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The Evaluation of Children's Labor During Proto Elamite Period in Late 4th Millennium B.C. Iran¹

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Abstract

Children are a big part of any society. But the meaning of childhood is different from one society to another. This leads to specific child-rearing habits, legal status, and general living conditions. Childhood is more than a biological stage in human development, but a social and political concept, and Iran in the late 4th millennium was no exception to this rule. Children's status has been largely understudied in Proto-literate texts, both in ancient Iran and Mesopotamia. This is not due to a lack of data, while, on the contrary, according to our preliminary estimates, about 50 proto-Elamite texts in a collection of about 1650 written records from all across Iran dating back to about 3300–2800 BC provide insights into the lives of children. But information about them is unevenly distributed across different textual genres and is made more difficult by the lexicon and semantic complexities of the Proto-Elamite writing system. Furthermore, despite the abundance of archaeological data and somehow written texts, we still do not understand many details of how proto-Elamite societies in Iran were organized. Many of the Proto-Elamite tablets from ancient Iran are economic and legal records that are unfairly considered “dull” by some. They originate in the administration archives of pastoral nomads' households of Khans or elites ruling over the community, where they were complex estates, centers of production and redistribution run by bureaucrats trained in writing and accounting. The article aims to discuss a corpus of clay tablets related to child labor in Proto-Elamite. These clay tablets confirm the presence of children, both male and female, among the workers of Proto-Elamite households and administration institutions. Proto-Elamite texts offer complex patterns of classifying workers according to their gender and age. These tablets describe workers as male or female and then distinguish between adults and children according to their rations.

Keywords: Proto Elamite, Clay Tablet, Children at Work, Ancient Iran, Economic System.

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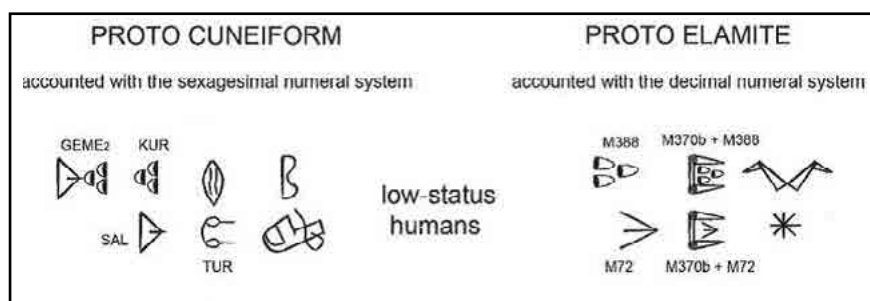
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




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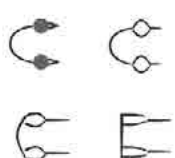
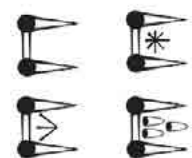
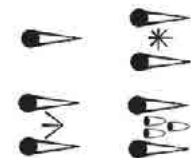
Introduction

Children already appear in written texts from Iranian Plateau in the earliest Proto-Elamite² written texts dating to the late fourth millennium BCE (Scheil,1905; Dahl et al, 2012; Damerow and Englund,1989). They record minors among the personnel and dependents of Proto-Elamite pastoral nomads' households and economic institutions governed by political elites, the best known from that period being the Acropole 16-14B from Susa (Le Brun, 1971; Dittmann 1986; Dahl et al., 2012). While there are only small number of text references to children in Proto-Elamite period (Dahl et al., 2018), we have substantial a number of ethnological references in modern pastoral nomad societies (Hatami 2021) in which child labor has significant status in subsistence economy of the society (Fig. 1).



◀ Fig. 1: Graphical correspondences between the Proto-Cuneiform and Proto-Elamite worker's sign (Authors, 2023).

Damerow and Englund first identified signs for children in Proto-Elamite texts (Damerow and Englund 1989). They suggested that the sign M370b and the related signs and forms represent child workers, in parallel to the interpretation of the sign TUR in the archaic cuneiform corpus (1989: 57 fn. 156). Scribes recorded children according to their gender, similar to what were conducted for adults. The M370 series which are the main signs for the presence of children are determine with simple and complex graphemes as follow; (M370 , M370b , , , , M370~c ). Accordingly, there were 9 logographic signs for children in that period derived+ from signs used for adults very similar to TUR3 in the late Uruk (Englund 2004) logographic lexicons (Fig. 2; Fig. 3).

Late Uruk	Proto-Elamite	
TUR	M370 _b +SIGN	M370+SIGN+M370
		

◀ Fig. 2: Graphical correspondences between the Proto-Cuneiform and Proto-Elamite children's sign (Authors, 2023).

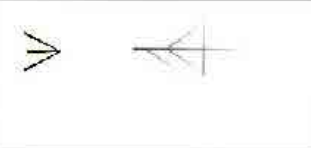
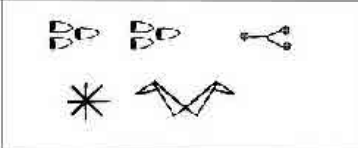
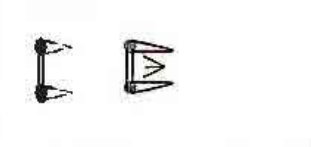
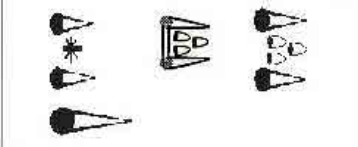
age \ sex	Woman	Man
Adults		
kids		

Fig. 3: Graphical correspondences of the Proto-Elamite children's signs according to the gender (Authors, 2023). ►

Currently, there exist approximately 16 published and Unpublished texts related to children's work, alongside fragments of similar content from the Proto-Elamite period that are part of the Susa collection. The most revealing of these texts regarding children are the records detailing the tasks assigned to them and the rations they received in return for their labor. This article aims to examine two of these texts and provide substantial insights into the status of children within the subsistence economy of Proto-Elamite societies (Tab. 1).

The present discussion on children in Proto-Elamite administrative records was initiated by a consigned text, namely MDP 06, 246 + 269+ 302 + 332. This text, dating back to the late Proto-Elamite period according to Dahl's classification, is going to be thoroughly examined by the authors.

MDP 06, 246 + 269+ 302 + 332 (Workers Ration Texts amid Children's Wages)

A well-preserved ration text provides valuable insights into the status of children within the subsistence framework of Proto-Elamite societies. This clay tablet features various representations of adult and child graphemes, organized by gender. The text enumerates different categories of laborers, including men, women, boys, and girls, concluding with a grain capacity notation (M288) for each labor unit. The counts of these labor units, which range from one to sixteen, suggest that the specific tasks assigned hold greater significance than the diversity of roles within each unit. The notation M288 appears at the end of each unit a total of 13 times, implying that at least 13 distinct groups of varying sizes, genders, and ages were engaged in their designated tasks. Contrary to Dahl's hypothesis that these groups signify teams of workers led by foremen (Dahl et al., 2018), the authors contend that the presence of a foreman for each unit is not addressed

Row	Text No	M370	M370-b				M370-				+M370			M370-da	M370-c	M370-d
			No sign	+X	-M072	+M388	M072	M388	M046	X	M370-a					
25	MDP17,210	1														
26	MDP17,221	1														
27	MDP17,231	1														
28	MDP17,234	6							1						1	
29	MDP17,272															
30	MDP17,292	15			4	3					1		1	1		
31	MDP17,304	1														
32	MDP17,315	1														
33	MDP17,368	3														
34	MDP17,411														1	
35	MDP26,54	1														
36	MDP26,63	1														
37	MDP26,71		1													
38	MDP26,82		1													
39	MDP26,155	1														
40	MDP26,177		1													
41	MDP26,218	1														
42	MDP26s,0333	6			1	2		1	2							
43	MDP26s,0339	5				1									1	
44	MDP26s,4763	1														
45	TCL32,02	5			1			1	1							
46	TCL32,27	1														
47	TCL32,47	1														
48	chaDAFI,5802	2														
49	SE 121	2														
50	SE 124	1														
Total		121	5	3	16	15		12	10	11	3	1	1	5	1	

in this text, and the totals recorded on the reverse side challenge this interpretation. In Proto-Elamite administrative texts concerning labor and rations, a consistent methodology is employed whereby all workers, encompassing both adults and children, are enumerated using a decimal system represented by 18 distinct signs. Each worker is denoted by a unique symbol that corresponds to their gender and age, culminating in a recorded quantity of cereal expressed through a numerical notation aligned with the capacity system as outlined in M288. The tablet retains 126 entries on both its obverse and reverse (Figs. 17 and 18), and despite the fragmentary nature of the evidence, it provides sufficiently preserved data to facilitate an understanding of the role and status of children within Proto-Elamite societies (Fig. 4).

This Rations text discusses various units of laborers, specifically M370 frames M072 and M388, which are identified as female and male workers. When combined with M370 or M370b, they represent an innovative pairing that redefines the concept of female and male children. The ages of these children remain unspecified at this point. In the initial column of the tablet, following the header that includes three symbols (M377~e, M217, and M207), the first unit of laborers is presented, comprising six groups of workers and individuals.

The initial laborer appears to be a woman identified by the inscription M124, accompanied by a series of intricate graphemes (M242~ab#? M230 M096 M003~b?) that may indicate a modification of her household affiliation or potentially the specific task assigned to the entire group. Given that this sequence is assigned a value of 1 (N01), it cannot represent an abstract designation or title for the role. In contrast, the subsequent entry, according to the author's interpretation, suggests a different understanding. The second entry seems to refer to an individual rather than a collective, also valued at 1 (N01).

The data indicates that M124 is classified as a female worker, whereas M370 is identified as a child laborer with an indeterminate gender. Assuming M370 is neutral, M124 can be redefined as a female child worker, closely resembling the combinations of M370b with M072, as well as M370, M072, and M370. The third individual is a child laborer with an unknown gender, denoted as M370+x+M370, assigned a value of 1 (N01). The fourth entry within the primary group consists of two children, both of whom lack a specified gender (M373, 2N01). The fifth entry comprises two males, and the final entry documents a female child worker, represented by M370~b+M072. The first unit is ultimately recorded as M288 in the numerical notation of the capacity system (Fig. 5).

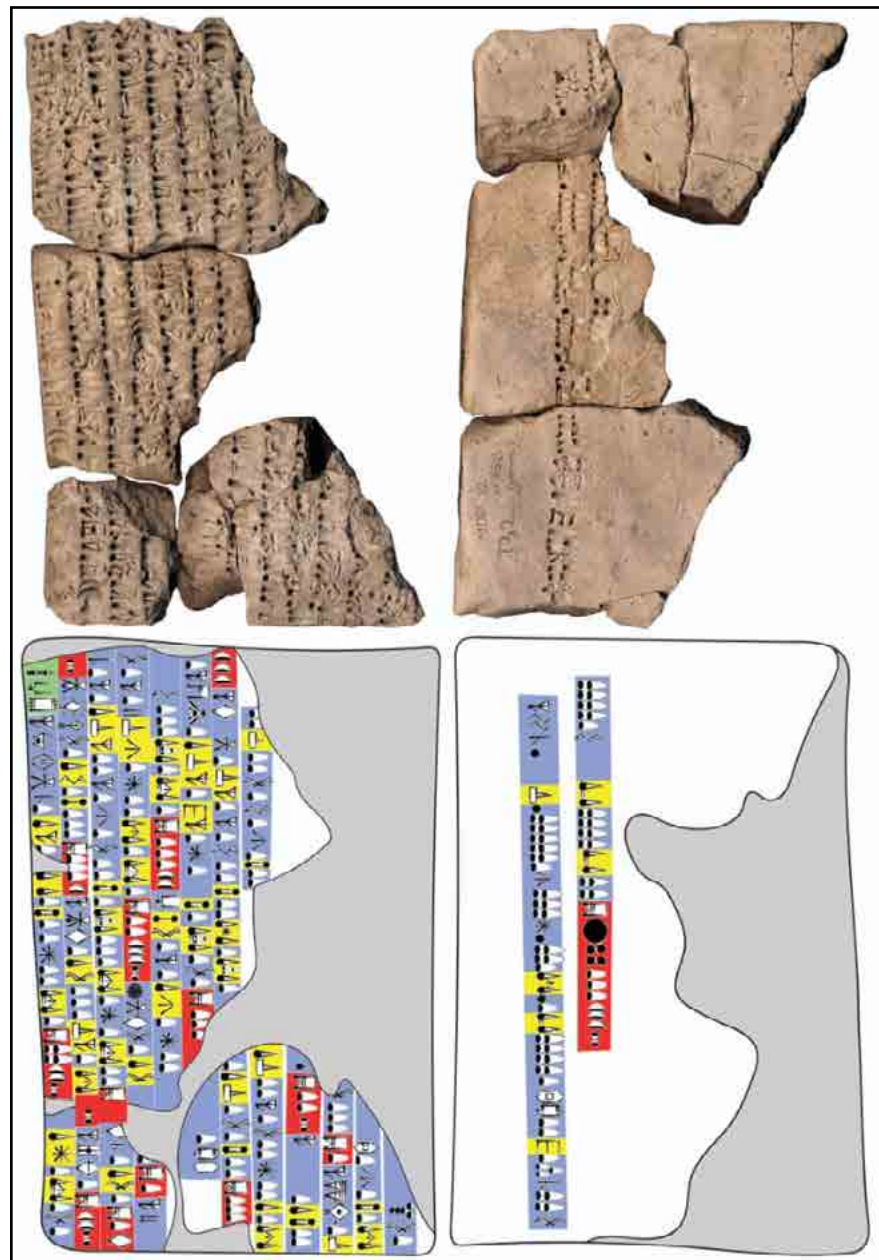
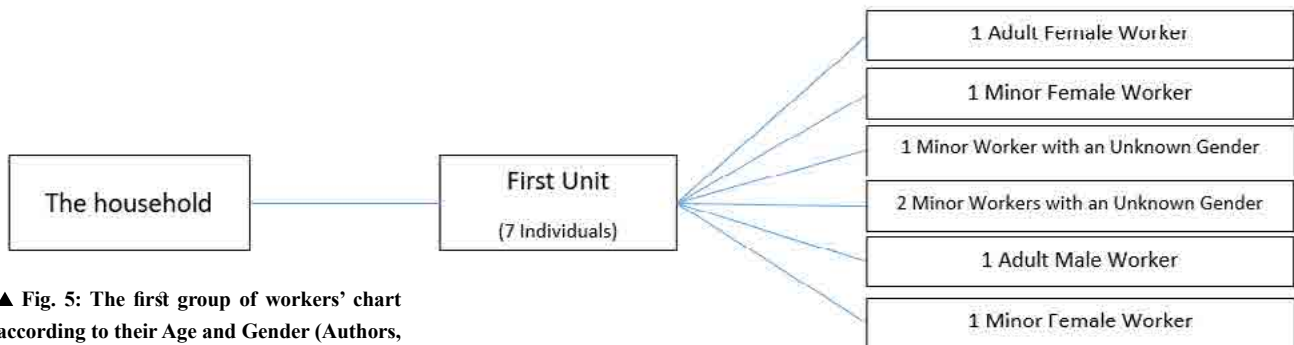
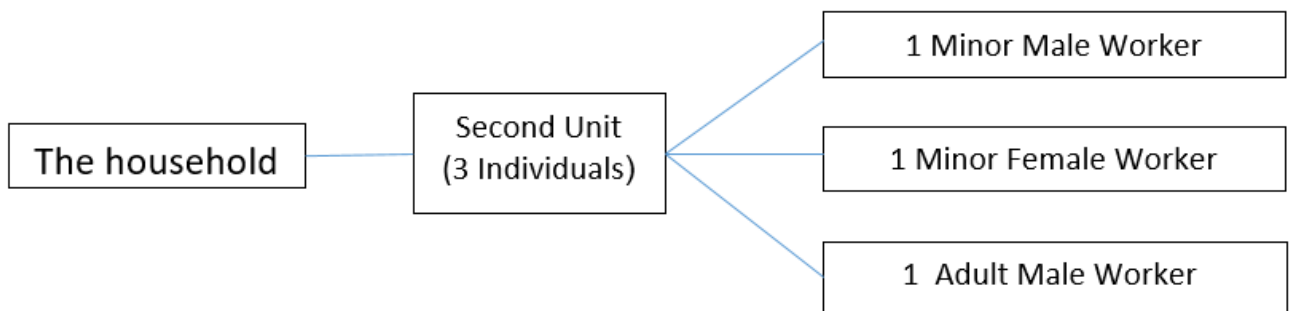


Fig. 4: A Proto-Elamite clay tablet (MDP 06, 246 + 269+ 302 + 332) (Authors, 2023). ▶



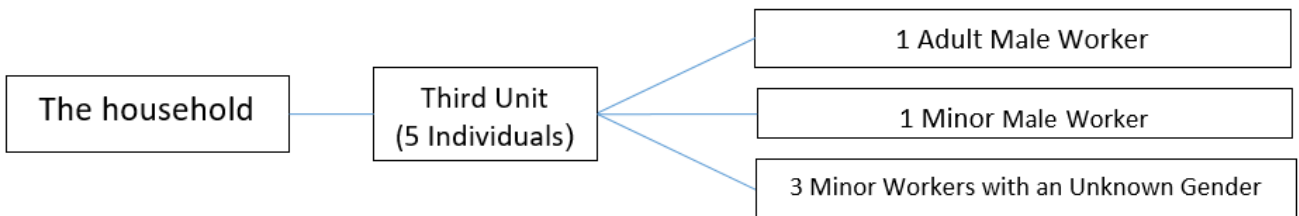
▲ Fig. 5: The first group of workers' chart according to their Age and Gender (Authors, 2023).

The second cohort of laborers is comprised of three distinct groups of individual workers. The first worker appears to be a young male, designated as M370# M046, with a valuation of 1 (N01). If we interpret M370 as neutral, M046 alters its gender, aligning closely with the initial group as a male child worker. The second individual is a female child laborer, represented as M370~b+M072, also valued at 1 (N01). The third member of this group is an adult male worker, identified as M054, with a valuation of 1 (N01), although the remaining numerical notation is incomplete. The unit concludes with the numerical notation (1(N24)), while M288 remains unrecorded (Fig. 6).



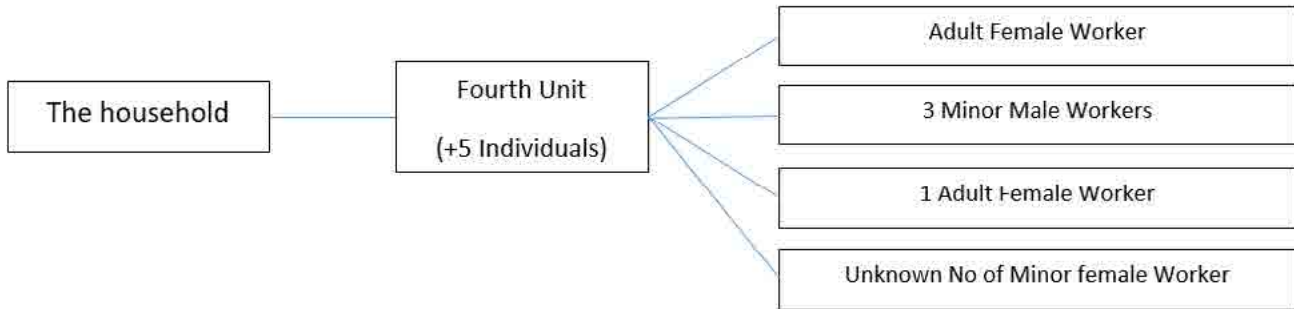
▲ Fig 6. The Second Group of Workers' chart according to their Age and Gender (Authors, 2023).

The third group of workers is made up of two individuals (M097~h M218~b M250~ba M054/ M370 M053~a) and a collective of three children whose genders are not specified (M371#?). The first individual is identified as an adult male, represented by a series of symbols that carry a value of 1 (N01). The second individual is classified as an immature male worker (M370 M053~a), which is a detailed amalgamation of two symbols indicating both age and gender, thereby creating a complex grapheme that denotes a male child worker. The final component of this group consists of child workers with unknown gender. The unit is concluded with M288 and a numerical notation (3(N01) #? 1(N39B) (Fig. 7).



▲ Fig 7. The Third Group of Workers' Chart according to their Age and Gender (Authors, 2023).

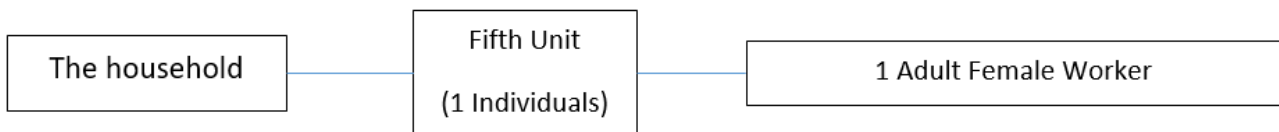
Comprising the fourth unit of workers is one female individual (M124# M097~h M218) and a collective of three minor male children (M370 M054), one adult female (M203~a M124), and a minor female



▲ Fig. 8: The Third Group of Workers' Chart according to their Age and Gender (Authors, 2023).

child. The numerical designations that represent these individuals are partially missing. This unit receives payment through the capacity system; however, M288 and most of the numerical identifiers are compromised, leaving only one identifier (N24) available (Fig. 8).

The fifth unit is modified by one individual (M124 M145~a M220), apparently an adult female worker assigned to a specific solitary job and numerical notations quantifying her wages as M288, 2(N39B) 1(N24) (Fig. 9).



▲ Fig. 9: The Fifth Group of Workers' chart according to their age and gender (Authors, 2023).

The sixth unit, comprising 16 workers, includes 7 individuals identified as M003~b, M124, M124, M072, M054, M373#?, and M370~b+M072, as well as M046 and M370~b+M072. Within this group, there are 4 adult females, 1 adult male, 1 minor male, and 1 minor female. Additionally, there are 4 distinct groups of workers: the first group (M370 M203~a M124/M054) contains 2 minor females; the second group (M370~b+M388) consists of 2 adult females; the third group (M370~b+M072) includes 3 minor males; and the final group concludes with 2 minor females, resulting in M288. It is noteworthy that the numerical notations are missing (Fig. 10).

The seventh unit is modified by two individuals (M218 M003~b and M370 M054), apparently an adult worker with an unknown gender and a minor male laborer assigned to a job and numerical notations quantifying their wages as M288, 1(N01) (Fig. 11).

The eighth unit of 7 workers consists of a group of 2 adult males (M046) and 5 individuals (M054/ M124/ M009 M203~a M072/ M370+M072+M370/ |M370~b+M072), among them are one adult male, one adult female and 3 minor female workers ended up with M288, 2(N01) 3(N39B) 1(N24) (Fig. 12).

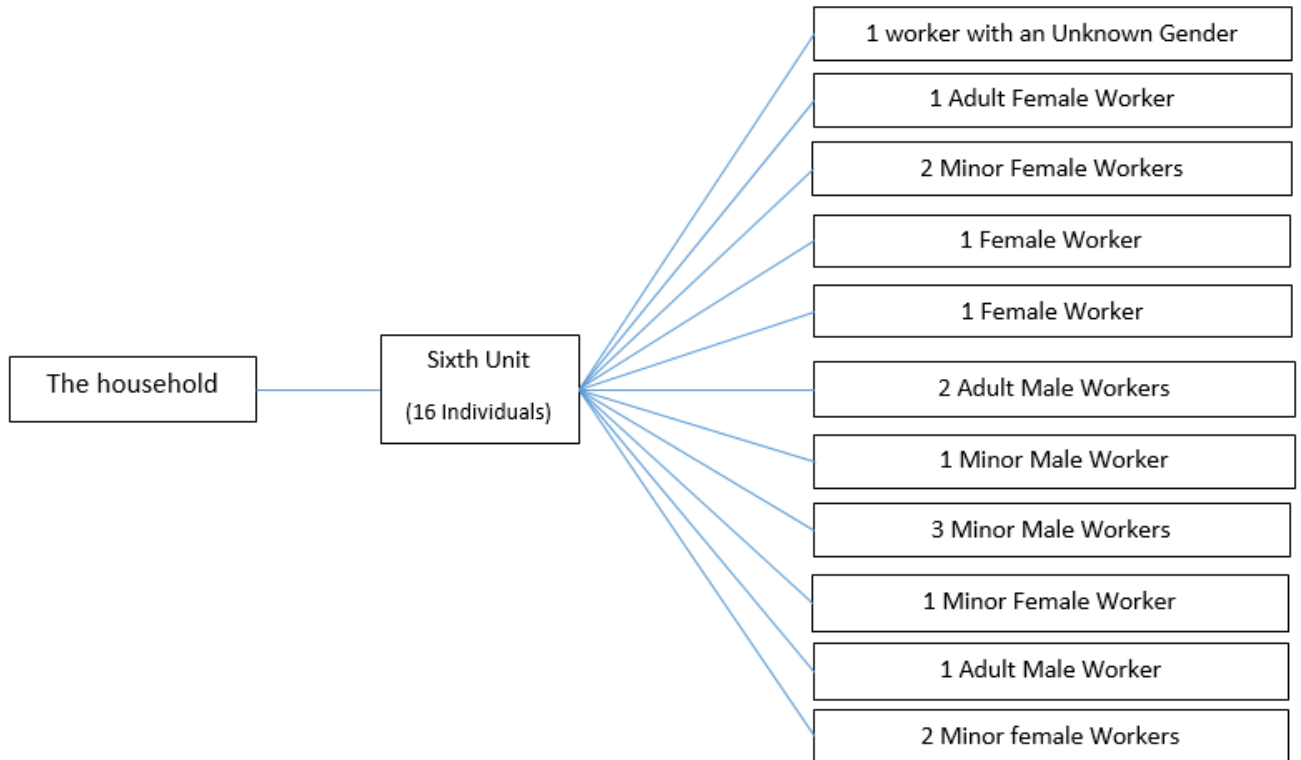


Fig. 10: The sixth group of workers' chart according to their age and gender (Authors, 2023). ▲

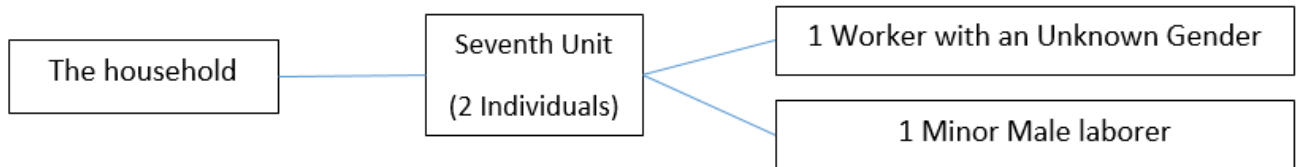


Fig. 11: The seventh group of workers' chart according to their age and gender (Authors, 2023). ▲

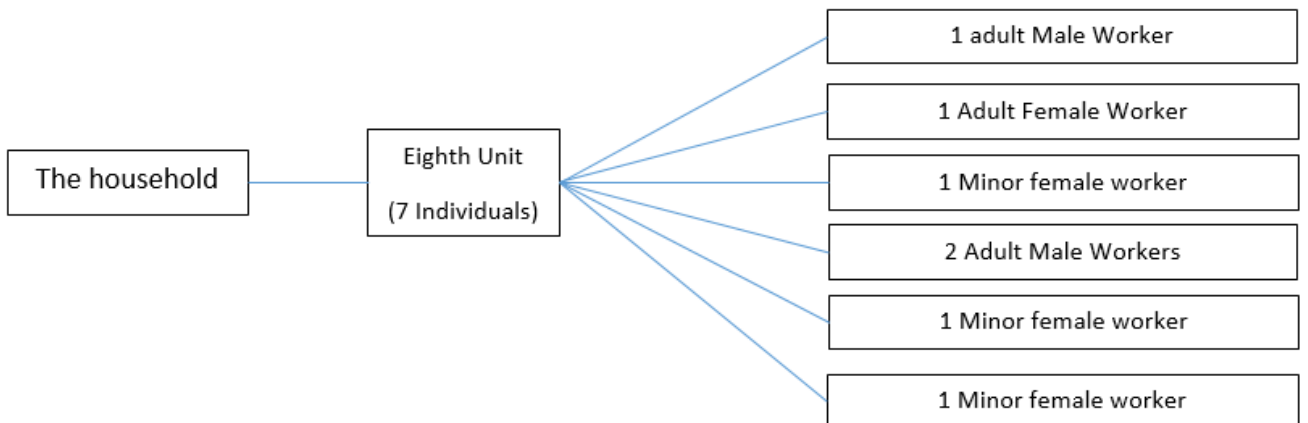
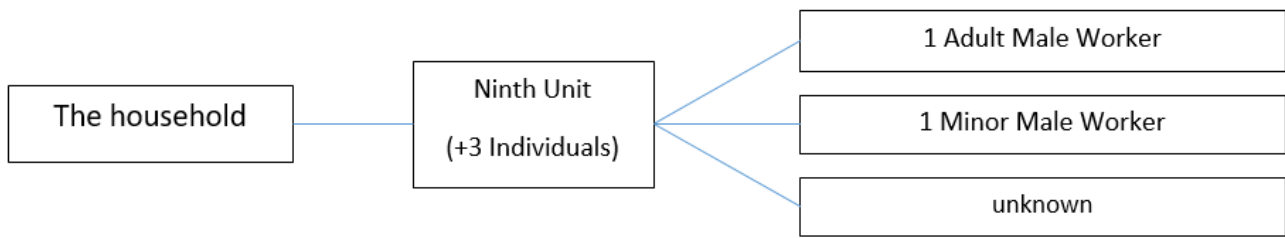
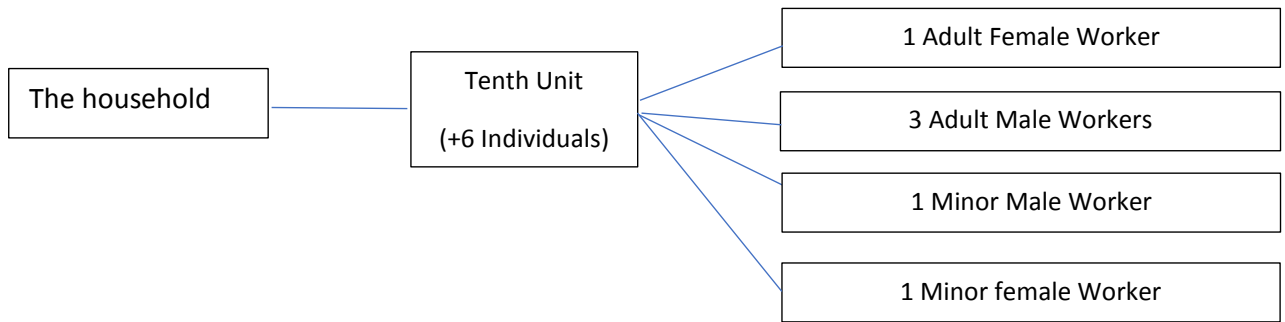


Fig. 12: The eighth group of workers' chart according to their age and gender (Authors, 2023). ▲



▲ Fig. 13: The ninth group of workers' chart according to their age and gender (Authors, 2023).

The ninth unit consists of one individual for sure (M352~o M096 M218 M054) and one minor male worker with a broken number quantifying him (M370#? M054). The sign for the next group of workers, or perhaps an individual, is broken and only 1 (N01) is available. The unit ends up with M288 and numerical notation (3(N01) #? 1(N39B) (Fig. 13).



▲ Fig. 14: The tenth group of workers' chart according to their age and gender (Authors, 2023).

The tenth unit is registered with 4 entries, an adult female with a broken numerical quantifier, 3 adult male workers, 1 minor male worker, and 1 minor female worker ended up with M288 and string numerical notations within the capacity system (3(N01) and 2(N39B)).

The remaining entries are largely fragmentary, making it difficult to provide a definitive interpretation. Overall, the text records 37 instances of child laborer symbols, which include 15 female children, 9 male children, and 13 child workers whose gender remains unidentified. The diversity of sign combinations employed to denote children is remarkable, particularly within the proto-cuneiform lexicon, as well as through an intuitive approach that combines M370 with various adult worker symbols to indicate gender modifications for M370. The variants of M370 representing children are illustrated below (Fig. 15).

NO	Sign	Gender	Icon
1		Minor with an Unknown Gender	
2		Minor with an Unknown Gender	
3		Minor with an Unknown Gender	
4		Minor Female	
5		Minor Male	
6		Minor Male	
7		Minor Female	
8		Minor Female	
9		Minor Male	
10		Minor with an Unknown Gender	
11		Minor with an Unknown Gender	
12		Minor Female	
13		Minor Female	
14		Minor Female	

◀ Fig. 15: Minor male and female signs used in the text (Authors, 2023).

Tab. 2: Transliteration on the obverse of tablet MDP 06, 246 + 269+ 302 + 332 (After: Dahl et al., 2018). ▼

Primary Publication: <i>Jacob L. Dahl, Laura F. Hawkins, Kathryn. Kelley</i> (2018) <u>MDP 06, 246 + 269+ 302 + 332 (P008043)</u> : Louvre Museum, Paris, France/ Provenience: Susa/ Period: Proto-Elamite (ca. 3100-2900 BC)			
ROW	Tablet obverse	ROW	Tablet obverse
1	[...] M377~e,	60	M370 M072, 1(N01)
2	M217 M207,	61	M046#, 2(N01)#?
3	M124 M242~ab#? M230 M096 M003~b?, 1(N01)	62	M370# x, [...] <i>n lines broken</i>
4	M370 M124, 1(N01)	63	[...], 1(N01)
5	[M370+x+M370?], 1(N01)	64	M124 M029~a M073~a, 1(N01)
6	M373, 2(N01)	65	M370 M203~a M124, 1(N01)
7	M046, 2(N01)	66	M041 M124, 1(N01)
8	M370~b+M072 #, 1(N01)	67	M046, [...]
9	M288, 4(N01) 2(N39B) 1(N24)# <i>n lines broken</i>	68	M371#, 1(N01)
10	[...] M370# M046#?, 1(N01)	69	M370~b+M388 , 1(N01)
11	M370~b+M072 #, 1(N01)	70	M054, 1(N01)
12	M054#, 1(N01)# <i>n lines broken</i>	71	M288, 2(N01) [...] <i>n lines broken</i>
13	[M288], [...] 1(N24)	72	[...] x, 1(N01)
14	M097~h M218~b M250~ba M054, 1(N01)	73	M305+X x [...], [...] <i>n lines broken</i>
15	M370 M053~a, 1(N01)	74	[...], [...] 3(N39B)
16	M371#?, 3(N01)#	75	M124 M218 x M096#?, 1(N01)
17	M288#, 3(N01)#? 1(N39B)	76	M203~a M124, 1(N01)
18	M124# M097~h M218, 1(N01)	77	M124, 1(N01)
19	M370 M054, 3(N01)	78	M053~a, 2(N01)
20	M203~a M124, 1(N01)	79	x, 2(N01)
21	M370+M072+M370 , [...]	80	M370+M046+M370 , 1(N01)
22	[M288], [...] 1(N24)	81	M370+M388+M370 1(N01) <i>n lines broken</i>
23	M124 M145~a M220, 1(N01)	82	[...], [...] 1(N01)
24	M288, 2(N39B) 1(N24) <i>n lines broken</i>	83	M370# M203~a, 1(N01)
25	[...] M003~b, 1(N01)	84	M054#, 1(N01)
26	M124, 1(N01)	85	M373#?, 2(N01)
27	M370 M203~a M124, 2(N01)	86	M288, 2(N01) [...] <i>n lines broken</i>
28	M124, 1(N01)	87	x x M203~a#?, 2(N01)
29	M072, 1(N01)	88	M054, 1(N01)
30	M054, 2(N01)	89	M053~a, 1(N01)
31	M373#?, 1(N01)	90	M072, 1(N01)
32	M370~b+M388 , 3(N01)	91	M373#, 2(N01) <i>n lines broken</i>
33	M370~b+M072 #, 1(N01)	92	[...] M370 M203~a, 1(N01)
34	M046, 1(N01)	93	M124, 1(N01)
35	M370~b+M072 , 2(N01)	94	M054, 2(N01)
36	M288#, [...]	95	M046, 2(N01)
37	x M218 M003~b, 1(N01)	96	M373#?, 1(N01)
38	M370 M054, 1(N01)	97	M370+M072+M370 #?, [...] <i>n lines broken</i>
39	M288, 1(N01)	98	[...] x, 1(N01)#
40	M218 [...], [...] <i>n lines broken</i>	99	M288#, 2(N01) 1(N24)
41	M054, 1(N01)	100	M124 x x, [...]
42	M124, 1(N01)	101	[...], 1(N01)
43	M009 M203~a M072, 1(N01)	102	M370 M373, 2(N01) [...] <i>n lines broken</i>
44	M046, 2(N01)	103	[...] M054#, 1(N01)
45	M370+M072+M370 , 1(N01)	104	x, 1(N01)
46	M370~b+M072 #?, 1(N01)#	105	M288#, 1(N01)
47	M288, 2(N01) 3(N39B) 1(N24)	106	M124 M115~a M281~c#?, 1(N01)
48	M352~o M096 M218 M054, 1(N01)	107	M203~a [...], [...] <i>n lines broken</i>
49	M370#? M054 [...], [...] <i>n lines broken</i>	108	[...] M298~a, 1(N01)
50	[...], 1(N01)#	109	M072, 1(N01)
51	M288#, 1(N01)	110	M373, 1(N01)
52	M124 x, [...] <i>n lines broken</i>	111	M370+M072+M370 , [...] <i>n lines broken</i>
53	[...], 1(N01)#	112	[...] x M380~b M054, 1(N01) [...]

Tab. 3: Transliteration on the reverse of tablet MDP 06, 246 + 269+ 302 + 332 (After: Dahl et al., 2018). ▼

Primary Publication: Dahl, Jacob L. (2019) TCL 32 2/Collection: Louvre Museum, Paris, France/ Provenience: Susa/ Period: Proto-Elamite (ca. 3100-2900 BC)			
Row	Tablet obverse	Row	Tablet obverse
1	<i>beginning broken</i> M123~b#? M054# [...], [...], <i>n lines broken</i>	22	M370#, 1(N01)
2	x M203~a, 2(N01)	23	M373#, 3(N01)
3	x [...], [...], <i>n lines broken</i>	24	M370+M072+M370 , 1(N01)
4	x, 1(N39B)#	25	M370+X+M370 , 2(N01) <i>n lines broken</i>
5	M046, 2(N01)	26	M332~d? M066? M054, 1(N01)
6	x [...], [...], <i>n lines broken</i>	27	M370 M373, 2(N01)
7	M370#, 1(N01)	28	x, [...] <i>n lines broken</i>
8	M009#?, 3(N01) <i>n lines broken</i>	29	[...] x M347 M371, 1(N01)
9	M203~a, [...]	39	M370 M124, 1(N01)# <i>n lines broken</i>
10	[...], 1(N01)	41	[...], 1(N01)
11	M046, 3(N01)	42	M203~a, 1(N01)
12	x M054, [...]	#	<i>rest broken</i>
13	[...], 2(N01)#	#	Tablet reverse
14	M288#?, [...] <i>n lines broken</i>	#	broken
15	[...], 1(N01)# <i>n lines broken</i>		
16	[...] M370#, 1(N01)		
17	M370+M388+M370 , 1(N01)		
18	M370~b+M072 #, 1(N01) <i>n lines broken</i>		
19	[...], 1(N01)#		
20	[...], 2(N01)#		
21	x, 1(N01)#		

Conclusion

Clay tablets dating from the Proto-Elamite period serve as significant evidence for the involvement of children in the subsistence economies of both households and economic institutions. Notably, this classification system exhibited only minor variations during the late Uruk period in Mesopotamia. Based on preliminary investigations into human logography within Proto-Elamite texts conducted by the authors, we can discern distinct sets of symbols that illustrate various methodologies for categorizing human labor resources within tribal households. The initial set comprises two tiers of classification: the primary tier identifies the sex of the individual, while the secondary tier distinguishes individuals as either adults or children. Proto-Elamite terminology includes specific terms for adults. However, within the texts concerning child labor and rations in Proto-Elamite, there is an absence of references to the biological age of the children categorized. The precise ages of both children and adults remain unknown. The authors suggest that the indicators used do not reliably represent the ages of the children assigned to various tasks. However, ethnoarchaeological research on pastoral nomads indicates that children as young as four typically participate in the family's subsistence economy, which is integral to the broader tribal community. This classification system, which is based

on gender and age, appears to have served primarily as a method for bureaucrats to account for human resources within each economic unit. The specific ages and social attributes of the individuals documented in the texts are unclear, largely due to our limited comprehension of these records. The evidence suggests that the terminology employed was indicative of an individual's worth as a laborer, which in turn influenced their food rations.

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Observation Contribution

Donya Etemadifar: preparing database, writing review of literature, Comparative analysis of similar texts

Rouhollah Yousefi Zoshk: laying out the subject, transliteration and interpretation of the text, Writing down the conclusion

Conflict of Interest

All authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

Endnote

1. This article is part of the first author's PhD thesis entitled "Political, social and economic structure of Susa in the second half of the fourth millennium BC; a research based on transliteration of Proto Elamite tablets" which is going to be accomplished in the Department of History and Archaeology at Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch, Tehran, Iran.

2. Proto-Elamite is the conventional name given to the earliest indigenous writing system from Iran. The Mesopotamian proto-cuneiform writing is often highlighted as the oldest writing system, overshadowing the neighboring regions. Yet, the Iranian Plateau likely had a significant, albeit overlooked, influence in this regard. In 1900, the French mission's epigraphist in Susa became the first to publish the initial two Proto-Elamite tablets. These tablets, discovered in Susa, were initially labeled as 'Proto-Elamite' by Scheil in 1905, solely based on their Susian geographical origin and without taking into account any linguistic factors. The term 'Proto Elamite', initially used solely for geographical purposes, underwent significant semantic expansion, encompassing not only a particular type of tablets but also various archaeological contexts, layers, material culture styles, periods, and ultimately, a civilization.

3. Proto Elamite signs M388 and M72 have been likened to proto-cuneiform signs KUR and SAL, denoting male and female laborers in proto-cuneiform inscriptions. As a result, M388 and M72 may represent male and female individuals of low social standing, with some Proto-Elamite texts containing as many as 591 instances of M388 and 1776 occurrences of M72; the PE sign M370b was identified as visually similar to the proto-cuneiform sign TUR, symbolizing the concept of child (DUMU). Combinations of signs M370b + M388 and M370b + M72 could therefore signify young male and female laborers of low status.

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ارزیابی و بررسی کار کودکان در نظام اقتصادی دوره آغازیلامی در نیمه دوم هزاره چهارم پیش از میلاد ایران*

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چکیده

کودکان بخش غیرقابل‌انکاری از هر جامعه هستند؛ اما معنای کودکی در هر جامعه متفاوت است و منجر به شکل‌گیری سنت‌های فرهنگی خاص از نقطه نظر حقوقی و شرایط عمومی زندگی کودکان در جوامع می‌شود. دوران کودکی علاوه بر رشد بیولوژیکی در رشد انسان، مفهوم اجتماعی و سیاسی است و ایران در اواخر هزاره چهارم پیش از میلاد نیز از این قاعده مستثنی نبوده است. جایگاه کودکان از این دید در هیچ‌کدام از متون آغاز نگارش ایران باستان و بین‌النهرین به درستی مطالعه نشده است. این موضوع به دلیل کمبود اطلاعات نیست و برعکس، طبق برآورد اولیه نویسندگان این پژوهش، حدود ۵۰ متن آغازیلامی در مجموعه‌ای از حدود ۱۶۵۰ سند مکتوب از سراسر ایران که قدمت آن به حدود ۲۸۰۰-۳۳۰۰ پ.م. می‌رسد، شواهد منحصر به فردی را در مورد حضور کودکان در نظام اقتصادی ارائه می‌کند. اطلاعات کودکان کارگر در متون آغازیلامی در کنار سایر موضوعات آمده که پیچیده بودن این سیستم نوشتاری، درک این اطلاعات را برای ما دشوار کرده است. هم‌چنین، با وجود فراوانی داده‌ها در متون مکتوب، هنوز جزئیات زیادی از ساختار سیاسی و اقتصادی جوامع آغازیلامی در ایران در دست نیست. بسیاری از متون آغازیلامی سندهای اقتصادی و حسابرسی هستند که برخی آن‌ها را فاقد ارزش در شناخت عناصر اجتماعی جوامع آن می‌دانند. هدف از نگارش این پژوهش بررسی یک متن شاخص با موضوعیت کودکان کار از میان الواح گلی مربوط به کار کودکان در دوره آغازیلامی است که حضور کودکان کارگر دختر و پسر را در میان کارگران دوره آغازیلامی و مؤسسات اداری تأیید می‌کند. این متون الگوهای پیچیده‌ای از طبقه‌بندی کارگران براساس جنسیت و سن آن‌ها ارائه می‌دهند و هم‌چنین حضور کارگران مرد و زن و کودکان و جیره‌ای که مطابق با کار آن‌ها پرداخت شده را توضیح می‌دهد.

کلیدواژگان: آغازیلامی، گل‌نشته، کودکان کار، ایران باستان، نظام اقتصادی.

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