List and Narrative:
Arrangement of Entries in an Old Babylonian List based on Late Uruk Iconography

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BACKGROUND

The most common similarities in lists are:

- Graphemic (SHAPE)
- Phonological (SOUND)
- Semantic (MEANING)

► Mesopotamian lists are products of scribal education:

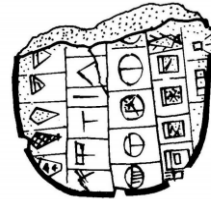   made **by scribes**, **for scribes**.

Graphemic association pattern in the late Uruk list W 9123,d

► Every list has **underlying association patterns** that govern the arrangement of entries within the text, facilitating **storage in** and **retrieval from** the mind.

These patterns are typically based on **similarities** between entries.

► The list **Diri** "**Oxford**" (~ 1,740 BCE) is one of the most complex bilingual lists (Sumerian – Babylonian) known from ancient Mesopotamia.

Unlike most other lists it does **not** exhibit a clearly visible unifying association pattern.

► Instead, a **wide variety** of such patterns was used by the compilers to create **pedagogically structured sections** with the aim to effectively transmit knowledge of the Sumerian language and writing system to students whose native tongue was Babylonian.

► In order to better understand how Diri "Oxford" is structured I developed a **simple semiotic model of cuneiform** applicable to both signs and texts, in which cuneiform graphemes are understood as complex **semiotic artefacts**.

graphemic aspect

CUNEIFORM GRAPHEME

+ linguistic
+ **extralinguistic**

semantic aspect

phonological aspect

sign {
graphemic level
phonological level
semantic level
}

text {
graphemic relations
phonological relations
semantic relations
}

similarity, identity
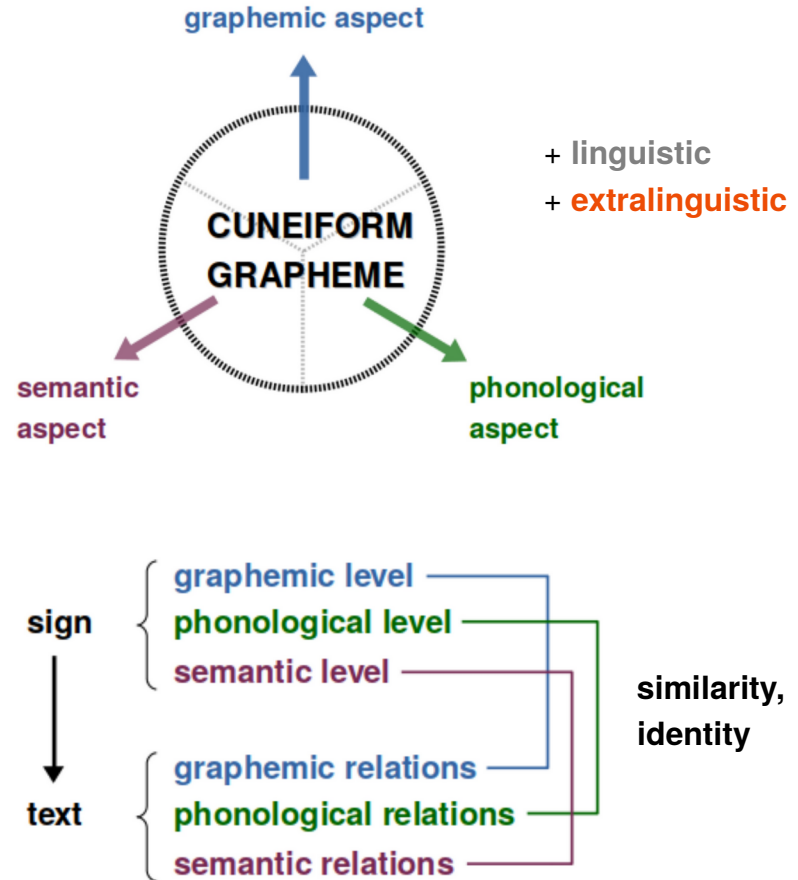
DIRI "OXFORD" 563-576

KASKAL.BU	**danna**	"league**"**
GANA$_2$.BU	**ašag-gid$_2$**	"field surveyor"
ŠAG$_5$.TUR	**nimbar-tur**	"young date palm"
PIRIG.TUR	**nemur**	"leopard"
PIRIG.TUR	**pirig**-TUR	"young lion; lion cub"
NAGAR.ZA^{tenû}	**tugul**	"femur, leg bone"
EŠ$_2$.SUD.NUN.EŠ$_2$.TUD	**saman**	"tether, nose-rope"
BAD.UD	**lugud**	"pus"
URUDA.NAGAR	**tibira**	"inlay worker"
IM.ŠU.LAGAB	IM.**šu-rin$_4$**	"oven"
SU.E.TUM	KUŠ.**kuru$_{14}$**	"(decorated) girdle"
KI.ERIxMIN	**dakkan**	"gatehouse"
ERIxMIN.KI	**suku$_4$**	"(door) post"

Controlled nature

Craftwork: girdle

Architecture: building entry

► Diri "Oxford" 563-576 is a unique example for a pedagogically structured section using extralinguistic contextual relations. Simple relations on the graphemic, phonological, and semantic levels can easily be established.

The key to understanding it is found in the **unusual subsection** from PIRIG.TUR to BAD.UD

LIST AND (VISUAL) NARRATIVE

► The **unusual subsection** allows us to associate Diri "Oxford" 563-576 with a narrative depicted on the **cylinder seal** YPM BC 37566, dating to the late Uruk period.

"league**"**
"field surveyor"
"young date palm"
Controlled nature

"leopard"
"young lion; lion cub" ✓
"femur, leg bone" ✓
"tether, nose-rope" ✓
"pus"

"inlay worker"
"oven"
"(decorated) girdle"
Craftwork: girdle

"gatehouse"
"(door) post"
Architecture: building entry
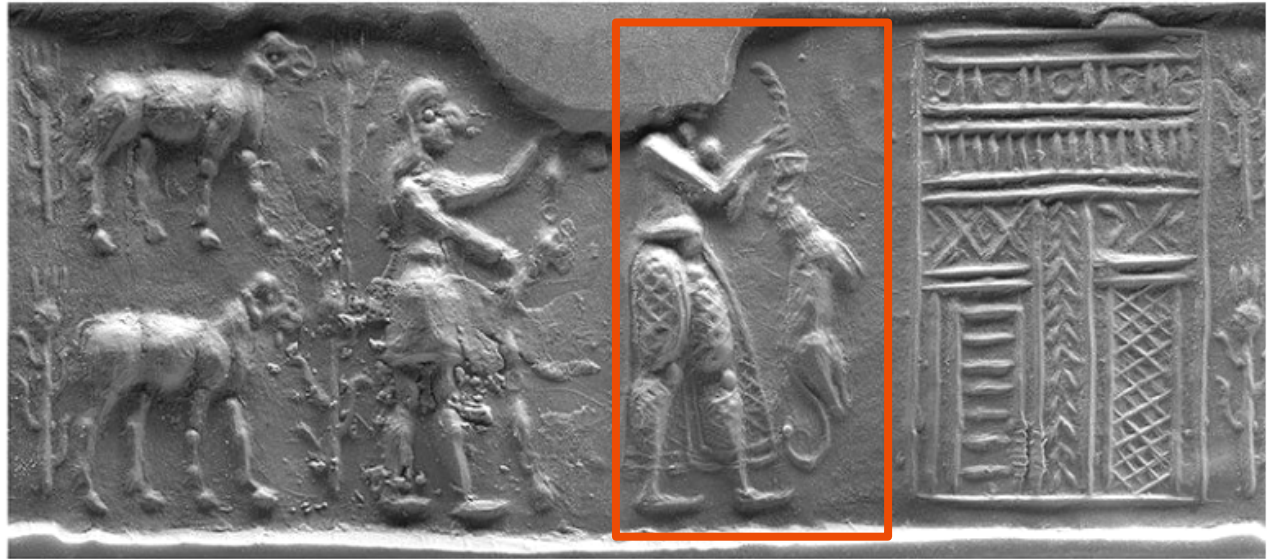
Controlled nature **Craftwork: girdle** large cat ✓ / leg bone ✓ / tether ✓ **Architecture: building entry**

CONCLUSIONS

► Compilers apparently were inspired by iconography to construct Diri "Oxford" 563-576.

► 'Retelling' of visual narrative in list format – not an exact copy!

► They used **extralinguistic contextual relations** based on a visual narrative similar to that shown on YPM BC 37566.

► **Pragmatics** of foreign / dead **language teaching**.

Visual aids & **storytelling** are powerful teaching tools:

- **Grab** and **maintain** students' **attention**
- Help to **retain information**