

GORGIAS STUDIES IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

14

The Material Origin of Numbers

Insights from the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East



By Karenleigh A. Overmann



The material origin of numbers



Gorgias Studies in the Ancient Near East

14

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The material origin of numbers

Insights from the archaeology of the Ancient Near East

Karenleigh A. Overmann



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Cover. Mathematical tablet (HS 201) from Nippur. It dates somewhere between the Ur III (2100–2000 BCE) and Early Old Babylonian (2000–1900 BCE) periods and is part of the Frau Professor Hilprecht Collection, University of Jena, Germany. The table is a list of reciprocals, an excellent example of the relational data transforming the concept of number. In 1935, Otto Neugebauer read the last line of the right column as 32 being the reciprocal of 112.5 ('32 igi 1,52,30', Mathematische Keilschrift-Texte, p. 10). The photo was produced by Manfred Krebernik and his assistant, and use of the image is courtesy of the Frau Professor Hilprecht Collection, University of Jena, Germany.

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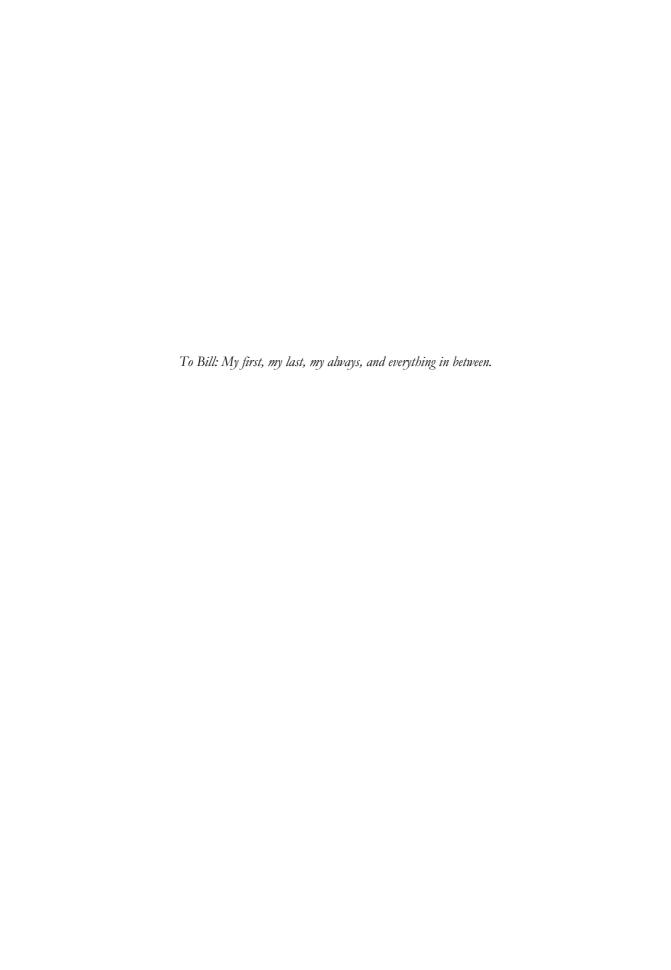


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CONVENTIONS

Late Upper Paleolithic

Early Old Babylonian

Old Babylonian (OB) Middle Assyrian (MA)

Neo-Assyrian (NA)

Neo-Babylonian (NB)

Old Assyrian (Old Assyr.)

TIMELINE

Epipaleolithic 12,000 years before present to 8300 BCE 8300-4500 BCE Neolithic Chalcolithic (Copper Age) 4500-3300 BCE Pre-Uruk V 8500-3500 BCE Uruk V 3500-3350 BCE Uruk IV 3350-3200 BCE Early Bronze Age 3300-2000 BCE 3200-3000 BCE Uruk III 3200-3000 BCE Jemdet Nasr (JN) Early Dynastic (ED) I/II 2900-2700 BCE Early Dynastic (ED) IIIa 2600-2500 BCE Early Dynastic (ED) IIIb 2500-2340 BCE Old Akkadian (OA) 2340-2200 BCE 2200-2100 BCE Lagaš II Ur III 2100-2000 BCE

30 to 12 thousand years ago

ABBREVIATIONS FOR MUSEUM DESIGNATORS

A Oriental Institute, University of Chicago, Illinois,

2000-1900 BCE

1950–1850 BCE 1900–1600 BCE

1400-1000 BCE

911–612 BCE 626–539 BCE

USA

AO Louvre Museum, Paris, France

Ashm Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, England
CUNES Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, USA
DV State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russian

Federation

IM Iraq Museum, Baghdad, Iraq

JA National Museum of Syria, Raqqa, Syria
JRL University of Manchester, England
MS, MT, MW Private, anonymous collections in Europe

NIM National Museum, Tehran, Iran

NMSDeZ National Museum of Syria, Der-ez-Zor, Syria NMSR National Museum of Syria, Raqqa, Syria

OIM A Oriental Institute, University of Chicago, Illinois,

USA

Sb Louvre Museum, Paris, France

T National Museum of Syria, Damascus, Syria

UM University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology

and Anthropology, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

VA, VAT Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin, Germany
W Artifact found at the ancient city of Uruk in Iraq

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