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túg | NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL | :

A headband written using a logogram

In general, during the period 2500-2000 BC, the same types of textiles were used throughout Mesopotamia and were identified using a common terminology. However, there are some examples where textile names predominantly appear on tablets from one location, although it is possible that the same types of textile were used elsewhere but identified using different names. túg|NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL| is a headband and the word is found written on clay tablets from the Early Dynastic IIIb, Lagash II and Ur III periods. The word is very unusual because, although it was used at a number of different locations and identified using the same cuneiform signs, the order of the signs differed systematically according to the location. Thus, túg|NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL| was used at Girsu, túg|NÍG.SAL.LAL.SAG| at Umma, and there is a third variation túg|NÍG.SAL.SAG.LAL| found on a tablet with unknown provenience (TLB 3, 168).¹ Thus, the 'word' can be regarded as a logogram because the order of the individual signs within the word can be varied whilst the word retains the same meaning (Steinkeller 1989, 276).

Waetzoldt (1972, 140 and 279; 1980-83, 200), Steinkeller (1989, 276-277) and Gelb, Steinkeller and Whiting (1991, 294) each give very brief notes on this type of headband. The objective here is to bring these earlier considerations together and develop them further, taking into account the much wider range of texts that are now available. Although there is a wealth of textiles listed in the tablets, these are under-represented in Sumerian dictionaries. This is probably because it is often difficult to determine enough information about textiles to distinguish one from another. The aim here is to provide sufficient detail for túg|NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL| so that it can be properly included in future research.²

Waetzoldt (1972) transliterated the cuneiform signs as túg-nì-sag-lá-mí, however, Steinkeller (1989, 276-277)

and Gelb, Steinkeller and Whiting (1991, 294) render the word as túg|NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL|, noting the parallel with chestband, níg-lal-gaba, and interpreting the sign, SAL, as 'fine' or 'female'.

Following Steinkeller (1989, 276-277) and accepting túg|NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL| as the correct transliteration then, taken literally, it is a woollen textile (túg) which is something (níg) that binds (lal) the head (sag) that is thin or fine (sal). There is some ambiguity since the same cuneiform sign can be transliterated in different ways so, if the sign rendered as SAL was instead given as MUNUS, then it would imply female, rather than light or fine.

In terms of the physical characteristics of the textile, Waetzoldt (1980-1983) notes the tablet UNT 34, which gives two examples for the length of this textile, i.e. 0.6 m and 3.5 m. Another tablet (ITT 5, 6711) implies that the weight of the textile is 83¹/₃ g. It is evident that if a headband of length 3.5 m is wrapped around the head then the resulting headwear would be something akin to a turban. However, a headband of length 0.6m would only pass once around the head of a full size adult.

The weight of the textile is relatively light considering its length. Therefore, it would seem appropriate if SAL was interpreted as light or fine. On the other hand a significant proportion of these headbands are described as being of quality, nin. This is a female designation of textile quality, analogous to lugal (royal). Thus, at least in these cases, the túg|NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL| were specifically intended for females, supporting the suggestion the sign, given as SAL, should instead be rendered as MUNUS ('female').

A further consideration is that SAL is frequently written as an adjunct to LAL, as túg|NÍG.SAG.



Tablet no.	Text	Context	Period
DP 31 (1.12)	NÍG.SAG.<LAL>.SAL	Girsu	EDIIIb
DP 32 (2.4')	1 NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL	Girsu	EDIIIb
DP 75 (4.2)	1 NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL siki	Girsu	EDIIIb
OrNS 42, 236 (2.5)	1 NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL	Girsu	EDIIIb
RIME 1.9.9.1 (10.10)	1 NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL	Girsu	EDIIIb
RTC 18	1 NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL	Girsu	EDIIIb
ITT 4 <7322>	NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL	Girsu	
RTC 198	1 ^{túg} NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL nin	Girsu	GU.16.04
MVN 6, 504	1 ^{túg} NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL nin	Girsu	GU.16.04
MVN 7, 152	5 ^{túg} NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL nin	Girsu	Lagash II
MVN 7, 459	1 ^{túg} NÍG.SAG.'LAL.SAL' [...]	Girsu	UN.i.01
ITT 5, 6711	2 ^{túg} NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL ús sag ¹⁰ ki-lá-bi 1/3{ša} 3 ^{túg} NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL ús ki-lá-bi 1/2 ma-na	Girsu	Š.08
RTC 281	[x] ^{túg} NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL sag ¹⁰	Girsu	Š.08
RA 65, 20 7	2 ^{túg} NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL sag ¹⁰	Girsu	Š.08.10
MVN 7, 394	[...] 2 ^{túg} NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL sag ¹⁰ [...] 1 ^{túg} NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL ús sag ¹⁰ 3 ^{túg} NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL ús 5 ^{túg} NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL sag ¹⁰ 1 ^{túg} NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL ús sag ¹⁰ 1 ^{túg} NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL ús sag ¹⁰	Girsu	Š.09.04
MVN 7, 405	1 ^{túg} NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL ús	Girsu	Š.09.08
SAKF 123	1 ^{túg} NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL [...]		Š.40
TUT 129 (1.8)	[... ^{túg} NÍG].SAG.LAL.SAL níg-PI-eb	Girsu	AS.01
HLC 84 (pl. 48)	1 ^{túg} NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL [?]	Girsu	AS.07.04
DAS 311	nin-ušur ₄ ama-tuku ₅ ^{túg} NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL	Girsu	AS.08.06
MCS 5, 31 AOTc 229	nin-ušur ₄ ama-tuku ₅ ^{túg} NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL	Girsu	AS.08.06
Princeton 2, 247	1 ^{túg} <NÍG>.SAG.LAL.SAL	Girsu	AS.09.12
UNT 103	5 ^{túg} NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL	Girsu	IS.04.09
ITT 5, 6855	1 ^{túg} NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL nin	Girsu	Ur III



Tablet no.	Text	Context	Period
MVN 6, 519	túg NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL nin lá-ia 4 túg NÍG.SAG.LAL.[...] lá-ia 6 3-kam ús túg NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL nin lá-ia 4 lá-ia 15 túg NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL nin lá-ia 30 túg NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL 3-kam ús	Girsu	Ur III
TUT 126 (3.21)	8 túg NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL sumun	Girsu	Ur III
UNT 16 (rev.1.4') ¹	2 túg NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL níg-IGI-eb	Girsu	Ur III
UNT 34 (2.6) ² (2.20)	1 túg NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL siki? 1 kùš 6 šu-si 1 túg NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL ús nin 7 kùš	Girsu	Ur III
HSS 4, 6 (4.3) (rev.2.20)	túgbar-du15 NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL nin 26 túg NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL ù túgbar-si níg-se11- se11 nin	Girsu	Ur III
RTC 304 (2.6)	5 túg <NÍG>.SAG.LAL.SAL du sumun	Girsu	Ur III

1. The words níg-PI-eb and níg-IGI-eb appear following túg|NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL| on TUT 129 and UNT 16. Since PI and IGI are similar signs, then it is likely that these represent the same word (níg-PI-eb is also found qualifying textiles on MVN 5, 155 and TUT 126).
2. There is a problem with the reading of the sign given above as siki on UNT 34: I.7, I.11 and II.6. Waetzoldt (1972, 234) reads the sign as KWU 898+AŠ (sic). The transliteration in the cdli database renders this sign as dara₄, however, there are no other examples of Ur III textiles described as dara₄ (red) in the cdli database. Thus siki (wool) is used here both because it is a reasonable interpretation of the sign and it is a plausible reading in this context.

Table 1: túg|NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL| on tablets from Girsu.

LALxSAL|. Following Waetzoldt (1972, 279), it is judged unnecessary to draw a distinction between túg|NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL| and túg|NÍG.SAG.LALxSAL|. However, the use of SAL as an adjunct to LAL would seem to favour its interpretation as a light or fine textile that is bound (around the head).

Tablet ITT 5, 6855 gives the amount of effort required to make a túg|NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL| and the time required for fulling. However, there is a difficulty here arising from the similarity between the signs diš (i.e. 1) and géš (i.e. 60). On the basis simply of the drawing of this tablet, the reading of lines II.4-6 would be
1(diš) túg|NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL| nin
á géme-bi 3(diš)
á¹ lú azlag₂-bi 6(diš)

The lengths of time are usually quoted in days, however, from a practical perspective, the amount of time required for the textile women (géme) to spin the wool and weave the textile would far exceed three days. This is particularly the case since the sign, nin,

denotes that this is a very high quality textile, probably implying that it was made with very thin thread. For this reason, Waetzoldt (1972, 140) reads line II.5 as: á géme-bi 3(géš) (i.e. 3 x 60 = 180). On this basis, it is suggested that the time required by the textile women to make the túg|NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL| nin is 180 days and the time required by the fullers (lú azlag₂) is six days. Whilst this is plausible, it relies heavily on an interpretation of a cryptic text and clearly it would be preferable if the inscription were more explicit.

Tables 1, 2 and 3 list the tablets including the word túg|NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL| and its variations. As already noted, in terms of the data available, the use of the word túg|NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL| appears to have been restricted to Girsu whereas túg|NÍG.SAL.LAL.SAG| was used at Umma. Waetzoldt (1983) noted this correlation based on a relatively small number of examples. The Tables below show that it remains valid even though a substantially larger number of tablets have been considered.



Tablet no.	Text	Context	Period
Nisaba 11, 25 (1.17 & 20)	3 túg NÍG.SAL.LAL.SAG 3-kam ús 1 túg NÍG.SAL.LAL.SAG du	Umma	Š.34
SAT 2, 190 (2.13)	1 túg NÍG.SAL.LAL.SAG a-rá 1-kam	Umma	Š.38
TCL 5, 6055	1 túg NÍG.SAL.LAL.SAG du	Umma	AS.03.04
UTI 3, 1855	5 túg NÍG.SAL.LAL.SAG níg-dára	Umma	AS.05
AnOr 1, 46	16 túg NÍG.SAL.LAL.SAG 14 túg NÍG.SAL.LAL.SAG [...] 5 túg NÍG.SAL.LAL.SAG du sumun 4 túg NÍG.SAL.LAL.SAG du 3 túg sumun 2 túg NÍG.SAL.LAL.SAG [...] 16 túg NÍG.SAL.LAL.SAG ga- [...]	Umma	AS.06
MS 2011 (rev.2.16')	2 túg NÍG.SAL.LAL.SAG du	Umma?	AS.07
BM 110313 ¹	6 túg NÍG.SAL.LAL.SAG	Umma	AS.09.11
AAICAB 1/1, pl. 43-44, 1911-240	8 túg NÍG.SAL.LAL.SAG 1 túg NÍG.SAL.LAL.SAG	Umma	ŠS.05
AAICAB 1/1, pl. 35, 1911-227	1 túg NÍG.SAL.LAL.SAG dam ² ba-ka [ŠU+LAGAB] 1 túg NÍG.SAL.LAL.SAG	Umma	IS.03.01
Rochester 146	'túg' NÍG.SAL.LAL.SAG	Umma	Ur III
BPOA 1, 435	1 túg NÍG.SAL.LAL.SAG	Umma	Ur III
Sale Documents 88	túg NÍG.SAL.LAL.SAG	Umma	Ur III

1. Pomponio 2010, 190.

Table 2: túg|NÍG.SAL.LAL.SAG| on tablets from Umma.

Tablet no.	Text	Context	Period
TLB 3, 168	1 túg NÍG.SAL.SAG.LAL 3 túg NÍG. SAL.SAG.[LAL] 1 túg NÍG. SAL.SAG.LAL		Ur III

Table 3: túg|NÍG. SAL.SAG.LAL| on a tablet with unknown provenience.



During the Early Dynastic IIIb period, the name of this headdress is given as |NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL| without the textile determinative, túg, used in later periods. Strictly, this leaves open the possibility that, during this period, the headdress could have been made from either wool or linen, although in one case (DP 75) it is specified that it was made from wool (siki).

During the Lagash II period, the túg|NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL| listed are qualified by nin (lady) and the usage of this quality designation continues into the Ur III period. It is particularly interesting to note MVN 6, 519 where we find both

túg|NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL| nin

túg|NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL| 3-kam ús

where 3-kam ús denotes that the textile is of third quality. Thus, it is clear that nin is indicating the textile quality, i.e. first class quality, suitable for a lady (cf. šàr, also rendered as lugal, which can be used to denote first class quality, or royal quality; see the discussion by Waetzoldt 1972, 47-48).

Similarly, on tablets ITT 5 6711, RA 65 20 7 and MVN 7 394, túg|NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL| is qualified by the word sag₁₀ (also rendered as sig₅ or saga) which is also a term describing quality. Thus, sag₁₀ is good quality and ús sag₁₀ is the following quality, i.e. second class quality (Waetzoldt 1972, 47). On RTC 304, the textile is described as being of ordinary quality (du). There are also qualifying terms, old (sumun) and rag (níg-dára).

It is worth noting that the lower quality examples are found on the later texts, from the Ur III period. Further, at Girsu, the qualities of many of these textiles is relatively high, whereas at Umma there are more examples of túg|NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAG| of an ordinary quality.

The aim of this paper has been to consider the Mesopotamian headband known as túg|NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAG| and to build on the previous, relatively brief notes, together with new transliterations of tablets, to give detailed consideration to this textile. It has been demonstrated that there is sufficient information about this textile to warrant its inclusion in Sumerian dictionaries.

Notes

1. The choice of format of the word, túg|NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL|, and the abbreviations used in this paper in references to texts are based on The Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative (<http://cdli.ucla.edu/>).
2. Currently túg|NÍG.SAG.LAL.SAL| does not appear in *ePSD* (Electronic Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary, <http://psd.museum.upenn.edu>). It appears in Halloran's Sumerian Lexicon (2006, 202) as (^{túg}nig₂-sag-la₂-MI₂; nig₂-sag-la₂xMI₂, veil for women ('thing' + 'to hang' + 'female'). However, this textile is clearly not a veil since it is shown in the main text that it can be up to 3.5 m long.
3. Where the information is available, dates are given using the initials of the ruler (Gudea in Lagash II; Ur-Nammu, Šulgi, Šu-Suen, Amar-Suen, Ibbi-Suen in Ur III), the year of reign and the month.

References

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