reconstructing of socio-economic life at Gasur in the Sargonic era (here belong the adjustment of the archive date, new evidence for the economic importance of the city under the Sargonids, as well as for the relationship between the local administration and the central one, and also for the links between Gasur and the most important urban centers of Southern Mesopotamia).

It should be noted that in the Appendix an up-to-date commented edition of all currently known Gasur texts is offered (including a previously unknown Gasur text).

Theoretical and practical significance of the work

The work offers a comprehensive reconstruction of the socio-economic life of a large northern Mesopotamian city of the late III millennium BCE, which was part of the Sargonic kingdom. The results obtained have a high theoretical significance, since the Gasur archive is the only Sargonic archive to allow drawing conclusions about how the economic life was organized in a region with predominantly rain-fed agriculture (all other significant corpora of this period come from the cities of the Sumerian South, where irrigation systems were the key agricultural factor).

The practical value of the work is due to the comprehensive edition of the Gasur corpus that accounts for collations, joins and the latest developments in the study of the Sargonic dialect. The texts are provided with a Russian translation and a detailed historical and philological commentary, which amplifies the accessibility of the corpus not only for specialists, but also for wider public. Moreover, the results of the thesis research can be used in the preparation of textbooks, lecture courses and historiographical works on the history of Mesopotamia III millennium BCE.

Positions to be defended

1. For several centuries, from the Early Dynastic period to the end of Lagaš II, Gasur was an important administrative center for land management and agriculture on a vast territory that stretched a considerable distance from the Little Zab towards the Diyala region.
2. The Gasur texts most likely date from the second half of the reign of Naram-Suen.
3. The Gasur corpus is an archive of a large institution, for which the name *Gasur Agricultural Bureau* is being proposed.
4. The corpus was created within a short time span that is most likely did not exceed three years.
5. The bulk of the Gasur texts reflects the activities of the group of people referred to as ‘the *engars*’ in the documents. The *engars* had a key role at the *Gasur Agricultural Bureau*, acting as intermediaries between its administration and the settlements under the city’s economic influence. Their duties included receiving resources from the office and their further distribution among those who worked directly on the land. Also, they were used to collect, deliver and process the harvest, most of which went to the grain reserve, referred to in the texts by the term ŠU.KADx RI.(A), which the office then could spend on current needs. They were also responsible for the production of semolina for fixed-volume food rations (MUN.ŠÀ), which were distributed within a certain group of Gasur citizens. An important duty of the *engars* was the processing of grain – the task sometimes designated in the texts as the ‘royal assignment’ and, hence, most probably carried out in the interests of the royal household.
6. Animal husbandry was in the focus of attention of the *Gasur Agricultural Bureau* too. Some texts mention the purchase of animals by trading agents who received funding from the *Bureau*, which suggests that the *Bureau* had associate entrepreneurs who acted on its behalf. Big cattle was often given to the *engars* to be used as draught animals, whereas small cattle was likely kept for the products they yielded. In this respect, the breeding of pigs was of special importance, as the *Bureau* made lard deliveries as far as Akkade.
7. Gasur had close ties with the capital of the Sargonic kingdom. The agricultural office interacted with the royal household and the representatives of the royal house at different levels: the texts mention not only the (transit?) royal visit to Gasur, but also the royal grandson (“son of the royal daughter”), as well as the royal servants and soldiers.
8. As evidenced by the number, variety and complexity of Gasur school texts, the Gasur agricultural office trained scribes, who most likely were later to become its administrators.

Pre-defense presentation of the results

The main results of the thesis, as well as a number of individual problems and subjects considered in it were presented at international scientific conferences (Rencontre assyriologique internationale in Paris (2019) and Marburg (2017), Diakonoff Conference (2015, 2018)) and colloquia (colloquium organized by the Russian-French research project COMPTABAB (L'administration économique du palais au Proche-Orient à l'Age du Bronze, 2014–2016)).

Information on the scientific institution and the academic supervisor

The work was completed at the Institute for Oriental and Classical Studies of the Federal State Autonomous Educational Institution of Higher Education “National Research University “Higher School of Economics.” Under the supervision of Leonid Efimovich Kogan, Dr. Sc. (Philology), Professor of the Institute Oriental and Classical Studies.

Published articles submitted for PhD defense:

1. Markina, Ekaterina. “Sargonovskie pis'ma iz Gasura.” *Vestnik drevney istorii* 2 (2022): 261–280.
2. Markina, Ekaterina. “Akkadskiye istochniki sargonovskoy (staroakkadskoy) dinastii III. Nadpis' Manishtushu.” *Vestnik drevney istorii* 4 (2018): 1081–1093.
3. Markina, Ekaterina. ““They embraced his feet, saying...”: *ša'pēn ahāzum* and *ša'pēn ezēbum* as Idioms of Loyalty and Defiance in Sargonic.” *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archäologie* 100 (2010): 56–62.

Other publications:

1. Markina, Ekaterina. “Gasur in the Third Millennium.” In *Pratiques administratives et comptables au Proche-Orient à l'âge du Bronze*, edited by Ilya Arkhipoff, Gregory Chambon and Nele Ziegler, 171–182. Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2021.
2. Markina, Ekaterina. “A Note on Sargonic MUN.ŠÀ /*mušāqum*/.” In *The Third Millennium: Studies in Early Mesopotamia and Syria in Honor of Walter Sommerfeld and Manfred Krebernik*, edited by Ilya Arkhipoff, Leonid Kogan and Natalia Koslova, 452–458. Leiden: Brill, 2020.
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