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Special Issue: Discussions in Assyriology | Edited by Magnus Widell & Parsa Daneshmand



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xšnaoθrahe ahurahe mazdā

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Special Issue: Discussions in Assyriology

Edited by Magnus Widell & Parsa Daneshmand

Mas, Juliette & Notizia, Palmiro (eds.). *Working at Home in the Ancient Near East*. Archaeopress Ancient Near Eastern Archaeology 7. Oxford: Archaeopress, 2020. Pp ii + 116, ISBN: 978-1-78969-591-5 / 978-1-78969-592-2 (eBook)

Magnus Widell
(University of Liverpool)

The collection of papers under review consists of seven studies presented in 2016 at a workshop with the same (somewhat foreboding) title, at the 10th International Congress on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East (ICAANE) in Vienna. The aim was to investigate “the socio-economic role played by non-institutional households in Mesopotamia during the 3rd and 2nd millennia BC, and their interaction with the institutional economy” (p. 1). The ensuing book is edited by the Sumerologist Palmiro Notizia and the archaeologist Juliette Mas, whose work so far has focused on Upper Mesopotamia and Syria in the Bronze Age. With the exception of Paolo Brusasco’s analysis of the domestic architecture in Old Babylonian Ur and Nippur (pp. 55-69), all contributions in the volume are based on archaeological and/or textual data from Upper Mesopotamia in the 3rd and 2nd millennia (4 studies), or on the analysis of Ur III textual data from the last century of the 3rd millennium in southern Mesopotamia (2 studies).

The so-called “Gelb-Diakonoff controversy” focused on the economic and social contexts of labor and production in early Mesopotamia – a favorite topic among Assyriologists during the final decades of the 20th century – appears to have reached an *impasse* in more recent years, although the editors rightly observe a recent proliferation in workshops focused on investigating the nature of the Mesopotamian households

(pp. 6-7). However, the topic as such is far from exhausted, and the study under review, which encourages a new form of dialogue between philologists and near eastern archaeologists, represents a welcome and much-needed response to Robert McCormick Adams' call for a more interdisciplinary approach to the topic, with a greater emphasis on the study of material culture:¹

It will be a primary responsibility of future archaeologists, not Assyriologists, to discover the real scale as well as the details of these more differentiated patterns of socio-economic life, of which only hints will have found their way into cuneiform texts through the myopic view of ancient scribes of their own hinterland.

The first contribution in the volume is a very useful overview by Laura Battini of the architectural and archaeological remains in ancient Nuzi, and how the data from the site may (or may not) help us reconstruct the domestic and palatial contexts of crafts production. Unfortunately, the architectural remains, as documented from the excavations of the site in the 1920s, do not clearly support (or contradict) the existence of crafts production in domestic contexts. According to Battini (p. 13), this absence of clear architectural evidence for domestic production is the result of the incomplete state of excavations (and excavation reports), and, at least to some degree, the insufficient comprehension among the archaeologists of the time of the evidence at hand. As pointed out by Battini, a few artefacts excavated in private houses, including whet stones and other hand tools (pp. 13-15), offer some glimpses into the work conducted within these structures, and more research is needed on this material. Nevertheless, the evidence presented by Battini remains rather underwhelming, and she concludes that very little evidence in the published reports suggest that specific craft activities took place in the private houses in the city (p. 13).²

Battini's assessment of the published data – and her somewhat negative conclusion overall – is entirely valid. Nevertheless, it would have been interesting to investigate further how/if the (admittedly very scant) architectural and archaeological data associated with the crafts production that has been recovered might enhance our understanding of the very rich data that we have on this topic from the ca. 5,000 cuneiform tablets from the city.³ For example, although largely unpublished, the archaeologists of Nuzi did unearth a significant number of spindle whorls and loom weights (offering evidence that the vertical warp was used for weaving in Nuzi), and the majority of these finds appears to have been made in the private houses of the city.⁴ These finds are interesting in light of the textual attestation of a group of female workers referred to as the “weavers of the thread” (*ušparātu ša gê*), which appear to have operated within the city's large households, seemingly outside of the administrative jurisdiction of the palace administration.⁵ If the connection between the “weavers of the thread” and the loom weights and spindle whorls excavated in the private houses of the city has any merit, it would offer evidence supporting the notion that large scale textile production took place within the domestic quarters in the city. Of course, domestic craft production

1- Adams 2007: §11.

2- Referencing Starr 1937: pl. 99-103, 116-127.

3- First studied in detail by Leo Oppenheim in 1939; see also Mayer 1978. More recent studies on production and labor in the Nuzi texts include Negri Scafa 2015 and Abrahams & Lion 2018.

4- Lion 2016: 365; with further references.

5- Abrahams 2014: 293-294; Abrahams & Lion 2018: 341.

does not constitute unambiguous evidence for independent crafts activities. Nevertheless, Jeanette Fincke has recently demonstrated that a wide range of work in Nuzi, including crafts activities, happened within the structural confines of the family household,⁶ and any evidence of more organized crafts production taking place within the city's domestic/private quarters are important for our understanding of the social and economic contexts in which labor took place.

Alexander Pruß is basing his study on the organization of labor in ancient Nabada (Tell Beydar) on the ca. 220 administrative cuneiform texts that were discovered in the city in the 1990s and early 2000s.⁷ It has been known for some time that these Pre-Sargonic texts (Early Jezirah IIIb, or ca. 2425-2340 BC), which primarily concern farming and grain management, labor and some aspects of animal husbandry, belong to a single archive that in all likelihood should be associated with the central administration of the city.⁸ Several texts with allocation of rations offer evidence of a redistributive economy, listing different workers involved in agriculture and herding, as well as artisans and crafts workers, including “potters, millers, fullers, basket-weavers, leather workers, cartwrights, one sculptor, and possibly a seal-cutter” (p. 21).

According to Pruß (p. 20), the entire population of Nabada, or at least a very large percentage of it, were sustained through barley rations distributed by the central administration. This understanding of the organization of labor at Nabada goes back to a detailed analysis of the site's ration lists by Jason Ur and Walther Sallaberger, and their (reasonable) assumption that the total population of Nabada consisted of approximately 2,000 people.⁹ In addition to the textual data, a large storage structure (possibly a granary), excavated on the edge of the central mound of the site, offers further support for a redistributive aspect of the economy of Nabada. On the other hand, several “family-sized” storage rooms in the city's domestic quarters suggest that not all households relied entirely on the collective/central management of agricultural reserves,¹⁰ highlighting the importance of a more nuanced understanding of the city's economy. Indeed, and as noted by Pruß, different people in Nabada received different amounts of barley, with rations ranging from the usual “minimum wage” of 60 sila₃/month for the men (and 30 sila₃/month for the women/children), to 90 sila₃/month for the “sheep watchers” (*ba-ri₂ udu*), and as much as 120 sila₃/month for the “persons, bringing the wood(en implement)” (*lu₂-geš-DU*).¹¹ Assuming that even the lowest rations were able to sustain their recipients, the obvious problem with such diverse amounts of rations is to offer a reasonable explanation for what the more privileged and well-paid groups in Nabada were supposed to do with their surplus. The answer, of course, is that they would exchange the surplus for other products and services in the city. The fact is that people cannot survive on barley alone, and *any* group sustained by barley rations – no matter how

6- Fincke 2015.

7- See Ismail et al. 1996; and Milano et al. 2004.

8- Sallaberger 1999: 397; see also Sallaberger & Pruß 2015: 104.

9- Sallaberger & Ur 2004: 58-59; Sallaberger & Pruß 2015: 103-104.

10- Hole 1999: 274; see also Paulette 2015: 64-69. According to Pruß (2020: 33), none of the excavated houses (which typically only measured around 40 m²) had the capacity to store enough grain to sustain its inhabitants for a whole year.

11- Sallaberger & Pruß 2015: 94-95. Pruß further believes that the *lu₂-geš-DU* were allocated additional sustenance land (p. 20, referencing Sallaberger & Pruß 2015: 94).

modest in size – will have to exchange a portion of the barley for other necessities of life.¹² Such exchange can only take place if there is demand for barley among the people with access to those necessities, which is difficult to envision in a socio-economic system assuming universal (or near universal) rations of barley.¹³ After all, who would exchange anything for barley, in a society where the state already provides everyone with all the barley they need? With this in mind, it may be necessary to consider the possibility that the recovered/available ration and worker lists in Nabada count the same individuals more than once,¹⁴ within a much smaller group of state employees (with the same individuals working for several/all of the five leading officials in the city). Alternatively (or additionally), it is possible that the barley rations in the texts simply refer to short-term compensations for regular/conscripted citizens, taking on temporary jobs during labor intense periods, such as the harvest or public construction projects. Such arrangements, whereby the state temporarily compels workers outside its immediate control to contribute their labor, are well known from southern Mesopotamia.¹⁵ The nature of the main “professions” in Nabada remains uncertain, and it is possible that these generously compensated groups “bringing wood(en implements)” or “watching sheep” held temporary – and much needed – functions within the administration and economy of the city, rather than permanent occupations.¹⁶ This interpretation might find some support in the curious fact that the overseers of work teams (perhaps permanent staff on regular incomes) received less barley than the workers under their supervision.¹⁷ Martin Savage has recently demonstrated that unskilled female workers temporarily employed in construction work in Ur III Garshana received 3 sila₃ barley/day, a significantly more generous (pro-rata) compensation than offered to the city’s permanent workforce.¹⁸

Juliette Mas is concerned with households and production in Upper Mesopotamia in the third millennium BC, where she distinguishes between production in non-urban and community controlled (private) households, typically built around patrilineal kinship groups, and state-controlled production taking place in larger households embedded in the bureaucracies of the major cities. While the textual evidence from major sites, such as Mari and Nabada, offers insights into the organization of the large urban households, we must rely on archaeological data for our reconstructions of the socio-economic contexts of production within the smaller, non-urban households (p. 37). To provide a more holistic picture

12- Pruß is right that “the amount of grain distributed through the ration system was sufficient to cover the basic caloric needs of the recipients” (p. 20 n. 16; referencing Ur & Wilkinson 2008), but there is more to a sustainable diet than just calories. Anyone trying to survive on barley rations alone would experience the first symptoms of scurvy within a few months, and almost certain (and excruciating) death within a single year. While 2-3 raw onions/day might keep the scurvy away (just about...), humans also need essential fatty acids and complete proteins. For a more wholesome and sustainable diet in southern Mesopotamia in the late third millennium, we may turn to the Ur III state’s provisions of its messengers, who typically received beer, bread, onions (or “soup”), oil, and (occasionally) mutton and/or fish, for additional proteins and fat (McNeil 1971, summarized by Pomponio 2013: 223-227; and Brunke 2013).

13- Hence Stanley Jevons, in his formative classic on the basic principles of exchange (1875: 3): “The first difficulty in barter is to find two persons whose disposable possessions mutually suit each other’s wants.”

14- We have to assume that the archaeologists of Nabada have only recovered a small fraction of the total number of ration- and worker lists that were produced by the city’s central administration, in the same way as the 220 tablets in total almost certainly only represent a fraction of the city’s archive as a whole.

15- Garfinkle 2010: 315.

16- Sallaberger & Pruß (2015: 94) have suggested that the lu₂-geš-DU may have served as plowmen (lu₂-geš-DU APIN), and it is reasonable to assume that the “sheep watchers” were engaged in livestock farming in the city.

17- Sallaberger & Pruß 2015: 95.

18- Savage 2020: 231-234 (edition of CUSAS 3 324; CDLI: P329384).

of production in Upper Mesopotamia, Mas offers an analysis of the archaeological remains of what have been identified as workshops from 15 different Bronze Age sites in northern Syria, ranging from small hamlets to the provincial capitals of the area. Based on the data from these sites, Mas reconstructs two co-existing systems of production, taking place in both the urban and the rural settings. Production was either organized/controlled centrally through specialized workshops associated with the public institutions (e.g. Nabada),¹⁹ or it occurred within the private houses in the settlements (e.g. Mari), and was for the most part coordinated outside the direct authority of the central administration, although any private groups involved in production would have maintained strong links to the state bureaucracy.

Mas presents a very interesting model for craft production in Upper Mesopotamia, that has important consequences for our overall understanding of the administrative and economic organization of cities and towns in the region. As pointed out by Mas (p. 36), the socio-economic systems of Upper Mesopotamia remain relatively poorly understood in comparison to the south, and her research successfully fills a gap in our knowledge of the region. Nevertheless, more data, from a wider range of sites, remains necessary before conclusions that are more definitive can be drawn regarding the social/economic contexts of craft production in Upper Mesopotamia. Future studies must separate between the actual data obtained from these various excavations, and the sometimes fanciful interpretations offered by the sites' archaeologists, whose willingness/reluctance (over the last century) to identify ancient workshops in the material culture is far from consistent. On page 42, Mas highlights the analytical complexities involved: several peculiar installations discovered in the temples of Nabada were originally interpreted as toilets by the excavators,²⁰ but later reinterpreted as "craft installations" (installation artisanales) by Jean-Claude Marguere. Based on their similarity to installations discovered in "Palais de la Ville II" in Mari, Marguere interpreted the Nabada structures as factory-temples, engaged in large-scale crafts production.²¹ Other factors that have to be considered in archaeological studies of the socio-economic contexts of craft production include the overall scale of operations, as well as the precise nature of the craft activities. Not all activities are equal, and a loom for weaving textiles, or a small workshop for shoemaking, can easily be accommodated in a domestic building, but the same might not apply to a large-scale tannery, a metal workshop or a shipyard.

In his contribution to the volume, Paolo Brusasco offers an original and interesting interdisciplinary approach to spatial analysis of the domestic and commercial quarters excavated in Old Babylonian Nippur and Ur. In addition to the archaeological and textual data, Brusasco relies on environmental/social psychology, producing "sensorial maps" that emphasize "the flow of life" in the cities (p. 56). The article successfully demonstrates that by calculating/mapping zones of smell (good and bad), noise levels, light/darkness, as well as lines of sight, we can enhance our existing reconstructions of the various activities

19- Note that the excavations at Nabada have focused on the acropolis, where private houses are entirely lacking, and it is generally assumed that only a minor portion of the domestic architecture in the so-called Upper City has been excavated to date (Sallaberger & Pruß 2015: 105-106).

20- See the detailed description of these benched temple toilets, complete with plumbing and screen walls, in e.g. Lebeau & Suleiman 2005.

21- Marguere 2014: 287-288; see also Marguere 2008. Another example (p. 40) of the uncertainties surrounding the interpretations of some of these structures is the "Maison aux installations artisanales," which has been interpreted as a workshop for dyeing textiles (Marguere 2007) or for the caulking of boats and carts (Sallaberger 2014), two seemingly very different types of crafts activities. For the bitumen caulking of boats in early Mesopotamia, see now Talib Mohammed Taher 2016: 69, with further references.

taking place in Mesopotamian cities.

In his article on the merchant (dam-gar₃) Ur-saga from Ur III Girsu, Steven Garfinkle presents a picture of a thriving market economy during the final century of the third millennium BC, with entrepreneurial “family firms” of merchants, maneuvering around competing households. As pointed out by Garfinkle (p. 71), the debate continues on the precise nature of the work conducted by the state’s merchants, and not all Ur III scholars will agree with the picture presented here.²² Garfinkle further notes that the reconstruction of this private side of the economic organization of the Ur III state is complicated by the fact that the numerous economic and administrative texts of the period were almost exclusively drawn up within the administrative contexts of the state’s large and public institutions. Naturally, such texts will mainly concern administrative and economic matters relevant to the institutions that produced them (p. 72). Nevertheless, certain economic activities taking place outside the traditional boundaries of the large households, such as loan agreements and sales/purchase transactions, generate cuneiform records, which may throw some light on the non-institutional sector of the Ur III economy (pp. 72-73).

There can be little doubt that the early Mesopotamian creditors offering (interest-bearing) loans to their fellow citizens operated outside the institutional economy of the state, and the nature of these loan agreements show that the creditors were driven by an incentive to make profit. As an example of the private endeavors of the Ur III creditors, Garfinkle refers to the small archive of the Susa official Igibuni, which included 14 loan contracts, half of which were interest-free barley loans referred to as še ur₅-ra.²³ It is worthy to point out here that Igibuni was not a merchant in Susa. Based on his seal, we know that Igibuni was a scribe (dub-sar), although this may simply have been an honorary title. Of course, we know of several merchants who are attested acting as creditors, but as already noted by Garfinkle several years ago, the link between the loan industry and the office of the merchant in the Ur III is not immediately obvious.²⁴ Anyone with surplus capital could become a creditor, but the only way of becoming a merchant in the Ur III period was to be employed (or engaged) as one within the state administration. Nevertheless, we agree with Garfinkle that some kind of relationship in all probability existed between the merchants of the Ur III institutions and private economic activities, including loans.²⁵ However, the precise nature of this relationship remains unclear, and the fact remains that all merchants were engaged by the large public institutions, whose economic activities they sustained by securing a wide range of raw materials and other commodities.²⁶ This was the main responsibility of the merchants in the Ur III period, and concrete evidence for merchants acting as “facilitators of commerce” (p. 72) outside this professional capacity within the state bureaucracy remains rather scant.²⁷

22- See e.g. Garfinkle 2010a: 192: “For some, the damgars were employees of the state, and this would imply that the state was responsible for determining their hierarchy. For others, including myself, the damgars were representatives of their own individual households whose professional responsibilities included a great deal of contact with the state.”

23- De Graef 2015: 290. Note that the institutionally issued barley loans referred to as še ur₅-ra in the Ur III texts only rarely identify the individual creditors by name. When creditors of še ur₅-ra loans are mentioned by name, prosopographical analysis typically identify them as mid- to upper level official within the state bureaucracy (Notizia 2019: 275).

24- Garfinkle 2004: 24, n. 63; see also Widell 2008.

25- See e.g. Neumann 1999; Steinkeller 2004: 105-109.

26- Steinkeller 2004: 97-98. As argued by Garfinkle (2010b: 309-310), it is likely that merchants were organized in special offices in the Ur III cities, perhaps referred to as the “house of merchants” (e₂-dam-gar₃).

27- Cripps 2014: 206.

As a *dam-gar*₃ 1(u), “merchant (overseeing) 10 (merchants),” Lu-saga was an important and senior official in Girsu. From other studies by Garfinkle, we know that he was himself the son of a merchant, and that several of his sons were merchants in the city.²⁸ That kinship ties played an important role in the organizational structure of the Ur III merchants is well known among Ur III scholars. For example, many years ago, Hans Neumann demonstrated that (at least) three sons of the merchant Ur-Dumuzida, who worked in the Šara temple in Umma, followed their father’s example, and became merchants in the city.²⁹ In fact, more than half a century ago, Robert Adams argued that the *entire* administration in the early Mesopotamian city-states was based on kinship affiliations.³⁰ An increasing number of prosopographical studies of the Ur III material, from a variety of official contexts, have since then appeared in support of Adam’s proposition, showing that kin based succession of offices and responsibilities in the Ur III period does not, in itself, demonstrate independence from the state institutions.³¹ Indeed, as the next article in the volume under review demonstrates (see e.g. p. 84-86 and n. 10), Ur III officials routinely worked together with their fathers, brothers and sons, and there can be no doubt that both public and private organizational structures in the Ur III state were shaped to, and even took advantage of, existing kinship ties in the society.

Palmiro Notizia is presenting a fascinating account of the long career, and the personal wealth/assets, of the high-ranking Girsu official Lugal-irida, who was in charge of the Ur III state’s important textile mill in Guabba in the Lagaš province. While Notizia’s contribution is focused on the multi-column text RTC 304 (*CDLI*: P128457), an inventory of Lugal-irida’s various assets, his careful analysis of the overall organization of the textile mill in Guabba is excellent, and offers important insights into the hierarchical structure of a major provincial production center in the Ur III period. This analysis includes a detailed and very useful prosopographical study of Lugal-irida and his family, and we learn that Lugal-irida quickly advanced from being the “overseer of the weavers” (*ugula uš-bar*) to the important “superintendent of the weavers” (*nubanda uš-bar*), a position he held for over two decades, until his retirement (or death) from the office at the end of Amar-Suen 5. In this capacity, Lugal-irida was coordinating the work of anywhere between 17 and 27 “overseers” (p. 85), several of which were his own sons, and Notizia estimates the total number of people involved in the textile industry in Guabba (and its nearby satellites Nigin and Kinunir) to 10,000 individuals, with more than 6,200 female weavers in Guabba alone (pp. 86-87).

28- Garfinkle 2010a: 192-193, n. 23 and 2010b: 309, n. 8.

29- Neumann 1993.

30- Adams 1966: 85-86. Also note David Schloen’s now famous “patrimonial household model,” which, based on the theories of Max Weber, argues that the patriarchal household served as the universal paradigm for all social, economic, political and religious relationships in the ancient Near East (Schloen 2001).

31- See e.g. Hallo 1972; Steinkeller 1987: 80; also figures 2-4; Wu 1995; Dahl 2007: 131-132; Widell 2009: §§3.3-3.3.5; Allred 2013: 118, n. 6; and Widell, forthcoming.

A complete assessment of the importance of kinship ties within the administration of the Ur III state is somewhat complicated by the fact that the Sumerian word for “son” (*dumu*), in some contexts, appears to refer to an administrative relationship between an apprentice and his master, rather than a biological one (see e.g. Widell 2004; and, most recently, Pomponio 2013: 227-231). This ambiguity of the meaning of *dumu* in administrative contexts continues in the second millennium, and Jeanette Fincke writes about the household of the Nuzi scribe Taya (2015: 557; with additional references): “Perhaps student scribes that had entered Taya’s household were later called his “sons”. Since according to all Ancient Near Eastern contracts of apprenticeship the young apprentice entered the household of a craftsman to be taught his profession, a similar procedure may have been adapted to train scribes.”

Notizia shows how two texts provide us with some information on the agricultural domain land under Lugal-irida's control (pp. 88-89). Based on Zinbun 21, pl. 10 43 (*CDLI*: P142613), Lugal-irida was allotted 12 bur₃ of institutional land (ca. 77.76 ha), which would correspond to two standard (or ideal) fields in the Ur III period, each being the responsibility of one "cultivator" (engar).³² However, according to the large account City Life 2, 101-102 (*CDLI*: P143192), the "superintendent of the weavers" in Guabba only contributed 720 sila₃ of flour in zi₃-KA tax, the expected amount liable for a holder of a plot measuring 6 bur₃. A possible explanation for this difference might be that the 12 bur₃ represented the total amount of agricultural land allocated to Lugal-irida, of which only 6 bur₃ was cultivated (and thus liable to the zi₃-KA tax), while the remaining 6 bur₃ was left unplanted, in adherence with the bi-annual fallow requirements in the region.³³

Notizia's translation and analysis of RTC 104 is exemplary, offering an insight into some of Lugal-irida's institutional and private assets, and his (or his household's) possible involvement in a fairly wide range of economic activities, unrelated to his official role within the state's textile industry, including exchange (of aromatics and metals), date production, and animal husbandry. Considering Lugal-irida's long and successful career, as one of the most senior officials in the province, the inventory is remarkably modest: a handful of domestic animals, some wool and a few dozen textiles, a year's worth of barley, dates and oil for the family and staff, a few everyday tools and utensils, etc. Such entries tell us about the production, consumption and everyday life in a wealthy Ur III household, but they do not offer us much information on (any) more serious economic endeavors undertaken by Lugal-irida, with potential of having more than a marginal impact on the overall wealth of the household. As Notizia observes (pp. 93-94), the 50 gur of barley recorded in the inventory (= 15,000 liters), would not cover the annual outlay associated with the 27 individuals employed in the household, assuming a monthly compensation of 60 sila₃/person. On the other hand, according to the nominal yield rate used in Girsu, Lugal-irida's 6 bur₃ of cultivated domain land produced 180 gur barley every year (= 54,000 liters), which, using the same monthly compensation estimate of 60 sila₃/person, would be sufficient for the annual salaries of 75 individuals. In other words, Lugal-irida did not store the main part of his barley harvest within the confines of his residence/office (and the same would no doubt apply to other bulkier assets), and offsite holdings were not recorded in RTC 104.

The final contribution in the book is a shorter article written by Gojko Barjamovic and Norman Yoffee. Barjamovic first offers a brief but competent overview of the Old Assyrian trading activities of the early second millennium, emphasizing the undisputable private and profit-driven nature of the trade. Based on data from the private archives unearthed at the trading colony Kaneš (Kültepe) in Central Anatolia, Barjamovic concludes that the Old Assyrian trade was coordinated and maintained through an extensive network of private agents, who were supported in this endeavor by a wide range of legal and political institutions of a collective authority.

The second part of the article, written by Yoffee, is concerned with the importance of mercantile systems in antiquity more generally. Yoffee points out that a wide range of foreign goods and commodities are present in the material culture of prehistoric Mesopotamia, and argues that cross-cultural studies of the importance of trade and exchange can aid our reconstructions of the social, political and economic

32- Widell 2013: 60-61.

33- According to Govert van Driel (1999/2000: 81, n. 4), land in fallow was included in the allocations of sustenance plots of the Ur III state (cf., however, Maekawa 1986: 99; and Widell 2013: 63). For the disastrous results following violation of fallow in Mesopotamia, see Gibson 1974.

contexts in which the earliest Mesopotamian city-states acquired those goods and commodities.

To sum up this review, Juliette Mas and Palmiro Notizia have put together a successful collection of very interesting and intersecting articles, which raises a number of important questions regarding the structure and function of the non-institutional household in Mesopotamia in the third and second millennium BC. We are most grateful to the editors as well as the contributors of the volume, which is highly recommended to anyone interested in the socio-economic history of early Mesopotamia. The book is available directly from the publisher both in hardcopy and as an eBook.

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