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original specifically to check this very detail. The clearest figures in the row show that the shapes Churcher took to be beaks in fact continue under the bird in a curve that continues unbroken below the legs.¹ This feature is also present on the Pitt-Rivers knife handle (also verified by my collation), where the shapes below the birds become almost flattened ovals. Both equivalent rows of birds should be compared with the elephants supported by serpents shown on the opposite side of the Brooklyn handle (A1). They are vultures or other birds of prey tearing serpents, as shown on the early jar in the British Museum and a bowl from Qustul tomb L 23. This point is emphasized here because these two knife handles, with the vultures tearing serpents (possibly pulling them from a land-sign on the Pitt-Rivers handle) are an important step in the developing historical consciousness of early Egypt shown more clearly in a representation from Qustul tomb L 19 and the later palettes.

In the catalogue, which includes the entire collection of early materials, the objects are organized by kind (pottery, stone vessels, etc.) and classification and illustrated by photographs that clearly show details. Thus many pieces in the book are given dual illustration. The descriptive entries are preceded by designation, information on date, provenience, museum number, and previous publication. The organization is straightforward and useful, and the frequently cited parallels are illuminating. A high point is the complete publication of the Ma³amariya figurines. The vessels of Nubian origin are also of special interest, especially a late A-Group painted bowl from Hierakonpolis (97). A black-mouthed bowl with incised rib-rim may actually be Pan-Grave, however,

¹ In row B 1, the third bird is poorly preserved, but the prey has a head. The prey of the fourth bird is clear, with an undulating body. The head of the fifth bird is quite clear with a well-defined short beak and eye; the body of the prey does not undulate. The prey of the sixth bird has an undulating body, and the head is shown. Only the lower part of the seventh bird is preserved, but the prey undulates. The fish at the end of the row differs from that of A 10. In row A 2, the bird at the end (secretary bird?) has a long, hooked beak that is broken in the middle.

despite its discovery in an early cemetery. Appendixes that describe and illustrate Morgan's finds in Cairo and France complete a record of the excavations.

Winifred Needler and the Brooklyn Museum can be proud of presenting a major publication of poorly known excavated material so completely. Despite the shortcomings common to so many excavations of its era, Morgan's work was important and Winifred Needler's account is very well written, thorough, and informative.

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The Sumerian Language: An Introduction to Its History and Grammatical Structure.

By MARIE-LOUISE THOMSEN. *Mesopotamia*, Copenhagen Studies in Assyriology, vol. 10. Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1984. Pp. 363.

The most common question asked of Sumerologists by academic colleagues, students, and interested individuals is: "What work can I consult as a reliable and relatively complete source of information on Sumerian?" This is already a difficult question. And when the (alas, all-too-frequent) further qualification is added "preferably in English," the request becomes impossible. Up to now, the best one could do was to hand the questioner (1) a rather extensive bibliography in German, French, and English, and append a warning that in any case without (2) a unifying commentary drawing on the "oral tradition," and (3) a personal working through of at least the better-understood parts of the corpus of Sumerian texts, the questioner probably has no hope of arriving at a realistic idea of what Sumerian is like, as far as it is understood today.

Marie-Louise Thomsen has now produced a work intended to answer the questioner's needs by meeting the just-mentioned three requirements. (1) It provides an overview of all major statements on Sumerian grammar up to approximately 1982. (2) It combines these into a synthetic view of Sumerian grammar as a

whole. (3) It illustrates copiously each point of grammar amassing in the process a total of 832 text citations, most of which consist of at least one grammatically complete clause. After a brief introduction to the language and the textual materials (pp. 1-33), the bulk of the work is dedicated to a detailed and systematic exposition of Sumerian grammar (pp. 37-294). It ends with a bibliography (complete, as far as I can see for grammatical investigations up to 1982), and a "Catalogue of Verbs" (pp. 295-323), a very useful glossary of the most common verbs and their compounds, including almost all those used in the examples.

Inevitably in an enterprise in which one attempts *a*) to account for different positions, and *b*) to convey a unified view of Sumerian, difficulties will arise. Some are more on the level of terminology. Such a case arises with the suffix /-a/, which attaches to verb forms and their accompanying nominal arguments and incorporates them into a nominal clause or argument position in a higher clause. Thomsen prefers to view this /-a/ as a "subordination suffix," as opposed to the older view of it as a nominalizing suffix, for reasons she discusses in the relevant section (pp. 241-50). However, since there is thus no reference to a nominalizing category in the table of contents, an earlier statement "There are no morphological means to derive nouns from verbs" (p. 55) could be misleading, since this morphologically marked subordination process is precisely what some users of the grammar might understand as a "morphological means of deriving nouns from verbs."

In other cases, an older terminology retained without discussion can be the cause of potential confusion. "Pronominal Conjugation" was a term used by Falkenstein (AnOr 28, p. 149) to designate what he conceived of as a morphologically independent way of forming finite verbs: Verb+a+Possessive. In references cited by Thomsen (p. 264), it was demonstrated that all of the forms cited by Falkenstein (and many others of the same type) are really subordinate clauses and that the form is a variant on a familiar type of subordinate construction consisting of "nominalized verb" with a possessive subject followed under certain conditions by a

postposition (*dé-a-ni* "when he pours"; *dé-a-zu-dè* "when you pour"). It might have been helpful to point out the origin of the term and to state that it is retained for ease of reference and for purposes of continuity only.

There is another difficulty inherent in any attempt to construct a seamless grammatical garment out of the kind of material that is available for Sumerian. This is that the evidence is very unevenly distributed over the various points of Sumerian grammar; and some of the evidence that can be adduced is of doubtful interpretation or validity. A case in point is the allowable sequences of prefixes in the Sumerian verbal prefix chain (chart on p. 139; discussion pp. 156 ff.). Depending on the evidence allowed, a number of distinct schemata might be supported. Thomsen takes the position that the not-uncommon "conjunction" prefix form /inga-/ is to be analyzed as the very common conjugation prefix /iⁿ-/ followed by /ga-/, which is taken to be the specific form of the "conjunction" prefix (and which thus becomes homophonous with the cohortative modal prefix). Since /inga-/ is quite reliably attested before another very common conjugation prefix /mu-/, it follows that /i-/ and /mu-/ can co-occur (and also that "conjunction" /ga-/ can only occur when it is preceded by the conjugation prefix /i-/ or the alternate form /a-/). There must thus exist sequences of the type /i-mu-/ and /im-mu-/. Sure enough, some can be quoted. But what needs to be pointed out is that while all other combinations of common prefixes are abundantly attested in the best possible contexts, this particular one occurs only sporadically, and even then limited to the corpus of Old Babylonian Grammatical Texts (with its very special kind of Sumerian), late texts, and scattered variants. Thus in the light of the distribution of the evidence, it might have been worthwhile at least to point out that the relative simplicity of the traditional analysis of the prefix, according to which /inga-/ is a single "quasi-modal" prefix, which can be preceded by a modal and must be followed by a "conjugation" prefix. (Note that, as in all other cases, the vocalic prefix /i/a-/ coalesces with the final vowel of a preceding prefix.)

Another case of the same type has to do with the distinction between finite verb forms with suffix /-a/ ("subordinate") and without ("asyntactic"). The general rule is that a non-prefixed form of the verb does not have the suffix /-a/ if it modifies its agent (*lú è dù* "the man who built the house") and has /-a/ if it modifies a noun bearing any other case relationship (*é dù-a* "the built house/ house which was built"; note that *é lú-e dù-a* "the house built by the man/ which the man built," the so-called Mes-an-e-pad-a construction, is not an exception, as claimed by Falkenstein, but a simple expansion of the basic construction). This rule handles correctly an enormous range of cases. In addition, there are a small number of cases which unaccountably have an /-a/, where the rule predicts no suffix: Gudea A XV 13 *lú é dù-a-ra* "to the man who built the house," is a well-known instance. (Krecher, *Or.*, n.s. 47: 376-403, made an interesting hypothesis about these.) Thomsen builds on Krecher's insight, and by including some action nominalizations without /-a/ (these are at best marginal to this construction type and are of the form /še-ba/ "grain distribution ration"), she can integrate all the material into a format (see paradigm on p. 257) in which both construction types (modified agent and modified non-agent) co-occur with both morphology types ("asyntactic" and "subordinate"). Since about four cases are cited for each possibility, a casual user could get the impression that each is about equally well attested. In point of fact, however, the citations for the regular cases (agent modified without /-a/; non-agent with /-a/) represent only a small sampling out of a large total of possible examples, whereas the four examples for the "irregular" case (agent with /-a/) represent a sizable proportion of all possible citations. Thus one risks missing a surer generalization in favor of a less certain, although more inclusive and more symmetric, schema. With a language such as Sumerian, it might be better if we all adopted the practice of indicating more often and more explicitly the degree of textual support behind generalizations and subgeneralizations.

These reservations aside (and they are reservations which apply to Sumerian grammar

writing generally), Thomsen accomplishes admirably the task she sets herself. Given the contradictory positions and incompatible terminologies which have been developed around every major aspect of Sumerian grammar in the sixty years since Poebel's epoch-making grammar, what is surprising is that Thomsen is able to make emerge as coherent a picture of Sumerian as she does. Thanks to the generous quantity of illustrations, and aids such as the "Catalogue of Verbs," the work should be an effective introduction to Sumerian for someone approaching the language for the first time and a handy reference compendium for anyone wanting to review or catch up on grammatical developments during the last couple of decades. In this respect, a final suggestion for an addition to a future edition: apart from a few general considerations on the writing system, Thomsen scrupulously limits her coverage to Sumerian grammar, as indicated in the subtitle of the work. In practice, however, her book seems destined to remain for some time the most accessible first source of information about Sumerian. In view of this, the usefulness of the book could be enhanced by including a short bibliographically oriented appendix, which would describe and evaluate in a practical way the various reference and research tools which exist for dealing with the Sumerian writing system and lexicon.

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Die Paläste im Alten Mesopotamien. By ERNST HEINRICH. Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Denkmäler antiker Architektur, vol. 15. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1984. Pp. xiii + 243 + 138 figs. DM 228.

This volume can be considered a companion work to Heinrich's monumental book on temples.¹ In the "Vorbemerkungen," Hein-

¹ E. Heinrich, *Die Tempel und Heiligtümer im Alten Mesopotamien*, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Denkmäler antiker Architektur, vol. 14 (Berlin, 1982).