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The Tale of "Gilgamesh and Akka" and the Question of Epic Tradition in Early Babylonia

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Abstract From the perspective of both its form and content, the tale "Gilgamesh and Akka" occupies a unique place among the Sumerian literary compositions. This communication argues that it once formed an episode within a larger, epic tradition. This oral composition probably originated in the Pre-Sargonic period, with its surviving written version having been an Ur III redaction. Stylistically, 'Gilgamesh and Akka' exhibits the characteristics of a short heroic epic poem, which focuses on human action and is devoid of any forms of divine participation. This communication also presents a new translation of "Gilgamesh and Akka", which offers new interpretations of several of its crucial passages.

Keywords Gilgamesh. Akka. Conflict between Uruk and Kish. Heroic/historic epics. Gilgamesh's death tradition. Hero's death and the birth of epic. Panegyrics and epics.

Summary 1 Part 1. The Plot of GA. – 2 Part 2. The Date, the Literary Classification, and the Possible Oral Background of GA.

For Wolfgang Heimpel, on his 85th birthday, with admiration and in friendship

The Sumerian[1] narrative composition "Gilgamesh and Akka" (henceforth abbreviated as GA) is a fascinating text. Superficially, there is not much to it. It numbers only 114 lines, which are completely preserved. Its plot is seemingly (though in reality deceptively) simple. For these reasons, and equally because of its historical interest, it has been repeatedly edited, translated, and discussed.[2] Therefore, why another study of GA? The reason, as I will argue in this communication, is that GA is completely unique among the whole body of Sumero-Akkadian literature. This fact alone, which has not been

This study had a long gestation history. During my forty-two years of teaching at Harvard, I read "Gilgamesh and Akka" with my students practically every second year in my Beginning Sumerian class. This gave me an opportunity to re-read it regularly and to rethink the various issues this composition raises. More directly, my study derives from the lecture "The Sumerian Composition 'Gilgamesh and Akka': A New Translation and Interpretation", which I presented at the Università di Napoli l'Orientale, 10 April 2025. I offer my cordial thanks to Eric Aupperle, Marco Bonechi, Lucio Milano, and Manuel Molina, who read the manuscript of this paper and offered comments, suggestions and bibliographic additions. It goes without saying that I alone am responsible for the views expressed.

1 Citations of cuneiform sources follow "Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative", `https://cdli.earth` and "Database of Neo-Sumerian Texts" (= BDTNS), `http:/bdtns.filol.csic.es`.

2 The most recent full edition of GA is Katz 1993, which cites all the previous editions and discussions. All the subsequent treatments of importance are cited in the present study.

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adequately recognized until now, makes such an undertaking worthwhile. Another reason is that, as I hope to show, it is still possible to improve an understanding of its plot.

This study is divided into two parts. The first part is concerned essentially (though not exclusively) with the plot of GA. There I offer my understanding of it, which is based on my own translation of this composition. Since the cuneiform text of GA is well established, I dispense with a transliteration of it. For those who wish to consult it, I recommend the online edition in *The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature 1.8.1.1. Gilgamesh and Aga: Composite Text*. Lexical points that remain uncertain or problematic I duly discuss here. By contrast, the second part addresses issues of more general nature, primarily the date of the composition of GA, its classification as a literary genre, and the possible existence of an oral version of it.

1 Part 1. The Plot of GA

1.1 The Arrival of Akka's Envoys (lines 1-2)

The story begins abruptly with a simple statement that the envoys of Akka arrived in Uruk. As one learns from the following passage (lines 3-8), Akka requests that Uruk submit to Kish. The implication is that Uruk should become Kish's vassal. It is the beginning of a long passage which continues down to line 39.

This being the perfect example of an *in medias res* beginning,[3] there is little doubt that, as already observed by Thorkild Jacobsen,[4] "the tale is clearly not self-contained, but represents rather a single episode in a much wider epic context leading up to it that is now lost".

That GA formed part of a much longer narrative cycle is also indicated by its concluding episode (lines 100-12), which alludes to an earlier event involving Gilgamesh and Akka in which Akka behaved magnanimously toward Gilgamesh. If my translation of lines 104-6 is correct (see below), it would seem that Gilgamesh had been Akka's captive at one point. It is possible, therefore, that the conflict GA is concerned with was preceded by an earlier war between Uruk and Kish in which Akka (or his alleged father En-mebaragesi) had an upper hand, capturing Gilgamesh and taking him as a prisoner-of-war to Kish.

Here it may be significant that, in our tale, the Kishite adversary of Gilgamesh is Akka, of whose accomplishments otherwise nothing is known.[5] One would rather expect that person to have been En-mebaragesi. Indeed, according to "Shulgi's Hymn O", it was En-meberagesi who had been taken captive by Gilgamesh.[6] These facts may add weight to the assumption that the conflict between Uruk and Kish to which the tale alludes to had a long and complicated history.

However, disregarding how that war may have fitted sequentially into the popular history of early Uruk-Kish interrelations, it seems certain that the plot of GA itself does not describe the course of a single military conflict, beginning with its causes and leading up to its eventual resolution, but is rather confined to its final crucial episode. This conclusion is based on my reading of the cryptic lines about "wells" (see below under 1.2.), that, if I am correct, indicate that, before Akka sent his envoys to Gilgamesh with his (final) demand of Uruk's submission, Kish had deprived Uruk of water, apparently by diverting the upper course of the Euphrates. If so, that particular conflict between Uruk and Kish was

3 See in detail below under 2.2.6.

4 Jacobsen 1987, 345.

5 The only source possibly mentioning Akka is a lapis lazuli pearl bearing the following inscription: ^{d}Inana / Ak / lugal / GIŠ.UH$_3^{ki}$, "(for) Inana, Ak(ka), king of Giššag (donated this)" (MVN 10 1). For GIŠ.UH$_3^{ki}$ being an early writing of the name of Umm al-Aqarib (rather than of Umma), see Alamamori 2024; Steinkeller (forthcoming). Based on its paleography, this inscription almost certainly dates to the ED II period (or ED I, if one follows the recent reevaluations of the status of ED II; see especially Evans 2007). The use of the title lugal (rather than ensi$_2$) in the inscription may support the possibility that the donor of the pearl came from northern Babylonia. If this Ak(ka) indeed was the same person as the king of Kish, one would find here additional evidence that, in ED II times, Kish controlled significant sections of southern Babylonia. In this connection, it should be noted that the personal name Ag-ga appears in Ebla sources. Of special interest here is ARET 1 7 rev. xi 12-18, where its bearer is a Mari merchant.

6 e$_2$ ˹Kiš˺^{ki}-še$_3$ ^{giš}tukul-zu ba-ta-a-e$_3$ ur-[s]ag $_7$-bi ad$_6$-a mi-ni-dab$_5$ [lugal Ki]š^{ki} En-me-barag-ge-e-si [… sa]g-ga$_2$-na gir$_3$ mu-na-ni-us$_2$ nam-lugal Kiš^{ki}-ta Unug!(ŠEŠ.UNUG)^{ki}-še$_3$ am$_3$-mi-de$_6$, "(Shulgi addressing Gilgamesh:) You dispatched your weapons against the house of Kish, you took prisoner its seven heroes, you set your foot on the head of En-mebaragesi, [king] of Kish, you brought kingship from Kish to Uruk/Ur" ("Shulgi O" lines 56-60; following Klein 1976, 278). One of the MSS of the "Sumerian King List" adds, following the mention of Dumuzi of Uruk and before the listing of Gilgamesh, the following two lines: šu aš En?-me-barag-ge$_4$-e-si nam-ra ˹i$_3$?˺-ak? ("Sumerian King List" lines 111a-111b ms. P3+BT14; Klein 1991, 125). However, it appears quite certain that this information pertains to Gilgamesh and not to Dumuzi.

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a protracted one, with Kish initially trying to force Uruk into submission simply by cutting off its water supplies and resorting to an outright siege only when that measure had failed to take its intended effect.

Such an understanding of the plot has important implications for the text-historical aspects of GA, for it strongly suggests the existence of an autonomous oral tradition about the war between Gilgamesh and Akka that antedated the recording of the tale in the form it survives, the event that took place, as there is every reason to believe, in Ur III times. The questions as to whether that earlier oral tradition may have taken the form of discrete epic poems, and, if such indeed existed, of what the nature of the relationship between those oral compositions and the surviving written version may have been, will be taken up in detail in Part II of this study. In a preliminary way, it may be suggested that the story of the conflict between Gilgamesh and Akka, as it existed in that (hypothetical) pre-Ur III oral tradition, had a symmetrical, two-part structure in which Kish and Uruk were in turns assigned the roles of the victor and the defeated. The theme of final reconciliation, present in the written version (lines 102-12), may not have been part of the oral story. This is suggested, in my opinion, by the fact that such a theme fits too neatly and too conveniently the propagandistic aims of the Ur III state not to suspect that it was an Ur III innovation. For more on this point, see below under 2.1.

Finally, I need to address the question of the historicity of GA. In other words, were Gilgamesh and Akka real human beings and did the events described in that tale really happen? In my opinion, GA was part of what I identified elsewhere as the Mythical History of Babylonia, which run a course parallel to that of the history of facts. The two remained in a dialectical relationship, in which they constantly interacted and influenced one another.[7] Although there may have existed an archaic ruler of Uruk named Gilgamesh, from the perspective of Mythical History that point is completely irrelevant. In the following discussion, therefore, all the potentially 'historical' data I cite from literary and religious sources are to be understood exactly in the same way.

1.2 Gilgamesh Consults Uruk's Elders (lines 3-8)

Having received the envoys of Akka, Gilgamesh convenes a general gathering of the elders of Uruk. Having described to them the deteriorating state of Uruk's water reserves, he argues that, despite this precarious situation, Uruk should not submit to Kish but to oppose it with arms.

The understanding of this passage hinges on the meaning of the verbal phrase tul_2 til-le-da, which appears here and in a slightly different wording later in the text. Almost without an exception, its translators believed that, unless Uruk submitted to Kish, the latter would subject the population of Uruk to the performance of corvée labor, which would call for the excavating of wells for Kish. This interpretation assumed that, in tul_2 til-le-da, the verb til means 'to complete, to finish, *zu vollenden*'.

However, if the text indeed talked of the excavating of wells, the expected verb would have been ba-al or dun, both meaning 'to excavate, to dig',[8] rather than til.[9] Moreover, wells were of secondary economic significance in southern Babylonia. In irrigation, they were used only to water orchards and

7 Steinkeller 2017, 178-86.

8 In Ur III economic sources, the verb used is ba-al. See workers pu_2 ba-al, '(were employed) to excavate wells' (MVN 16 1055:5-6; MVN 21 96:11; UTI 4 2356:1-2, 2397:13; etc.). In reference to urban wells, especially the ones made of fired bricks, Pre-Sargonic sources from Lagash use the verb du_3, 'to erect, to build'. See the following example: PN e_2-bi PN_2 mu-na-du_3 pu_2 sig_4-$alur_x$(BAHAR)-ra e_2-a mu-na-du_3, "PN built this house for PN; within (that) house he (also) built a well of baked bricks" (Steinkeller 2011, 3-4 n. 4 iv 1-7). For other attestations, see Behrens, Steible 1983, 277. This verb is also used in an Ur III text from Umma: 5 $geme_2$ im IL_2-ga_2-de_3 gub-ba pu_2 $šag_4$ e_2-a du_3-a (CUSAS 3 210 iii 1-2; courtesy of M. Molina).

9 Attinger 2021, 185; Cohen 2023, 135, 283.

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vegetable gardens (especially during the summer growing season).[10] Even more importantly, excavating of wells was never part of corvée obligations.[11]

These obstacles are removed if one follows the alternative meaning of til, which is "to use up, to exhaust, to come to an end".[12] Hence my translation: "the wells are becoming depleted, exhausted". In my view, the historical situation behind Akka's request is to be reconstructed as follows. Sometime before Akka sent his envoys to Gilgamesh with his (final?) demand for Uruk's submission, Kish had deprived Uruk of water by diverting the upper course of the Euphrates, a military procedure that was commonly practiced throughout Mesopotamian history (see in detail below). If so, that particular conflict between Uruk and Kish was a protracted one, with Kish initially trying to force Uruk into submission by cutting off its water supplies, resorting to an outright siege only when that measure had failed to take its intended effect.

In response to the diversion of the Euphrates by Akka, the Urukeans were forced to excavate wells throughout their land. But the wells soon began to be depleted. This made it necessary for them to excavate still deeper wells, the ones from which water was drawn by buckets suspended on hoisting ropes. The progressive diminution of Uruk's water supplies is vividly described in lines 5-7:

"The wells are becoming depleted! The wells of the (whole) land (of Uruk) are becoming depleted!
"The small (i.e., shallow) wells of the (whole) land are becoming depleted!
"(Even) the deep wells with hoisting ropes are becoming depleted!"

Eventually, the situation became critical, with Uruk having been completely deprived of water. And it was at that moment that Gilgamesh seeks the advice of Uruk's elders. His question is: given the gravity of the situation, should we or should not we submit to Akka? He recommends that Uruk should fight.

That, in our passage, til means 'to exhaust' was already considered by Yuhong Wu,[13] who translated it: "(your water supply) will be brought to end" or "(the well) will become used up / dry up". Wu was also the first translator to conclude that Akka had attempted to deprive Uruk of irrigation water. However, he failed to consider that the entire Euphrates had been diverted for that purpose, nor did he explain the significance of wells.[14]

10 Such wells are designated as pu_2 $^{giš}kiri_6$, "orchard wells". See Rochester 172, which lists vegetables produced in the Umma districts of Gu'edena, Mushbi''ana, and Apishal. Those are summarized as mun-gazi pu_2 $^{giš}kiri_6$ u_3 ab-sin_2, "vegetables and spices (produced) in the orchards (with) wells and in the furrows (of fields)". For the wells in date-palm orchards, see MVN 16 742 rev. 18-21; Nisaba 6 17 ii 17-18. Their importance is demonstrated by the fact that, at Umma, there existed a special administrator in charge of them called dub-sar pu_2 $^{giš}kiri_6$ (MVN 14 57 seal; BPOA 2 2084 seal; etc.). The wells were provided with jars (^{dug}gur pu_2) and buckets (ma-ad-li_2-um pu_2). Note, especially, 10 ^{dug}gur pu_2 la_2, "10 jars (to be) suspended in wells" (Nisaba 15/2 180 vi 19'), which approximates the pu_2 $eš_2$ la_2, "wells with hoisting ropes", of GA lines 7, 13, and 22. As demonstrated by the following lexical entry: pu-u_2 TUL_2 = *ṣi-ip*(var. *ṣip*)-*pa-tu* (CAD Ṣ 92 *ṣippatu* A), "well" was a virtual synonym of "orchard".

11 But this does not change the fact that Akka's objective must have been to obtain corvée labor from Uruk, though for other types of projects. Differently, Civil (1999-2000, 181), who talks of "the unfounded assumption that Kish wanted to exact corvée work from the Uruk people".

12 See Attinger (2021, 1043), who translates til as "être épuisé (subsistence, rations)", "consommer entièrement, user, utiliser entièrement". For this sense of til, see the following examples: PN u_3-na-dug_4 la_2-i_3-e ud-sakar-ka ha-bi_2-til-e, "speak to PN: he must eliminate / put an end to the deficit before the New Moon!" (BDTNS 1882121 iii 7-9; courtesy of M. Molina); ^{d}Na-ni lu_2 numun til-til-la, "Nani whose seed/posterity came to an end" ("Proverb 14" line 16); mu sar_2-a mul-an za-gin_3-gim šid-bi nu-til-le sag-e-eš rig_7 mu-na-ab, "grant him innumerable years, whose number, like that of the heavenly stars of lazuli, has no end" ("Rim-Sin E" line 68); sag-us_2 nu-til-le-[de_3], "constant attendant" ("Rim-Sin G" line 30); ud kalam til-til-e, "the storm that annihilates the Land" ("The Lament for Ur" lines 177, 182, 199); šaman-la_2 kug dam-gar_3-ra-ka til-til, "the assistant who uses up all of (his) merchant's money" ("Two Scribes" line 65 = Johnson, Geller 2015, 183-4); Sa-am-su-i-lu-na lugal kalag-ga numun lu_2 $erem_2$-gal_2-la-ne-ne bi_2-in-til-til-la_2-e, "Samsuiluna, strong king, the one who extinguishes the seed of evil-doers" (RA 114 [2020] 34 v 22'-25'). The form til-til-le-de_3 is an intransitive imperfective participle. Cf. sag-us_2 nu-til-le-[de_3] in "Rim-Sin G" line 20, and mu… nu-til-le in ("Rim-Sin E" line 680, where in the agent likewise is absent. Contrast the perfective numun til-til-la in "Proverb 14" line 16.

13 Wu 1998.

14 "Since Agga … controlled the water of the Euphrates flowing to the South Babylonian(sic), all the city-states submitted to him, but hero Gilgamesh and his city Uruk would not. Probably, some canals of the Euphrates had been dammed up and the water flowing to Uruk had been turned away by Kish on the upper river" (Wu 1998). That the wells were of strategic importance for Uruk was recognized also by Civil (1999-2000, 182): "Our text suggests that its [i.e., Uruk's] inhabitants tried to remediate the lack of water by digging wells… In this scenario, the mention of the wells makes sense, they had an obvious strategic importance. No resistance would be possible if the waterless town were to be assieged, and in any case war would delay the pressing search for essential water". But Civil never considered the possibility that the lack of water had been caused by the diverting of the Euphrates by Akka's army. Rather, he thought that this situation resulted from the fact that the western branch of the Euphrates had shifted away from Uruk already in ancient times, a natural process that is well documented during the river's more recent history (Civil 1999-2000, 182).

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The verb t i l was correctly read as 'to empty (the wells)', also by Andrew George.[15] However, George interpreted the sense of this passage differently: "These lines are usually taken to represent the literal demands of Akka, that the men of Uruk become drawers of water for Kish. I assume instead that in describing a menial task for which there can be no end, the poet conveys figuratively the endless and impossible toil that will follow a surrender of independence".[16]

The diversion of rivers and major canals as a way of strangling the downstream situated settlements was a well-known military strategy in ancient Mesopotamia. The earliest documented case of it is the diversion of the waters of the Tigris by the Gutians, whose objection was to deprive Uruk and other southern city-states of their supplies of irrigation water coming from the Tigris riverine system.[17] Later, the same method was used by the Old Babylonian king Abi-eshuh as part of his war on the Sealand. "By diverting the waters of the Tigris towards the Euphrates, the king intended to dry up the Mesopotamian Marshes, the home of the Sealand enemy, thus, starving its population".[18] Another, even more famous case, of such a military operation occurred in 539 B.C.E., when Cyrus diverted the waters of the Euphrates so that his troops could capture Babylon (Hdt., *Hist*. 1.189-1.191; "Isaiah" 44:27-28). It appears that, from a technical point of view, the diverting of the Euphrates and the Tigris was a relatively simple procedure.[19] But the best illustration of this–because it involves Gilgamesh himself–is provided by a Sumerian literary text describing how the population of Uruk diverted the Euphrates within the city of Uruk, in order to construct in the dry riverbed a stone tomb for Gilgamesh ("The Death of Gilgamesh", Me-Turan Version Segment H lines 10-21; Nippur Version Segment H lines 1-21). Whether true or not, this story shows that such operations must have been quite routine.[20]

The tradition that Gilgamesh was involved in the digging of wells is also preserved in the Akkadian "Gilgamesh Epic". Already in the Old Babylonian version, the elders of Uruk instruct Gilgamesh to excavate wells on his way to the Cedar Forest, so that he may libate Shamash and his father Lugalbanda with fresh water every evening.[21] See also the standard version of the "Gilgamesh Epic", Tablet I 39: *he-ru-ú bu-ú-ri sá* GU_2 KUR, "the one who excavated wells on the hill-flanks?".[22] But this request is bizarre: why should Gilgamesh excavate a new well every day, instead of using spring water that would be readily available to him during his journey? Therefore, one cannot but suspect that, although still vaguely remembered in the Old Babylonian and later periods, the original nature of the connection between Gilgamesh and the wells had been forgotten by that time.[23]

1.3 The Recommendation of the Elders (lines 9-14)

Not unexpectedly, the conservatively inclined elders disagree with Gilgamesh. Offering the gravity of Uruk's water situation as their rationale, they recommend submitting to Kish.

The fact that Gilgamesh subsequently puts the same query before the able-bodied men of Uruk (see under 2.4. and 2.5.) gave rise to the idea that, during Pre-Sargonic times, the governance of southern-Babylonian city-states may have involved the participation of bicameral advisory bodies, composed of the chambers of city elders and the younger citizenry respectively.[24] However, since the existence of such an institution is not mentioned or alluded to anywhere else, I would think that the juxtaposition of the city elders and the young men in this composition is merely a rhetorical device, with the two groups serving as stand-ins for the two alternative approaches/mindsets that tend to dominate the decision-

15 George 1999, 143.

16 George 1999, 143.

17 Steinkeller 2001, 30-1.

18 Van Lerberghe et al. 2017, 18.

19 Such operations were especially easy to conduct on the Euphrates, which always carried much less water and had a lower gradient than the Tigris. Already in Ur III times, and probably even earlier, the Kish branch of the Euphrates was carrying much less water than before, due mainly to the diversion of its water into a new, western branch (Arahtum) (Lauersen, Steinkeller 2017, 73 fn. 10).

20 A very similar story was related by the historian Jordanes about the Visigothic king Alaric. According to that account, upon his death in 411 AD Alaric was allegedly buried under the riverbed of the Busento in Calabria. See Grimm, Grimm 1961, 81.

21 George 2003, 206-7 lines 268-71.

22 George 2003, 540-1.

23 "Wells of Gilgamesh" are also mentioned in lexical sources and in the omen series "Shumma alu" (George 2003, 1: 94-5).

24 See most recently Neumann 2022, with earlier literature.

making process: the more cautious and conservative position typical of the old and the more impulsive and daring stand of the young. Clearly, the fact that Gilgamesh ignores the advice of the elders shows that he does not really need it. His mind is already made up. He consults the young men only because he knows that they will support his course of action.

1.4 Gilgamesh Ignores the Recommendation of the Elders and Lays His Case Before the Able-Bodied Men of Uruk (lines 15-23)

As in his address to the elders, Gilgamesh describes the seriousness of Uruk's water situation but argues that, despite of it, Uruk should not submit to the House of Kish.

1.5 The Recommendation of the Able-bodied Men (lines 24-39)

The able-bodied men, quoting a saying of wisdom about the unrelieved hardship of the serf's dole (lines 25-8), recommend that Uruk resist Kish with arms (line 29). Otherwise, they would be forced to perform corvée work for Kish.

As argued by this author (2013, 362), the saying, which is also attested elsewhere ("Sumerian Proverbs" Collection 3.1), describes the fate of corvée laborers. Crucial here is the phrase gub-gub-bu-de$_3$ tuš-tuš-u$_3$-de$_3$, "if not on duty, then waiting for a duty-assignment" (line 25), which undoubtedly refers to the Ur III rotational system, called bala gub-ba bala-tuš-a. During the bala gub-ba phase, "performing the duty", which lasted half a year, workers were employed full time. During the other half of the year, called bala tuš-a, "sitting out the duty", the same workers served as a reserve force; sometimes, they would hire themselves out for wages, usually to the same institutions. This citation shows that the tale, if not composed in Ur III times, it must at least have been redacted at that time (see further below under 2.1.).

Then, in a sort of motivational 'pep-talk', they try to build up Gilgamesh's confidence and extort him to provide his leadership, reminding Gilgamesh that Uruk has always enjoyed a special divine protection (lines 30-9). They assure him that, given this protection and his own reputation as a renowned warrior/wrestler (literally: 'head-basher'),[25] his very appearance on the battlefield will suffice to overwhelm Akka and his army.

A striking feature of this passage is the apparent connection between Gilgamesh and the young men of Uruk, as contrasted with his adversarial relationship with Uruk's elders. Since he and the young men share a common understanding, one could even say that he self-identifies with this social group: he is one of them. This motif is also reflected in Gilgamesh's title "the king of young men" (lugal guruš-ene), which appears in two Pre-Sargonic votive inscriptions dedicated to him.[26] The fact that this epithet of Gilgamesh is documented nowhere else could have a bearing on when exactly the original version of GA had been composed.

1.6 Gilgamesh Prepares for War (lines 40-7)

Overjoyed by the response of the able-bodied men and buoyed by their enthusiasm, Gilgamesh instructs Enkidu to get the arms ready. Having rejected Akka's demand (which is only implied in the text), Gilgamesh

25 sag LUM-LUM (lines 36 and 110). It is likely that sag LUM-LUM is to be read here sag gul$_2$-gul$_2$, because of the epithet sag-gul-gul-e-n[e], which describes wrestlers in "Gilgamesh and Bull of Heaven" line 18 (Klein, Sefati' 2020, 20, 36). As I note later, Gilgamesh was renowned for his wrestling skills.

26 Steinkeller 2018, 173-4; see further below 2.3. As I argued elsewhere (Steinkeller 2018, 151-6), the kingship of Gilgamesh represented a complete *novum* in the Mythical History of Babylonia. Unlike En-merkar and Lugal-banda, the two other legendary rulers of Uruk, who were Inana's obedient cultic servants, Gilgamesh, as he appears in written records, is "a secular ruler through and through. His interests and preoccupations are of an entirely different kind. Thus, he prefers to be with the boys, goes on foreign expeditions, and seeks fame. His life is all about individual achievement. This attitude is epitomized by his most important and lasting achievement, which was the construction of the city-wall of Uruk. With one insignificant exception, Gilgameš is never described as a temple builder, which was a defining characteristic feature of rulers of southern Babylonia in Early Dynastic times" (154). His predilection to spend time in the company of young men recalls the memorable words spoken by King Henry: "We few, we happy few, we band of brothers; For he to-day that sheds his blood with me Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile" (in Shakespeare's *Henry V*).

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now expects that Akka and his army will soon be on their way to besiege Uruk. His intention undoubtedly is to launch a surprise attack on them before they reach Uruk and, therefore, to frustrate Akka's plan of battle.

1.7 Akka Lays Siege to Uruk, Frustrating Gilgamesh's Plans (lines 48-50)

The surprise is Uruk's, however, since in less than five days Akka's army lays siege to Uruk. This turn of events being completely unexpected, Uruk is thrown into confusion and despair.

1.8 Gilgamesh Devises a Stratagem (lines 51-3)

Luckily, however, Gilgamesh conceives an alternative plan, which (as we learn only later, see under 1.10.), is to send out a sortie to capture Akka. But for this plan to succeed, a diversionary action is needed, which will permit the sortie to leave Uruk undetected. Gilgamesh asks for a volunteer who would be willing to sacrifice himself to create such a diversion. Birhurture, one of Gilgamesh's bodyguards, steps out, praising the cleverness of the plan.

The role of Birhurture is of crucial importance for the narrative. It was brilliantly solved by Wolfgang Heimpel:[27] "Being shut up behind their wall, the Urukeans were unable to use their numerical advantage. To get it back they must make a sortie. (Toward that end, Birhurture is sent out as a distraction, and subsequently caught and beaten by Akka's soldiers). This is according to plan, because, struggling with them, Birhurture manages to get them away from the gate, which remains unguarded".[28]

1.9 Gilgamesh's Stratagem is Put into Action – the Set-Up (lines 59-83)

Birhurture goes out of Uruk through the main city gate. As was called for by Gilgamesh's plan, he is immediately caught and, perhaps after offering some perfunctory resistance, brought before Akka. But, as soon as he begins to speak to Akka, the chief armorer (zabar-dab$_5$) of Uruk shows up on the top of the city wall, treating the enemy to a little performance. Such shows of force, which consisted of taunting, obscene gestures, and all sorts of intimidating behavior, formed a traditional prelude to the battle in all societies.

A good example here is the Maori war-dance called *peruperu* (*haka*): "Various actions are employed in the course of a performance, including facial contortions such as showing the whites of the eyes, and poking out the tongue, and a wide variety of vigorous body actions such as slapping the hands against the body and stomping of the feet. As well as chanted words, a variety of cries and grunts are used" ("Haka" Wikipedia).[29]

When asked by Akka if the man on the wall is his master (i.e., Gilgamesh), Birhurture replies that that man surely is not his master and goes on to taunt Akka (lines 70-81).

Birhurture boasts that, if that man indeed were Gilgamesh, Akka's army would instantly be defeated and Akka himself would be captured in the midst of his troops. Uruk's military capabilities being null at

27 Heimpel 1981, 242.

28 Cf. Klein 1983, 204: "Alternatively, his [i.e., Birhurture's] task may have been to divert the attention of Agga and his generals from the city-gate, the point from which Enkidu and his commando-troops planned to launch their attack on the army of Kish. Consequently, the ensuing attack takes the besieging army by surprise, and Agga is captured in the midst of his body-guards, at the most protected place of his military camp".

29 Pre-battle preliminaries of this kind were the subject of a recent monograph by James Gersbach. Naming them "battle expression" and focusing on their manifestations in the Classical world, this author characterizes them as follows: "Ancient literary and archaeological evidence reveals that military forces from the Graeco-Roman world intentionally employed a range of battle expression types that aimed to adversely affect the psychological state of the enemy on the battlefield. Characteristics of intimidatory battle expressions were large-scale choreographed demonstrations of massed movement and/or noise as well as taunting that could be inspired from events that transpired on the battlefield. The adoption of intimidatory practices on the battlefield appears consistently in the evidence and universally amongst cultural groups, suggesting it was a typical feature of ancient military life. The purpose of gaining a psychological edge over the enemy by deflating the enemy's mental wellbeing had real military outcomes and should be considered as an extension to military strategy. The sophistication and humour that ancient armies exhibited on the battlefield in their attempts to intimidate or distract the enemy justify the adoption of the battle expression as a replacement for war cry when accounting for the sonic and visual displays of military forces on the battlefield that could transpire before and during military engagement in antiquity. Evidence reveals that military forces, irrespective of ethnic composition, throughout the Graeco-Roman world, adopted tactics that aimed to intimidate the enemy prior to and/or during battle" (Gersbach 2023, 55). For threats and boats in the formal preliminaries to battle in epics, see Hainsworth 1989, 230.

this point, such a proposition sounds absurd and highly offensive to the Kishites, who give vent to their anger by beating Birhurture into a pulp. In fact, however, Birhuture's boast is an accurate prediction of what precisely is going to happen when, only a while later, Gilgamesh himself shows up on the wall.

There are reasons to suspect that the zabar-dab$_5$ official is none other than Enkidu:

1. as is made clear by the meaning of zabar-dab$_5$, "the one who holds / take care of bronzes", this title designated, at least originally, an official in charge of bronze objects, primarily weapons and various types of vessels. Because of the rarity and high cost of bronze during the third millennium, the social status of the zabar-dab$_5$ must have been very high. Unfortunately, little information on this official survives. He is documented since Pre-Sargonic times. An ED IIIb tablet from Adab mentions a certain Lugal-men zabar-dab$_6$(URUDA)[30] (CUSAS 35 7 iii 9-10). Most of the attestations of zabar-dab$_5$ date to the Ur III and Old Babylonian periods.[31] He disappears subsequently. In Ur III times, he was one of the highest officials of the state, whose principal role apparently was to provide ritual offerings on behalf of the royal family.[32] As indicated by the titles zabar-dab$_5$ geštin$_x$(DIN) kaš-a gal sagi-mah ugula maš$_2$-šu-gid$_2$-gid$_2$-de$_3$-ne, "the zabar-dab$_5$, the great one of wine and beer, the chief cup-bearer,[33] and the supervisor of the diviners" which were carried by the zabar-dab$_5$ dNanna-zi-šag$_4$-gal$_2$ and ^{d}En-lil-zi$_2$-šag$_4$-gal$_2$,[34] he also supplied alcoholic drinks to the royal court, and supervised the (royal) diviners. None of the Ur III and Old Babylonian sources offer an indication that the zabar-dab$_5$ was in any way connected with weapons or military affairs. It is possible, however, that, by the Ur III period, the zabar-dab$_5$ had become a purely honorific title, which no longer had anything to do with his original function, which, as I suggest, was that of the "chief armorer".[35] Such an evolution of titles was a common phenomenon throughout history. A good example here is the Polish *miecznik*, "the one of swords", originally the king's deputy in charge of weapons, who, by the sixteenth century AD, became a titular court official.
2. Earlier in the tale, it is Enkidu who is instructed by Gilgamesh to get the arms ready (lines 42-5). This suggests that Enkidu served as Uruk's chief armorer.
3. The "performance" given by the zabar-dab$_5$ on the top of Uruk's city wall would be convincing and credible only if he closely resembled Gilgamesh. And the only person fitting this role is Enkidu, who was a virtual double of Gilgamesh. Otherwise, if the zabar-dab$_5$ was some other, anonymous individual, his participation in the plot, which was of crucial importance for Gilgamesh's plan to succeed, would be difficult to justify. Moreover, if the zabar-dab$_5$ had been, as in Ur III times, an official in charge of royal offerings, the reason why he should play such an active role in an event of purely military nature is without an explanation.

But, even if the zabar-dab$_5$ was not Enkidu, this does not affect the essential meaning of the episode.

30 The value dab$_6$ of URUDA is well documented in the Pre-Sargonic sources. See, e.g., ba-dab$_6$-kar-re$_2$ (Frayne 2008, 269-75 Urukagina 3 ii 13'); mu-dab$_6$-il$_2$ (Frayne 2008, 433-7, Lugal-zagesi 1 ii 32); mu-dab$_6$-zi (Frayne 2008, 433-7, Lugal-zagesi 1 iii 2).

31 For attestations, consult CAD Z 5, BDTNS, and CDLI.

32 According to Walther Sallaberger (1999, 186-8), zabar-dab$_5$ was "das höchste kultische Amt" and "der höchste Verantwortlicher für den königlischen Kult" in Ur III Babylonia.

33 That the Ur III zabar-dab$_5$ officials supervised cupbearers (sagi) is confirmed by the examples where the sagi are identified as their subordinates. See, e.g., SAT 1 53:9-10; Kennelmen n. 9:6; AnOr 7 79:7-8; grain še-ba sagi iti 12-kam ugula zabar-dab$_5$ (Nisaba 15/2 1079:1-4).

34 CBT 1 BM.12920+A seal; CBT 3, BM.28053a seal; BDTNS 043167 seal; Nisaba 30 58 seal; BDTNS 170855 seal; BDTNS 17133 seal; studied by Waetzoldt (2006). The reading of DIN.KAŠ-a-gal is somewhat uncertain. Waetzoldt tried to connect it with the later KAŠ.DIN = kurun. However, since no other examples of kurun are otherwise attested in Ur III texts, a more likely reading is geštin$_x$(DIN) kaš-a(k) gal. For the examples of wine and beer being issued together, see the following examples: 150 kuš ka-bar kaš ^{giš}geštin-še$_3$, "150 leather jar-stoppers for beer and wine" (ITT 5 10010:6); 10 gin$_2$ i$_3$-giš 2 sila$_2$ zu$_2$-lum nig$_2$-sizkur$_2$-ra kaš geštin, "2 shekels of sesame oil and 2 liters of dates as part of the offering of beer and wine" (Behrens 74:1-3); 4 ^{dug}nig$_2$(GAR) gal 0.4.0 kaš geštin, "4 large nig$_2$ jars with 40 liters of beer and wine" (Atiqot 4, pl. 20 n. 67:17).

35 Such a possibility was already considered by CAD Z 6a: "Gilgamesh and Akka" and other sources "indicate that zabar *dabbu* was a high military rank (possibly, originally, the weapon carrier of the king)". I assume that this interpretation is to be attributed to Thorkild Jacobsen.

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1.10 The "Sting" (lines 84-99)

At this point,[36] the chief armorer (who, as I suggest, is actually Enkidu) departs from the scene, his place on the wall being taken over by Gilgamesh. The appearance of Gilgamesh in his resplendent battle gear stirs up everybody in Uruk. A sortie is formed–undoubtedly by Enkidu–armed with battle maces and put in a battle-ready position in the lane leading to the city gate.[37]

The Kishites, already distracted by the performance of the armorer and the taunts of Birhurture, have now their attention completely focused on the top of the wall–where a new figure has just appeared–leaving the city gate unguarded. This allows Enkidu to sneak out through it without detection. After ascertaining that the way is clear, he is apparently followed by the rest of the sortie.

Noticing Gilgamesh, Akka asks Birhurture whether this is his master. Birhurture replies that this, indeed, is his master.[38] As he says it, Enkidu and his men make a surprise attack and take Akka prisoner. And so Birhurture's prediction is fulfilled.

The importance of Gilgamesh's appearance on the wall was rightly stressed by Civil: "The whole point of the tale is to show the supernatural powers of G[ilgameš]. He alone, by its sole presence, appearing with his radiating aura at the top of the city wall, overwhelms the Kish army. All the previous episodes are there to make clear how no one can truly help him, he acts all alone".[39]

But I think that Civil somewhat exaggerates the role of Gilgamesh in the tale. He certainly did not act alone. The contributions of Birhurture, the zabar-dab$_5$ (= Enkidu?), and the ordinary Urukean soldiers were equally responsible for Uruk's success. Its victory over Kish was a joint effort, which, as I see it, depended on purely military factors (see further below under 2.2.3.). Moreover, the powers of Gilgamesh were not "supernatural", at least not in the otherworldly sense. Like the Homeric champions, he indeed possessed extraordinary physical characteristics and was an exceptionally able and experienced warrior. One must also assume that his armor and weapons were of special quality as well. His appearance, therefore, must have been truly frightening. But this fact, however significant, would not have been sufficient to defeat Akka's army.

The real hero was in fact Birhurture, who sacrificed himself for the common good. More than anything else in the tale, Birhurture's act is the reflection of a true heroic ethos.

In the passage describing the capture of Akka, of interest is the mention of barges (ma$_2$-gur$_8$) in lines 80 and 98: "the prows of the barges were chopped off". It is obvious that Akka's soldiers must have used barges, on which their materiel and supplies were transported over the Euphrates, from Kish down to Uruk. Accordingly, it appears that, just before their final assault on Uruk, they had reverted the Euphrates back into its original bed.

1.11 The Reconciliation Between Gilgamesh and Akka (lines 100-12)

In recognition of a favor that Akka had apparently granted Gilgamesh sometime in the past,[40] Gilgamesh pardons Akka. In addition, he makes Akka his governor and general. He even puts him in charge of all his troops. Akka, in turn, acknowledges that Gilgamesh indeed is the true and only ruler of Uruk. These acts of mutual generosity signal that Uruk and Kish are now fully reconciled with each other. Akka returns to Kish.

The "earlier favor" referred to in this passage is one of the many internal clues that there existed an oral, considerably longer version of the tale which narrated an earlier phase of the war between Uruk and Kish. In that hypothetical earlier conflict, Kish may have been victorious over Uruk. Since Gilgamesh compares himself to a "captured bird", it is conceivable that Akka–or alternatively his father En-mebaragesi–had captured Gilgamesh at that point, pardoning him subsequently.

36 Sting: "a carefully planned operation, typically one involving deception" ("Oxford Dictionaries" online).

37 It is possible that Enkidu's sortie had actually used a *different* city gate to sneak out of Uruk. This would have made this action more difficult to detect by Akka's soldiers.

38 Most of the translators assume that, in line 93, it is Enkidu whom Akka is addressing. See Cooper 1981, 237; Jacobsen 1987, 353; Katz 1995, 45. But this is impossible, because, at that moment, Enkidu and his sortie were about to attack Akka's camp.

39 Civil 1999-2000, 187.

40 See line 110a. I follow here source CBS.10355+N.3591 (Wilcke 1998, 484), which reads: [sag mu]-sig$_{10}$ šu-mu ⌜im-mi-ib-gi$_4$⌝, "it has been entrusted to you. Repay my favor!". This MS omits "You are (its) master (and) champion! The head-basher, the prince beloved of An".

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It appears quite certain that his theme of reconciliation, which concludes the tale, was introduced only in Ur III times, when the surviving written version was apparently redacted (see further below under 2.1).

1.12 The Meaning of the Tale

If one accepts this understanding of the plot, GA is a tale of how, when put in a seemingly hopeless situation, Uruk was able to prevail over Kish thanks mainly to Gilgamesh's cunning and military acumen. In many ways, therefore, it is an apotheosis of Gilgamesh as a crafty military strategist. For this reason, a title "How Gilgamesh tricked/outsmarted Akka" would be quite appropriate for it.[41] As he appears in our tale, Gilgamesh was more of an Odysseus than an Achilles figure. Note that, apart from performing a show on the city wall, he did not participate in the battle himself![42]

Translation of GA

1. The envoys of Akka, son of En-mebaragesi,
2. came from Kish to Gilgamesh.
3. Before the elders of his city Gilgamesh
4. lays the matter, seeking advice:
5. "The wells are becoming depleted! The wells of the (whole) land (of Uruk) are becoming depleted!
6. "The small (i.e., shallow) wells of the (whole) land (of Uruk) are becoming depleted!
7. "(Even) the deep wells with hoisting ropes are becoming depleted!
8. "(But, in spite of this) we should not submit to the House of Kish! Let us fight!"
9. The convened gathering of his city's elders
10. answers Gilgamesh:
11. "(Indeed) the wells are becoming depleted! The wells of the (whole) land (of Uruk) are becoming depleted!
12. "The small (i.e., shallow) wells of the (whole) land (of Uruk) are becoming depleted!
13. "(Even) the deep wells with hoisting ropes are becoming depleted!
14. "We should (therefore) submit to the House of Kish! We must not fight!"
15. Gilgamesh, Lord of Kulaba,
16. (being) the one who trusts Inanna,
17. did not take to heart the words of his city's elders.
18. For the second time, before the able-bodied men of his city Gilgamesh
19. lays the matter, seeking advice:
20. "The wells are becoming depleted! The wells of the (whole) land (of Uruk) are becoming depleted!
21. "The small (i.e., shallow) wells of the (whole) land (of Uruk) are becoming depleted!
22. "(Even) the deep wells with hoisting ropes are becoming depleted!
23. "(But, in spite of this) we should not submit to the House of Kish! We should fight!"
24. The convened gathering of his city's able-bodied men answers Gilgamesh:
25. "As they say: if not on duty, then waiting for a duty-assignment;
26. "If not marching at the prince's side,
27. "Then cleaving to the donkey's thigh–
28. "Who would have stomach for that?
29. "We should not (therefore) submit to the House of Kish! Let us fight!
30. "Uruk, handiwork of the gods,
31. "Eanna, the temple descended from heaven–
32. "it was the great gods themselves who fashioned its parts!

41 A similar characterization was offered by Heimpel 1981, 243: "the story relates a trick and becomes entertaining, a quality which may contain a clue for the question of the function of the text: the story of the Trojan horse, which also tells how a city wall was overcome by trickery, was, according to the Odyssey, sung for entertainment of the nobility".

42 This point has also perceptively been noted by Ponchia 2016, 52: "[this passage] reveals at the same time a comic or satirical overtone in its portrayal of a heroic king who stays safe behind his wall, while the heroic action of confronting the enemy on the field is delegated to poor Birhurture, who gets repeatedly beaten". But I do not see any reason to suspect comic overtones here. As being usually based on purely personal perceptions, scholars' attempts to detect satire/humor in Sumerian literature have not in general been very successful.

33. "Its great ramparts were compacted by An!
34. "Its lofty dwellings were founded by An!
35. "It (now) remains in your trust! You are (its) master (and) champion!
36. "When a head-basher (like you), a prince beloved of An,
37. "comes (to confront Akka), oh, how he will be afraid!
38. "Its (i.e., of Kish) troops will dwindle, they will scatter (in retreat) from their rear;
39. "his men will be unable to resist!"
40. Then Gilgamesh, Lord of Kulaba,
41. Rejoiced at the words of his city's able-bodied men, his spirit brightened.
42. He speaks to his servant Enkidu:
43. "Let the implements and arms of battle be made ready!
44. "Let the battle mace return to your side!
45. "May they create a great terror, a terrifying aura,
46. "So that when he (i.e., Akka) comes (to battle) my great terror will overwhelm him,
47. "His plans will be frustrated, his strategy will fall apart!"
48. (But) not ten, not even five, days had passed
49. (When) Akka, the son of En-mebaragesi, laid siege to Uruk.
50. (And so it was) the plans of Uruk that became frustrated!
51. Now Gilgamesh, Lord of Kulaba,
52. speaks to his warriors:
53. "My warriors, you (all) look despondent.
54. "(But) somebody with courage (among you) surely will rise (and say): 'I will go to Akka!'"
55. Birhurture, his royal bodyguard,
56. lauds his master (for his stratagem):
57. "I will go to Akka,
58. "so that his plans will be frustrated, his strategy will fall apart!"
59. And so Birhurture goes out through the city gate.
60. As soon as Birhurture went out through the city gate,
61. they captured him at the entrance to the city gate.
62. They pounded Birhurture from head to toe
63. (and) brought him before Akka.
64. He speaks to Akka.
65. He had not yet finished his words when the armorer of Uruk climbed up the wall
66. and leaned out over it.
67. Akka saw him.
68. He speaks to Birhurture:
69. "Servant, is that man your master?"
70. "That man is not my master!
71. "Were that man my master,
72. "Were that his terrifying brow,
73. "Were those his bison eyes,
74. "Were that his lapis beard,
75. "Were those his fine fingers,
76. "Then would not multitudes fall down, would not multitudes rise up?
77. "Would not multitudes be covered with the dust (of battle)?
78. "Would not all the foreign invaders be overwhelmed?
79. "Would not the mouths of people (lit. : the mouth of the land) be filled with the dust (of death)?
80. "Would not the prows of the barges be chopped off?
81. "And would not Akka, the king of Kish, be taken captive in the midst of his troops?"
82. (When they heard this), they beat him, they struck him,
83. they pound him from head to toe.
84. Following the armorer of Uruk, Gilgamesh climbs up the wall.
85. (His) terrifying aura overwhelmed everyone of Kulaba, young and old.
86. The able-bodied men of Uruk took up battle maces.
87. They positioned themselves in the passageway to the city-gate's entrance.
88. (Then) Enkidu alone came out (stealthily) through the city gate.
89. (At that very moment) Gilgamesh leaned out over the wall.
90. As he was looking out, Akka saw him.

91. (Akka speaks to Birhurture:) "Servant, is that man your master?"
92. "Yes, that man is indeed my master!"
93. Just as he (i.e., Birhurture) said that,
94. Multitudes fell down, multitudes rose up,
95. Multitudes were covered with the dust (of battle),
96. All the foreign invaders were overwhelmed,
97. The mouths of people were filled with the dust (of death),
98. The prows of the barges were chopped off,
99. And Akka, the king of Kish, was taken captive in the midst of his troops!
100. (Then) Gilgamesh, Lord of Kulaba,
101. spoke to Akka:
102. "Akka my captain, Akka my colonel,
102a. "Akka my governor, Akka my general,
103. "Akka, the generalissimus of (all) my soldiers,
104. "Akka, you (once) granted me breath, you granted me life!
105. "The one who was taken away (from his home) you Akka sheltered in (your) bosom!
106. The bird which was carried away (from its nest) you Akka fed with grain!"
107. (Akka speaks:) "Uruk, handiwork of the gods,
108. "Its great ramparts were compacted by An!
109. "Its lofty dwellings were founded by An!
110. "It indeed remains in your trust! You are (its) master (and) champion! The head-basher, the prince beloved of An.
110a. ["Repay me] my favor!"
111. (Gilgamesh speaks:) "By Utu, I hereby repay you the former favor!"
112. And he set Akka free (to return) to Kish.
113. Gilgamesh, Lord of Kulaba,
114. Praising you is sweet!

2 Part 2. The Date, the Literary Classification, and the Possible Oral Background of GA

2.1 The Date of GA

Like most of the surviving Sumerian literary compositions, all the manuscripts of GA date to Old Babylonian times. It is generally assumed, however, that many (if not the majority) of these compositions had actually been composed during the Ur III period. In some instances–though such are quite rare–an even earlier date of composition can be demonstrated. Not surprisingly, therefore, GA too has usually been dated to Ur III times. This is especially so since the other Sumerian compositions dealing with Gilgamesh, especially "Gilgamesh and Huwawa" among them, were almost certainly composed during the Ur III period. Such an attribution is also favored by the fact that, as well known, the Ur III kings traced their descent back to Gilgamesh and his dynasty.

By contrast, however, several scholars were of the opinion that "Gilgamesh and Akka" may have been composed in Early Dynastic times. Here one can mention Thorkild Jacobsen, Geza Komoróczy, Dina Katz,[43] and Gianni Marchesi.[44] A pre-Ur III date of the tale was also considered by Mario Liverani, with a difference that, according to him, its plot reflects best the historical realities of the Sargonic period.[45]

A radically different dating was suggested by Claus Wilcke, who speculated that GA was composed at Uruk in Old Babylonian times, around the time of Sumu-el of Larsa.[46] Wilcke based this dating on the fact that some of the manuscripts of GA are written in the characteristically late Old Babylonian

43 "It may be suggested that the early tale originated prior to Utu-hegal's war against the Gutians, perhaps in Gilgamesh's own time" (Katz 1987, 114). For the same dating, see also Katz 1993, 31.

44 Jacobsen 1987, 345; Komoróczy under Klein 1991, 127 fn. 23; Katz 1987, 114; Marchesi 2004, 192 n. 220.

45 "The tale ... [makes] more sense if contextualized after the victory of Sargon against Lugalzagesi. This was the time when the rulers of Uruk tried to reconcile their current subordination to the empire with their former autonomy, rooted in the past splendour of their city" (Liverani 2014, 148).

46 "Als Entstehungsort des Epos wird man Uruk vemutten können [...] ungefähr zur Zeit von Sumu-el von Larsa [...] Ein Epos über den die Unabhängigkeit Uruks gewinnenden mytischen König Gilgameš bietet sich an als Legitimationsmythos" (Wilcke 1998, 481).

version of Sumerian.[47] However, orthography is not a reliable dating criterion.[48] It is known that the Old Babylonian scribes routinely rewrote earlier texts according to their understanding of the Sumerian grammar. A good example in point is the composition "Instructions of Shuruppak". Although originally written down in ED III times, and probably recopied during the Sargonic and Ur III periods, this composition was eventually completely rewritten in Old Babylonian times, in accordance with the then grammatical and orthographic rules. If not for the existence of the earlier MSS, one would never suspect that it was composed in the ED III period.

Therefore, the assumption that GA dates, *at least in the surviving written form*, to the Ur III period is the most probable one.[49] As already discussed, three points support this dating specifically: 1) the inclusion in the tale of a proverb whose background unquestionably is Ur III (see above under 1.8.); 2) the sequence of officials cited in lines 102-3 of the tale–the captain (u g u l a), the colonel (n u - b a n d a $_3$), the governor (e n s i $_2$), and the general (š a g i n a)–is characteristic of the Ur III politico-military organization;[50] 3) the concluding theme of reconciliation, which likewise seems to reflect Ur III reality (see below). In my opinion, these three points offer undisputable evidence that, disregarding the exact date of its composition, the tale underwent some degree of redaction in Ur III times.[51]

For the dating of the tale, of particular significance is the theme of reconciliation that concludes and so to say "crowns" the narrative. This is because this theme fits perfectly the needs of Ur III political propaganda, whose primary objective was to turn Babylonia into a fully integrated political, economic, and cultural system.

Although Babylonia had successfully been united by Ur-Namma and his son Shulgi, it is more than certain that significant differences and tensions between the southern and northern portions of it still existed in Ur III times. In my view, the tale's conclusion is a propagandistic argument that, while the political relations between South and North had indeed been characterized by a long-standing conflict, that adversarial relationship is finally a thing of the past, with the two lands coexisting now in peace and harmony. This argument is diplomatically coached in the realities of semi-mythical past: since the times of Gilgamesh and Akka, the balance of power between southern and northern Babylonia has constantly shifted back and forth. Now, finally, the conflict between the two has peacefully been resolved. Although Uruk (read Ur-Namma/Shulgi) had been the ultimate winner, Kish has become an equal partner of Uruk. Its ruler, now serving as a governor and a general of Kish, shares power amicably with the ruler of Uruk.

A very similar propagandistic paradigm underpins the compositions forming the so-called "Aratta" cycle. In the hoary past, the relationship between the lowlands (Babylonia) and the Iranian highlands (Elam, Marhashi, etc.) used to be a hostile and competitive one. But this situation has changed under the Ur III kings, when an age of peaceful coexistence (*Pax Babyloniaca* of sorts) had been ushered in. Because of their mutual dependence–the former need metals, stone, and timber, the latter need grain, oils, and woolen textiles–the two regions must cooperate with one another, both economically and politically.

However, the fact that GA was redacted in Ur III times does not mean that the *entire* tale was necessarily composed at that time. As the following discussion will show, my own preference is to think that there existed an oral version of the tale, which had been composed much earlier, possibly as early as ED times. One may speculate that this oral GA was known, probably in various forms, from the Pre-Sargonic into the Ur III period, and that it was only under the Ur III dynasty that it was finally put into writing. That written GA, the text we have at our disposal, was a considerably abbreviated version of the original oral tale.

47 "Der Text von 'Gilgameš und Akka' zeigt also Merkmale, die für seine Entstehung in der 'frühaltbabylonischen' Zeit sprechen können" (Wilcke 1998, 472).

48 Wilcke's interpretation has recently been questioned also by Neumann 2023, 511.

49 Cf. Neumann 2023, 510-11: "Die literarische Überlieferung zu Gilgameš, hymnisch wie episch, hatte daher letztlich zum Ziel, in den Handlungen des Königs von Uruk die Legitimität und Wirkmächtigkeit des Herrschers Šulgi von Ur zu vermitteln. Dies dürfte gewiss auch auf die vorliegende Dichtung 'Gilgameš und Akka' zutreffen".

50 The ranks of u g u l a, n u - b a n d a $_3$, and š a g i n a are typical of the military organization. See Steinkeller 2013, 351-2. With the addition of e n s i $_2$, "governor", the sequence comprises the most important positions of the Ur III political system.

51 Katz 1993, 31-2, too believed that the tale was edited in Ur III times.

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2.2 The Uniqueness of GA Among Sumerian Literary Compositions

It has been customary to class GA together with the other Sumerian narrative tales that concern Gilgamesh. This Gilgamesh "cycle", numbering five compositions,[52] has in turn been typologically linked by scholars to the four narrative poems dealing with the adventures of two other semi-historical rulers of Uruk, En-merkar and Lugal-banda. All these compositions are usually identified by Sumerologists as "epics". I will discuss the validity of this designation later.

However, GA is completely unlike any of those compositions. Among the features that make it singularity unique, the following ones are particularly striking.

2.2.1. The tale is replete with the examples of what Miguel Civil identified as "discourse ellipsis", an omission of the information that is essential for understanding of the plot. In fact, so much information is left unsaid that the plot of GA is practically incomprehensible in its present form. Thus, we are never told the content of Akka's demand; the importance of wells is never explained; Gilgamesh's intention to confront Akka in the field is not spelled out; beside Gilgamesh's question "Who will go to Akka?", the nature of his alternative plan is not specified; the climax of the tale, during which Enkidu leads a sortie out of Uruk's city walls and captures Akka, is only briefly sketched out; and the reasons why Gilgamesh pardons Akka are never explained. In my judgment at least, the tale records only the high points of the plot, told in a characteristic "telegraphic style".[53]

These facts strongly suggest that, in its present form, the tale is but a summary or an abridgement of a longer story. For this conclusion, see already Jacobsen:

> This short tale of Gilgamesh and Aka remains so far the only example of true primary epic that Sumerian has to offer. It may well be that the genre was losing favor and was dying out by the time of the Third Dynasty of Ur, from which the bulk of the known literary compositions dates. That the genre once was better represented is indicated by "Gilgamesh and Aka" itself, for that tale is clearly not self-contained, but represents rather a single episode in a much wider epic context leading up to it that is now lost. This particular tale may have survived because of the dramatic way in which it presents the inner conflict in Gilgamesh between ambition and loyalty, pride and gratitude, and its resolution. (Jacobsen 1987, 345)

2.2.2. Another distinguishing feature of the tale is its patently profane character. Within the entire body of Sumerian narrative compositions, literary and historical alike, GA is the *only* text in which events take place without any direct or indirect divine intervention, with their outcomes being the sole result of human actions.[54]

Strangely, this point has attracted little attention so far. Notable exceptions here are Kramer, Komoróczy, and Klein: "Brief as it is, however, it [i.e. GA] is of rather unusual interest. Its plot deals with humans only; unlike all the other epic tales, it introduces no mythological motifs involving any of the Sumerian deities".[55]

As G. Komoróczy correctly pointed out (cf. his *A Sumer Irodalmi Hagyomány*, 40 ff; 54-5), one of the major characteristics of our epic, indicating its great antiquity, is the conspicuous absence of magical or mythological motives from its plot".[56]

That GA significantly differs in this respect from other Sumerian 'epic' poems was observed also by Katz. However, rather than interpret these distinguishing features positively as evidence of the tale's

52 Apart from GA, these are "Gilgamesh and Huwawa", "Gilgamesh and the Bull of Heaven", "The Death of Gilgamesh", and "Gilgamesh, Enkidu and the Netherworld".

53 Civil 1999-2000, 180, tended to deny the possibility that the "discourse elipses" in GA are intentional deletions, explaining them rather as a performance method, by which the narrator relied "on common knowledge in order to establish an empathic connection with his audience". In this case, however, the omissions are too many and too serious to be accounted for in this manner: the Ur III audience would certainly have lacked the knowledge necessary to reconstruct the intricacies of the plot. Significantly, at the same time Civil 1999-2000, 188, strongly believed that written Sumerian literary texts are generally abbreviated versions of oral compositions.

54 Except for the mentions of An and Inana in stereotypical expressions: "Gilgamesh the one trusts Inana" (line 16), "the walls and dwellings of Uruk were compacted by An" (lines 33-4, 108-9), and "prince beloved of An" (lines 36 and 110), deities do not play any role in the tale.

55 Kramer 1963, 186.

56 Klein 1983, 204 n. 19. At my request, Dr. Zsombor Földi has kindly read Komoróczy's Hungarian text. He identifies Komoróczy's main conclusions as follows: GA is the most archaic piece of Sumerian epic that has come down to us; of all the Sumerian epics, GA is the only one that is free of irrational/magical elements; such elements appear gradually later and thus constitute a criterion for dating these compositions.

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distinctiveness, Katz judged them negatively as compositional deficiencies, which, as she seemed to think, take away from the value of GA as an example of 'epic' poetry:

> In respect to its literary form *Gilgamesh and Akka* is indeed structured as an epic tale... the composition, however, lacks some typical features of the epic genre. The setting is narrower in scope, the protagonists act like ordinary human beings, and there is no involvement of gods or demons. Furthermore, there are no philosophical or moral implications. Thus *Gilgamesh and Akka* is not only the shortest tale about Gilgamesh, but also the only one lacking mythical or legendary elements.[57]

2.2.3. The tale focuses its interest exclusively on the martial aspects of the Uruk-Kish conflict, relishing the shifts taking place in the constantly changing military situation. In my view, this interest in military realia, which would make the tale particularly attractive to an audience of experienced warriors, is probably its main and defining characteristic. This characteristic is completely unique, not only among Sumerian compositions, but also within the entire corpus of the surviving cuneiform literature.

2.2.4. The brevity of GA is another feature that sets it apart from the extant Sumerian 'epic' poems. This fact, however, does not disqualify it from being classified as an epic, if indeed this designation applies to our tale (see below under 2.3. where I address this question in detail). Although in the common understanding of this term, epic indeed is thought to be a long narrative poem,[58] epics vary greatly in size, the scale of the genre being from the short lay or poem to the long epic.[59] Thus, Russian bylina may be as short as 23 lines, though usually from 100 to a 1000; the poems of the "Elder Edda" number from about 40 to 384 lines; the ballads in the Kalevala between 50 and 400.

According to Paul Zumthor,[60] short epic commonly is "a story with a single episode, in dramatic gradations, or a hyperbolic accumulation of brief juxtaposed episodes–a single character, sometimes collective …, fighting a stronger adversary".

The artistic integrity of the short epic was noted by Maurice Bowra: "both short and long poems have appropriate techniques. It is wrong to assume that the short lay is an imperfect preliminary to the full epic".[61]

"The short lay has its own characteristics and standards. It can be roughly divided into two classes. The first, which is much commoner, treats a single subject, the second a series of episodes, and this difference dictates a considerable difference of manner".[62]

However, given the fact that, as discussed earlier, the surviving written version of GA undoubtedly is heavily abbreviated, the length of the original oral version (if such indeed existed, see below under 2.3.) is impossible to calculate.

2.2.5. Unlike the other Sumerian "epics", which invariably have long and complicated plots, GA is concerned with a single but crucial episode: the siege of Uruk by the forces of Kish and the capture of Akka. As argued earlier, that episode was likely part of a much longer narrative, which described the war between Uruk and Kish.

As emphasized by Bowra, "the art of the single episode" is typical of short epics. "The art of the short lay consists largely of creating this sense of crisis and leading rapidly to the simple dramatic moment".[63] "What counts is the central, significant event, the surprise which it awakes and the force with which it strikes us".[64]

But "epic episodes" are more than that. Very often they assume the role of the "epic moment", the high point of the narrative, the climax of the whole story. See the following observations by A.T. Hatto:

57 Katz 1993, 3. Katz underestimated the potentialities of the epic genre, since, as one can learn from any standard introduction to world epic, neither the brief scale of GA nor its reliance on human actors to the total exclusion of divine participants and of any other fantastic elements makes it less of an epic poem, both features, in fact, being commonly found in this immensely rich and multifaceted body of literature.

58 See, e.g., Thrall et al. 2008, 174-5: "A long narrative in elevated style presenting characters of high position in a series of adventures which form an organic whole through their relation to a central figure of heroic proportions and through their development of episodes important to the history of a nation or race".

59 Bowra 1952, 330.

60 Zumthor 1990, 82.

61 Bowra 1952, 331.

62 Bowra 1952, 331.

63 Bowra 1952, 334-5.

64 Bowra 1952, 334.

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"Epic poetry is apt to condense long-drawn tensions into brief scenes of dramatic power enhanced by visual magnificence, that is, 'epic moments'"; "epic moments are highly charged narrative ganglia".[65]

2.2.6. Of all the Mesopotamian narrative compositions, Sumerian and Akkadian alike, GA is the only one that begins *in medias res*.[66]

As recognized since ancient times, such introductions are characteristic of the epic genre. It was already Horace who, in *Ars poetica*, asserted that epic must begin *in medias res*.

Modern students of the genre have invariably stressed the commonness of such an opening in epics as well. Thus, according to Bowra, who cites many relevant examples, "short poems may equally well begin with an opening which goes straight to the heart of the matter in question... starts in the middle of an action which indeed explains itself".[67] As this author writes, *in medias res* beginnings are closely connected with the principle of the single episode: "The poet sees that he must make the most of it and goes straight to the point at the start".[68]

Apart from the "Iliad", other famous attestations of such an introduction come from "Slovo o Polku Igorove": "Igor waits for his dear brother Vsevolod. And Wild Bull Vsevolod [arrives and] says to him"; and "The Poem of the Cid": "My Cid turned his head and stopped and gazed with streaming eyes".

In medias res beginnings commonly treat of "persons arriving with news or the like", very often messengers.[69] This phenomenon is particularly frequent in short poems, though it appears in long epics as well, as in "The Iliad", which begins with the description of how Chryses, the priest of Apollo, arrives with rich gifts to ransom his daughter. It may not be accidental that GA begins with an arrival of messengers as well.

2.3 Was There an Oral Version of GA?

That there was an oral version of GA is not a novel idea. Among the scholars who entertained such a view, one may name Kramer, Heimpel, Alster, and Jacobsen.[70] On the other hand, Jerrold Cooper took a more cautious position on this issue: "Where and by whom epic tales like Gilgamesh and Agga were recited and what relation our written texts have to those that were actually recited are all questions whose answers must remain guesses".[71]

Civil offered a particularly extensive and cogent argument in favor of the existence of oral poetry in ancient Sumer, with a specific reference to GA. His views deserve to be cited in full:

> As it is now generally accepted, the "literary" texts, at least the narrative ones, were above all traditional oral compositions, meant to be recited or sung in public performances, accompanied some times by a musical instrument. I would suggest that the written texts of the same compositions are secondary in the sense that they were abbreviated versions whose purpose was (a) the training of singers and similar performers in special centers, and (b) the preservation of the compositions themselves; they were not intended to be 'read' in any usual sense. The main point here is that oral and written versions of the same composition were in principle *different*. Oral texts were not in all cases simply a link in the transmission of the written text, but were autonomous entities having a life of their own. Once in a while some were written down... I am convinced, however, that despite the impression given by the existence itself of a writing system, and by the abundance of tablets, the literary culture of Mesopotamia, at least up to the end of the OB period, was a culture of the spoken word, not of the written word.[72]

65 Hatto 1980, 1, 4, 6.

66 Civil 1999-2000, 180-1, argued that since "suddenly starting a tale in medias res is accepted practice in universal folklore and poetry, there is no need to postulate a lost 'Gilgameš and Akka I' and assume that what we have is its sequence". This is incorrect, however. *In medias res* beginnings are by no means universal. They appear typically in epics. Characteristically, one finds no examples of them in Sumero-Akkadian literature, which favors etiological/cosmological introductions.

67 Bowra 1952, 333.

68 Bowra 1952, 334.

69 Bowra 1952, 287-90.

70 Kramer et al. 1983, 345; Kramer 1946, 120-1; Heimpel 1981, 243; Alster 1972, 27; Jacobsen 1983, 345.

71 Cooper 1981, 226-7.

72 Civil 1999-2000, 188-99.

To be sure, the task of proving that there indeed existed an oral GA is extremely difficult, if not an impossible one. Still, I will try to argue such a case anyway.

I begin with the question of the classification of our tale as a literary genre. As noted earlier, GA is commonly grouped with other Sumerian compositions treating of mythical heroes such as Gilgamesh, Lugal-banda and En-merkar. All these compositions are customarily identified as 'epics'. The question whether this label is in fact correct, and whether some other designation would not have been more appropriate for this group of poems, is, if not completely futile, at least not a particularly productive one. This is especially so since the very question of what constitutes 'epic' remains highly disputed, with no realistic hopes of ever being resolved. This having been said, the fact remains that, while disagreeing on the specific definition, modern students of literature do accept, if not much more than intuitively, the existence of a discrete literary genre called 'epic'. Furthermore, there is no question that the Sumerian compositions in question indeed share much in common, both in terms of their form and thematic concerns, with the 'epic' poetry, and since no other literary genre comes closer in terms of shared similarities, it is certainly justified to classify them as epic poems.

The correctness of this classification may be argued on various grounds, most of which are self-evident, such as the fact that the focus of these narrative compositions is uniformly the adventures of human beings who act as heroic figures. I believe that this feature alone is sufficient to place our poems securely in the realm of epic. This is as far as the issue of 'epic' in Sumerian literature may be taken without getting bogged down into a stale terminological dispute. In my view, the 'epic' label is particularly apt in the case of GA. Here one thinks especially of the genre known as 'heroic' epics.[73] This is primarily because many (if not all) of the distinctive features of GA I identified earlier are typical of that genre as well.

To quote Ruth Finnegan, heroic epic poems "resemble each other not only because they are narrative and designed primarily for entertainment, but also because of a basic likeness in outlook. There is a concentration on the adventures of human beings who act as heroes, fired by the longing for fame and glory". To put it slightly differently, they are imbued what may be termed "heroic spirit".[74]

Heroic epics tend have a 'historical dimension', in that they invoke 'true' events, which are at best dim reflections of historical facts. In support of this theoretical stand, Karl Reichl, a specialist on Turkic epics, agued as follows:

My emphasis on singing *the past,* on the importance of a 'historical dimension' in heroic epic, should not be understood as a contribution to the theory of origins. In my discussions of heroic epics like "Edige", "Beowulf", and the "Chanson de Roland" it emerged that there is a difference between the "historical nucleus" as a historiographically verifiable element, and the past, "our past", as the focus of identification. The two might overlap, as in the case of "Edige" and the "Chanson de Roland", but the "historical nucleus" might also be merely tangential to the narrative, as in "Beowulf". Similarly, the role a heroic past plays on the pragmatic level, in the dynamic relationship between epic, singer, and audience, differs considerably between epics and traditions. But despite differences and variations, there is a common concern with the past, not as the historiographer's history but as the time of heroes and ancestors, which justifies comparison.[75]

The events so invoked in historical epics very often are of pivotal importance for the history of nations or societies. The "Iliad", "Chanson de Roland", and "Slovo o Polku Igorove" are prime examples here.[76]

I submit that the narrative of GA belongs here typologically as well. Although Gilgamesh may not have been a real historical figure, the conflict between Uruk and Kish was *the* event that shaped the history of Babylonia throughout most of the third millennium BCE. This conflict began in ED II (if not already in ED I) with rulers such as En-mebaragesi and Me-silim and continued–more or less without any interruption–through the ED III period down to the time of Sargon.[77]

This shape of the early history of Babylonia is also reflected in the Sumerian King List. Though not a true historical source, this document too organizes events from the perspective of an ongoing struggle between Uruk and Kish. This view is echoed by the beginning of the "Curse of Akkade" lines 1-6:

73 Zumthor 1990, 85, preferred the term 'historic', arguing that "the epic tends toward the 'heroic', only where 'heroic' means the exaltation of a sort of community superego".

74 Finnegan 1977, 247.

75 Reichl 2000, 180.

76 The observations of Zumthor (1990, 85) are especially relevant in this connection: "It has been noted that it [heroic epic] finds its most fertile grounds in border regions where there exists a prolonged hostility between two races, two cultures–neither of which obviously dominates the other. The epic song crystalizes this hostility and compensates for the uncertainty of competition; it foretells that all will end well, proclaims at least that we have righteousness on our side. In so doing, it forcefully arouses action".

77 For an extensive discussion of this conflict, see now Steinkeller 2024, 10-14.

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When Enlil's caprice
had slain Kish like the Bull of Heaven,
had slaughtered the House of Uruk land in the dust like a great ox,
and then, to Sargon, king of Akkade,
Enlil from south to north,
had given enship and kingship.[78]

For the above interpretation of GA, note also that this is the only Sumerian epic poem in which a 'historical' kernel may be detected.

That various forms of oral poetry existed in early Babylonia is demonstrated by the contemporaneous art. Of special importance here is the so-called Standard of Ur. This wooden artifact, whose original shape cannot be determined, is decorated with two panels, inlaid with a mosaic of shell, red limestone, and lapis. Because of their subject matter, these panels have usually been dubbed "War" and "Peace" respectively **[figs 1-2]**.



Figure 1 The Standard of Ur, "War" side. After https://smarthistory.org/standard-of-ur-1/



Figure 2 The Standard of Ur, "Peace" side. After https://smarthistory.org/standard-of-ur-2/

78 Cf. Steinkeller 2003, 285.

The panels form a single narrative sequence,[79] which begins with the bottom register of the "War" section, depicting battle wagons trampling dead enemy soldiers. The middle register shows what happens after the battle: some enemies are being slaughtered on the spot, while others are being led away as prisoners of war. This scene continues onto the top register, where the prisoners are brought before a large male figure, which, because of its dominant size, must be the commander of the victorious army. The story resumes on the bottom register of the "Peace" panel, continuing then on the middle register, both showing the transportation of war booty, which consists of equids, cattle, sheep, and various commodities. The top register of the "Peace" panel depicts a banquet culminating and celebrating the victory so accomplished. The commander is the prominent seated male to the left. He is faced by six other men, also seated, to his right. As already noted by Henri Frankfort (1970, 74-5), the fact that all the participants are male is unique. Although depictions of banquets are common in ED III art, they invariably show mixed groups, men and women.

For our purposes, of special importance are the two figures standing to the right of the banqueteers. Also facing the commander, these are a harp player and, behind him, a singer.

The singer has characteristically long hair. He shows striking similarity to Ur-Nanshe, the "chief singer" (nar-mah), two statues of whom were excavated in the ED III levels at Mari.[80] See figure 3, which shows the better preserved one. Ur-Nanshe sports the same hairdo as the singer of the Ur Standard. He originally held a string instrument of some kind, which is now destroyed **[fig. 3]**.[81]



Figure 3 The Statue of Ur-Nanshe of Mari. After woldvrcandi library – WorldPress.com

79 Here I follow the reading of the Standard by Winter 1985, 19.

80 Parrot 1967, 89-93 and pls. XLV-XLVI. It is dedicated to the goddess Inana-ZA.ZA for the intention of Iplus-Il, king of Mari. From the same locus survive fragments of a similar statue of Ur-Nanshe, which records an identical dedication. See Parrot 1967, 93-6, figs 132-3.

81 It may be noted here that, at roughly the same time when this Ur-Nanshe was active, Ebla was visited by a group of singers from Mari. One of them was named Ur-Na-zi-a, where Na-zi-a is but a different form of the divine name Nanshe (Steinkeller 1993, 237-8). While there is no reason to suspect the same identity between these two individuals (the Ur-Nazi of Ebla sources was a nar-tur, "junior singer"), it is likely that the name Ur-Nanshe enjoyed high reputation at Mari, being associated with singers, probably in reflection of their original Sumerian background.

That this image may provide a possible *Sitz im Leben* for GA was suggested already by Heimpel:

> It is quite plausible that our story too belonged to the repertoire of royal entertainment in Babylonian courts from at least the Early Dynastic III period on. An illustration of such an occasion is provided by the upper register of the peace panel of the standard of Ur. A singer, accompanied by a lyre player, entertains a party, surely the king and his courtiers.[82]

Given the overall message of the standard,[83] the bard likely sings a song celebrating the military victory depicted on the "War" panel. His audience are the commander and his chief warriors. But the song itself is missing alas.

As I noted earlier, the banquets depicted in Sumerian art invariably involved both male and female participants. See the following two ED III representations of banquets, which are attended by musicians as well **[figs 4-5]**.



Figure 4 A plaque from Tell Agrab, Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, University of Chicago, A. 18073; Boese 1971, 168-9 AG 2, pl. 1 fig. 2.
After en.m.wikipedia.org.Banquet plaque.Tell Agrab

82 Heimpel 1981, 243.

83 If this is the correct reading of the Standard, its subject matter is a single successfully accomplished military campaign. However, rather than depicting a specific event, it undoubtedly is a generic representation.



Figure 5
A plaque from Khafajah, Iraq Museum, Baghdad, IM.14661; Boese 1971, 172 CT 2, pl. 5 fig. 2.
After Amin, O.S.M. (2019, May 25). *World History Encyclopedia*. Retrieved from https://www.worldhistory.org/image/10776/sumerian-votive-plaquefrom-khafajah/

More interesting is this example **[fig. 6]**, where, apart from a man and woman in the top register, the bottom register depicts a musician and a singer. The position of the singer's arms makes it clear that he is singing or reciting something. To the right of the musician and the singer, there are two wrestlers, accompanied by a man holding a baton. He must be the referee supervising the wrestling competition. It is highly likely, I think, that these four men form one group. If this is true, the song or the poem so performed must have described the wrestling match.



Figure 6
A plaque from Khafajah, Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, University of Chicago, A.12417; Bosse 1971, 176 CS 7, pl. 9 fig. 2.
After Suter 2024, 224 fig. 14.1

Here I need to remind the reader that wrestling happened to be Gilgamesh's favorite sport.[84] His reputation in that respect was such that, after his death, a special competition allegedly had

84 See Steinkeller 2018, 160 n. 28.

been established in recognition of his wrestling feats: "youthful men and onlookers(?) will form a semicircle(?)..., and in front of it a wrestling match will be organized; in the month of NE-NE-gar, the festival of ghosts, even though he (i.e., Gilgamesh) will not be there, lights(?) indeed will be set up (for him)" ("Death of Gilgamesh" Segment E lines 8-11). As will become significant in the following, this festival focused on the worship of Gilgamesh as the king of the human denizens of the Netherworld.[85]

While the existence of heroic poems in ED III times must remain hypothetical, we have evidence that, already at that time, Gilgamesh was worshiped as a heroic figure. Particularly important here are three Pre-Sargonic mace-heads, which are dedicated to Gilgamesh ex-voto.[86] Two other examples of such dedications date to the Ur III period.[87] The very nature of these objects makes it certain that Gilgamesh's worship centered on his martial characteristics. This is confirmed by the inscriptions recorded on two Pre-Sargonic mace-heads,[88] in which he is given the titles of (lugal) kalag-ga, "the mighty (master/king)",[89] and lugal guruš-(e)ne, "master/king of young men" **[figs 7-8]**.[90]

The second of these titles, which is assigned to Gilgamesh only here, is of particular interest, for it immediately brings to mind the intimate connection between Gilgamesh and the young men of Uruk in GA. In fact, this otherwise completely unique designation could be the only textual datum that would allow one to date the original GA to Pre-Sargonic times.[91]

Thanks to the contemporaneous sources from Lagash, we also know that, already in the ED IIIb period, Gilgamesh was believed to serve as the ruler of the human denizens of the Netherworld.[92]

This fact implies that, already then, the death of Gilgamesh was an important component of the tradition pertaining to this legendary ruler. The memory of Gilgamesh's demise and his peculiar burial survived down to the Ur III period, as is evidenced in the composition "Death of Gilgamesh", which, as I mentioned earlier, describes his mortal disease, death, and funeral. The fact that Gilgamesh's death

85 A stele found near Badra, now in the Iraq Museum, Baghdad, IM.75208; Safar 1971; Canby 2001, 24, pl. 14 d, shows an especially extensive wrestling scene. The stele is decorated on its front, left, and right sides. The top section is missing. See the drawing in Canby 2001, pl. 14 fig. d. Two registers survive. The top register shows, in that order, three kneeling wrestlers grasping their hands in a praying or greeting attitude; two referees holding batons; four wrestlers involved in a contest; two musicians, a drummer and a harp player; on top of the big drum balances a wrestler. The lower register depicts a procession of two groups of men facing each other. The men to the left have shaved heads, the ones to the right are bearded. All of them grasp their hands in a praying gesture. Between them, two men carry a sheep and a goat respectively. Finally, to the right there are two men standing next to a large beer(?) vessel. Canby 2001, pl. 14 fig. d, subscript, dated the stele to ca. 2650 BCE. A lower dating, ca. 2400 BCE, appears to be more realistic. It appears that the stele depicts a single wrestling event, which, as suggested by the praying posture of some of the participants and the animal offerings, had a ritual character. Is it possible that it is the wrestling competition honoring Gilgamesh?

86 (1) Krebernik 1994, 8, 10-12 (possibly from Uruk); (2) de Genouillac 1913, 101 n. 2 (provenance unknown); color photograph in Sallaberger 2013, 53 fig. 5.4; (3) YOS 1 3 (provenance unknown) = Braun-Holzinger 1991, 45-6 K 17. Cf. Sallaberger 2013, 53; Steinkeller 2018, 155, 173-4.

87 (1) Steinkeller 2011, 20 n. 17; (provenance unknown); (2) Steible 1991, 355 n. 1 (provenance unknown); (3) Braun-Holzinger 1991, 45 K. 18; "Paris, Louvre, Keulenkopf mit Weihung an Gilgameš; wird demnächst von B. André publiziert".

88 ^{d}Bil$_3$-ga-mes lugal guruš-ne-ra... kalag-ga dumu ^{d}Nin-sumun$_2$-ka-ra (Krebernik 1994, 8, lines 1-6); ^{d}Bil$_3$-ga-mes lugal guruš-še$_3$-ne-ra (de Genouillac 1913, 101 fn. 2: 1-2) **[figs 7-8]**.

89 Gilgamesh is the earliest documented bearer of the title lugal kalag-ga. This title was later assumed by Naram-Suen upon his deification. See Steinkeller 2017, 136, 139-41; 2018, 155. It was later revived by Shulgi, likewise upon his deification. See Steinkeller 2017, 151.

90 Note further that one of the Ur III mace-heads (Steinkeller 2011, 20 n. 17) was dedicated to Gilgamesh by a certain Ur-Numushda, an "elite soldier" (aga$_3$-us$_2$). In the other Ur III example (Steible 1991, 35 n. 1), the donor calls Gilgamesh "his master/king" (lugal-a-ni), which too may be an indication of his military background.

91 The significance of this title and its possible connection with GA was noted already by Gianni Marchesi 2004, 192 n. 220: "Such a title is possibly related in some way to the episode narrated in the Sumerian epic *Gilgameš and Akka*... If so, it follows that this story on Gilgameš already existed and circulated in the ED period".

92 The evidence here are the mentions of gu$_2$ ^{d}Bil$_3$-aga$_3$-mes-ka, "the assembly (of the dead Lords) of Gilgamesh" in the sources from Lagash (DP 54 xi 5, 218 iv 4', 222 ix 7'; VAS 14 74 x 9 [following an offering for Gilgamesh], 172 ix 8; VAS 27 10 xi 5). The same cultic locus is called alternatively ki-gu$_2$, "the place of the assembly, gathering". See ki-gu$_2$-še$_3$ e-ne-de$_6$ (Nikolski 1 25 iv 9); ki-gu$_2$-še$_3$ ba-ne-de$_6$ (DP 57 v 5), ki-gu$_2$-ka ba-sa$_6$ (BIN 8 351 i 4, ii 4); [ki]-gu$_2$-ka (RTC 50 i 1). The place in question appears have been a building: e$_2$ e$_2$-bar ^{d}Bil$_3$-aga$_3$-mes-ka du$_3$-a [i$_3$]-DU, "(fish delivered) to the building erected at the 'outbuilding' of Gilgamesh" (DP 287 iv 1-2). In these examples, gu$_2$ is an abbreviation of gu$_2$-en(-na), "the gathering of the Lords". The full term appears in DP 53 viii 11 and TSA 1 viii 2, which record offerings for ^{d}Dumu-zi gu$_2$-en(-na), "Dumuzi of the assembly of the Lords". For the meaning of gu$_2$-en-na, of particular importance is the following bilingual passage, which mentions Dumuzi and Gilgamesh in the Netherworld setting: g[u$_2$-e]n-ar šeš-mu, ˹gu$_2$˺-en-na-a[r] = *ina nap-ḫar be-li a-ḫi ina n*[*ap-ḫar be-li*] šeš-mu ^{d}Dumu-zi-da g[u$_2$-en-na-ar] ^{d}Gilgameš umun ki-ta = *be-el er-ṣe-ti*, "in the assembly of the Lords, my brother, in the assembly of the Lords, my brother Dumuzi, in the assembly of the Lords, (with) Gilgamesh the Lord of the Netherworld" (Civil 1983, 48 lines 9'-11'). Cf. Attinger 2021, 424, who translates gu$_2$-en as "'totalité (des) seigneurs' d'où 'assemblée'". The "Lords" referred to in gu$_2$-en(-na) are the dead rulers and high priests over whom Gilgamesh ruled in the Netherworld. In Pre-Sargonic Lagash, they were also called en-en KU.KU-ne, "sleeping Lords". For their cult at Lagash, see Steinkeller 1999, 110-11; 2005, 23 fn. 26; 2017, 30-1. For Gilgamesh as a Netherworld ruler, see also George 2003, 127-30.

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and funeral play no role in the Akkadian versions of the "Gilgamesh Epic" could be interpreted that these events played a particularly pronounced role in the earliest stages of Gilgamesh's tradition, that is, during the last four centuries the third millennium.[93]



Figure 7 A mace-head dedicated to Gilgamesh. After Krebernik 1994, 11

93 There is nothing in this text that would indicate its oral background. Except perhaps for the dramatic prologue (lines 1-14), each line of which names a different designation of Gilgamesh, followed by the phase "he has lain down and is never to rise again!"

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Figure 8 A mace-head dedicated to Gilgamesh. After Sallaberger 2013, 53 fig. 5.4

That the cult of Gilgamesh was a pan-Babylonian phenomenon during the ED IIIb period could find support in iconographic evidence as well. I am referring here to a group of sealings, which belonged to the ED IIIb rulers and generals of Mari.[94] These sealings have a characteristically martial flavor, as they show realistic depictions of battles. In practically all of them, the battle scene is dominated by a standing naked male who is holding two lions. This figure functions almost as a heraldic emblem, the symbol of a perfect warrior of sorts. See figures 9-11 for three of these seals. An even earlier representation of this male appears on a vessel from Tell Agrab. The hero is likewise naked, except that he wears a belt; he grasps two lions **[fig. 12]**.[95] I am more and more inclined to think that, as it has often been suggested in the past, this is a depiction of Gilgamesh–be he a real person or a purely legendary character.

All these data demonstrate quite conclusively that Gilgamesh was worshiped as a heroic figure in the ED IIIb period. Here it needs to be noted that the evidence of Gilgamesh's deification dates even earlier, to the ED IIIa period.[96] As proved by the Lagash evidence, that cult was not confined to Uruk, but was a Pan-Babylonian phenomenon. It also appears that the fact of his death was an important if not the crucial – element of this tradition.[97] The last point could have further implications for the ultimate origins of GA.

94 Beyer 2007, 254 figs 17-19. Cf also Beyer 2007, 250 figs 15-16.

95 Marchetti, Marchesi 2011, 26 fn. 45, suggest that this vessel "can be dated to no earlier than Early Dynastic I, possibly even later". Thus, an ED IIIa date appears to be the most likely one. The same figure is depicted on another vessel from Tell Agrab (see Highlights from the Collection. Animals at the link `https://isac.uchicago.edu`). The naked man, also belted, grasps the rumps of two lions. The tails of two other loins are tucked under his arms, and all four animals attack a bull on the opposite side of the vessel.

96 SF 1 rev. iii 21'.

97 There are no indications that the other legendary rulers of Uruk appearing in the Sumerian "epics"–Lugal-banda and En-merkar–were worshipped as heroes. Like Gilgamesh, Lugal-banda was deified already in the ED IIIa period. Already then, he was also paired with Nin-sumun. Although Gilgamesh is identified as the son of Nin-sumun as early as ED IIIb (see above n. 57), he is not connected with Lugal-banda until the Ur III period. As for En-merkar, he almost certainly was an Ur III invention. See Steinkeller 2018, 152 n. 10.

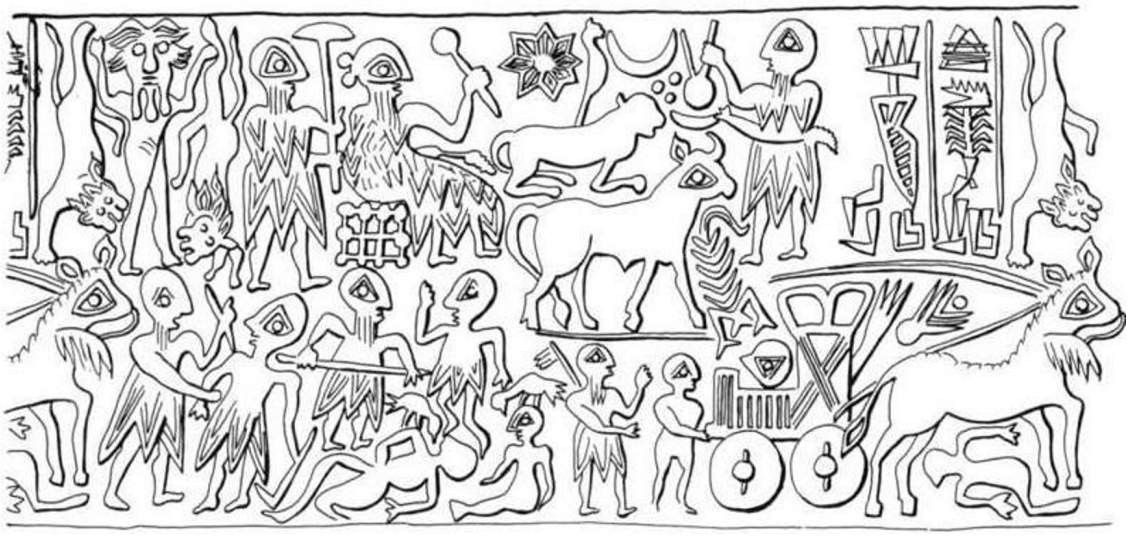


Figure 9 Seal of Ishqi-Mari, king of Mari. After Beyer 2007, 254 fig. 17

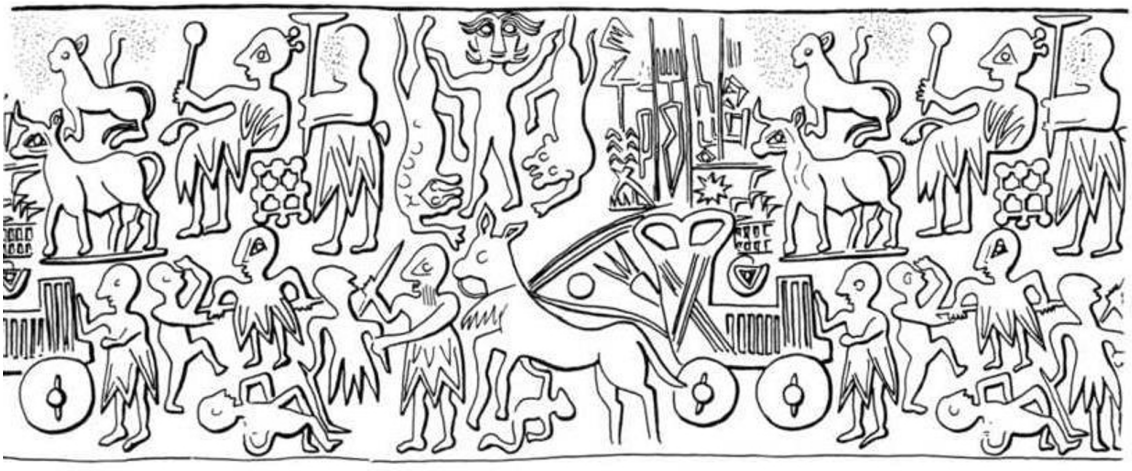


Figure 10 Seal of Ishqi-Mari, king of Mari. After Beyer 2007, 254 fig. 18

Writing in the reference to Homeric epics, Gregory Nagy argued that "the cult of heroes is a subtext, as it were, for the development of epic traditions about heroes in ancient Greece".[98] According to him, the most fundamental aspect of the cult of Hellenic heroes was that "the hero must experience death. The hero's death is the theme that gives him power–not only in cult but also in poetry".[99] In this connection, Nagy stressed the fact that the death of heroes played an important role also in the development of Sanskrit (Radjasthani) epics. In the Indian epic tradition too, "what gives the hero his ultimate power is the actual fact of his death".[100] According to the Sanskrit specialist Stewart H. Blackburn, "the death event operates as the 'generative point' for stories in local traditions. It leads to deification, to worship, to a cult, and eventually to a narrative which is ritually performed to invoke the spirits of the dead".[101] It appears quite likely, therefore, that both in ancient Greece and India, the death of heroes was one of the sources, possibly the crucial one, of epic literature.

98 Nagy 1995, 167.
99 Nagy 1979, 9.
100 Nagy 1995, 168.
101 Nagy 1989, 22.



Figure 11 Seal of Iddin-Eshtar, general of Mari. After Beyer 2007, 254 fig. 19

Is it possible, therefore, that in Babylonia too the Pre-Sargonic cult of Gilgamesh, in particular the traditions of his death, were the "subtext" from which the oral version of GA had developed? As in the case of the heroes of Greek and Indian epics, the death of Gilgamesh may have been the starting point of his worship. This may have led to his deification and then, possibly, to the formation of epic poems that celebrated his achievements.



Figure 12 Stone vessel from Tell Agrab, Iraq Museum IM.27905. After Wikipedia Commons: Gilgamesh in a Sculptured Vase, Shara Temple, Tell Agrab, Iraq.jpg

In summary, I offer the following tentative conclusions. Although the surviving text of GA does not contain anything that would allow us *securely* to date its origins to Pre-Sargonic times, it likely reflects an earlier oral tradition, which had been still alive in Ur III times.

As for the exact history of this composition, the following scenario appears to be the most likely one:

There existed an earlier oral GA, in roughly the same form as the surviving poem. Its origins went back to the ED III period. This oral poem was written down for the first time in the Ur III period, with some minor editorial changes having been introduced into it, of which the most significant one was the very ending, describing the reconciliation between Gilgamesh and Akka. Alternatively, but less likely, the tale was only recomposed orally in Ur III times, with its recording having taken place in the early Old Babylonian period.

Assuming that this interpretation is correct, one could then posit the existence of other ED III oral tales about Gilgamesh that dealt with some other events of his life, particularly, his death and of how he had become the leader of the human denizens of the Netherworld.

But before I close, I wish to identify another datum that is potentially of significance for the origins of Sumerian epic tradition. Nagy suggested that praise poetry (panegyrics or eulogies) may have been one of the sources of Homeric epics. In this Nagy drew support from Aristotle's assertion ("Poetics" 1448b 32-34) that epic takes its origin in eulogy. As Nagy puts it, "praise poetry can be reconstructed as *a* basis, not *the* basis for the development of epic".[102]

The idea that there is a connection between panegyrics and epic poetry is not new, of course. Such a point was argued already by H.M. Chadwick and N.K. Chadwick: "the chief source of narrative poetry must be sought in the heroic panegyric". And consider also Bowra (1952, 10):

> the resemblances between panegyrics or lament and heroic poetry are so close that there must be a relation between them. Historical priority probably belongs to panegyric and lament, not merely because they are similar and less objective, but because they exist in some societies where heroic poetry is lacking.[103]

Even more pertinent here are the observations by Jeff Opland, an eminent student of the Xhosa poetry. Although narrative is only implicit in Xhosa eulogies, these compositions occasionally exhibit passages of explicit narrative as well. In Opland's opinion, this shows that "the structure of the poetry is sufficiently flexible to permit extension into narrative";[104] "it is certainly feasible that poets operating in a tradition of eulogy, a genre in which narrative is implicit, could produce explicit narrative poetry when they become conscious that their audience… has grown more universal and might not understand the arcane references and allusions normally apprehensible to the poet's local audience. Narrative is embryonically present in eulogy; if a praise poet perceives that his audience has altered significantly, he may expand on the allusions in extended passages of explicit narrative. The narrative element might even come to dominate the eulogistic, with the praises perhaps retained as heroic epithets or elegant variations for the characters. In this way, eulogy could well give rise to epic".[105]

GA concludes with a praise of Gilgamesh: "Gilgamesh, Lord of Kulaba, praising you is sweet!" (lines 113-14). By itself, this fact is not unusual, since this stereotypical praise-formula is almost invariably attached to the Sumerian literary compositions dating to the second millennium BCE, be they epic poems or religious hymns. What is of interest is the great antiquity of this formula. It is documented already in the ED IIIa period. Examples here are the so-called "hymns" from Abu Salabikh celebrating temples and their divine owners,[106] the "hymns" to Shamash,[107] Nisaba,[108] and Ushumgalana-Dumuzi,[109] and the incantation praising Ningirsu, which is part of a building inscription of Ur-Nanshe of Lagash.[110] To this category also belong the later "hymns" of Gudea of Lagash, which praise the construction of the

102 Nagy 1995, 171.

103 Chadwick, Chadwick 1940, 723.

104 Opland 1989, 122.

105 Opland 1989, 140.

106 Krebernik, Lisman 2020.

107 ^{d}Utu za$_3$-me$_3$ (ARET 5 6 xviii 2-3 + OIP 99 342 iii 9 = Krebernik 1992, 81).

108 ^{d}Nisaba za$_3$-me (ARET 5 7 xiv 4 = Krebernik 1992, 90).

109 ^{d}Ama-usumgal za$_3$-me (ARET 5 21 xv 3-4 + OIP 99 278 vii' 3-4 = Krebernik 2003, 177).

110 ^{d}Nin-gir$_2$-su za$_3$-me (Frayne 2008, 117-18 Ur-Nanshe 49 iii 9).

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Eninnu, Ningirsu's main temple.[111] It is striking that all these compositions are of a *religious* character. It goes without saying that the extreme brevity and formal simplicity of the Abu Salabikh compositions dedicated to temples and their gods makes it impossible to classify them as "hymns". The best definition fitting them is panegyrics or eulogies. In my opinion, this definition also applies to the other "hymns" I enumerated earlier, even the ones of Gudea. All of them are best described as panegyrics, with varying volumes of narrative added to them.[112]

These facts suggest that, in early Babylonia, panegyrics were, as in ancient Greece, one of the sources of epic poetry. If, as it appears likely, the traditions of the death of Gilgamesh and his subsequent deification led to the birth of praise poetry associated with him, such compositions could have eventually contributed to the formation of epic poems about him, one example of which, as I suggest, being GA.

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111 ^{d}Nin-gir$_2$-su za$_3$-mi$_2$ e$_2$ ^{d}Nin-gir$_2$-su du$_3$-a za$_3$-mi$_2$ mu-ru-bi-im ("Gudea Cylinder A" xxv 14-16; Edzard 1997, 88).

112 Even Gudea's "Statue B", which likewise describes the construction of the Eninnu, can be classed as a panegyric. Note its concluding lines: gaba-gal$_2$ dingir-re-ne-ka en ^{d}Nin-gir$_2$-su-ka nam-mah-ni un/kalam-e he-zu-zu, "may the nation/land make known the greatness of the vanguard of the gods, the lord Ningirsu" (Edzard 1997, 38 ix 27-30).

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At the House of Ūtanapišti
An Interpretive Essay

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Abstract This article employs a close literary reading of the last narratological block in the Epic of Gilgameš, the extended scene at the house of Ūtanapišti in Tablet XI. It argues that the end of Tablet X and the beginning of Tablet XI preserve two incompatible first meetings and dialogues between Gilgameš and Ūtanapišti, creating a deliberate narratological false ending that makes room for the Flood story. The analysis highlights Ūtanapišti's unnamed wife, whose apparently marginal role conceals complex agency and an ambivalent, partly sympathetic stance toward Gilgameš. Re-reading the sleep-deprivation test, the article contends that the loaves placed beside the sleeping hero not only mark time but represent a missed chance to share divine food and gain immortality, in dialogue with Enkidu's first bread and the myth of Adapa. A comparison with Abraham and Sarah's hospitality in Gen. 18, and with theories of hospitality from Pitt-Rivers, Levinas, and Derrida, frames Tablet XI as a dark meditation on hostile, manipulative hosting and guarded divine–human boundaries. Finally, the essay discusses Ūtanapišti's farewell gift.

Keywords Epic of Gilgamesh. Gilgamesh. Ūtanapišti. Abraham. Mesopotamian Literature. Mesopotamian.

Summary 1 Two Initial Meetings and False Ending. – 2 Ūtanapišti's Unnamed Wife and the Sleep Deprivation Trial. – 3 Not Sleeping or not Eating?. – 4 The Old Couple: Ūtanapišti and His Wife Vs. Abraham and Sarah. – 5 Hospitality: Gilgameš, Ūtanapišti, Pitt-Rivers, Levinas and Derrida. – 6 A Tale of Two Tests. – 7 Changing clothes as sign of existential transition. – 8 The Departure and the Farewell Gift.

Tablet XI of the Standard Babylonian version of the Epic of Gilgameš comprises three distinct literary units. It opens with Ūtanapišti's first-person account of the Flood and concludes with Gilgameš's return to Uruk. Between these two frames lies an extended scene set in Ūtanapišti's house. This article centers on that scene, offering a new reading that is less strictly philological and more exegetical. In pursuing this approach, I draw on both the Old Babylonian and the Standard Babylonian versions of the epic, allowing each to elucidate the other and to address thematic gaps that arise between them. In this respect, my study follows a similar line of inquiry to that undertaken by George (2012).

I begin by observing that there are two disparate accounts of the initial encounter between Ūtanapišti and Gilgameš and two different conversations between them, indicating an important editorial seam in the epic (§ 1). Then I launch into an analysis of the role of Ūtanapišti's wife in the story (§ 2) and read afresh Gilgameš's sleep deprivation trial (§ 3) and (§ 6). I present a set of significant parallels between the description of Gilgameš visiting the house of Ūtanapišti and the account of the three wayfarers who receive hospitality in Abraham's tent in Genesis (§ 4), and in this context explore the concept of hospitality in Tablet XI in light of anthropological and philosophical theories (§ 5). In order to better understand the end of Gilgameš's stay in the house of Ūtanapišti, I examine the topos of bathing and changing one's clothes in the epic (§ 7). Finally, I investigate the meaning of Ūtanapišti's unexpected parting gift to Gilgameš (§ 8).[1]

1 All references to the epic follow the editions of George 2003 and eBL (I.4 Poem of Gilgameš). Translations are mine.

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1 Two Initial Meetings and False Ending

Tablet XI begins with Gilgameš addressing Ūtanapišti directly. He expresses astonishment that immortality has not altered Ūtanapišti's human form, leaving him indistinguishable from ordinary mortals. Gilgameš even admits that he once considered killing him. His speech ends with the question, "You, how did you find yourself present in the assembly of the gods, while you were seeking (eternal) life?" (XI 7).[2] At first glance, this appears to be the two protagonists' first encounter – but it is not. Gilgameš already met Ūtanapišti at the end of Tablet X (207 ff.). His astonishment at Ūtanapišti's human appearance is therefore puzzling, since the two had already spoken in Tablet X. There, in a long, partly broken passage, Ūtanapišti stands on the seashore and observes an unknown figure steering a boat toward Pī-narāti. Once ashore, Gilgameš greets him politely: "[Long] live Ūta-napišti, son of Ubar-[Tutu …!" (X 208). Ūtanapišti asks why he looks so weary (ll. 212-18), to which Gilgameš responds at length, recounting his struggles since Enkidu's death (ll. 219-65). Notably, the men seem to know each other by name. When Gilgameš blesses Ūtanapišti, he uses not only his personal name but also his patronym, "son of Ubar-Tutu". Later, he even adds his epithet *rūqu*, "the Far-away" (l. 250).[3] Ūtanapišti, for his part, already knows the name of the mysterious man arriving on his shore, even though he has never met him before and has received no notice of his coming (ll. 267, 270).[4] Setting aside the question of how they know each other's names, it is evident that the epic presents two irreconcilable versions of their first meeting – the first amicable, the second unfriendly, even hostile. Yet the inconsistency between the end of Tablet X and the beginning of Tablet XI goes beyond the differing tones of these introductions. The two ensuing dialogues are also completely different in character. The first exchange is existential and empathetic: Gilgameš shares his grief, and Ūtanapišti responds with sober wisdom that addresses his psychological turmoil. Death, he says, is sudden, sorrowful, and inevitable, and no human can escape it (X 266 ff.). Nothing in Ūtanapišti's long speech at the end of Tablet X mentions eternal life or suggests that he himself escaped death. By contrast, the dialogue at the start of Tablet XI follows a wholly different line. It answers a specific question – how Ūtanapišti gained access to the assembly of the gods – and unfolds as the story of the Flood. Here, Ūtanapišti's immortality and divine status form the central theme. The introspective empathy of the end of Tablet X gives way to the terse, sardonic exchanges of Tablet XI. Now Ūtanapišti is antagonistic, even dismissive, urging Gilgameš to depart. Thus, the epic does not simply offer two incompatible first meetings; it also presents two fundamentally different conversations. Without invoking source criticism, the presence of these parallel encounters and dissimilar dialogues clearly signals a major editorial seam between the end of Tablet X and the beginning of Tablet XI. Incorporating the Flood narrative – told by Ūtanapišti in the first person and arguably the Standard Version's most radical innovation – required significant editorial stitching.[5] The Flood story evidently came from a source that contained its own version of the meeting and dialogue, distinct in tone and structure from those closing Tablet X. Why the editor left these inconsistencies unresolved is uncertain. Whatever the reason, the result is a rare and intriguing narratological device: the false ending. This device makes a work appear to conclude, only for it to

2 In George 2003, 703 (continued in eBL), XI 7 is translated "How was it you attended the gods' assembley, and found life?". Commenting on this line, George (2003, 878) assigns a special perfective-resultative sense to *balāṭa še'û* in this context: not simply "to seek", but "to seek successfully, to attain". This he contrasted with *balāṭa bu''û* or *balāṭa saḫāru* elsewhere in the epic, which George took to denote unsuccessful searching for eternal life. Worthington (2004, 229-30) accepted this interpretation and further applied it to *balāṭa bu''û*. In my view, however, this ad hoc semantic proposal is unwarranted. The straightforward understanding of *še'û* as "to seek", attested in numerous instances (see e.g. V 312), suits the passage perfectly. Gilgameš asks Ūtanapišti how it came about that he (Ūtanapišti) was invited to the assembly of the gods while seeking eternal life – whereas he, Gilgameš, was not. A fitting parallel to this usage is found in VII 78: [*šamaš*$^{?}$ *l*]*ušte''a ilukka*^{sic} (*i-lu-ka*; I can see no other option but locative) *lusḫu*[*r*] "I will look for [Šamaš], I will appeal to your god". (See also V 47, if correctly restored: *mūta mišī-ma balāṭa* [*še'i*$^{?}$] "Forget death, [look for] (eternal) life!").

3 Letting the OB version to our discussion, we find that Gilgameš could have known the name of the immortal hero of the Flood from what Sursunabu the boatman told him (OB VA+BM b6, contextually parallel to SB X).

4 Similarly, Siduri (in OB VA+BM a16) and the Scorpion-man (IX 90) know Gilgameš by name, though none of them has ever met him before. In fact, the only person in the entire epic who Gilgameš encounters and exchanges names with is Sursunabu, the boatman. In this encounter, which is found only in the OB version, the two are strangers, and the boatman, after being attacked by Gilgameš, looks him in the eyes and asks: "What is your name? Tell me!". Before Gilgameš can answer, the boatman offers his own name: "I am Sursunabu, (the man) of Ūtanapišti the Far-away" (OB VA+BM b5). Gilgameš responds: "Gilgameš is my name". He omits any mention of his heroic deeds – specifically, his adventures in the Cedar Forest and the killing of the Bull of Heaven – which he had earlier recounted to Siduri and Ūtanapišti (in the Standard Version). Instead, he simply states that he is from Uruk-Eanna and that he traveled through the mountains by a lengthy route, a reply that reiterates the account found in SB IX.

5 For a succinct and useful summary of the editorial process of the Standard Version of the epic, see George 2012, 227-8.

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resume with new developments, twists, or scenes.[6] In other words, the close of Tablet X functions like a potential epilogue to the epic – only to lead directly into the dramatic Flood narrative and the encounter at Ūtanapišti's house in Tablet XI.[7]

2 Ūtanapišti's Unnamed Wife and the Sleep Deprivation Trial

After the story of the Flood in Tablet XI, an independent literary unit of about two hundred lines, a new character is introduced: Ūtanapišti's unnamed wife. The narrative now leaves Ūtanapišti's past and moves back to the present in Pī-narāti. The wife makes two appearances. She serves freshly-baked bread to the slumber-stricken Gilgameš, and she later urges her husband to give a farewell gift to the departing guest. Although a side character, she demonstrates her independence by acting sympathetically towards Gilgameš, against her husband's wishes. Her role in this part of the epic has considerable importance.[8]

The sleep deprivation trial is the central episode in this part of Tablet XI. It is initiated when Ūtanapišti sarcastically poses a question to Gilgameš (mirroring the latter's question in XI 7): "Now, as for you, who will gather gods for you so that you will find eternal life that you seek?" (XI 207-8). Then, without any explanation, he tersely challenges his guest: "Come on! Do not sleep for six days and seven nights!" (XI 209). What follows is reminiscent of the unsettling atmosphere in various trials recorded in *Grimms' Fairy Tales*, except that in the epic the hero received no help. Succumbing to fatigue, Gilgameš is instantly engulfed by Sleep, Death's brother (ll. 209-11), proving him unworthy to become a god (ll. 213-14). Then, Ūtanapišti's wife urges her husband to wake the weary traveller up: "Touch him, let the man wake up! May he return safely by the road he came. May he return to his land through the gate he came out!" (ll. 216-18). The result is a complex state of affairs, in which the man and his wife adopt opposing and unexpected positions towards their slumbering guest. The wife who seemed favorable to Gilgameš now wants to wake him up, and Ūtanapišti, who was ill-disposed towards him, is determined not to disturb his sleep. On the surface, the wife seems to be revealed as an inhospitable host and Ūtanapišti a proper one. However, not all is as it seems. The wife is actually working on Gilgameš's behalf because if he can remain awake for the duration of the trial, he can acquire immortality. Likewise, Ūtanapišti's real intention is not benevolent, as he wants to prove that his guest is unfit to be immortal. This is a rather complicated triangle in which everyone has a hidden interest. On the surface, Ūtanapišti is welcoming Gilgameš to his home, but in fact he is hostile to him, doing all he can to prevent him from joining the community of immortals. His wife is more friendly, but like her husband, she too is manipulating Gilgameš. She baldly states that she wishes Gilgameš would wake up and go home, and she urges her husband to give the guest a farewell gift.[9] As for Gilgameš, he is a guest who is dependent on his hosts' goodwill, but he is anything but innocent. He comes to Ūtanapišti's house determined to join the immortal ranks of his hosts, even though he is undeserving.

Reading the scene carefully, another element of friction is revealed between Ūtanapišti and his wife. She does not know how Gilgameš has reached their house, and her words reflect the assumption that he arrived at Pī-nārāti directly from Uruk. That is why she suggests that he return home by the same route. This misconception reveals that Ūtanapišti has not informed her of what Gilgameš recounted to him at length when they first met (X 220-65).[10] The simmering tension between the couple boils over when Ūtanapišti belittles his wife with a sagacious saying: *raggat amēlūtu iraggigki* "Mankind is evil! It will ill-treat you!" (XI 220).[11] This dictum tells us two things. First, the wife is immortal like her husband, as she is not equated with *amēlūtu*. Her immortality – first mentioned in XI 204 – is reaffirmed through

6 On false ending in literature and film, see Bazhanova 2019.

7 Another notable false ending in the epic occurs in the episode of the plant of life and the snake that eats it at the end of Tablet XI, discussed below.

8 My analysis of Ūtanapišti's wife differs from that of Harris, who considers her "passive, acted upon" (Harris 1990, 225).

9 On this, see § 8 below.

10 Gilgameš told the same story to Siduri (X 29-66) and Ur-šanabi (X 120-43).

11 Translation based on CAD R, 62 (*ragāgu* is attested only here). Harris (1990, 226) describes it aptly as a "jaundiced proverb". A similar pessimistic view of human nature and morality, connected directly to the Flood, is found in Gen. 8:21: "And when the Lord smelled the pleasing odor, the Lord said in his heart, 'I will never again curse the ground because of humans, *for the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth*…'" (translations of biblical texts follow the New Revised Standard Version, Updated Edition).

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the fact that she lives beside her husband. (Note that the other members of Ūtanapišti's family, who were saved from the Flood, seem to have died). Second, despite the wife's unclear attitude towards Gilgameš in the sleep deprivation test, the narrator puts the wife on Gilgameš's side. This aligns her with other female characters in the epic who, directly or indirectly, try to help Gilgameš get home to Uruk:[12] Šamḫat (Tablet II *passim*), his mother Ninsun (Tablet III 46 ff)., the wife of the Scorpion-man (IX 50-1), Siduri (X 78-91 and OB VA+BM iii 1-15), and, to some extent, even the infatuated Ištar in Tablet VI. In contrast to his wife's empathy, Ūtanapišti perceives Gilgameš not as an individual but as a representative of evil humankind. By this point, Ūtanapišti has been fully integrated into the divine community, so that he is reminiscent of the enraged Enlil when discovering the boat on Mount Nimuš and realizing that someone had miraculously survived the Flood (XI 175-6). Having been accepted into Enlil's divine circle (XI 199-204), Ūtanapišti adopted an attitude more in line with his new divine patron than with Ea, the deity with a stronger focus on humanity whom he initially revered.[13]

3 Not Sleeping or not Eating?

Determined to prove to Gilgameš that he will fail the sleep deprivation test, Ūtanapišti devises the idea of placing a freshly baked loaf (*kurummatu*) in front of the sleeping hero every day, as a way to mark the time elapsed. Naturally, he tasks his wife with baking and serving the bread. Placing baked loaves next to the sleeping Gilgameš reminds the reader of Enki's suggestion to Atra-ḫasīs to stop venerating all the gods and offer a baked pastry (*epītu*) to Namtar (and then, to Adad) alone, so that the god would stop killing humanity (Atr. I 380 ff. and II 42 ff.). On a deeper level, the baked bread in both episodes – which have the same hero, Ūtanapišti//Atra-ḫasīs – symbolizes the constant human attempts to reach into the divine realm, thereby stressing human frailty vis-à-vis the gods.

Gilgameš sleeps for seven days without eating. This can be said to parallel a previous scene in the epic, in which Enkidu, after spending seven days with Šamḫat (I 194), is given bread for the first time (II 44-51). Both scenes involve a recumbent hero who stands at the threshold of humanity being presented with bread. Enkidu, after making love to Šamḫat and eating the bread, is cast out of the wild and sent into civilized life; Gilgameš, after failing to gain divine acceptance, is compelled to return to human society. So, both heroes, after seven days of lying down and being served with bread, transition irrevocably into humanity. The rationale underlying the two episodes is that eating together equals living together.[14] A *locus classicus* demonstrating this principle is the myth of Adapa, who after being tricked by Enki declined the food and drink offered by Anu in heaven, thus missing out on eternal life.[15]

A surprising corollary of the above is that Gilgameš was not denied eternal life because he failed to stay awake. His slumber prevented him from consuming the bread baked in the oven by order of the semi-divine Ūtanapišti, so he missed the chance of partaking in divine food. In other words, the bread provided by Ūtanapišti's wife was more than a means to track the passing time, it was a way to grant him entry into the divine realm.

4 The Old Couple: Ūtanapišti and His Wife Vs. Abraham and Sarah

A striking parallel to Gilgameš's stay at Ūtanapišti's house in Tablet XI is found in Gen. 18:1-15. In Jewish tradition, these verses (known as the Visit of the Angels) are significant for the divine promise of a son to Abraham. Similarly, the Qur'anic tradition (Al-Hijr 51-4) emphasizes the glad tidings of the forthcoming son. Christian exegesis, on the other hand, focuses on the three visitors to the patriarch, who are viewed as a foreshadowing (a prefiguring type) of the Holy Trinity. In all three traditions,

12 Cf. Harris 1990. Male figures (Enkidu, Ur-šanabi) support Gilgameš in his wanderings. Emmanuel Levinas' fundamental view on Habitation and the Feminine is relevant here. Levinas sees the Feminine as the sources of primary hospitable welcome: "And the other whose presence is discreetly an absence, with which is accomplished the primary hospitable welcome which decribes the field of intimacy, is the Woman. The woman is the condition for recollection, the interiority of the Home, and inhabitation" (Levinas 1980, 155. Cf. Meijer-van Wijk 2017).

13 On the hidden tension in the pantheon, between Enlil and the rest of the gods, see Wasserman 2020, 149-52.

14 For discussion of commensality in ancient and modern societies, see Weiss et al. 2025.

15 For the myth of Adapa, see Izre'el 2001 and now eBL I.7 (`https://www.ebl.lmu.de/corpus/L/1/7`). On different interpretations of the myth, see Bing 1984; Izre'el 1998; Milsten 2015a; 2015b.

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though, there is an emphasis on Abraham's hospitality (known as *Philoxenia* in Christian writings). The biblical text reads as follows:

> The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them and bowed down to the ground. He said, "My lord, if I find favor with you, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on – since you have come to your servant". So they said, "Do as you have said". And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah and said, "Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes". Abraham ran to the herd and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared and set it before them, and he stood by them under the tree while they ate.
>
> They said to him, "Where is your wife Sarah?" And he said, "There, in the tent". Then one said, "I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son". And Sarah was listening at the tent entrance behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I be fruitful?" The Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?' Is anything too wonderful for the Lord? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son". But Sarah denied, saying, "I did not laugh", for she was afraid. He said, "Yes, you did laugh".

The structural-thematic parallels between the Mesopotamian epic and the biblical account are remarkable, and the differences are all the more revealing. (1) An old and childless couple[16] living in isolation unexpectedly receives a guest or guests, whereby (2) the divine and the human realms meet. In Tablet XI, the hosting couple is divine (that is, immortal) and the guest is human (consumed with fear of dying); while Gen. 18 reverses the divine and human identities of guests and hosts. (3) The member(s) of the divine sphere are physically indistinguishable from regular human beings. In Tablet XI, Ūtanapišti, though immortal, looks just like everyone else (XI 2-4), and in Gen. 18, the physical appearance of God and the two accompanying angels does not occasion any remark.[17] Neither do the divine protagonists perform any miraculous deeds. They behave quite normally; only their unique knowledge sets them apart. (4) Bread (alone, or together with other food) is prepared for the guest(s). In Gen. 18, food is prepared (by Sarah and the servant, vv. 6-7) and served (by Abraham, v. 8); in Tablet XI, the bread is prepared and served (by Ūtanapišti's wife) but left untouched (see above § 3). (5) The arrival of strangers generates tension between husband and wife, with differing reactions from the spouse. In Gen. 18, Abraham is hospitable and Sarah is half-hearted; in Tablet XI, Ūtanapišti is hostile and his wife is more friendly. (6) With the guests' departure, promises of eternal blessings are made. In Gen. 18, the departing strangers promise Abraham and Sarah that they will soon have a son, through whom "Abraham shall become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him" (Gen. 18:18). In Tablet XI, Gilgameš receives a magic plant of rejuvenation. When the plant is lost, he comes to realize that his only path to eternity lies in procreation.

There is a further correspondence that deepens the ties between the two stories. Ms. z of the story of the Flood (a Late Babylonian or Achaemenid fragment) includes a striking passage: "Enlil went up into the b[oat]. He took my hand and escorted me from the boat: 'You are Zisudra, (from now on) let [your name] be Ūtnapišti'".[18] No other Mesopotamian source records a name change by a god. The

16 Viewed across the epic as a whole, the absence of a complete, productive family is pervasive: nowhere do we find father, mother, and children together. Gilgameš has only a mother; Enkidu, neither parent. The hunter lives only with his father, while Šamḫat, the prostitute, lacks family or kin. Humbaba dwells alone in the forest. Ištar, in Tablet VI, is the only major goddess without spouse or offspring. The wise woman Šiduri and the boatman Ur-šanabi, in Tablets X–XI, are likewise solitary. Even the few couples are childless: Ūtanapišti and his wife, the Scorpion-man and his wife in Tablet IX, and the divine pair Šamaš and Aya. All protagonists are single, without offspring, or with only one parent. Questions of family and procreation thus permeate the epic, illuminating even Gilgameš's defiance of marriage custom in Tablet I, when he prevents brides from joining their husbands.

17 On the question whether the three visitors at Abraham's tent were three angels or two angels accompanying God, see Westermann 1985, 278 and De Hemmer Gudme 2019, 92.

18 *īlâma* [^{d}*Enl*]*il ana libbi e*[*leppi*] *iṣbat qāta* [*u*]*ltēlânni ul*[*tu*] *libbi e*[*leppi*] *att*[*am*]*a* ^{m}*Zisudra lū Ūtnapištīm* [*šumka*] (Wasserman 2020, 107: 15'-17').

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immediate parallel that comes to mind is in Gen. 17, where God changes the names of both Abraham (originally Abram) and Sarah (originally Sarai).[19]

I do not intend to press my argument further by proposing a genealogical link between the Mesopotamian and biblical sources. While the topical and structural parallels are significant, they alone cannot demonstrate a direct genetic relationship. Nonetheless, given the striking resemblances between the Mesopotamian and biblical Flood narratives – both in overall structure and in specific detail – it is not implausible that the episode of Gilgameš's encounter with Ūtanapišti, the Flood hero, and his wife was indirectly known to the biblical compiler in some form. The scene of Abraham, Sarah, and the divine visitors in Gen. 18 may, therefore, have been shaped along comparable narratological lines. In this light, the ideological framework of the Mesopotamian account, in which Ūtanapišti becomes the new progenitor of humanity, could have been reinterpreted and transposed onto Abraham – the patriarch of the Israelite nation and faith – for distinctly Israelite theological purposes.

5 Hospitality: Gilgameš, Ūtanapišti, Pitt-Rivers, Levinas and Derrida

Having compared Gilgameš's stay at Ūtanapišti's house with the arrival of the three mysterious wayfarers at Abraham's tent, I now wish to read Gilgameš's visit – perhaps the most ancient record of hospitality in world literature – through the lens of three major twentieth-century thinkers: the anthropologist Julian Pitt-Rivers (1919-2001), and the philosophers Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995) and Jacques Derrida (1930-2004).[20]

In the mid-twentieth century, Pitt-Rivers carried out ethnographic research in Spain that focused on interrelated sociological concepts, such as honour, shame, grace, generosity, and kinship systems. His distinct contribution was his analysis of hospitality as a fundamental social mechanism. According to Pitt-Rivers, hospitality is a strategy for managing potential conflict between strangers who enter stable communities. It creates a nuanced social space that mediates between hostility and inclusion, not by eliminating conflict, but by suspending it through a delicate reciprocal mechanism. The host-guest relationship is defined by a careful balance of power and honour: the host holds a superior position by offering protection and shelter, and the guest can either confirm or challenge it. Both parties are vulnerable in this exchange, because the guest depends on the host's goodwill, and the host risks dishonour if the guest is mistreated or challenges his authority. Each interaction, therefore, creates a cycle of honour or insult, governed by the principle of reciprocity. In this way, hospitality functions as a sophisticated social mechanism that transforms potential conflict into a structured, mutually negotiated encounter.[21]

At first glance, the scene at Ūtanapišti's house appears to fit Pitt-Rivers' 'law of hospitality': the host offers shelter, food, and rest, and the guest seems to respect the host's rules. The two enter into a delicate reciprocal relationship of power. However, a closer look reveals that the dynamic in the Gilgameš epic deviates from Pitt-Rivers' model. Both host and guest manipulate each other, openly displaying mutual dislike. Ūtanapišti is suspicious of Gilgameš, and Gilgameš is ungrateful. The atmosphere is heavy, full of contempt – so much so that one can almost hear Ūtanapišti's sigh of relief when Gilgameš departs for Uruk (for the meaning of the parting gift he offers, see § 8 below). The key elements of hospitality in Pitt-Rivers' theory – honour, respect, and mediated mutual acceptance – are strikingly absent from the scene in Tablet XI, opening it up for alternative interpretations of hospitality.

Hospitality is a key term in the philosophical writing of Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995). In his 1961 *Totalité et Infini: essai sur l'extériorité*, he introduced hospitality as a central metaphor to elucidate the existential and ethical relationships between the 'I' (the subject, the self) and the Other (*l'autre, autrui*), establishing it as a cornerstone of his ethics and metaphysics. *Totalité et Infini* profoundly influenced mid-twentieth-century continental philosophy, and would go on to become one of the most significant works of the second half of the twentieth century and the early twenty-first century, a

19 See Wasserman 2020, 109, and *in extenso*, Wasserman, Bloch 2025.

20 In recent years, hospitality has become a much-studied topic. It has developed into a defined sub-field in philosophy and anthropology, as proven by *The Routledge Handbook of Hospitality Studies* (Lashley 2017). The applicability of the term to traditional and even ancient cultures is exemplified by George (2009), who reads the Indian hospitality tradition and ethos in light of Levinas and Derrida.

21 Pitt-Rivers 1965; 1977.

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period characterized by waves of immigration, conflicts between asylum-seekers and local populations, political tensions and rapidly changing communal identities.

Departing from previous thinkers, Levinas claims that the host-guest relation denotes an a priori moral obligation of the host to the uninvited guest. This stands in opposition to Pitt-Rivers' account, which posits that the host holds more power than the guest in the intricate interaction. Furthermore, Levinas presents a non-reciprocal view of hospitality – again, unlike Pitt-Rivers. For Levinas, the host has a non-reciprocal moral responsibility, which does not derive from a conscious decision. This entails the paradox of the host becoming a hostage in his own home. The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* summarizes this fundamental aspect in Levinas' thought as follows: "[The] other speaks to me, implores or commands me. In responding, I discover my responsibility to them. This is the ground of ethics or indeed our concern with ethics as the good of the other person".[22] The Other (i.e. the guest), accordingly, is regarded as higher than oneself (i.e. the host), coming from a position of transcendence.[23] Levinas provocatively states that the Other "resembles God",[24] for the guest is the non-'I' around which the moral web is spun. This point is significant for our discussion. In the Biblical story of Abraham and the angels, this is indeed the case: the guests are divine, albeit in disguise. By contrast, in Tablet XI, it is ostensibly the host, Ūtanapišti, who is a god, and not the guest, a fact that contradicts Levinas' model.

Jacques Derrida developed a philosophy of hospitality that both radicalizes and complicates Levinas' ethics. In his *De l'hospitalité* (2000) and *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas* (1999), Derrida critiques the very foundations of host-guest relations by distinguishing between two types of hospitality. The first is *unconditional hospitality*, an ethically absolute, non-reciprocal welcome of the stranger, for which one does not inquire about the guest's name, legal status, or expectation of return. This accords with the behavior of Abraham in the paradigmatic scene in Gen. 18. The second type is *conditional hospitality*, which operates within sociopolitical frameworks of law, sovereignty, and exchange.[25] For Derrida, hospitality is an *aporia*, that is, it demands that the host surrender control to the guest (as Levinas' ethics of infinite responsibility to the Other implies), yet this surrender is structurally impossible, because hospitality requires the host's authority to offer shelter, thereby maintaining a hierarchy.[26] This paradox, for which Derrida coined the neologism 'hostipitality' (from French *hôte*, both 'host' and 'guest', and *hostilité* 'hostility'), underscores how hostility always lurks in hospitality's shadow. Where Levinas frames the guest as a transcendent Other who ethically commands the host,[27] Derrida insists that real-world hospitality is mediated by the host's sovereignty (e.g. borders, citizenship laws) and by asymmetrical power dynamics, a position that shares something with Pitt-Rivers' emphasis on the host's superior position. Derrida explicitly rejects Levinas' metaphysical abstraction (and implicitly Pitt-Rivers' reciprocal social mechanism). For him, conditional hospitality risks reducing the guest to a transactional object, while unconditional hospitality remains an ethical horizon: impossible to enact fully, yet imperative to strive toward.[28]

With these conceptions of hospitality in mind, it is worth rereading the fraught encounter between Ūtanapišti and Gilgameš. Pitt-Rivers' theory of hospitality as a stabilizing social strategy does not fit, because the tensions are never defused. The Levinasian view of hospitality, which paradoxically accords the guest divine status, also falls short in Tablet XI, because it is not the guest, Gilgameš, but the host, Ūtanapišti, who belongs to the realm of the gods. Consequently, Ūtanapišti feels no moral obligation towards his human guest; instead of acting deferentially he experiences annoyance and acts against him. Derrida's view of hospitality explains the scene best. The host, Ūtanapišti, offers conditional provision of shelter, maintaining his sovereignty over the guest, Gilgameš, while the latter's defiance exposes the absence of reciprocity. Derrida's 'hostipitality' thus illuminates the scene's underlying tension: hospitality is a fragile negotiation of power, where the guest's presence disrupts the host's authority, as the host seeks to control the interaction.

Derridarian 'hostipitality' accounts for the undercurrent of awkwardness, emotional tension, and unwelcomeness that exists throughout Gilgameš's stay at Ūtanapišti's house. The term *unheimlich* is fitting here, especially as the scene unfolds within Ūtanapišti's home (*Heim*). Gilgameš, the hero of

22 See the link: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/levinas/ § 2.3.

23 Levinas 1980, 79.

24 Levinas 1980, 293.

25 Baker 2010; Bulley 2015.

26 Derrida, Dufourmantelle 2000, 25-7.

27 Levinas 1980, 293.

28 Derrida 1999, 50-1.

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the epic, realizes that his host is suspicious of him and unfriendly towards him, despite the overtures of hospitality. And by denying him entry to the divine realm, Ūtanapišti is literally sending him to his inevitable death. As Gilgameš says to him before leaving, "What can I do now, Ūtanapišti? Where should I go? The Marauder has taken hold of my f[lesh]! In my bedroom, Death sits, awaiting me!" (XI 243-6). Ūtanapišti, however, does not bear sole responsibility for the disquieting encounter. Gilgameš, for his part, initially intends to kill Ūtanapišti (XI 5), and even after giving up this evil thought, he treats him only as a means to an end – the attainment of eternal life. This instrumentalist view undermines the hospitable guest-host paradigm, and lays bare an antagonistic relationship between a dogged pursuer and an evasive target. Seen through this lens, Gilgameš is no guest; he is a deceitful intruder who covets his host's precious status, namely, Ūtanapišti's immortality. This is characteristic of Gilgameš. Throughout his journey, all his encounters are either violent or manipulative: disturbing Enkidu's pastoral life and luring him to Uruk; forcing his way into Ḫumbaba's solitary forest abode and killing him treacherously; breaking into Sidūri's house as a would-be rapist (X 15-22). Gilgameš was never truly a guest before Pī-nārātim, and his time with Ūtanapišti demonstrates that he is incapable of sincere gratitude. As such, the earliest known portrayal of a stranger being received by a host in world literature can scarcely be regarded as a model of hospitality.

6 A Tale of Two Tests

Following Pitt-Rivers' analysis of hospitality in *The Odyssey*, Glassner (1990) drew attention to representations of hospitality in Mesopotamian literature. He examined many such instances, ranging from the descent of Ištar/Inanna to the netherworld and other myths recounting various gods visiting their peers, to accounts of people arriving in foreign cities and of envoys residing at foreign courts. What he found is that receiving guests generally equals commensality. By contrast, when a stranger wishes to settle down permanently and integrate into a new society, he is typically challenged and even forced to fight a representative of the local group. Only if the stranger loses may he be accepted. In Glassner's view, the prototypical example is Enkidu entering Uruk. Only after confronting Gilgameš and being overpowered by him is he allowed to stay there as the king's friend (Glassner 1990, 65-71). If one accepts Glassner's conclusions, the meaning of the trial to which Gilgameš is subjected by Ūtanapišti should be reconsidered. Faced with his guest's desire to permanently join the divine community, he challenges him in order to assess his suitability for acceptance.[29] If we analyze the scene this way, staying awake, rather than eating the freshly baked bread, is the key element and the true test. Gilgameš is faced with an impossible challenge: If he passes the test of not sleeping, he will be driven out of his host's house, since he threatens the latter's superiority. If he fails the test, he may perhaps stay at his host's house, but not as part of the community of his divine host, only as an inferior mortal. Gilgameš's failure is inevitable; it is a lose-lose proposition. The gulf separating human and divine cannot be bridged.

7 Changing Clothes as Sign of Existential Transition

After failing the sleep deprivation trial and realizing that death awaits him like every other mortal (XI 242-6), Gilgameš prepares for his journey home. The epic dedicates some forty lines to Gilgameš's departure for Uruk (XI 247-86). The sheer size of this textual block – equal in length to the entire description of Gilgameš's sojourn in Pī-nārātim (XI 207-46) – illustrates its importance. It is divided into two parts: Gilgameš's bathing and changing of clothes (ll. 247-70), and Ūtanapišti offering Gilgameš a parting gift (XI 273-86, see § 8). Gilgameš bathes, and his rough, ragged clothes are replaced with royal garments (XI 250-70). This act of bathing and changing clothes directly recalls Siduri's earlier advice to Gilgameš to keep his clothes clean, always wash his head, and bathe regularly (OB VA+BM iii 10-11). These actions suggest that Gilgameš has at last come to terms with his unavoidable mortality. Practically speaking, it is unwise for Gilgameš to don royal attire before reaching Uruk, since keeping such robes clean on a long journey is difficult (cf. 260-1, 268-70), and he is still quite far from his royal court. But the change of clothing is necessary, as it marks the end of Gilgameš's existential quest. The epic allows for no middle ground: Gilgameš can no longer remain a wanderer in the wilderness and must immediately reclaim his status as monarch at the heart of civilization.

29 Again, the myth of Adapa is instrumental here. There was no need to test Adapa's fitness to be a god, since his magic powers were already proven when he broke the wings of the South Wind.

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This motif of changing clothes recurs elsewhere in the epic. After Gilgameš and Enkidu return triumphantly from the Cedar Forest, Gilgameš washes, cleans his gear, shakes out his hair, discards his soiled garments, and dons clean robes, cloaks, and his crown (VI 1-5). Here again, the act marks the close of his adventures in the wilderness and his re-assumption of royal status in Uruk – the change of attire symbolizing this transition. Conversely, after Enkidu's death, as Gilgameš's despair deepens, he casts off his elaborate clothes and regalia (VIII 62-4) and puts on skins, signaling his departure from civilization and kingship to dwell in the wilderness ([*iltabbi*]*š maški labbim-ma irappud ṣ*[*ēra*] VII 147 and VIII 91).[30]

The final change of clothes discussed here does not involve Gilgameš but Enkidu, right before he arrives in Uruk. In Tablet II of the Standard Version the lines are incomplete, but the OB version in the Pennsylvania Tablet is fully preserved, allowing us to understand the scene. After making love, Šamḫat and Enkidu talk, and she describes the joys of city life. In the Standard Version, the couple seems to remain naked; in the OB version, Šamḫat has already dressed. Both versions, however, agree on the main point: Šamḫat gives Enkidu one of her garments and puts on a different one of hers (SB II 33-5; OB II 69-72). Clothed in the harlot's dress, Šamḫat leads Enkidu to the shepherds' camp "like a god" (SB II 36-7; OB II 73-6). Enkidu, who only days before lived in the wild, is now about to enter the civilized world, and he must be suitably attired. In this respect, Enkidu wearing clothes resembles Gilgameš changing his clothes in two scenes.

That said, the scene with Enkidu is more complex than the others and bears a deeper cultural meaning. First, the clothed Enkidu marks more than his transition from wilderness to civilization, but also his existential transformation from beast to human, and then, in the next line, to a being resembling a god.[31] Second, this dramatic makeover has a twist: Enkidu, clearly male, is dressed in female clothing. This surprising blurring of genders, right after Enkidu has proven his masculinity by coupling with Šamḫat for seven days and nights, shows that the category of "Human" in the epic transcends gender distinctions.

8 The Departure and the Farewell Gift

Gilgameš and Ur-šanabi have already boarded the boat (XI 271), when something unexpected occurs. Ūtanapišti, at his wife's prompting, offers a gift to Gilgameš. Why the sudden change of heart, and what exactly is the nature of his gift? Welcoming receptions for arriving guests, in the form of ceremonial meals, are attested in cuneiform sources.[32] But gift-giving to *departing* guests is not part of ancient Mesopotamian etiquette.[33] If we look westward to archaic Greece, there is ample literary evidence of this social practice – so much so, that some scholars apply the term 'Gift Economy' to ancient Greek society.[34] An important characteristic of Homeric civilization is that gift-giving was, ultimately, reciprocal. When a host gave a guest a sumptuous gift, he knew that one day, perhaps even a generation later, the guest or his descendants would give him a gift in return.[35] In our case, though, this ancient Greek parallel is lacking. First, in Tablet XI, reciprocity is unreasonable. Gilgameš will never return to Pī-nārātim, nor will Ūtanapišti and his wife ever visit Uruk, and they have no children to do so either. The whole point is that the two loci are not just remote, but separate realms entirely: the former belongs to gods (even if only parvenus), the latter to humans. Moreover, the abstract nature of Ūtanapišti's gift – a secret of the gods – prevents the giving of a gift in kind. What could Gilgameš possibly give Ūtanapišti in return?

30 Cf. also the regrettably partly broken VII 64, where Enkidu is the subject.

31 With George (2003, 167), I take the simile *kīma ilim* "like a god" as describing Enkidu, who was taken by Šamḫat by the hand, as divine statues were touched and guided by priests in different processions and ceremonies.

32 A fine example of a welcome party for new guests, which is not mentioned in Glassner (1990), is the MB Ištar-Dumuzi composition (JAOS 103, 26-7 = Wasserman 2016, no. 7), where young Ištar's parents, Sîn and Ningal, offer an affluent meal to Dumuzi, who is visiting with his boys. The social hierarchy is evident: Ningal and her daughter Ištar serve sweet cake to Dumuzi, who in turn takes care of his dogs and shepherds (in this order!) who remain outside. Alster discussed the Sumerian accounts of Gilgameš meeting Huwawa in the Cedar Forest, interpreting them "in terms of Gilgamesh playing the role of a visitor received in audience at a foreign court. His gifts aim at inviting Huwawa to reciprocate, and thereby give up his protection" (Alster 1992, 1).

33 George (2003, 523) summarizes this scene saying that giving a "departing guest [a] farewell gift [was] evidently required of good hospitality".

34 The literature on gifts and gift-giving in the ancient Aegean world is vast, of which I will mention only two studies: Bertelli 2014 and Mifsud 2007.

35 Donlan 1982; Beidelman 1989; Cook 2016. For a more nuanced view of reciprocity, see Hooker 1989.

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Upon closer inspection, it appears that Ūtanapišti's gesture is not a farewell gift at all. No actual gift was given, nor did etiquette demand one. It functions, as I see it, as a coda, the final act of his encounter with Gilgameš. As noticed by George,[36] Ūtanapišti's words to Gilgameš: *lupte Gilgameš amāt niṣirti u pirišta š[a ilī kâšu luq]bīka* "I will disclose, Gilgameš, a secret matter, and [I will] tell you a mystery of [the gods]" (XI 280-1), repeat verbatim his opening words to Gilgameš, before telling him about the Flood (XI 9-10). This repetition may be considered a scribal parsimony. But more importantly, *pirištu ša ilī* is the term used by the epic for Ea's warning to Ūtanapišti about the impending Flood. Later, when Ea explains himself before the angry Enlil, he says: *anāku ul aptâ pirišti ilī rabûti* "I myself did not reveal the secret of the great gods" (XI 196, cf. 197). The same term is also found in the OB version of the epic, where Enlil furiously demands to know from the gods: *ayyānu ūṣi pí-ri*$^{!}$*-iš-tum* "Whence did the secret escape"? (C_1(+)C_2 vi 9).[37] One could simply construe these as stock phrases typical of epic writing. But I think that this echoing is intentional. It conveys that toward the end of Gilgameš's meeting with Ūtanapišti, and the conclusion of the epic as a whole, the transmission of divine mystery does not stop. What started as a secret passed from Enlil to Ea, and then from Ea to Ūtanapišti, continues with a secret passed from Ūtanapišti to Gilgameš. It is no accident that Ūtanapišti tells Gilgameš his secret when the latter is standing on the boat. The divine secrets transmitted by Ea to Ūtanapišti and by Ūtanapišti told Gilgameš are all connected to *eleppum*, a boat.

The fact that Gilgameš eventually did obtain something tangible as a result of Ūtanapišti's words should not distract us from the larger point. The plant of rejuvenation is quickly lost by the water pool (XI 303-7), and its narratological role is exhausted in the short term – this is another false ending (see above § 1). After all his troubles and wanderings, Gilgameš enters Uruk empty-handed, with no spoils, and not as a victorious king. But he has become the bearer of esoteric knowledge, whose origin is divine, about life, death, eternity, perpetuity and transient existence. As such, he is indeed the one "who saw the Deep, the bases of the land" (I 1).[38]

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36 George 2003, 894 ad. 281-2.

37 For this reading, see Wasserman 2020, 28, 36 with comm. on 56f.

38 For the role of Uruk in the epic, see George 2012.

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The Pain and Necessity of Kingship in Old Babylonian *Etana*

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Abstract This paper investigates two couplets in the Old Babylonian version of *Etana*, respectively preserved as ll. 5-6 and 13-14 of MLC.1363 (OB Morgan). It gives a philological-grammatical analysis offering new solutions to two problems, one in each couplet: the nature of an *isinnum*, 'festival' said to be ordained by the gods while kingship was not yet set up; and the precise description of a group of people said to be deprived of *mitluku*, 'deliberation' in kingship's absence. The couplets, newly interpreted as implying both a critique of kingship and an endorsement of its ultimate necessity, are then set in broader Mesopotamian as well as biblical context.

Keywords Epic of Etana. Cuneiform Literature. Babylonian Mythology. Ancient Conceptions of Kingship. Cuneiform Literature and the Hebrew Bible.

Summary 1 A Mysterious Festival. – 2 No Counsel for the People. – 3 The Couplets in Context. – 4 Summary.

> Therefore, it is natural that the fool, a stranger to the custom, rejoices and congratulates himself when freed from his chains, but the one who knows laments bitterly, resists being taken along, and would much rather remain in chains as before. So, you vain man, don't try to be a king before you have acquired sense!
>
> (Dio Chrysostom, *De Regno* IV 69-70)[1]

More than 130 years after Edward Thompson Harper's 1894 *editio princeps*, the *Epic of Etana* remains tantalizing.[2] It is known in three versions – Old Babylonian, Middle-Assyrian, and Neo-Assyrian – significantly divergent in phrasing and all fragmentarily attested and with an unknown tablet count. Combining evidence from all three, what is known of *Etana*'s plot can be summarized

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1 οὐκοῦν τότε, ἐπειδὰν ἄρωσι τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐκ τῶν δεσμῶν, εἰκός ἐστι τὸν μὲν ἀνόητον καὶ ἄπειρον τοῦ πράγματος χαίρειν καὶ μακαρίζειν ἑαυτὸν ἐπὶ τοῖς γιγνομένοις, τὸν δὲ εἰδότα ὀδύρεσθαι καὶ μὴ ἐθέλειν ἑκόντα συνακολουθεῖν, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον, ὥσπερ εἶχε, μένειν ἐν ταῖς πέδαις. μὴ οὖν πρότερον, ὦ μάταιε, βασιλεύειν ἐπιχείρει πρὶν ἢ φρονῆσαι. Translation adapted from Parpola 1983, xxxi.

2 The latest edition of all three versions of *Etana* is Földi 2024, from which the transliterations given here are adapted. The next-most recent is Haul 2000, there accompanied by extensive thematic and philological analysis. A usefully succinct overview of the poem and its history of research can be found in the introduction to Földi 2024. Manuscript abbreviations follow Földi 2024 throughout: OB Morgan = MLC.1363; OB Susa = Sb.9469; MA based on Ist-A.142, VAT.10291, VAT.10137, VAT.10529; and SB = the Nineveh recension of the text. Transliterations from secondary literature are reproduced while substituting subscript numbers for accents to mark sign values in accordance with *Kaskal* editorial guidelines. The only abbreviations employed here not part of the standard Assyriological literature are: eBL (electronic Babylonian Library [https://www.ebl.lmu.de/]); ETCSL (Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature [https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/]); OED (Oxford English Dictionary Online [https://www.oed.com/?tl=true]); and SEAL (Sources of Early Akkadian Literature [https://seal.huji.ac.il/]).

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as follows.[3] In ages primordial, the gods decide not to set up kings. After a kingless interim, the gods change course and kingship is set up. Etana rules over Kish. He is childless. A separate plot thread opens. An eagle and a serpent live in a tree, the eagle in its branches, the serpent at its roots. The eagle eats the serpent's young, and is punished for his crime. His wings broken by the serpent, he lies helpless in a pit, whence he is rescued by Etana and nursed back to health. The eagle, bearing Etana on its back, twice endeavors to fly up to highest heaven, where a solution for Etana's childlessness is kept: *šammu ša* (*w*)*alādi*, "the plant of birth". The first ascent is aborted by a terrified Etana; the second succeeds. Immediately upon Etana and the eagle's arrival in heaven, the text breaks off. The expedition's outcome remained unknown until 2020, when Benjamin Foster and Andrew George's publication of an entirely different text – YBC.2394, an Old Babylonian dialogue between a father and his son – revealed that the gods did not grant Etana a son.[4] This indicates that, as has long been suspected, Etana's predicament was no more solved by a magical plant than Gilgamesh's was.[5] Moreover, as Foster and George remark, it "suggests that Baliḫ, as known from the Sumerian King List, was not thought to be his [Etana's] biological son".[6] Whether or not this suggestion holds true cannot be known until additional manuscripts of *Etana* are recovered to inform us of the story's conclusion. If it does, one suspects that Baliḫ succeeds Etana through adoption, and that if so, the myth may be an etiology of adoption itself.[7]

This paper investigates two couplets in the Old Babylonian version of the poem, respectively preserved as ll. 5-6 and 13-14 of MLC.1363 (OB Morgan). Following philological-grammatical analysis, new solutions are proposed for two cruxes, one in each couplet: the nature of an *isinnum*, 'festival' said to be ordained by the gods while kingship was not yet set up (§ 1); and the precise description of a group of people said to be deprived of *mitluku*, 'deliberation' in kingship's absence (§ 2). The couplets, hypothesized based on the preceding reanalysis to imply both a critique of kingship and an endorsement of its ultimate necessity, are set in broader context (§ 3), and argued to bear on three themes of broader Mesopotamian as well as biblical salience: the shortsightedness of the gods (§ 3.1), the connection of power in general and kingship in particular with (forced) labor (§ 3.2), and the role of the king as counselor (§ 3.3).

1 A Mysterious Festival

The couplet ll. 5-6 is part of a description of humanity's primordial kinglessness:

3. *ba-nu ki-ib-ra-tim ša-ki-nu ši-ki-it-tim*
4. *ṣi-ru a-na ni-ši i-lu i-gi$_4$-gu*
5. *i-si$_2$-nam a-na ni-si i-ši-mu*
6. *šar-ra-am la iš-ku-nu ka-lu ni-ši e-pi$_2$-a-tim*
7. *i-na ši-a$_3$-tim la ka-aṣ-ra-at ku-ub-šum me-a-nu*
8. *u$_3$ ḫa-aṭ-ṭu$_2$-um uq-ni-a-am la ṣa-ap-ra-at*

Scholars have understood these lines in widely diverging ways. Below are nine representative translations, given in chronological order along with accompanying transliterations when present:

3 For an overview of the poem's plot, see Haul 2000, 5-33; on the number and outcome of Etana's flights to heaven, Horowitz 1990.

4 The dialogue is also edited as SEAL no. 1738, and was recently discussed in Greenstein 2025. At one point in their argument, the son tells his father (ii 43-51; translation adapted from Foster, George 2020, 42-3): *putti atta tīde // etana ana šerrim // itt*[*ag*] *išam šadiam // iṣ*[*urriš*] *ana puḫri ša ilī // [šamêš]am īli //* (ruling) [*ana awil*]*ūtim iškunūniš*[*šu*] *// š*[*âšu*]*m ilī lā īkušūšūma // šerram lā išrukūšum // ina šīmātim*, "You yourself know that Etana // W[an]dered the uplands seeking a child // [Like] a bi[rd] (alt. [with] a bi[rd]) to the assembly of the gods // He went up to [heaven]. // (ruling) They ordained for [him the lot of ma]nkind, // H[i]m the gods did not approach, // Nor bestow upon him a child, // As a thing destined to be (lit. among destinies)". Note that for ii 48, SEAL reads not [*a-na a-wi-l*]*u-tim iš-ku-nu-ni-iš-*[*šu*] but [*a-na* SIP]$_A$*-tim iš-ku-nu-ni-iš-*[*šu*], and translates "They (the gods) appointed [him] for [shepherd]ship".

5 Alster wrote (1989, 84): "The whole story would certainly be senseless if Etana did not somehow get hold of the plant of birth, but presumably he made a kind of mistake, or violated a condition set up for him, so that he finally appeared less successful than he would otherwise have been (cf. Gilgamesh […])". In postulating that Etana failed to make use of the plant of birth, Alster's analysis aligns with YBC.2394. Yet the dialogue implies that this failure was due not to a mistake on Etana's part, but rather to a divine decision not to grant Etana the plant at all.

6 Foster, George 2020, 51 ad ii 38-51. The Sumerian King List relates (ll. 68-71): ba-li-iḫ dumu e-ta-na-ke$_4$ mu 400 (var. 410) i$_3$-ak, "Baliḫ, son of Etana, ruled for 400 (var. 410) years". For editions of the Sumerian King List, see ETCSL c.2.1.1 and Glassner 2004, 117-26; for analyses of the list's purpose and history, Marchesi 2010 and Gabriel 2023.

7 To my knowledge, these possibilities have not yet been raised.

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1) Langdon[8]	**2) Speiser**[9]	**3) Wilcke**[10]
3. *ba-nu ki-ib-ra-tim ša-ki-nu ši-ki-it-tim*		3. *ba-nu ki-ib-ra-tim ša-ki-nu ši-ki-it-tim*
4. *ṣi-ru a-na ni-ši i-lu I-gi*$_2$[sic]*-gu*		4. *ṣi-ru a-na ni-ši i-lu i-gi*$_4$*-gu*
5. *i-zi-nam a-na ni-ši i-ši-mu*		5. *i-si*$_2$*-nam a-na ni-si i-ši-mu*
6. *šar-ra-am la iš-ku-nu ka-lu ni-ši e-bi-a-tim*		6. *šar-ra-am la iš-ku-nu ka-lu ni-ši e-pi*$_2$*-a-tim*
7. *i-na ši-we-tim la ka-aṣ-ra-at ku-ub-šum me-a-nu*		7. *i-na ši-a*$_3$*-tim la ka-aṣ-ra-at ku-ub-šum me-a-nu*
8. *u*$_3$ *ḫa-ad-du-um uk-ni-a-am la sa-ap-ra-at*		8. *u*$_3$ *ḫa-aṭ-ṭu*$_2$*-um uq-ni-a-am la ṣa-ap-ra-at*
3. they who create the (four) regions, who found the 'foundations', i.e. sanctuaries.	3. They who created the regions, who set up the establishments,	3. Die Bildner der Weltufer, die alles setzen, –
4. But the Igigi were hostile to the people,	4. The Igigi were too lofty for mankind,	4. erhaben sind für die Menschen die Götter, die Igigū –
5. (and) they fixed a term upon mankind.	5. A stated time for mankind they decreed.	5. bestimmten für die Menschen ein Fest.
6. The pale-faced people, all of them, had not yet set up a king.	6. The beclouded people, in all, had not set up a king.	6. Einen König setzten sie nicht ein unter all den zahlreichen Menschen.
7. At that time no tiara had been worn, nor crown,	7. At that time, no tiara had been tied on, nor crown,	7. Bei diesen ist die Kopfbinde nicht geknüpft, die Kappe,
8. And no sceptre had been studded with lapis lazuli.	8. And no scepter had been inlaid with lapis;	8. Und das Szepter mit Lapislazuli nicht besetzt.
4) Kinnier Wilson[11]	**5) Foster**[12]	**6) Selz**[13]
3. *ba-nu ki-ib-ra-tim ša-ki-nu ši-ki-it-tim*		3. *ba-nu ki-ib-ra-tim ša-ki-nu ši-ki-it-tim*
4-5. *zi-<ik>-ru* †*ka-li-šu-nu*† *i-lu I-gi*$_4$*-gu i-si*$_2$*-nam a-na ni-ši i-ši-mu*		4. *ṣi-ru a-na ni-ši i-lu i-gi*$_4$*-gu*
		5. *i-si*$_2$*-nam a-na ni-si i-ši-mu*
6. *šar-ra-am la iš-ku-nu ka-lu ni-ši e-pi*$_2$*-a-tim*		6. *šar-ra-am la iš-ku-nu e*$^{\text{I}}$(=KA)*-lu ni-ši e-pi*$_2$*-a-tim*
7. *i-na ši-a*$_3$*-tim la ka-aṣ-ra-at ku-ub-šum me-a-nu*		7. *i-na ši-a*$_3$*-tim la ka-aṣ-ra-at ku-ub-šum me-a-nu*
8. *u*$_3$ *ḫa-aṭ-ṭu*$_2$*-um uq-ni-a-am la ṣa-ap-ra-at*		8. *u*$_3$ *ḫa-aṭ-ṭu*$_2$*-um uq-ni-a-am la ṣa-ap-ra-at*
3. The (four?) Creators of the World Regions *were* the..... of.....,	3. The creators of the world regions, establishers of all physical form,	3. Die Erschaffer der (vier) Weltregionen, die das Weltgefüge setzten,
4-5. And unanimously the Igigi established a Festival for the people.	4. The Igigi-gods…[14]	4. Erhaben für die Menschen (sind) die Igigū-Götter,
	5. Ordained a festival(?) for the people.[15]	5. Sie bestimmten für die Menschen den Fest(kalender),
6. But a king they did not appoint over any of the *tribes* and peoples,	6. Among all the teeming peoples they had established no king,	6. Einen König (aber) setzten sie nicht über die zahlreichen Menschen.
7. And at that time unworn remained head-cloth and 'crown';	7. Then no headdress had been assembled, nor crown,	7. In diesen (Tagen) war kein Turban, keine Krone gewunden,
8. No sceptre was inlaid with (the royal) lapis lazuli,	8. Nor yet scepter had been set with lapis,	8. Und das Zepter war mit Lapis-lazuli (noch) nicht verziert.

8 Langdon 1932, 10-11.
9 Speiser 1955, 114.
10 Wilcke 1977, 156-8.
11 Kinnier Wilson 1985, 30-1.
12 Foster 1993, 439.
13 Selz 1998, 162-3.
14 Cf. Foster 2005, 535: "Those sublime for the people, the Igigi gods".
15 Cf. Foster 2005, 535: "Ordained the festival(?) for the people".

7) Haul[16]	**8) SEAL**[17]	**9) Földi (trans. Foster)**[18]
3. *ba-nu ki-ib-ra-tim ša-ki-nu ši-ki-it-tim*	3. *ba-nu ki-ib-ra-tim ša-ki-nu ši-ki-it-tim*	3. *ba-nu ki-ib-ra-tim ša-ki-nu ši-ki-it-tim*
4. *ṣi-ru a-na ni-ši i-lu i-gi$_4$-gu*	4. *ṣi-ru a-na ni-ši i-lu i-gi$_4$-gu*	4. *ṣi-ru a-na ni-ši i-lu i-gi$_4$-gu*
5. *i-si$_2$-nam a-na ni-si i-ši-mu*	5. *i-si$_2$-nam a-na ni-si i-ši-mu*	5. *i-si$_2$-nam a-na ni-si i-ši-mu*
6. *šar-ra-am la iš-ku-nu ka-lu ni-ši e-pi$_2$-a-tim*	6. *šar-ra-am la iš-ku-nu ka-lu ni-ši e-pi$_2$-a-tim*	6. *šar-ra-am la iš-ku-nu ka-lu ni-ši e-pi$_2$-a-tim*
7. *i-na ši-a$_3$-tim la ka-aṣ-ra-at ku-ub-šum me-a-nu*	7. *i-na ši-a$_3$-tim la ka-aṣ-ra-at ku-ub-šum me-a-nu*	7. *i-na ši-a$_3$-tim la ka-aṣ-ra-at ku-ub-šum me-a-nu*
8. *u$_3$ ḫa-aṭ-ṭu$_2$-um uq-ni-a-am la ṣa-ap-ra-at*	8. *u$_3$ ḫa-aṭ-ṭu$_2$-um uq-ni-a-am la ṣa-ap-ra-at*	8. *u$_3$ ḫa-aṭ-ṭu$_2$-um uq-ni-a-am la ṣa-ap-ra-at*
3. Die die Weltufer erschufen, das *Menschengeschöpf* (?) setzten,	3. The creators of the (world's) boundaries, who set fast the ordinance,	3. Those creators of the world regions, establishers of all physical form,
4. die erhaben sind über die Menschen, die Götter, die Igigū,	4. The Igigu gods, exalted for the people,	4. Those sublime for the people, the Igigi-gods,
5. bestimmten den Menschen ein Fest.	5. ordained a feast for the people.	5. Ordained the *holy day* for the people.
6. Den König hatten sie (noch) nicht eingesetzt unter allen zahlreichen Menschen;	6. They had not instituted a king among the teeming people,	6. Among all the teeming peoples they had established no king,
7. daher war keine Tiara, keine Kopfbinde geknotet,	7. There had been bound neither turban nor tiara,	7. Then no headdress had been put together, no crown,
8. und kein Szepter war mit Lapis besetzt.	8. The scepter had not yet been set with lapis.	8. Nor yet scepter had been set with lapis,

Line 5, *isinnam ana nišī išīmū*, has been variously interpreted. The crux is *isinnam*. Stephen Langdon and Ephraim A. Speiser respectively interpreted *isinnam* as referring to a 'term' or 'stated time' imposed on humanity by the hostile Igigi. Langdon remarked regarding the Igigi, "Apparently they restricted mankind to short life and condemned them to labor. The phrase may be connected with Gen. 3,17-19 and Ps. 90,10".[19] Yet as Foster remarked: "[T]here is no philological basis for such an interpretation. If the Akkadian word used here really means 'festival', the older version would still refer not to death but rather to a holiday".[20] Since Langdon invoked Genesis and Psalms as comparanda for his interpretation of the line, one may speculate that underlying his rendering of *isinnam* as 'term' is the double meaning of Heb. מועד: 'appointed time' and 'festival'.[21]

All subsequent translators have understood *isinnam* to mean 'festival', yet have disagreed as to what the festival in question is. One interpretive strand takes it as referring to a specific celebration, e.g., René Labat's "la Fête (du Nouvel-an)"[22] and Bendt Alster's "the coronation of the king";[23] James Kinnier Wilson endorsed Labat's rendering and wrote: "The relevance of this festival to the kingship [...] is that it became the traditional time for coronation and represented the beginning of the king's years of reign".[24] The issue with taking *isinnam* as connected to the coronation of the king is, as Gebhard Selz put it: "Alster [...] meint es wäre auf 'the coronation of the king' angespielt. Das scheint mir aber mit der Aussage von Z. 6 kaum zu vereinbaren: Ein 'Krönungsfest', aber 'keinen König'?".[25] As Selz indicated in the same note, one way to sidestep this problem was put forward by Alster, who rendered the couplet as: "The gods established a festival for the people, (and now follows an account of how it happened: First the gods had) not (yet) appointed a king".[26] Such an interpretation would obviate the couplet's dissonance, yet as Alster's bracketed text suggests, takes as expressed much, perhaps too much, that the text does not say.

16 Haul 2000, 106-7.
17 SEAL no. 1524.
18 Földi 2024 (Trans. B. Foster).
19 Langdon 1932, 8 n. 5.
20 Foster 1993, 439 n. 1.
21 Clines 2001, מוֹעֵד 3 (p. 179) and 4 (p. 181) respectively.
22 Labat et al. 1970, 296.
23 Alster 1989, 84.
24 Kinnier Wilson 1985, 31 n. 5.
25 Selz 1998, 163 n. 132.
26 Alster 1989, 84.

Taking a different approach, Michael Haul took the 'festival' as referring to religious worship in general. He wrote of the state of affairs at the beginning of the poem:

> Allerdings fehlte anfangs noch das zur Ordnung der Stadt und der zivilisierten Welt gehörende Bindeglied zwischen den Menschen und den Göttern, eine höchste irdische, zur göttlichen Sphäre vermittelnde Instanz: das Königtum. Mit ihm fehlte das ‚Fest' und es fehlten die Tempel, d. h., es gab noch keinen geregelten Kult. All dies wird erst durch die Einsetzung eines Königs gewährleistet werden [...] Die Erwähnung des Festes in Z. i 5 lässt sich problemlos auf die Institution des Königtums beziehen: der enge Zusammenhang zwischen dem Königtum und rituellen Festen ist uns aus vielfältigen Keilschriftquellen, in denen der König als die zentrale Figur des Kultes erscheint, aufs Beste vertraut.[27]

Yet the temporal sequence indicated by the plain sense of ll. 5-6 is the reverse: it is said first that the *isinnum* was decreed, and second that kings were not appointed. Taking up Haul's identification of the 'Fest' with the cult in general, the couplet's implication would be not that cult and temple were introduced "durch die Einsetzung eines Königs", but rather that religious worship preceded kingship. Such a reading is tentatively proposed by Foster: "[P]erhaps [...] religious observance was established first, then kingship was provided".[28] Foster also observes: "The line remains obscure; perhaps 'lineage' or 'genealogy' is meant".[29] Yet neither 'lineage' nor 'genealogy' fits with the known attestations of *isinnum*.

A new interpretation of ll. 5-6 may be offered. The CAD (I-J) translated *ilū igigū isinnam ana nišī išīmū* as "(before kingship existed) the divine Igigu assigned for mankind a permanent festival".[30] In that spirit, one may take the couplet as reiterative:

> 5. They ordained a festival for the people:
> 6. Among all the teeming peoples they established no king.

Understood thus, the 'festival' in question would *be* the absence of kings. This might be because kings, by the nature of their office, impose labor on their subjects and so curtail their leisure and enjoyment. Their absence, here taken not as a primordial state rectified by divine decree but as the result of one, may then be reckoned as yielding a happy and restful condition afforded by, and thus comparable with, a holy day (*isinnum*). (One may note that the very same logic underlies the transformation of Old English *hāligdæg*, 'holy day' into Middle English *haliday* and later into 'holiday'.)[31] Taking *isinnum* to be unrelated to kingship leaves open the question of why it is mentioned at all; understanding it to be a coronation festival leaves unclear why such a festival was ordained without kings being set up. This approach avoids both difficulties.

As in the CAD's above-given translation, *isinnum* would refer not to a specific cultic festival but to celebration more generally. Such a use of *isinnu* is likewise recognized by the CAD,[32] and is evidenced for instance in *Gilgamesh* XI 75: *isinna ippušū kī ūmī akītimma*, "They (the ark-constructing craftsmen) made *isinnu* as if it were the New Year's festival"; and *Gilgamesh* I 226: *ūm*[*išam-m*]*a* [... *š*] *akin isinnu*, "[Every] day [...] there [is] an *isinnu*".[33] Citations gathered under *isinnu* 2b, "in transferred meaning"[34] – e.g., *isinša tamḫāru* "Her *isinnu* is battle",[35] and *qablu u ippiru isinanni* "Battle and hardship are our *isinnu*"[36] – likewise show that *isinnu* could connote festive enjoyment, and so be metaphorically applied to activities other than literal religious festivals.

In light of the preceding analysis, one may render ll. 3-8 as follows:

27 Haul 2000, 7.

28 Foster 2005, 535 fn. 1. As a reference for this interpretation, Foster cites Haul 2000, 7, though Haul in fact argued for the reverse sequence.

29 Foster 2005, 535 fn. 1.

30 CAD I-J, 196.

31 OED, s.v. "holiday (*n.*)".

32 CAD I-J, 196-7, *isinnu* 2, 'secular festival'.

33 For an edition of *Gilgamesh*, see George 2022.

34 CAD I-J, 197.

35 *Agušaya* iii 7; edition Pohl 2022, 124-75.

36 *Tukultī-Ninurta Epic* v 12'; edition Machinist 1978.

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3. *bānû kibrātim šākinu*[37] *šikittim*
4. *ṣīrū ana nišī ilū igīgū*
5. *isinnam ana nišī išīmū*
6. *šarram lā iškunū kalû nišī epiātim*
7. *ina šiātim lā kaṣrat kubšum meānum*
8. *u ḫaṭṭum uqniam lā ṣaprat*

3. The creators of the world regions, establishers of all form,
4. Those exalted for the people,[38] the Igigū gods,
5. Ordained a festival for the people:
6. Among all the teeming peoples they established no king.[39]
7. Then no headdress had been put together, no crown,
8. Nor yet had scepter been set with lapis.

These six lines would then be neatly divided into three couplets.

2 No Counsel for the People

The text then describes the consequences of the Igigi's decision not to set up a king, but rather to withhold kingship from the people:

9. *lā banû ištēniš parakkū*
10. *sebetta bābū uddulū eli dapnim*
11. *ḫaṭṭum meānum kubšum u šibirrum*
12. *qudmiš ānim ina šamā'ī šaknū*

9. Not a single dais had been built,
10. Seven gates were shut against the hero.[40]
11. Scepter, crown, headdress, and staff,
12. Were set before Anu in heaven.

This brings us to ll. 13-15:

13. *u_2-ul i-ba-aš-ši mi-it-lu-ku ni-ši-ša*[41]
14. [*šar*]-ʳ*ru*¹-ʳ*tum*¹ *i-na ša-ma-i ur-*ʳ*da*¹-*am*
15. […] (x) x ʳ*i*¹-ʳ*iš*²¹/ʳ*ka*²¹-ʳ*ri**¹ ʳ*šar*²¹-*r*[*a*²-*am*²] ʳ*i*¹-*ši*-ʳ*i*¹

Scholars have likewise diverged in their understanding of these lines:

37 If *ša-ki-nu* is analyzed not as a substantivized plural of *šākinu*, but – as one intuitively analyzes *bānû*, found earlier in the line – as a singular participle referring, in apposition, to the plural *ilū igīgū*, it should be normalized not as *šākinū* (as in Földi's edition), but rather *šākinu*. (In his analysis, Haul twice normalized the phrase as *šākinu šikittim* [2000, 116; 117] and thrice as *šākinū šikittim* [2000, 117; 119; 212], without commenting on the alternation.) As relevant below, *šākinu* would then be a poetic, case ending-retaining bound form (on such forms, see von Soden 1931, 211-2). On the appositional use of singular participles to refer to plural nouns, see von Soden 1995, § 134 c. This grammatical phenomenon is very precisely defined by Huehnergard (2011, 197): "A participle modifying a plural noun, when the former stands in the bound form before another noun, may be singular".

38 To my knowledge, until Haul's edition of the poem (Haul 2000), scholars uniformly took *ṣi-ru a-na ni-ši i-lu i-gi_4-gu* as a complete sentence: e.g., "But the Igigi were hostile to the people" (Langdon) or "erhaben sind für die Menschen die Götter, die Igigū" (Wilcke). Haul, followed here, analyzed *ṣi-ru* not as a stative but as the plural substantivized verbal adjective *ṣīrū*, "Die Erhabenen" (Haul 2000, 118-9), and took it as standing in apposition to *ilū igīgū*. He therefore translated "die erhaben sind über die Menschen, die Götter, die Igigū". Similarly, Foster has "Those sublime for the people, the Igigi gods" (Foster 2005, 535), and SEAL, "The Igigu gods, exalted for the people".

39 On *i-na ši-a_3-tim*, here translated 'then', see Földi 2024 ad OB Morgan 7; on the translation "teeming people" for *ni-ši e-pi_2-a-tim*, Haul 2000, 119 ad i 6.

40 On this line, see Lambert 1980a and Streck 2009, 484-5.

41 The sign *ša* in *ni-ši-ša*, clear in Langdon's 1932 copy, has been abraded from the tablet.

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1) Langdon[42]	**2) Speiser**[43]	**3) Wilcke**[44]
13. *u*[*sic*]-*ul i-ba-aš-ši mi-it-lu-ku ni-ši-ša*		13. *u*$_2$-*ul i-ba-aš-ši mi-it-lu-ku ni-ši-ša*
14. *šar-ru-tum i-na ša-ma-i ur-da-am*		14. *x-x-tum i-na ša-ma-i ur-da-am*
15. ……		15. [x x x x x x x x] x [I]štar *ša[r-r]a-[am] i-ši*
13. there being no direction for her people.	13. there being no counseling for its people.	13. nicht gibt es Beratungen für ihr Volk.
14. (Then) kingship descended from heaven.	14. (Then) kingship descended from heaven.	14. Die... stieg vom Himmel herab.
15……	15. [marked as missing]	15. [...]..., [Ištar war auf der Suche nach ei[nem] Kö[nig].
4) Kinnier Wilson[45]	**5) Foster**[46]	**6) Selz**[47]
13. *u*$_2$-*ul i-ba-aš-ši mi-it-lu-ku* †*ša ni-ši*†		13. *u*$_2$-*ul i-ba-aš-ši mi-it-lu-ku ni-ši-ša*
14. [*ša*]*r*-[*r*]*u-tum i-na ša-ma-i ur-da-am*		14. [*ša*]*r*$^{?}$-*ru*$^{?}$-*tum i-na ša-ma-i ur-dam*[sic]
15. [ ] x [*I*]*štar* ˹*šar*˺-*r*[*a-am*] *i-ši-i*		15. [not included]
13. There was no..... of the people.	13. There was no right counsel for their(?) people:	13. Es gab keinen Rat(geber) für ihr (=Ištars) Volk.
14. (When) the sceptre of kingship came down from heaven,	14. (Then) [ ] came down from heaven.	14. kam das *Königtum(?)* vom Himmel herunter.
15. [.....] Ištar sought a king.	15. [marked as part of a gap]	15. [not included]
7) Haul[48]	**8) SEAL**[49]	**9) Földi (trans. Foster)**[50]
13. *u*$_2$-*ul i-ba-aš-ši mi-it-lu-ku ni-ši-ša*	13. *u*$_2$-*ul i-ba-aš-ši mi-it-lu-ku ni-ši-ša*	13. *u*$_2$-*ul i-ba-aš-ši mi-it-lu-ku <a-na> ni-°\ši°-ša*
14. [*be*$^{?}$]-˹*el*$^{?}$˺-*tum i-na ša-ma-i ur-da-am*	14. [*ša*]*r*-[*r*]*u-tum i-na ša-ma-i ur-da-am*	14. [*šar*]-˹*ru**˺-˹*tum*˺ *i-na ša-ma-i ur-*˹*da*˺-*am*
15. [X X X (X X)] X -˹*Ištar*$^{?}$˺ ˹*šar*˺-*r*[*a*$^{?}$-*am*] ˹*i*˺-*ši*-˹*i*˺	15. [… … …] x ˹*Ištar?*˺(˹**U.DAR**˺?) ˹*šar*˺-*r*[*a-am*] ˹*i*˺-*ši*-˹*i*˺	15. […] (x) x ˹*i*˺-˹*iš*$^{?}$˺/˹*ka*$^{?}$˺-˹*ri**˺ ˹*šar*$^{?}$˺-*r*[*a*$^{?}$-*am*$^{?}$] ˹*i*˺-*ši*-˹*i*˺
13. Da es keinen Besonnenen ihres Volkes gab,	13. No common counsel existed for its (the land's) people.	13. There was no right counsel for *its* people:
14. stieg ˹die Herrin˺ vom Himmel hinab,	14. Kingship(?) descended from the heavens.	14. (Then) did [kin]gship come down from heaven.
15. [.....] suchte ˹Ištar (?)˺ ˹einen König (?).˺	15. [...] Ištar(?) sought a king(?).	15. [...]... had a king,

The crux at hand is *ni-ši-ša* (l. 13), which has – with the exceptions of Kinnier Wilson's †*ša ni-ši*†, "of the people" and Foster's "their(?) people" – been uniformly construed as appended with a feminine singular possessive suffix. Scholars have put forward two options as to what noun that suffix refers back to, and thus to whom the people are said to belong.

The first – endorsed by Langdon, Claus Wilcke, Alster,[51] Selz, and Haul – is Ištar, with *ni-ši-ša* then being "her people". This interpretation presents two difficulties. First, there would be no parallel for the people of the land in general being spoken of as belonging to Ištar. Second, Ištar is not mentioned before l. 13 for her to serve as the implied referent of *ni-ši-ša*. However, Wilcke floats as a possibility, and Haul argues, that Ištar appears immediately after l. 13 and can therefore serve as such a referent. Wilcke wrote of l. 14: "Die Spuren am Zeilenanfang passen zu [*ša*]*r*-[*r*]*u-tum* (so die communis opinio […]); die Lesung [*b*]*e*-[*e*]*l-tum* scheint aber nicht ausgeschlossen zu sein";[52] and of l. 15: "Ergänzung

42 Langdon 1932, 11.
43 Speiser 1955, 114.
44 Wilcke 1977, 156-8.
45 Kinnier Wilson 1985, 30-1.
46 Foster 1993, 439.
47 Selz 1998, 164-5.
48 Haul 2000, 106-7.
49 SEAL no. 1524.
50 Földi 2024 (Trans. B. Foster).
51 Alster 1989, 85.
52 Wilcke 1977, 157 ad l. 14.

und Lesung nach Z. 19ff. der jungen Version".[53] The SB lines here referred to by Wilcke, which occur at the equivalent point in the narrative to the OB passage under discussion, and only the beginnings of which are preserved, do seem to speak of Ištar searching for a king:

> I 19. ⌜d⌝*iš-tar re-e*$_2$*-a* […] Ištar a shepherd (acc.) […]
> I 20. LUGAL *i-še-*⌜ ⌝*-i* […] She was seeking a king […]

In arguing for *bēltum* over *šarrūtum*, Haul wrote:

> Das Pron.-Suff. von *nišīša* verweist, wenn richtig ergänzt, auf [*bēl*]*tum* in Z. 14 bzw. auf *Ištar* in Z. 15, also auf einen erst später realisierten Referenten. Die Ergänzung mit *bēltum* nach dem Vorschlag von C. Wilcke [...] ist vor allem aufgrund dieses *-ša* und der so gewonnenen parallelen Satzsubjekte für Z. 14 und 15 gewählt.[54]

Yet however much [*be*ʾ]-⌜*el*ʾ⌝*-tum* would cohere with *ni-ši-ša* being "her (Ištar's) people", as well as with Ištar's search for a king in the poem's SB version, it can be ruled out on epigraphic grounds. Streck writes of l. 14: "[P]hoto and copy rather support a reading [*r*]*u* of the second sign".[55] And Földi notes: "[C]ollation from the photograph confirms ⌜*ru*⌝".[56] As such, if *ni-ši-ša* in l. 13 is in fact "Her (Ištar's) people", the referred-to goddess would be mentioned neither in the preceding 12 lines nor in the line immediately following; she could conceivably appear in l. 15, yet the line is too fragmentary to confidently analyze.

The second option – put forward by Michael Streck,[57] and taken up by SEAL as well as (tentatively) by Földi – is *mātum*, "the land", invoked in l. 2, with *ni-ši-ša* being "its (the land's) people". This approach, it should be noted, was anticipated by Speiser's "There being no counseling for its people", on which Speiser remarked: "Evidently, the Earth's".[58] This second interpretation raises neither difficulty presented by the first: people are naturally taken as being of a land,[59] and *mātum* appears in l. 2 and so can serve as a referent for *ni-ši-ša* (albeit a distant one).

Another point of scholarly disagreement regarding l. 13 is the grammatical construction underlying *u*$_2$*-ul i-ba-aš-ši mi-it-lu-ku ni-ši-ša*. To my knowledge, all interpreters except for Haul, Kinnier Wilson, and Alster have understood its basic meaning to be "There was no *mi-it-lu-ku* for *ni-ši-ša*". This creates a difficulty: one would in that case intuitively take *ni-ši-ša* as the genitive *nišīša*, yet a genitive would need to be preceded by *ana* to match the expected sense of "for". As far as I know, this issue has not been spelled out, though Földi's *<a-na> ni-ši-ša* serves to implicitly acknowledge it, as does his entertaining Kinnier Wilson's emendation †*ša ni-ši*†.[60] A different solution to this problem is supplied by Haul,[61] who, following von Soden,[62] analyzed *mi-it-lu-ku* as a case ending-retaining bound form. Haul therefore translated *mi-it-lu-ku ni-ši-ša* as "Besonnenen ihres Volkes".[63] An analysis of *mi-it-lu-ku ni-ši-ša* as a genitive construction is likewise evinced by Alster's "counseling of her (sc. Ištar's) people".[64]

As an alternative, *ni-ši-ša* may be construed as ending with the OB poetic locative-terminative ending *-iša*(*m*).[65] The word would then still be read in the conventional way (*nišīša*), yet be translated as "for the people", and *ul ibašši mitluku nišīša* rendered as "There existed no counsel for the people". This solution has two advantages: it sidesteps the problem of the unclear referent, and unlike Kinnier

53 Wilcke 1977, 157 ad l. 15.

54 Haul 2000, 123 ad i 13f.

55 Streck 2009, 485 ad Morgan Tablet i 14.

56 Földi 2024, ad OB Morgan 14.

57 Streck 2009, 484 ad Morgan Tablet i 7 and 13.

58 Speiser 1955, 114 n. 9.

59 People (*nišū*) are said to be of a land (*mātu*) in e.g., *māta… išni ṭēm nišīša*, "The land's people lost their reason" (Frame 1995, B.2.4.8: 18); *eli māt aššur māta eli nišīša nišī luraddi*, "Verily did I add land to the land of Aššur, and people to its people" (Grayson 1991, A.0.87.1: 31-32 [=A.0.100.5: 133]). For the association between *mātu* and *nišū*, see also citations under *mātu* 1h (CAD M/1, 418).

60 Földi 2024, ad BabaOB$_1$ i 13.

61 Haul 2000, 123 ad i 13f.

62 von Soden 1931, 212.

63 Haul aligned with Selz (1998, 164 n. 139) in construing *mi-it-lu-ku* as a substantivized adjective, though he did not rule out the possibility of its being an infinitive (2000, 123 ad i 13f).

64 Alster 1989, 85.

65 On *-iša*(*m*), see von Soden 1995, § 67 g; Mayer 1995, 184-6; Mayer 2015, 192-3 ad § 67 g; and note also Wasserman 2003, 78 n. 87 and `www.ebl.lmu.de/library/BM.120003` ad l. 13.

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Wilson's †*ša ni-ši*†, does so without emending the text; and it supplies the expected sense whereby there is no counsel for, rather than of, the people, without requiring Földi's postulated haplography <*a-na*>. Following this interpretation, the couplet may be translated as:

13. There existed no counsel for the people,
14. (So) [king]ship descended from heaven.

3 The Couplets in Context

Taken together as newly reinterpreted, the couplets would mean that the Igigi ordained for humanity a holiday-like state of kinglessness, but that this decision deprived the people of deliberation and so was promptly reversed.[66] This in turn may evince an ambivalent yet ultimately affirming view of kingship: that it is a necessary pain.

For the couplets to indicate such an origin for kingship, and to implicitly characterize kingship in this way, would bear on three themes of broader Mesopotamian as well as biblical concern: the shortsightedness of the gods, the connection of power in general and kingship in particular with (forced) labor, and the role of the king as counselor.

3.1 Shortsighted Gods

As here interpreted, in OB *Etana* the Igigi evince flawed decision-making of a kind central to other Mesopotamian compositions, most notably *Atraḫasis*. In that text, the Anunna exploit the Igigi, yet in so doing end up sparking class warfare in heaven. Humans are created to resolve the conflict, yet they multiply and their noise keeps Enlil from sleeping. The deluge is sent to extinguish the clamor, yet leaves the gods without sustenance. In every case, the gods make decisions beneficial in the short term yet deleterious in the long run. Further evincing their shortsightedness, it is only after the deluge that the gods set up measures to curb humanity's continuous increase.[67] Had these been created concomitantly with humans, Enlil's sleep would not have been disturbed in the first place. As hypothesized here, the Igigi evince similarly faulty decision-making. In not appointing kings, the Igigi ordain for humankind the *isinnum* of their absence. Yet in doing so, they deprive humans of *mitluku* and create an untenable situation only remedied by introducing kingship after all.[68]

66 This would cohere with Cancik-Kirschbaum's analysis of *Etana* (2007, 175), "Eine konkrete politische Form ist nicht von vorneherein Teil des von den Göttern bestimmten menschlichen Geschicks. Zwar sind die Amtszeichen bereits konzipiert (Z. 11-12), jedoch erst zu einem späteren Zeitpunkt – und offensichtlich durch *ul ibaššû mitlukū*, Nicht gab es (genügend) Besonnene' (Z. 13) begründet – wird die Realisierung von Herrschaft unter Menschen notwendig". Note that Cancik-Kirschbaum, like Haul, aligns with Selz's analysis of *mi-it-lu-ku* as referring not to an abstraction but to a person (1998, 164 n. 139) and also that the tablet has *ibašši* (*i-ba-aš-ši*), not *ibaššû*, with there being no cause to normalize *mi-it-lu-ku* as a plural form.

67 Post-diluvian population controls are introduced in OB *Atraḫasis* III vii 1-11, part of a partially preserved speech delivered by Ea to Bēlet ilī; in what we have, Ea ordains non-child-bearing women and baby-killing demons. These lines are paralleled in theme, though not (as far as we can tell based on what remains of the equivalent speech in *Atraḫasis*) in phrasing, by SB *Gilgamesh* XI 183-95, addressed by Ea to Enlil. On these lines, see commentary in George 2003, 519; 891-2 (ad 185-6; ad 187; ad 188-9), though they are here understood as having a slightly different meaning than posited by George. George takes Ea's message to Enlil as being that "It would be better not to have sent a Deluge but instead to send a lion or a wolf to reduce the population, a famine or a plague to decimate the people" (2003, 519), and understands the population-curbing forces to be invoked by Ea as "alternatives [that] remain at Enlil's disposal and should be used in future" (2003, 892 ad 188-9). Yet it would better parallel *Atraḫasis*, more closely match the danger-filled reality of human life, and cohere to a greater extent with Ea's employment of imperatives earlier in his address to Enlil (XI 185-7), for Ea to speak of said population-controls as measures that *should*, not merely *could*, be employed to keep the population in check. As such, the precatives he uses throughout the passage in describing the measures should be translated not with 'could', as does George (2022), but rather with 'let', as does for instance Foster (2019); and e.g., *erra litbâmma māta lišgiš* (XI 195) be rendered not as "Erra could arise and slaughter the land" but as "Let Erra arise and slaughter the land!". On the idea that SB *Gilgamesh* XI suggests that death itself was created after the flood, see Lambert 1980b, 57.

68 The way in which kingship is introduced deserves comment. In SB (I 19-22), it is Ištar who descends from heaven to seek a king. As discussed, in OB it is likely said that kingship descended from heaven. This would parallel the incipit of the Sumerian King List ([nam]-lugal an-ta ed_3-de_3-a-ba, "When kingship descended from heaven", ETCSL c.2.1.1: 1). And just as in SKL, the line may imply that the abstract quality of *šarrūtu* here acts as an independent agent, resolving to go down to earth though the gods did not command it to do so. One would however assume that, in OB as in SB, it is Ištar who brings kingship down with her, thus accomplishing the descent of *šarrūtu*.

Divine shortsightedness likewise figures in *The Tamarisk and the Palm* (edition Wilcke 1989, 170-90; lines quoted below from p. 171),[69] which supplies the closest known parallel to *Etana*'s own "basileogony".[70] This disputation text is known in four versions: OB, MB, MA, and (early) NA (Wilcke 1989 TḪa-b, E, Ab, and Ac respectively).[71] The composition opens with a prologue. OB preserves one recension thereof; MB and NA another, albeit with divergences (the section is broken off in MA). The OB recension reports that when the gods established the land, they "exerted themselves" for humans (TḪa 2, *ittanḫū ilū ana awīlūtim*), convening council and sending down plenty upon them (TḪa 2-3a).[72] It then reports that "Before, the gods had named a king [t]o direct the land, strengthen the people, // To administer the [Ci]ty Kish, the Black-Headed Ones, the numerous people" (TḪa 3b-5, *ina pāni* // [*an*]*a šutēšir mātim guššur nišī ibbū šarram* // [*āl*]*am kiš ana šapārim ṣalmāt qaqqadi nišī madātim*). This implies that, just as in *Etana*, land, people, and Kish were already created before kingship was ordained.[73] The same is indicated in the MB/NA recension. It relates that when the gods established the land and built a city for the ancient people, when they piled up the mountains and dug the rivers, they held council (ll. 1-5). It then declares that "Before, kingship had not existed in the land, and sovereignty was bestowed upon the gods (alone)" (l. 6, *ina pānāma šarrūtu ina māti ul ibašši u bēlūtu ana ilī šarkat*). One may interpret this statement to mean that "lordship was vested in the gods" (Foster 2005, 927), with the implication being that in kings' absence the gods ruled directly over mankind.[74] Yet one suspects that it rather means that sovereignty itself was not to be found among humans, just as in OB *Etana* crown, scepter, and headdress were set before Anu in heaven before kingship descended to earth. MB then tells us that the gods loved the Black-Headed People (l. 7, *ilū irāmūma nišī ṣalmāt qaqqadi*; NA is corrupt at this point).[75] Out of this love, the gods gave monarchy to humankind, appointing a king and consigning to him the Land of Kish so that he may watch over its inhabitants ([*nišī*?] *ša mātam kiš u*[*g*] *ammerūnišša ana naṣāri*, ll. 7-8 [MB]).[76] (But as Šiduri told Gilgamesh, life eternal the gods never gave to mankind, but kept it for themselves).[77] In this as in the OB version of *The Tamarisk and the Palm*, that the gods do not establish kingship from the outset, but only do so after Man and city had already been created, suggests that they behave shortsightedly, and play it by ear.

69 I thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing out the relevance of this text to OB *Etana*.

70 On etiology and justification of kingship in ancient Mesopotamia, see Cancik-Kirschbaum 2007, Jiménez 2013 (esp. 245-7), and Pongratz-Leisten 2015, 205-17. On Assyrian conceptions of kingship specifically, see Radner 2010 and Machinist 2011.

71 On the four versions, see Wilcke 1989, 163-70; for a manuscript list, 170. Wilcke writes (1989, 169), "Die Frage, welche der vier uns vorliegenden Versionen einer ursprünglichen Fassung am nächsten stehe, scheint müßig. Wir finden den Text des Streitgedichtes im Fluß".

72 One wonders what exactly *ittanḫū* – derived from *anāḫu*, "to toil, exert oneself, become tired" – conveys. Does it mean that the gods labored, *Atraḫasis*-style, for humanity's benefit – Wilcke, translating (1989, 183) "da mühten sich die Götter für die Menschheit ab", seems to imply as much – or does it refer to self-exertion more generally, with the gods then noted to have taken pains to care for humanity? If the former, perhaps the gods' labor produced the *nuḫšum* sent down to humanity (yet why would mention of toil be immediately followed up by talk of convening council?). If the latter, then *ittanḫū* might rather denote the benevolent diligence motivating the gods' giving humanity plenty and kingship.

73 As Jiménez writes (2013, 246), "In […] narratives of the creation of the king […] such as the one contained in the prologue of *The Date Palm and the Tamarisk* or at the beginning of *Etana*, the existence of humankind prior to the election of a king is taken for granted". On other texts testifying, albeit less clearly, to a view whereby kingship post-dated humanity's creation, see Cancik-Kirschbaum 2007, 172-5.

74 This would parallel the biblical account of kingship's creation (see discussion of 1 Samuel 8 below).

75 The versions differ from one another in how they describe the gods at this narrative juncture: OB has *ittanḫū ilū ana awīlūtim*; MB, *ilū irāmūma nišī ṣalmāt qaqqadi*; NA, *šarra ilāni rāmūniššu nišī ṣalam* (sic) *qaqqadi iqbûniššu*, "The gods had love for the king, and *assigned* the Black-Headed People to him". (For NA, I follow Lambert 1960, 162 over Wilcke 1989, 171 while agreeing with Wilcke 1989, 179 n. b that NA is corrupt at this point). *ittanḫū* implies that the gods exerted themselves, and perhaps did literal labor, for humanity's benefit. Yet *irāmūma* implies no such effort, but denotes only that the gods loved the people. This difference between OB and MB coheres with the lessening emphasis on divine labor between OB and later Mesopotamian mythology, manifest for instance in the difference between the respective cosmic histories of *Atraḫasis* and *Enūma eliš* (on labor in *Atraḫasis*, see Gabriel 2018, 186-92 and Helle 2026; on *Enūma eliš*'s transformation of *Atraḫasis*'s anthropogony, Seri 2006, 515; Foster 2016, 94-5; Wisnom 2024, 267).

76 The portion expected from context to describe the appointment of a king is broken off in MB (E 5), and corrupted out of existence in NA (Ac 9). Foster (2005, 927) translates […] *ša mātam kiš u*[*g*]*ammerūnišša ana naṣāri* as "… [the people] of the land of Kish gathered around him to look at(?)". Yet it would better cohere with the rest of the passage, all of whose actions are performed by the gods, as well as with OB, in which the gods appoint the king to administer Kish, to hew closer to Wilcke's (1989, 179), "[Die Menschen] des Landes Kiš versammelten sie ihm". Two notes may be offered. First, neither "versammeln" nor "gather around" fits the established meanings of *gamāru*, and one should rather translate *u*[*g*]*ammerūnišša* in line with *gamāru* 3c (CAD G, 30), "To pay or deliver in full". Second, *ša* might function here not as a genitive particle but a topicalization marker, in which case one need not reconstruct *nišī* at the broken ending of l. 7, but rather translate "Regarding the Land of Kish, they consigned it to him".

77 *Gilgamesh* OB VA+BM a+18-20. I thank Benjamin Foster for pointing out this contrast between kingship and death in Mesopotamian thinking.

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3.2 Kingship and Drudgery

Explicit in *Atraḫasis* and implicit in *Etana* as here interpreted is a connection between power and labor.[78] In *Atraḫasis*, the power of the Anunna manifests in their exploitation of the Igigi's labor. Humans are created to replace the Igigi as the working class, and the subsequent relationship between gods and humans is likewise defined by the perpetual labor imposed by the former on the latter. If, as here hypothesized, OB *Etana* describes the lack of kings as an *isinnum*, it may be because kings, by virtue of their office, impose labor on their subjects just as Enlil, the divine monarch, oversaw the oppression of the Igigi. This may imply, just as does the plot of *Atraḫasis*, that the imposition of labor is a central feature of kingship, and thus power. The labor in question would, as in *Atraḫasis*, be of the corvée type, yet would include, in the way of earthly kingship, military in addition to civilian service.[79] Interpreted thus, it would make sense for OB *Etana* to compare the absence of kings to a holy day (*isinnum*), just as *Atraḫasis* refers to the creation of humanity and the subsequent release of the gods from labor as the loosening of their yoke (*ulla paṭāru*) and establishment of their freedom (*andurāra šakānu*).[80]

There is only one other source of which I am aware in which the introduction of kingship is spoken of as burdening the population with labor. In the Hebrew Bible, just as in *Etana*, kingship is not part of the primordial order of things. Before the creation of Israelite kingship, God was ruler over his people, directing them through his prophets. Yet in 1 Samuel 8: 4-5, the elders of Israel come before Samuel and ask him to set a king over them for that king to judge them "like all the nations" (ככל הגוים). Samuel disapproves of the idea, yet God tells Samuel to grant the people their wish – albeit while informing them of what they shall suffer as a result (1 Samuel 8: 6-9). Samuel does so (1 Samuel 8: 10-21): he tells the people that the king will render their sons his warriors and farmers, their daughters his perfumers and cooks, their fields and orchards his servants' property; that he will put their servants to his own work, and take a tenth of their livestock for himself; and that, though they shall cry out in protestation of the king's action, God will pay them no heed.

Because there is little certainty as to exactly where, when, by whom, and why 1 Samuel 8 was composed,[81] no claim is made here as to the relationship between 1 Samuel 8 and OB *Etana*. For the present, it will only be pointed out that, if the interpretation here advanced regarding OB *Etana* is correct, both texts would frame the advent of kingship as a detriment to human happiness, and – in a way explicit in the former and implicit in the latter – describe that detriment as bound up with the imposition of labor. For such framing to arise independently would make sense, drawing as it does on the cross-cultural reality of kings' perpetual demands on their subjects' time, property, and very lives.

3.3 King as Counselor

Whether one interprets *ni-ši-ša* as "her people", "its people", or "for the people", it is clear from ll. 13-14 that it was the lack of *mitluku*, 'deliberation' that occasioned the descent of *šarrūtu* from heaven. This implies deliberation to be the purpose of kings. For *Etana* to evince such a view may have broader significance; as Speiser remarked:

> The term *mitluku*, "counseling, consultation" refers here to the function of the *māliku*, a cognate of the Hebrew word for "king". It is a significant commentary on the nature of kingship in Mesopotamian civilization.[82]

78 On labor in *Atraḫasis*, see recently Gabriel 2018, 186-92 and Helle 2026.

79 On corvée labor in the Old Babylonian period and the terms relevant to it – Sum. b a l a, 'term' and d u s u, 'basket' and Akk. *tupšikkum*, *dekûtum*, *ḫarrānum*, and *ilkum* ('basket', 'levy', 'path', and 'going' respectively) as well as *ḫarrān šarrim*, 'way of the king', likely referring to military service – see Stol 1995; on corvée in the Ur III period, Steinkeller 2013.

80 OB I 239: *apṭur ulla*(*m*) *andurā*[*ra*(*m*) *aš*]*ku*]*n*, "I have released the yoke, I have [establish]ed freedom"; the line can be confidently restored based on OB II vi 28. In *Enūma eliš* VI 49 (edition Heinrich 2021), the creation of humankind and the subsequent exemption of the gods from toil is likewise described as the establishment of freedom (*šubarrû*).

81 As is generally the case in biblical criticism, the compositional history of 1 Samuel 8 is contested. A Deuteronomistic background, along with a connection to Deut. 17,14-20, has received broad support – though a post-Deuteronomistic origin for part of the chapter has likewise been argued for. The literature on the chapter is enormous. For recent contributions also providing outlines of previous literature, see Nihan 2013a and 2013b; for an analysis of the view of kingship expressed in the chapter, Müller 2004, 119-47; on the chapter's putative connections to Deut. 17,14-20 and Judg. 8,22-3, and its composition possibly being a response to Assyrian imperialism, Wazana 2016.

82 Speiser 1955, 114 fn. 9.

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Three other mythological texts bear out Speiser's observation, since they likewise point to the perceived centrality of counseling and consultation in Mesopotamian kingship. The first is a text referred to in scholarship as "The Creation of the King". Likely composed in Assyria under the Sargonids,[83] it is known from two manuscripts: VS 24: 92, edited by Werner R. Mayer in 1987,[84] and STT 24, edited by Enrique Jiménez in 2013.[85] In the story, Ea commissions Bēlet-ilī to create the first king, described in VS 24: 92 as LUGAL *ma-li-ku* LU_2 (l. 33'). This much-translated phrase,[86] read with one exception, discussed below, as *šarru māliku amēlu*, has been interpreted in three ways, each having as its starting point a different interpretation of the participle *māliku*. The first is to interpret *māliku* in its usual sense, namely as denoting advising or deliberation, and translate *ma-li-ku* LU_2 for instance as "the counselor-man".[87] The second is to understand *māliku* in its West- and Central-Semitic, sovereignty-signifying sense,[88] and have for example "ein zur Ausübung von Herrschaft befähigter Mann".[89] The third is to analyze *māliku* as amenable to both counsel- and kingship-related interpretations, with the resulting renderings including "man the prince (or man of counsel)".[90]

Extant sources do not permit a conclusive decision between these three ways. At present, one may observe that the relative abundance of advice-related attestations of *malāku* vis-à-vis kingship-related ones militates against *ma-li-ku* LU_2 being wholly unrelated to counsel; and that in postulating polyvalence for *ma-li-ku* LU_2, the third way would presumably result in the greatest literary effect. Regarding what that effect may have been, one may quote Beata Pongratz-Leisten:

> In myth, the king's skill in decision-making is expressed by the participle form *māliku*, derived from the root *malāku*, "to give advice, to ponder, to come to a decision". *māliku* […] appears to function as a pun for *mal*(*i*)*ku* "king", derived from the West Semitic verb *malāku* "to reign". Thus, although both the king and the *lullû*-man belong to the same species (*awīlu*), the king is distinguished from the *lullû*-man by virtue of his being a *māliku* who is appointed to the office of ruler (*šarru*).[91]

In his edition of STT 24, Jiménez argues that in view of the spelling LUGAL *ma-lik* [LU_2] (STT 24: 5'), LUGAL *ma-li-ku* LU_2 could be construed as employing a genitive construction,[92] and "interpreted just as 'the king, the ruler of man(kind)', or, alternatively, as 'the counselor of man(kind)'".[93] Concerning LUGAL *ma-lik* [LU_2], he also writes: "It would be tempting to relate this phrase to the epithet of Enlil in OB *Atraḫasīs* I 43, *ilu mālik ilī* [The divine *māliku* of the gods]".[94] This brings us to our second text.

In *Atraḫasis*, and consequently in *Gilgamesh*, Enlil is described as the gods' *māliku*.[95] This role has conventionally been understood as "counselor".[96] In light of Enlil's being the king of the gods, it is tempting to suppose – taking after the second aforementioned path regarding LUGAL *ma-li-ku* LU_2 – that Enlil is rather described as the gods' ruler. However, that Enlil is meant to serve as the gods' counselor is indicated by his failing, and cataclysmically so, at this very role. As we are told, Enlil was he who

83 On this text, see Mayer 1987; Cancik-Kirschbaum 1995; Radner 2010, 26-7; Jiménez 2013; Pongratz-Leisten 2015, 208-10.

84 Mayer 1987.

85 Jiménez 2013.

86 For a useful compilation of past renderings of *šarru māliku amēlu*, see Jiménez 2013, 240.

87 Foster 2005, 497.

88 This sense, present for instance in Heb. מלך and Arab. مَلَكَ, is well attested, as demonstrated by Renger (1988) and Zaccagnini (1993, 56 n. 10), for *malāku* as well.

89 Cancik-Kirschbaum 1995, 17, with argumentation in 1995, 16-7.

90 George 2003, 448.

91 Pongratz-Leisten 2015, 209.

92 Though note factors acknowledged by Jiménez (2013, 241) as contraindicating an analysis of LUGAL *ma-lik* [LU_2] as a genitive construction.

93 Jiménez 2013, 241. In arguing for this new interpretation, Jiménez points to the expression *šarru mālikšunu*, found thrice in Sargon II's inscriptions (Frame 2021, no. 65: 202, 346; no. 82: v 68'), and translated by Jiménez as "the king, their ruler" (Jiménez 2013, 241). In his edition of STT 24: 5', Jiménez has LUGAL *ma-lik* [*a-me-lu*] (2013, 238). Yet VS 24: 92: 33' employs the logogram LU_2 for *amēlu* rather than spelling the word syllabically, and as shown in Jiménez's subsequent analysis and reflected in his rendering lugal *ma-lik* [*amēlu*/*i*] (2013, 241), there is no reason to suppose that LU_2 is here in the nominative rather than the genitive. Inferring from VS 24: 92, and preserving the ambiguity, the rendering LUGAL *ma-lik* [LU_2] is opted for here.

94 Jiménez 2013, 241.

95 In *Atraḫasis*, e.g., OB I i 8, 43; III viii 11; in *Gilgamesh*, SB XI 16. *Atraḫasis*, the text of which was edited in Lambert, Millard 1969 (reprinted 1999) and then supplemented by Al-Rawi, George 1996, is currently being edited for an up-to-date eBL edition, the first tablet of which has already been uploaded (Jiménez, Rozzi 2024). For an edition of *Gilgamesh*, see George 2022.

96 E.g., in Lambert, Millard 1969, 45; Jiménez, Rozzi 2024 (Trans. B. Foster).

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"did not consider, but brought about the Flood" (*lā imtalkūma iškunu abūba*).[97] Here as in the case of *mālik*(*u*) LU$_2$, a double meaning for *māliku* produces the richest sense. Enlil – the gods' counselor and sovereign both – neglects to deliberate within himself (*mitluku*), and so fails in his role as counselor and proves himself an incompetent king unworthy of the post-diluvian sacrifice.

The third text is *Erra and Išum*, in which Erra, god of violence and pestilence, decides to annihilate humanity because they hold him in contempt, yet is dissuaded at the last moment by Išum, a benevolent god of fire and protection.[98] In the fourth of the poem's five tablets, Išum expounds before Erra the world-threatening plans Erra had formulated to himself. These include the following scheme (IV 127): *ana šubat šar ilī lū'irma lā ibbašši milku*, "I will approach the dwelling of the king of the gods, so that no counsel come into existence". Here as in *Etana*, the non-being of kingship results in the non-existence of counsel.

These three texts indicate that, just as Speiser argued, the couplet at hand reflects a long- and broadly held Mesopotamian conception linking kingship with counseling and consultation. One suspects that this connection, to my knowledge not stressed to such a degree in other ancient cultures, was motivated not only by the actual duties of kingship but also by the double meaning of *malāku* as signifying both counsel and sovereignty.

The importance of deliberation and counsel, and hence the need for kingship, is also stressed, albeit implicitly, elsewhere in the preserved portions of *Etana*. As part of the tale of the eagle and the serpent, the eagle schemes to eat the serpent's young and then fly up to heaven, where he expects to be out of retribution's reach. One of his fledglings, young yet exceedingly wise, tries to dissuade him.[99] But the eagle pays his fledgling no heed. Later, when the snake is hiding inside the carcass of a wild ox, lying in wait for the eagle, the fledgling once again warns his father, this time that the snake is surely waiting within the carcass and the eagle should not descend onto it.[100] This warning is similarly disregarded. The eagle ends up with his wings broken. And one can only assume, though the story does not report so, that the fledgling starves to death along with his siblings for lack of a father to feed them (thus depriving the eagle of his children as he deprived the snake of his). Through this story, *Etana* cautions its readers not to follow the heart's foolish inclinations, but rather to listen to sage advice. The same message is conveyed by other Akkadian myths, such as the *Cuthean Legend of Naram-Sîn*,[101] *Gilgamesh*,[102] and *Erra* – in which the world is saved by the intervention of Išum, Erra's *māliku*.[103]

The tale of the eagle and the serpent demonstrates the need for kingship in yet another way. This episode begins with the two predators swearing an oath of friendship to each other.[104] In SB (II 25-35), the friends follow up this oath by living out a mutually beneficial arrangement, taking turns to hunt for the other and his children. In OB (Susa 8-11) and MA (b+14-b+20), a different and one-sided arrangement is described, whereby the snake sustains the eagle and his young but seems to receive nothing in return. Regarding this change from OB and MA to SB, Jerrold Cooper remarked: "The symmetry is appealing as choreography, perhaps, but the dramatic effect of the eagle's subsequent treachery – he eats the serpent's young – is drastically reduced".[105] One can only agree, while also wondering why the snake agreed to the manifestly exploitative OB/MA arrangement in the first place. Perhaps the eagle's task was to keep watch over both sets of children while the snake was away, or the snake was just kind-hearted to the point of folly, and paid for his goodness just as the eagle suffered for his evil. Until further manuscripts are recovered to fill the lacuna afflicting both OB and MA at this point in the plot,

97 OB *Atraḫasis* III v 43 = SB *Gilgamesh* XI 170.

98 An edition and analysis of *Erra and Išum* can be found in Taylor 2017. An updated edition of the poem is under preparation as part of the eBL, with that of Tablet I already on the site (Jiménez 2023).

99 The fledgling's speech is fully preserved in SB, and warns the eagle that Šamaš would take him to task for violating the oath (II 45-50). In OB Susa 22-4, enough is preserved to show that the fledgling addresses his father, with the traces appearing to align with SB (see also Földi 2024, ad l. 24). The speech is not preserved in MA.

100 MA c+3-c+9 (partially preserved), SB II 98-100. While the message of the fledgling's MA and SB speeches is the same – the eagle should not descend onto the carcass – the MA speech is longer and more elaborate.

101 Finn 2017, 58-71.

102 Sonik 2020; Helle 2021, 164-81.

103 That Išum saved the world, and that it was in his role of *māliku* that he did so, is explicit in the poem's summary of its own plot (V 40-1): *ša erra īgugūma ana sapān mātāti u ḫulluq nišīšin iškunu pānīšu // išum mālikšu unīḫūšūma īzibu rēḫāniš*, "That Erra flew into a rage, and set out to lay waste the lands and wipe out their people // And Išum his counselor calmed him down, so he (Erra) spared (some) as a remnant". On Išum's role in the story, see George 2013, 47-65 and Wisnom 2020, 158-243.

104 The oath itself is preserved in neither OB nor MA, though extant in both is the stipulation whereby the violator of the oath would be overthrown (OB Susa 1-3/MA: b+1-b+7). Yet the oath is extant in SB II 8-9, where it is one of friendship (*rū'ūtu*).

105 Cooper 1977, 509-10.

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one can only guess. What one can be sure of is that the arrangement, agreed upon by two equal parties and enforced only by oath, broke down bloodily. Since this is precisely the type of arrangement that might hold society up in the absence of a king, its failure proves his necessity.[106] That it is through the intervention of Šamaš – with whom Mesopotamian kings were routinely identified – that the snake's children are avenged, and things end up for the better, may likewise demonstrate the utility of kings as punishers of oathbreakers and evildoers.[107]

4 Summary

This article reanalyzed two couplets in the Old Babylonian version of *Etana* while offering new solutions to two problems, one in each couplet. It then placed the couplets, newly interpreted, in broader textual context.

The first couplet is OB Morgan 5-6, and the problem confronted therein the nature of an *isinnum*, 'festival' which the text declares the Igigi to have ordained immediately before it notes them not to have set up kings. The couplet's earliest translators took this *isinnum* to refer to a limit set upon human life, yet this is philologically untenable. The vast majority of subsequent interpreters have opted for one of two routes: construing the *isinnum* as unrelated to kingship, which leaves open the question of why it is mentioned at all; and understanding it as a coronation festival, which leaves unclear why such a festival was ordained without kings being set up. Taking a different route, this article argued the *isinnum* to be the absence of kings, who by the nature of their office burden their subjects and so curtail their leisure and joy. Following this interpretation, the Igigi's decision to ordain a festival, and their decision not to set up a king among the people, would be one and the same, and both the mention of the *isinnum* and its existence in the absence of kingship be explicable in context.

The second couplet is OB Morgan 13-14, and the problem the identity of *nišīša*, for whom the text says that no *mitluku*, 'deliberation' existed in kingship's absence. The majority of scholars have analyzed *nišīša* as affixed with a singular feminine possessive pronoun. Yet they have diverged as to the identification of the pronoun's referent, with the two proffered candidates being Ištar and the land (*mātum*). Opting for the former raises considerable thematic and epigraphic difficulties. Opting for the latter does not. Yet opting for either runs against the absence of *ana*, 'for' before *nišīša*. This article proposed to construe *nišīša* as ending not with a singular feminine possessive suffix but with the Old Babylonian locative-terminative ending *-iša*(*m*). It therefore translated *nišīša* as "for the people", thereby sidestepping the problem of the unclear referent while obviating the problem of the missing *ana*.

It was argued that, taken together, the couplets may mean that the Igigi ordained for humanity a holiday-like state of kinglessness, but that this decision deprived the people of deliberation and so was promptly reversed. This article judged these events to evince an ambivalent yet ultimately affirming view of kingship as a necessary pain. It then put them in context: it was observed that *Atraḫasis* and *The Tamarisk and the Palm* have the gods behaving in similarly shortsighted fashion; that *Atraḫasis* also implies a connection between power and labor, and 1 Samuel 8 explicitly connects the advent of earthly kingship with the imposition of immiserating labor on the people; that the role of the king as counselor is likewise stressed in "The Creation of the King", *Atraḫasis*, and *Erra*; and that the importance of counsel, and thus of kingship, is implied by the tale of the eagle and the serpent elsewhere in *Etana* itself.

106 For an analysis of *Enūma eliš* likewise construing it as justifying kingship, see Gabriel 2024.

107 On royal self-identification with the sun god, see Vacín 2009; Charpin 2013; Frahm 2013, 99-101. According to Vacín's analysis (2009, 176-7), Amar-Suen (c. 2046-2037) was the earliest king known to have identified himself with Utu, referring to himself as "the sun god of his land" (^{d}utu-kalam-ma-na, Frayne 1997, E3/2.1.3.16: 11).

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Texts in Movement
The Networks of Near Eastern Royal Narratives

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Abstract This article examines royal narratives as part of broader literary, political, and cultural networks of the ancient Near East, through a comparative study of the Middle Bronze Age Epic of Zimrī-Lîm and the Late Bronze Age Epic of Tukultī-Ninurta. It presents an exploratory comparison of the two narratives in order to test the heuristic value of an approach inspired by the Actor-Network Theory. By situating the narratives within the Near Eastern cultural milieu from which they emerged and tracing the social contexts in which they circulated, it reveals the contrasting trajectories of the two texts: one likely only short-lived, tied to the immediate political setting of its hero; the other preserved and transmitted in later scholarly traditions. Through this comparison, the article asks how such texts participated in the co-creation of social realities within which they operated.

Keywords Royal narratives. Royal ideology. Scribal education and tradition. Epic of Zimrī-Lîm. Epic of Tukultī-Ninurta. Actor-Network theory.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Archaeology of the Texts. – 3 Constructing Royal Discourse. – 4 Conclusion.

1 Introduction

The topic of royal ideology and propaganda in the ancient Near East is broad. Throughout the millennia and vast region,[1] the kings and their courts produced many objects to promote themselves. Palaces could have been filled with statues or reliefs depicting the royal figures performing heroic deeds, participating in rituals, or boasting of their wealth. Public spaces could have been occupied by stelae, sometimes bearing royal inscriptions. Scribes in schools were educated by copying royal inscriptions, hymns, and narratives. When reconstructing temples and palaces, the foundations often yielded royal inscriptions of the past kings, addressing their successors. Through visual, textual, and oral media, the kings communicated their promotion to varied audiences from farmers to officials to merchants or diplomats.

The aim of this article is to address one of these media, namely royal narratives. More specifically, the article outlines their dynamical networks – in what contexts they were composed, how they were influenced by previous royal narratives and other literary texts, how they circulated over the ancient Near East, and how they might have shaped the social realities, especially the political discourses.

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1 During the preparation of this article, artificial intelligence tools (namely ChatGPT-5 and Grammarly) were employed in a limited capacity to provide language feedback and to comment on the clarity and coherence of the argumentation. No AI system contributed to the scholarly interpretations, analyses, or conclusions presented here, which remain entirely the responsibility of the author.

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The journal *Kaskal*, whose name also means 'the journey', seems to be almost an eponymous venue to host an article about such a topic.

To address this issue, we will centre our discussion around two historical royal narratives, the Epic of Zimrī-Lîm[2] (furthermore EpZL) extolling the king of the Middle Bronze Age Mari and the Epic of Tukultī-Ninurta[3] (furthermore EpTN), praising the Late Bronze Age Assyrian king. This study is theoretically based on some assumptions of the Actor-Network Theory[4] (ANT), hand in hand with the theory of social construction of reality.[5] Importantly for us, from the ANT perspective, the texts themselves are actors, too. They are set within the network of interconnected actors, and all of them together continuously create the social reality, whether they are human or not. From this perspective, interpreting the sources means tracking the networks by which they are entangled in the complicated web of the "social".

In an ideal case, we would track these networks as closely as possible. Observing the actual situation, for example, someone holding a tablet, interacting with the signs that make sense to them because they, at some other time, were taught their meanings. The meaning of the situation was also shaped by the places where this happened, such as a palace court in contrast to education in *edubba*. Should the words have been read aloud, each of the present people would have understood them slightly differently – an educated scribe, a priest, a soldier, a foreign emissary, a peasant, or the king. The networks in which the tablet was and is entangled are virtually limitless.

Unfortunately, an issue well-known to all of us makes such a detailed approach impossible. The sources at our disposal are extremely limited and discontinuous. There is seldom any immediate context in which we may follow the networks to such detail that the emergence of the social meaning is clear to us. We must follow many indirect networks, sometimes centuries or millennia apart. The broad timespan itself is not necessarily a problem for this approach. After all, we are now also entangled in networks with actors thousands of years old, and they shape our present social realities. The problem, however, is to demonstrate the existence and relevance of the networks for particular historical situations. Therefore, rather than reconstructing the complete and complex networks in a strict Latourian sense, this article uses ANT heuristically to ground the interactions among texts, tablets, archives, scribal training, kings, courts, audiences, etc. I believe this approach may help us focus on some aspects that may otherwise be overlooked or ignored. It also guides us to be cautious when we are reconstructing the meaning in the past. Admittedly, there are great limits to what we can reasonably say.

The two compositions, EpZL and EpTN, were selected as the focus points for illustrating the topic for several reasons. First, they are among the best-preserved royal narratives that could have been used as narrative political discourses during the life of the rulers they praised.

Second, they are set apart from each other by a significant time gap and are, in many ways, distinct. At the same time, they also share many similarities. Because of that, we may try to track their networks in a somewhat more nuanced way and follow transformations of the genre. They also exhibit many features that are shared with other literary texts and are, therefore, ideal for tracking broader literary connections.

Third, they are rather straightforward in their political message. EpZL narrates Zimrī-Lîm's military expeditions north of Mari, praising him for his deeds, demonstrating the divine support he had, as well as highlighting his personal involvement and relation with his army. EpTN focuses on the conflict between Assyria and Babylonia, and it puts a lot of energy into justifying this war by proclaiming the treacherous and impious behaviour of the Babylonian king Kaštiliaš. Both seem to be quite clear in their praise, and it is less likely that they were intended as a political satire or as mock-epics.[6]

2 For *editio princeps* and French translation, see Guichard 2014. Transcription and English translation are available at ORACC `https://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/nere/Q009326`; see also Miglio 2017 and Válek 2022.

3 See Machinist 1978 for a composite edition of EpTN with English translation and Jakob 2024, texts nos. 5-10, for an edition of several new fragments and their translation in German.

4 See Latour 2007.

5 See Berger, Luckmann 1966.

6 We may contrast this, e.g., with the Ugaritic narratives about Kirtu and ʾAqhatu, where the scholarly consensus is far from clear, and some argue for satire. See, e.g., Margalit 1999, 206, 208-9 and 1989, 477-82.

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2 Archaeology of the Texts

Following the ANT approach, we should start the discussion with the immediate contexts of the compositions. For us, the starting points are archaeological settings. In both cases, unfortunately, the records are rather fuzzy.

2.1 The Epic of Zimrī-Lîm

EpZL has been preserved only in a single manuscript, a four-column tablet.[7] Its fragments have surely been unearthed in the Great Royal Palace, but further details are not clear. The discovery was probably made during the first years of the archaeological mission at Mari. The most probable locus of the discovery is room 115 of the palace, but there is a possibility of a mix-up with objects from room 108. In any case, it seems more than likely that the tablet ended up at the same place as some royal correspondence, administrative and legal documents, and a few literary texts. However, the findspot was probably not the place where this text was stored when it was used by someone at the palace, and the co-finds are not necessary part of the same original archival context. The collection of texts among which EpZL was discovered was probably a temporary storage created by the Babylonians after the conquest of Mari, serving to sort out texts to be transported to Babylon.[8] Should this interpretation be correct, we may further speculate whether this means EpZL was of no interest to the Babylonian scholars, whether they actually transported another copy of the composition, or whether something prevented them from transporting this particular collection that was ultimately left behind. We will later revisit this form of movements of texts – through military conquests – as it is also relevant to the EpTN, where it is even narrated about. While the immediate archaeological context of EpZL is not detailed in regard to its use in narrative politics, it firmly places it in the timeframe of active rule of Zimrī-Lîm and within the centre of political activities at his city, the Great Royal Palace.

2.2 The Epic of Tukultī-Ninurta

The case of EpTN is even more complicated. This composition has been preserved in more manuscripts, from two sites, and from different periods. None of them can be readily connected directly to the period of the rule of Tukultī-Ninurta. Together, the preserved fragments seem to belong to eight different manuscripts.[9]

Two manuscripts were discovered in the tablet collections ('libraries') of Nineveh, a notoriously mixed-up assemblage where individual findspots are difficult to ascertain. The first manuscript[10] was found in the Kuyunjik mound, in the area between the temples of Ištar and Nabû.[11] This manuscript was discovered together with Neo-Assyrian tablets, but its palaeography is Middle Assyrian.[12] Therefore, we may argue that it could have been archived (there?) for a long time. The second manuscript[13] from Nineveh was also discovered in the Kuyunjik mound and is usually attributed to the Neo-Assyrian collections of Aššurbanipal, and its palaeography is Neo-Assyrian.[14] This clearly indicates that this composition was of interest to the future generations of scholars who copied it.

Six manuscripts of EpTN were discovered in Aššur. The first manuscript[15] probably comes from the

7 A.3152+M.5665+unnumbered fragment; see Guichard 2014 for *editio princeps*. See also Válek 2022, 15-18 and Guichard 2014, 1-4 for more details about the excavation contexts. The current location of EpZL fragments is unknown.

8 See Charpin 1995.

9 An additional manuscript was suggested by Arnaud, who claimed that EpTN found its way to Ugarit, contemporary to the reign of Tukultī-Ninurta (RS.25.435 = Arnaud 2007, no. 36). While this would have been a very interesting piece of evidence to our discussion, I now believe it is clear that this tablet does not belong to EpTN at all; see Válek 2024.

10 BM.121033+BM.98730+BM.98731 = fragments A+B+C in Machinist 1978. These fragments do not join directly; the reasons to consider them one tablet are discussed by Machinist (1978, 9-11).

11 See Reade 1986, 217, who provides a correction to the discussion of Machinist 1978, 9.

12 Machinist 1978, 10.

13 Rm.142+Rm.957 = fragment F in Machinist 1978.

14 See Machinist 1978, 16.

15 VAT.9596+VAT.12960 = fragment D in Machinist 1978 and no. 5 in Jakob 2024.

collection N1 in the Aššur Temple.[16] This is a Neo-Assyrian collection, but just as it was the case with the first manuscript from Nineveh, the palaeography is Middle Assyrian, indicating its long-term archiving. The rest of the Aššur manuscripts[17] lack more precise information about their findspots. All of these manuscripts can also be dated to the Middle Assyrian period based on the palaeography. Unfortunately, due to the lack of an excavation context, we cannot securely state if they were also archived until the Neo-Assyrian period, but it is likely.

In sum, the preserved fragments of EpTN manuscripts clearly indicate a persistent interest in this narrative within the Assyrian scholar communities that has led to its transmission and preservation. In contrast with the EpZL, none of these manuscripts can be readily connected to the life of the hero of the poem, i.e., to the reign of Tukultī-Ninurta. While the Middle Assyrian origin of many tablets makes it possible, they remain archaeologically detached from the contexts of their supposed active use for the politics of this king.

2.3 Literary Networks

Moving further from the excavation contexts of the compositions under discussion, we may now attempt to fit them within further networks of the literary milieu of the ancient Near East. Tracking these networks may allow us to better grasp their emergence as well as their impact on the construction of social realities, especially royal discourses.

The physical form of these epics as cuneiform tablets, as well as their incorporation in scholarly collections, necessarily leads us to connect their emergence with scribal education. Although the authors of the texts remain anonymous to us,[18] those who inscribed them in the clay must have been educated in scribal skills.

Starting with the Middle Bronze Age Mari, we may note that the scribal education in Old Babylonian times was not only a process of learning how to write and read cuneiform signs but also included cultural education. Among other things, the scribes-to-be encountered numerous literary texts, including narratives. By copying these texts, they not only learned to write but also acquired a repertoire of models, including literary tropes, to be reused in their later scribal practice. Hand in hand with this, it formed the worldview of the scribes – indoctrinating them.[19]

The process of scribal education in Mari during the time of Zimrī-Lîm has been discussed only relatively recently.[20] A house in the vicinity of the Great Royal Palace, labelled by the archaeologist *Chantier K*, has been identified as a scribal school. The findings from this structure reveal that the education in Mari during this period was very similar to the Mesopotamian practice. Importantly for us, the finds indicate that scribes of Mari could have encountered the literary corpus of advanced works, such as Sumerian wisdom literature, letters, hymns on the Ur III kings, religious liturgies, narratives such as Lugalbanda and Enmerkar or Lugal-e, or royal inscriptions.[21] These texts served as literary inspiration for the scribes, allowing them to transpose and adapt learned knowledge to praise their own kings.

The scribal education from the Middle Assyrian period is, unfortunately, much less explored and more difficult to reconstruct.[22] Nonetheless, it seems that it was, to some extent, built upon the Babylonian practices, adapting them to fit the local Assyrian needs.[23] Indeed, it appears that the Babylonian literary tradition was valued in the Middle Assyrian period. EpTN itself contains an example of this – when Tukultī-Ninurta conquered Babylon, local texts were collected and transported to Assyria to enrich

16 See Pedersén 1986, 12-28, for the description of N1.

17 VAT.10358 = fragment E in Machinist 1978 and no. 7 in Jakob 2024; VAT.10339+VAT.10343 = no. 6 in Jakob 2024; VAT.10655 = no. 8 in Jakob 2024; VAT.10722+VAT.12178 = no. 9 in Jakob 2024; VAT.10904 = no. 10 in Jakob 2024. To these, we could add another text, VAT.10447 = no. 11 in Jakob 2024, which does not belong to the EpTN composition, but is also a Middle Assyrian narrative about Tukultī-Ninurta.

18 It has been suggested that EpZL was composed by a certain Ašmad, a persona named in the narrative; see, e.g., Wasserman 2015 or Sasson 2015, 33, fn. 7. However, this remains a speculative suggestion.

19 See Delnero 2016 for broader discussion on the construction of scribal identity through education.

20 See extensive discussion of Nicolet 2015a; 2015b.

21 The corpus is extensively described (and some of it edited) in Nicolet 2015b.

22 See, e.g., Postgate 2013, 47-85.

23 See Veldhuis 2012.

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the scholarly collections.[24] Similarly, we have already mentioned that Ḫammurabi, when he conquered Mari, transported documents from there.

Military conquests were only one mode of how the literary works circulated. The ancient Near East was, both in the Old Babylonian and in the Middle Assyrian periods, richly interconnected – by international communications from diplomacy to long-distance trade to movements of all kinds of scholars and professionals.[25] Together with people, texts moved, too. These texts then influenced scholarly practices over a broader area, providing them with inspiration on literary motifs and devices.

Among the texts that travelled, those with royal themes are those that are of special interest to us. We have already mentioned that the *Chantier K* in Mari yielded hymns, epics, or royal inscriptions. In the Old Babylonian period, scribal education was still largely centred on Sumerian, and the corpus of Akkadian texts in the curriculum was very limited.[26] Nevertheless, Akkadian was the language that was used in everyday practices. Akkadian compositions about royalty circulated throughout the Near East, and scholars at Mari were aware of them, too. For example, the Great Royal Palace yielded a copy of The Great Revolt against Narām-Sîn.[27] The same composition was also discovered in Ešnunna,[28] a city that had a significant influence on the scribal traditions of Mari.[29]

The narratives about the kings of Agade were widespread. The Old Assyrian merchants even got them to Anatolia – a poem praising Sargon for his military conquests in Anatolia was discovered in *kārum* Kāneš.[30] Later, in the Late Bronze Age, these compositions resurfaced in Anatolia and, through international communications, reached as far as Egypt.[31] In Anatolia, we may observe the transformation of such works to better fit local traditions. For example, the composition Narām-Sîn and the Enemy Hoards was discovered there not only in Akkadian but also in Hittite edition.[32] The transformation of Mesopotamian literature in Anatolia during the Late Bronze Age is extremely clear in another widespread royal composition, the Epic of Gilgameš, which has been attested there in Akkadian, Hittite, and Hurrian, sometimes heavily transformed to fit the local geographical and cultural realities.[33] Although the evidence remains very discontinuous, these examples illustrate that royal narratives travelled great distances, spanning over centuries, influencing scribes and scholars who contributed to the creation of royal discourses on their royal courts or in international diplomacy.

In Mesopotamia, the most widespread texts presenting royal discourse are certainly royal inscriptions.[34] Many of them are attested not as *actual* royal inscriptions in situ, e.g., inscribed on stelae or foundation prisms, but as tablet copies used in scribal education. Thus, they had a significant impact on scribal practices and consequently on any ideological production. Importantly for us, the royal narratives resemble royal inscriptions in many ways. Similarly, they resemble chronologies.[35] We may note that numerous royal inscriptions are indeed narrative in form, and some are even longer than EpZL.[36] However, there often seems to be a difference in perspective throughout the royal documents. Chronologies list events by short entries, royal inscriptions usually give a bit more elaborate descriptions of them, and finally, royal narratives focus on one or a few selected episodes and narrate them in greater detail, with repetitive passages, including features like direct speech, etc. This can be illustrated with EpTN. The Assyrian-Babylonian conflict is mentioned in chronologies,[37] elaborated in royal inscriptions,[38] and fully described in the epic. Such a change of perspectives could then possibly be connected with

24 This episode is narrated in manuscript B 2'-11'; see Machinist 1978, 128-9.

25 For the ancient Near East as a broad framework for cultural transmission, exchange, etc., see, e.g., proceedings of the Crossroads conferences (the last one being Mynářová et al. 2024).

26 See Nicolet 2015b, esp. chap. 9 "Littérature sumérienne", where the few Akkadian literary texts are included, despite the title.

27 Westenholz 1997, 231-7 and Charpin 1997.

28 Westenholz 1997, 224.

29 See Charpin 2012; see also Nicolet 2015a, 338-40 for the comparison of the scribal curricula in these cities.

30 Edited in Mieroop 2000.

31 Composition *šar tamḫāri* was discovered in Tell-Amarna; see Westenholz 1997, 104.

32 See text 21A, B in Westenholz 1997.

33 For the edition of Gilgameš texts from Ḫattuša, see Beckman 2019.

34 Collected in the many volumes of RIM (*Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia*) series.

35 See, e.g., Grayson 1975a or Glassner 2004.

36 Although EpZL is lengthier than Old Babylonian inscriptions (compare it, e.g., with lengthy inscriptions of Samsu-ilūna RIME 4.3.7.3 or 4.3.7.5), many of the later inscriptions surpass it by far (e.g., RINAP 5/1 Ashurbanipal 3, 4, 6, 7, etc.).

37 Glassner 2004, 186.

38 E.g., RIMA.0.78.10: 34-40 or 0.78.25: 1-8.

the intended use of these texts and with the audiences they aimed to target.

EpZL and EpTN are literary works that can (albeit only tentatively, in the case of EpTN) illustrate the transformation of learned scribal knowledge into active political propaganda for a ruling king, similar to the creation of royal inscriptions. Although texts such as these are scarce, compared to inscriptions, they are nevertheless part of the same stream of tradition. The narratives about the kings of Agade are known to us from scribal education, but we may at least tentatively suppose that their origin can be traced back to times when their heroes were living kings. This can be indicated by the only extant Old Akkadian excerpt from the Great Revolt against Narām-Sîn discovered in Ešnunna.[39] While this text cannot be securely dated to the rule of Narām-Sîn, it surely bridges the gap to the Old Babylonian scribal exercises. The Old Akkadian tablet itself was likely a scribal exercise, which may lead us to conjecture that these texts functioned as an ideological device targeting young scribes and became part of the stream of tradition not long after their creation. Other compositions, such as narratives about Adad-Nīrārī, Adad-šuma-uṣur, Nabopolasar, and others,[40] then reveal that the offshoots of this stream were created throughout history. Yet, none of them appears to have become part of the tradition in the same way as the narratives about Sargon and Narām-Sîn.

The relation of the historical royal narratives to the stream of tradition are well illustrated by EpZL and EpTN. It may be argued that some of the scholars might have had an idea to create something that would become part of scribal education for future generations. After all, encountering hymns of Šulgi during education might have encouraged them to do so.

> Because of my extraordinary wisdom and my ancient fame as a master, he should choose my hymns as examples, and himself beget heavenly writings. (ETCSL.2.4.2.02: 305-7)

> For me, the king, the singer has recorded my exploits in songs about the strength of the protective deity of my power; my songs are unforgettable, and my words shall not fall into oblivion. (ETCSL.2.4.2.02: 328-31)

In the case of EpZL, we have only one preserved manuscript. A possible chance for its cultural survival, after the destruction of Mari, was a usurpation of its other copy by the Babylonians when they took away the Mari documents. While intertextualities are later attested in Assyrian and Babylonian traditions, these may be easily explained by relations to the same literary lore that inspired the creation of the Mari text, rather than by the survival of EpZL in Babylonian education. It is more easily conceivable that a short epic extoling a defeated king was of little interest to the Babylonian scholars.

In contrast, EpTN is attested only in the context of continuation. While it is not unlikely that some of the manuscripts originated during the rule of Tukultī-Ninurta, it was thanks to the interest of the Assyrian scholars that they were preserved. The fact that it has been preserved both in Aššur and in Nineveh clearly indicates that it was relevant to them. The Neo-Assyrian copy underlines this scholarly interest. We must highlight that apart from praising the living king, texts such as these epics might have also targeted future audiences, making the king unforgettable, just as we have seen in the above-mentioned Šulgi hymns – an intention that was embraced by the Assyrian scholars in the case of EpTN. In addition, the author(s) of EpTN might have, on purpose, targeted the scholarly community via the already mentioned episode of taking the Babylonian archives away to Assyria. In this light, Tukultī-Ninurta was to be praised not only for his military endeavours and great relationship with deities, but also for his contribution to the tablet collections in Assyria. This might have been appealing to the scholars who archived and copied the text.

3 Constructing Royal Discourse

Although we lack the original contexts, it seems more than likely that the narratives were primarily intended to articulate particular aspects of royal ideology, praise the deeds of the kings, and present them as rightful actions. This seems clear from their contents. Therefore, it is essential to work through them to find out what discourse they might have created, as well as to connect this discourse to other social realities, so we may find why the authors might have thought this would work. The authors focused

39 See Westenholz 1997, no. 15.

40 See, e.g., Grayson 1975b.

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on constructing the imagery of the heroes, as well as of their enemies. They used literary figures and numerous intertextualities that might have been known to the audiences, building upon the previously successful compositions. And they also set the story within realia that might have been known to the audiences, be it geographical settings, features of international law, or religious activities from divination to cult. It seems that both epics addressed topics that could have been relevant to different possible audiences, be it high officials, local scholars, foreign diplomats, or those who participated in the narrated military campaigns as soldiers.

We may illustrate the construction of ideological discourse by focusing on the role of the deities and their relationship to the praised rulers. This is an essential feature of both narratives and, at the same time, a vital element of the ancient Near Eastern societies. Both texts go to great lengths to articulate the divine support for the rulers. In the ANT perspective, we may highlight how narratives act in the construction of the social reality by creating or highlighting specific relations between social actors.

They present the kings as those who rule because the deities have chosen them for this purpose. The poet in Mari sang about Zimrī-Lîm that "in the precious heart, the gods have chosen his name",[41] and in Assyria, the scholars could have read about Tukultī-Ninurta that "Enlil raised him like a natural father, after his firstborn son".[42] Essential is that the kings do not act out of their own volition, but follow the instructions of deities.[43] We may read that Zimrī-Lîm performed divination while on his military campaign,[44] or that Kaštiliaš, as the adversary, constantly fails in receiving positive omens.[45] The imagery of divine support on the one hand and divine abandonment on the other is used multiple times in EpTN to articulate the contrast between Tukultī-Ninurta and Kaštiliaš. One was following the divine will, the other acting against it. For Kaštiliaš – who "has not feared your oath, has transgressed your command, has schemed falsehood"[46] – this has severe consequences: "Annunītu no longer approaches Agade […] the lady of Uruk forsaken her city".[47] Tukultī-Ninurta, in this context, provides a just and rightful solution demanded by the deities.

The divine support for the rulers is not articulated as something abstract. Deities in the ancient Near East were conceived as active and physical actors. Gods and goddesses could have accompanied the kings on their campaigns and even into battles. What we perceive as an image of deity was understood as the deity itself.[48] In both narratives, we may see the reflection of this: "Annunītum has walked by his right side, the Storm-God has laid down the loudness of his cry",[49] or "After the gods, his support, the king at the head of the army, begins the battle".[50]

Importantly, the divine characters mentioned in both texts seem to have been intentionally selected to fit the historical-religious settings in which the kings were active. A solid argument can be made for both local and international aims of such literary articulations. For example, EpZL invokes deities closely tied with the religious context of Mari (notably Itūr-Mêr and Dagān) and at the same time names deities broadly recognised in the international religious milieu (e.g., Anu, Enlil, Šamaš, Ištar). Similarly, EpTN presents the deities relevant to the Assyrian-Babylonian conflict, most importantly Aššur and Marduk. Through the narratives, the authority attributed to various deities aptly backed up the authority of the rulers locally and internationally.

When exploring how the texts could have worked socially, the audience is of the utmost importance. Unfortunately, it is an issue for which we have only indirect sources, heavily interpreted. There are many possible audiences, all of them non-exclusive.

The audiences also varied over time. As mentioned several times, many royal narratives are attested in the context of scribal education. There, the audience was students, and the encounters with such texts allowed them to acquire writing and reading skills, as well as a repertoire of ideological literary

41 EpZL i: 12.

42 EpTN i: 20' in manuscript A following Machinist 1978.

43 E.g., "The hero does not go on a campaign by himself, the king, by the command of Dagān, the lord…" (EpZL iii: 30-1).

44 "At night, he stepped in front of them, he summoned the diviners" (EpZL iii: 40-1).

45 See fragmentary section of EpTN iii: 39'–49' in manuscript A following Machinist 1978.

46 EpTN ii: 20' in manuscript A following Machinist 1978.

47 EpTN i: 44'–45'in manuscript B following Machinist 1978.

48 On the involvement of deities in battles, see, e.g., Trimm 2017, 553-625; on the conception of divinity, including their physicality, see, e.g., contributions in Porter 2009 or Dick 1999.

49 EpZL i: 27-8. Similarly, Ištar is said to be at the front of the battalion (EpZL iii: 24), and Addu with Erra flank Zimrī-Lîm on both sides (EpZL iii: 37-8).

50 EpTN v: 41' in manuscript A following Machinist 1978. This is a part of a broader description of the battle (starting at line 31') where numerous deities battle, supporting the contingents of Tukultī-Ninurta.

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figures, ready to be reused. It also constructed their worldview. Because we lack proper contexts for the use of EpZL in practice, we cannot rule out the possibility that it was created solely as a school text targeting young scribes. On the other hand, I believe it is reasonable to suppose a broader political intention, possibly with the school itself being only a secondary use. After all, its excavation context places it outside the school curriculum. EpTN is then attested in a scholarly rather than in a school environment. Although education and scholarly activities tend to be interconnected, they do not entirely overlap. The manuscripts of EpTN clearly indicate the interest of scholars in these texts. However, the reason why they archived and copied it remains speculative. As noted before, the continuation of royal narratives both in education and the scholarly milieu might have been among the intentions of the original authors, ensuring the fame of the king for future generations.

The most immediate audiences, during the lives of the rulers, might be inferred by trying to determine to whom the contents were relevant. It might have targeted court officials or military personnel, but also foreign emissaries. Possibly, the king himself wanted to listen to how great he was. We might even have some indications for such practices from Mari, where Zimrī-Lîm was given a recommendation for a musician to appraise him on his court.[51] There is also a possibility that deities were the intended audience. The list could continue, and many reasons and interpretations could be given for all kinds of uses, intentions, and audiences.

We must also ask about the relations of these narratives to the "public", including the issues of how broad this "public" could have been. This may be done through comparison with other works that created the ideological discourse, such as royal inscriptions, monumental architecture, or artistic works presenting it, such as palace reliefs.[52] But here, we must remain cautious that our understanding of it is heavily interpretative and based on many assumptions. My own assumption – an educated guess – is that the primarily intended audience has been more limited and carefully targeted.[53] It consisted of more groups, some of whom were court insiders, while others were foreign emissaries. I base this assumption on the fact that both discussed texts are, on the one hand, quite straightforward and, on the other hand, polyvalent enough to convey meanings to different audiences, both local and international.

It is clear that the poems were not articulated as mere appraisals of kings as the sole most important actors. The poems communicate that the authority of the king must have been recognised within broader social contexts.[54] And the people belonging to these contexts might have been the audience. Both narratives express that while the king is firmly and justly at the apex of the society, he is not despotic and that he cares for and listens to his people. Tukultī-Ninurta, "is the eternal image of Enlil, attentive to the voice of the people, to the counsel of the land".[55] Similarly, Zimrī-Lîm also pursues the advice of his men.[56]

In this context, I see potential in further exploring the possible impact on military personnel, which in times of war may concern broader population. In the case of EpZL, the king associates himself with his troops in his speech: "A womb has created you, a mother, just like you, has given a birth to me! The same battle is upon me!",[57] and the poem narrates how "until the king has achieved his goal, and Ida-Maraṣ was subjected under his feet, he (only) drank water from water-skins, counted with the soldiers, everything was torture. Great (were) the huntsmen who went with him, like an onager (eating) straw in the steppe, his men ate meat, they gained courage; they gained strength".[58] This literary feature might have been particularly appealing to the military personnel in the Middle Bronze Age Mari. The strategies of EpTN are, in this regard, more focused on presenting the king as someone who actively participates in the battle. However, the preserved passages do not indicate such a close relation to the

51 In A.27 (Ziegler 2007, text no. 8); see also Sasson 2015, 36.

52 An interesting interpretative scheme here may be the theory of concentric belts as discussed by Liverani (2014), addressing how the ideological message reaches the wider populace in a somewhat diluted manner, in contrast with the most immediate audiences. For a discussion on the royal inscriptions (in the Neo-Assyrian period), see, e.g., Frahm 2019, 140-2. For an interesting discussion on royal ideology and its audiences, including a discussion of the accessibility of palace reliefs that may be in some ways parallel to our discussion, see Portuese 2020.

53 The narrower audience could have appreciated more the peculiarities of the narrative. Compare this with the discussion of Portuese on the reliefs: "The degree of comprehension could depend on the knowledge possessed by the viewer, on his/her readiness in appreciating the depicted details, their meanings, their associations in the iconographic context, and the ideological and political reasons lying behind the narrated episode" (2020, 202).

54 See, e.g., summary on how the kings of Mari acquired and communicated their authority and charisma in Sasson 2015, 21-38.

55 EpTN i: 18′ in manuscript A following Machinist 1978.

56 EpZL ii: 33-6.

57 EpZL ii: 22-4.

58 EpZL iii: 7-14. Following this passage, Zimrī-Lîm pronounces an encouraging speech to his soldiers.

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soldiers. While Zimrī-Lîm is appraised as *primus inter pares*, Tukultī-Ninurta seems to be rather *primus* only. The narratives and their poetic devices had the potential to communicate, negotiate, strengthen or even establish ties – i.e., networks – among actors. By this, they contributed to constructing the desired royal ideology into a social fact.

4 Conclusion

Royal narratives of the ancient Near East compose an interesting collection of texts that communicated royal ideological discourse. Yet, their emergence and social impact are still poorly understood. The limited evidence and imprecise excavation contexts limit our possibilities of interpretation. The article argued that despite these limits, examining them as actors in vast social networks offers a promising way in an attempt to reconstruct their relevance in past societies.

In this short article, we have explored some of the networks in which the Epic of Zimrī-Lîm from Middle Bronze Age Mari and the Epic of Tukultī-Ninurta from Late Bronze Age Assyria were set. Some networks are peculiar to each of the compositions, such as those relating to their excavation contexts and specific cultural and social realities. Others are shared and interconnect these works whose creation spans over centuries. Both are offshoots of the literary stream of tradition that was continuously in creation and transformation throughout the history of cuneiform writing.

The two examples reveal contrasting lives of the royal narratives. EpZL was most likely only a short-lived episode in the construction of political discourse. It has been composed for a living king, building upon existing royal discourse that its author(s) could have encountered during scribal education and when working for the palace administration. However, after the defeat of Zimrī-Lîm's state by the Babylonians, the social relevance of this composition probably swiftly faded away. In contrast, several centuries later, EpTN picked up on the descendants of the same literary and political tradition. This time, its existence outlived its hero and author(s). It became part of the same tradition, influencing scholars of future generations. These contrasting trajectories highlight the value of an approach inspired by the Actor-Network Theory for understanding how texts not only reflected but also shaped social and political realities. The future endeavours of exploring royal narratives are still wide open, and most of the networks among actors remain to be reconstructed.

Abbreviations

A	accession no., Mari tablets
BM	museal siglum, British Museum, London
ETCSL	texts in The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature; available at `https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/`
K	museal siglum, British Museum, London (Kuyunjik collection)
M	accession no., Mari tablets
ORACC	The Open Richly Annotated Cuneiform Corpus, available at `https://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/`
RIMA	texts in the series Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia: Assyrian Periods
RIME	texts in the series Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia: Early Periods
RINAP	texts in the series Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period
Rm	museal siglum, British Museum, London (Rassam collection)
RS	excavation siglum Ras Šamra (Ugarit)
VAT	museal siglum, Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin

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Hamath, a Kingdom of Neo-Hittite Origin and the Bible

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Abstract Hamath, a Syrian kingdom of Neo-Hittite origin, may have played a role of mediation and, therefore, transmission towards the Israelite world of some elements of the rich Hittite cultural tradition. Indeed, we can hypothesise that the close commercial, cultural, military and perhaps religious between Hamath and ancient Israel were actually more profound than those we can deduce from both biblical and extra-biblical sources. Finally, could the king of Hamath Toi be identified with Taita II, who appears in two Luwian-hieroglyphic inscriptions and whose kingdom of *W/Palistin* still remains largely obscure?

Keywords Hamath. Israel. Palistin. Neo-Hittite. King Toi/Taita. Assyrian army.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Biblical Quotes. – 3 Extrabiblical Sources. – 4 Conclusion.

1 Introduction

The historical-archaeological and textual evidence we have regarding the Syrian kingdom of Hamath, the lack of precise chronological connections notwithstanding, seems at least in part to confirm that this kingdom had continuous political contact and cultural and economic exchanges with Israel, sharing with it a stretch of border and the tragic fate of defeat and deportation at the hands of the Assyrian army.

Hamath (חֲמָת) does not seem, as is often the case with other foreign kingdoms, to have been hostile towards the Jewish people or an instrument in the hands of God to punish their sins; indeed, the biblical editors mention this kingdom on several occasions as being considered a potential ally of the Israelites. This could also suggest that Hamath played a role in the transmission of some Hittite cultural elements to the biblical world.

Furthermore, as shall be shown, the king of Hamath Toi (תֹּעִי), mentioned together with David in 2 Samuel (8:9-10), can probably be identified with Taita, whose kingdom of *Palistin*, despite having a certain political importance, still remains largely obscure.[1]

This possible Toi/Taita identification could also partly answer another question: that is, whether it was actually King David who maintained relations of equal rank with the kingdom of Hamath or whether this supposed political-economic balance between the two states was instead achieved only in later times, corresponding, in our opinion, to the reign of subsequent sovereigns such as Jeroboam II.[2]

1 In this regard, see Sass 2010, 169-74; Aro-Valjus 2010, 1-9; Emanuel 2015, 11-40; Čech 2015, 63-73; Archi 2016, 35-7; Hawkins, Weeden 2016, 9-21; Welton et al. 2019, 291-333.

2 Cf. also Frevel 2019, 349-50.

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2 Biblical Quotes

"Toi king of Hamath" 2 Samuel (8:9): תֹּ֣עִי מֶ֣לֶךְ חֲמָ֑ת

In the story of King David's conquest in 2 Samuel (8:9-10) and the parallel verses in 1 Chronicles (18:9-10)[3] it reads:

> When Toi king of Hamath heard that David had smitten all the host of Hadadezer[4] then Toi sent Joram his son unto king David, to salute him and to bless him, because he had fought against Hadadezer, and smitten him: for Hadadezer had wars with Toi. And Joram[5] brought with him vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and vessels of bronze.

In these verses, Toi does not appear to be a ruler seeking submission to David[6] at all, but appears to be leading a state that has excellent diplomatic relations with Israel. This alliance may have contributed to the defeat of a common enemy like Hadadezer and to increasing the prestige of the king of the Israelites, activating the common practice of sending gifts between sovereigns of equal status.[7]

The biblical account of the Davidic-Solomonic monarchy, while not providing precise historical data realistically compatible with other Near Eastern sources,[8] could, however, lead us to a possible identification of Toi with Taita, whose name occurs in texts in Hieroglyphic Luwian.

This identification makes use of some linguistic considerations, such as that of Steitler, according to whom *Taita* would be a name of Hurrian origin containing the root *taḫḫe* (man) with the addition of a suffix *-ta* for personal names. The Hebrew form could be interpreted as an abbreviation of the Hurrian *taḫḫe=ta* used in Hieroglyphic Luwian contexts. Furthermore, given the frequent change of the long vowel *ā* to *ō* in Canaanite, together with some other clues, such as the presence of the original vowel "*a*" attested in the Greek form of the biblical name "Toi" in Josephus (Jewish Antiquities 7.108) and in some manuscripts of the Septuagint (Codex Vaticanus, Codex Alexandrinus), there could be confirmation of a possible Toi/Taita correspondence.[9]

Even if the biblical verses cited seem, perhaps partly erroneously, to name the kingdom of Hamath rather than the land of *Palistin*,[10] we could have, as shall be shown, further possible evidence of the excellent diplomatic relations that appear to have existed between Hamath and Israel from the outset, and their shared evident hostility towards Hadadezer.[11]

Indeed, Hamath appears in several contexts of the biblical narrative as an important political entity of the time, often involved in the historical and prophetic destiny of ancient Israel.[12] The contexts are examined below.

3 In 1 Chronicles the name of the ruler Toi appears in the variant Waw: תֹּ֫עוּ

4 Hadadezer (הֲדַדְעֶ֔זֶר) appears in the biblical story as the king of Zobah, a sworn antagonist of Toi of Hamath. In these contrasts perhaps we can already glimpse the signs of a future friction between the Luwian and Aramaic elites, with Damascus allied and at the time partially subjected to Hadadezer of Zobah against Toi and David (cf. 2 Samuel 8:3-8).

5 The name of the son of Toi appears in 2 Samuel (8:9) as a Semitic name derived from YHWH; however, in 1 Chronicles (18:9) the same character instead bears the name of Hadoram which would more likely bring to mind a theophoric name derived from the deity Hadad.

6 Especially since Toi does not bring the gifts personally, but through his own son who probably acted as viceroy. For Stoebe 1994, 251, the particularity of the account of the verses (9-10) speaks in favour of their reliability and indeed of the central role of Toi and his gifts which were also placed in the sanctuary of YHWH (2 Samuel 8:11).

7 See later 2 Kings (7:6) where Hamath may have again provided logistical or military support to the kingdom of Israel. Furthermore, in Amos (6:2) Hamath is defined as "the Great".

8 See Janzen 2008, 39-58; Garfinkel 2011, 13-35; 2017, 5-59.

9 Furthermore, Steitler argues for equating Hebrew *t'y* with Hurrian *taḫḫe* as the interchangeability between *ḥ* and ʿ would be a common phenomenon in the realisation of foreign words and names in Western Semitic texts. Steitler 2010, 81-99. See also Collins 2007, 198-9; Galil 2014, 75-104. Alternatively see Simon 2014, 725-6.

10 In general, as we know, even the comparison with celebratory inscriptions or real annals does not often provide us with clear and genuine information on historical events, as they essentially imply, above all, propaganda purposes, while the biblical story seems to anachronistically move the chronology of negative events and unfortunate events in the history of ancient Israel to the reigns of rulers deemed unworthy by the various biblical authors who followed. Cf. Galil 2013, 167-8; Blum 2016, 46-7.

11 Hadad-ezer is a typical theophoric name composed of the Aramean deity Hadad, presumably inspired by the Hittite storm god. Therefore, the king of Zobah, hostile to Toi and defeated by David in 2 Samuel, may not correspond with the later Hadadezer king of Damascus, who later seems to have joined with Hamat and Israel and other adverse regional potentates for reasons of political survival attempting to stem the neo-Assyrian military power.

12 2 Kings (14:28; 19:13; 23:33; 25:21), 1 Chronicles (18:3), 2 Chronicles (8:3-4), Isaiah (10:9; 11:11; 36:19; 37:13); Jeremiah (38:5; 49:23; 52:9; 52:27), Amos (6:2; 6:14), Zechariah (9:2).

In 2 Kings (5) it tells of the conversion of a commander of the Aramean army to the God of Israel YHWH,[13] which could be a possible reference to the actual presence of a cult of YHWH, in some historical periods, even outside Israelite territory, and precisely in the kingdom of Hamath, given its geographical proximity.[14] The annals of Sargon II testify to a revolt of a king of Hamath with the significant theophoric name Yahu-bihdi,[15] later killed by Sargon himself, which dramatically put an end to the Hamathite kingdom in 720 BCE.

In the biblical text the connection "at the entrance to Hamath" (לְבוֹא חֲמָת) recurs several times. This geographical indication would seem to suggest a gap or point of access within a border area that seems to mark the northern limit of the Israelite kingdom,[16] a territorial extremity that seems to occupy a central importance in biblical historiography. This region is also often cited precisely as an ideal frontier of the kingdom of Israel in the prophetic context as well,[17] almost as if to underline, in respect of divine will, its role as the geographical boundary to the north of the "Promised Land", without ever becoming, therefore, a terrain disputed with Hamath, unlike Damascus and other contemporary regional political forces.[18]

The kingdom of Hamath and the kingdom of Israel, in fact, seem to have shared military alliances on certain occasions, gravitating in two evidently distinct and non-competing geographical spheres, and also presenting a certain cultural and political affinity. The Bible describes the kingdom of Damascus led by Hazael and his son and successor Ben-Hadad as an expansive force,[19] which seems to have presented a threat to both Hamath and Israel, whose territories could allow it valuable access to the Mediterranean Sea along two directions, north-west and south-west.

In 2 Kings (6:8) it is said that the king of Damascus, defined as king of Aram (מֶלֶךְ אֲרָם), clashed with Israel, and during this war, Hamath, who is perhaps referred to in a generic and symbolic way in 2 Kings (7:6) as "king of the Hittites", may have provided decisive help in an highly critical moment when the Israelites were on the verge of succumbing.

3 Extrabiblical Sources

In the southern part of the territory that would later constitute the kingdom of Hamath we find the important site of Mishrifeh,[20] in which various excavations provided very important new archaeological and epigraphic data which add to the data provided by the Tell sites Tayinat, Tell Afis further north, as well as Aleppo itself, with the Temple of the Storm God.[21] As previously mentioned, a ruler with a probably Hurrian name Taita ruled a kingdom called *Palistin*, whose name appears to have a Luwian origin.[22] This potentate, from its epicentre and crossroads Tell Tayinat (ancient Kunulua),[23] around the eleventh century BCE, probably controlled large territories and interacted with them; among these

13 Römer 2019, 105-19.

14 Wazana 2016, 393: "Extrabiblical evidence suggests the possibility of YHWH worship in Syria, particularly in Hamath". Dalley (1990, 21-32) argued, mainly on the basis of onomastic data, that YHWH was worshipped as a major god in Hamath.

15 This sovereign would in fact seem to bear a name formed in environments close to a cult of YHWH, perhaps assimilated by Aramean populations through regional contacts between Hamath and northern Israel. Sargon in his inscription describes Yahu-bihdi as "evil Hittite". See Frame 2021, 402-37.

16 Numbers (13:21; 34:8); Joshua (13, 5); Judges (3:3); 1 Kings (8:65); 2 Kings (14:25); 1 Chronicles (13:5); 2 Chronicles (7:8). In 2 Kings (14:25) it is said that Jeroboam II responded (הֵשִׁיב) to the loss of part of the territory, restoring this apparent historical border after a victorious reconquest at the entrance of the kingdom of Hamath. See Niehr 2019, 373-87.

17 See Ezekiel (47:16-17; 47:20; 48:1); Zechariah (9:2); Amos (6:14). See Na'aman 1999, 417-41.

18 A quote in 2 Chronicles (8:3-4) regarding an apparent military action by King Solomon towards Hamath could partly contradict what has been said above; however, the celebratory and glorifying context of this passage seems to serve purely a literary purpose to raise this sovereign in an anachronistic and artificial way compared to the territory conquered, according to the Bible, by his father David. Cf. also 2 Kings (14:28) which almost seems to contradict the previous verse (14:25) in which Hamath was once again clearly recognised as an extremity of the border and certainly not a territory subject to conquest.

19 1 Kings (19:15); 2 Kings (8:7-15; 12:17-18; 13:24).

20 In central-western Syria Mishrifeh/Qatna was already active in the middle and late Bronze Age; in the Iron Age it became an important urban centre, under the influence of Hamath, of textile production and connected to various agricultural settlements. Furthermore, the site has yielded a statue of considerable size. Cf. Morandi Bonacossi 2019, 179-207.

21 Kohlmeyer 2009, 190-202; Harrison 2009a, 174-89; 2009b, 171-84.

22 Hawkins 2009, 164-73; Pucci 2019, 169-94

23 The archaeological site of Tell Tayinat is located in southern Turkey in the province of Hatay and was the main Syro-Anatolian centre of the Amuq plain and the northern Orontes valley. See Osborne et al. 2019, 261-312; Welton et al. 2019, 325.

stood the renowned sanctuary of Aleppo, where in 2003 the Luwian hieroglyphic inscription was found which commemorates a ruler Taita (I) who describes himself as "King and Hero of the country of Palistin".[24] The inscription, laudatory in nature, contains accurate instructions for religious ceremonies and cultic offerings to the god.[25] The highly important temple dedicated to the Storm God of Aleppo was a sanctuary of considerable size and decorated with splendid reliefs;[26] carefully restored and renovated, it endured as a cultic location until after the conquest by the Hittite empire, after the end of the Bronze Age.[27] The excavations have in fact highlighted the recovery of a certain well-being and stability during the Iron Age, which allowed further restructuring at least until around 900 BCE, among which we can include King Taita's restorations of the eleventh century.[28]

A ruler named Taita appears in two other inscriptions from Meharde and Sheizar north-west of Hama on the Middle Orontes,[29] dating, however, to a much later period. We must, therefore, be dealing with a second sovereign who bears the same name – more precisely with Taita II king of *W/Palistin* and his wife Kupapiya.[30]

It can therefore be assumed that this state of *Palistin* had extended to control the Amuq plain[31] and the city of Aleppo up to Hamath,[32] and that it still maintained a strong component of the Hittite Syro-Anatolian tradition. This could also be indicated by a line of rulers who succeeded one another on the throne and who bear typically Hittite names that refer to the imperial dynasty and seem to have more or less direct ancestral ties with it. Furthermore, two Luwian-hieroglyphic inscriptions from Arsuz[33] mention a Suppiluliuma son of Manana,[34] as king of *Walistin*, which could be evidence of an extension of the kingdom towards the north-west and an increased political importance which perhaps became comparable to that of the kingdom of Karkemiš. The latter, for a certain period, would therefore have been hypothetically partly subjugated or at least in competition with the kingdom of *Palistin* itself.[35]

Furthermore, the inscription on a throne found in Tell Tayinat during the excavations of the 1930s is rather interesting. In this inscription the ethnic adjective *w/palistin* appears, apparently associated with a ruler with the significant name of Halparuntiya.[36] Also on the site of Tell Tayinat, a further Luwian-hieroglyphic inscription was found in 2012 on a splendid basalt statue. It perhaps belonged to a second ruler who bore the name of Suppiluliuma and was found near fragments on which the same toponym *Walistin* reappeared.[37]

24 Cf. Galil 2014, 75-104; Sass 2010, 169-74; Weeden 2013, 1-20.

25 Hawkins 2011, 41-54.

26 A demonstration of the basic role played by the storm god of Aleppo in the religion of the Near East can be traced back to cultic offerings by the kings of Ebla as far back as the mid-third millennium. Furthermore, about 40 km north-west of Aleppo stands the temple of 'Ain Dara which similarly presents architectural evidence and sculptures that date back to both the Hittite imperial period and the reign of King Taita I. Cf. Kohlmeyer 2008, 119-30; 2010, 255-80; Knitter et al. 2014, 107-27.

27 A second, very fragmentary inscription (Aleppo 7) is found near the portal of the temple dating back to the Hittite imperial period, also restored and inscribed later by Taita I, Hawkins 2011, 46-51.

28 These renovations included new orthostats in relief and new figures on the entrance, as well as the engraved depiction of this ruler placed significantly on the eastern wall opposite the pre-existing figure of the storm god from the imperial era. In the inscription (ALEPPO 6) Taita requires ritual sacrifices for all levels of Aleppo society whenever they go to the temple, thus linking kingship to the cultic institution towards the Halabite Storm god. See D'Alfonso, Lovejoy 2023, 177-214, with previous bibliography.

29 Hawkins 2000, 399; Singer 2012, 463; Giusfredi 2018, 163-9.

30 Cf. Hutter 2004, 429-30.

31 The Amuq area was mentioned until the ninth century BCE in Assyrian sources as the land of Unqi, becoming an integral part of the Assyrian empire at the end of the eighth century. Cf. Pucci 2019, 169-94.

32 Therefore, the reign of Taita I, king of Palistin, under his descendant Taita II had probably extended to include Meharde-Sheizar near Hamath and was now evidently written with the toponym *Walistin*, which, as we will see, also appears in Arsuz (although in this text we will generally continue to refer to the initial name of the eleventh century kingdom ruled by the first Taita "King and Hero of Palistin").

33 To the south on the Turkish coast in Iskenderun Bay. See Dinçol et al. 2015, 59-77; D'Alfonso, Lovejoy 2023, 200.

34 According to Giusfredi, the palaeographically most plausible sequence for the rulers of *W/Palistin* mentioned above would be the following Taita I (eleventh century) / Suppiluliuma son of Manana (tenth century) / Taita II (early ninth century), Giusfredi 2018, 163-9. Alternatively see Harrison 2019, 219-31.

35 The aforementioned ALEPPO 7 inscription, in a very fragmentary context, seems to hint at political relations in the north-east with Karkemiš (which may have in fact undergone a temporary political-economic contraction) and, furthermore, on a much broader international scale at relations with Egypt as well. See Hawkins 2011, 44-51; Weeden 2013, 12-13; Simon 2017, 317-30. Cf. also Mora 2023, 185; 2024, 121-34.

36 See in regard Hawkins 2000, 365-7; 2009, 166-7; Harrison 2009b, 179. Halparuntiya is probably mentioned in Assyrian sources as king Qalparunda.

37 The later dating of this inscription was suggested by Hawkins, who identified this ruler Suppiluliuma (II) with Sapalulme, mentioned by Shalmaneser III in the mid-ninth century. Cf. also Weeden 2013, 12; Morandi Bonacossi 2019, 181-2; Harrison 2017, 286-8.

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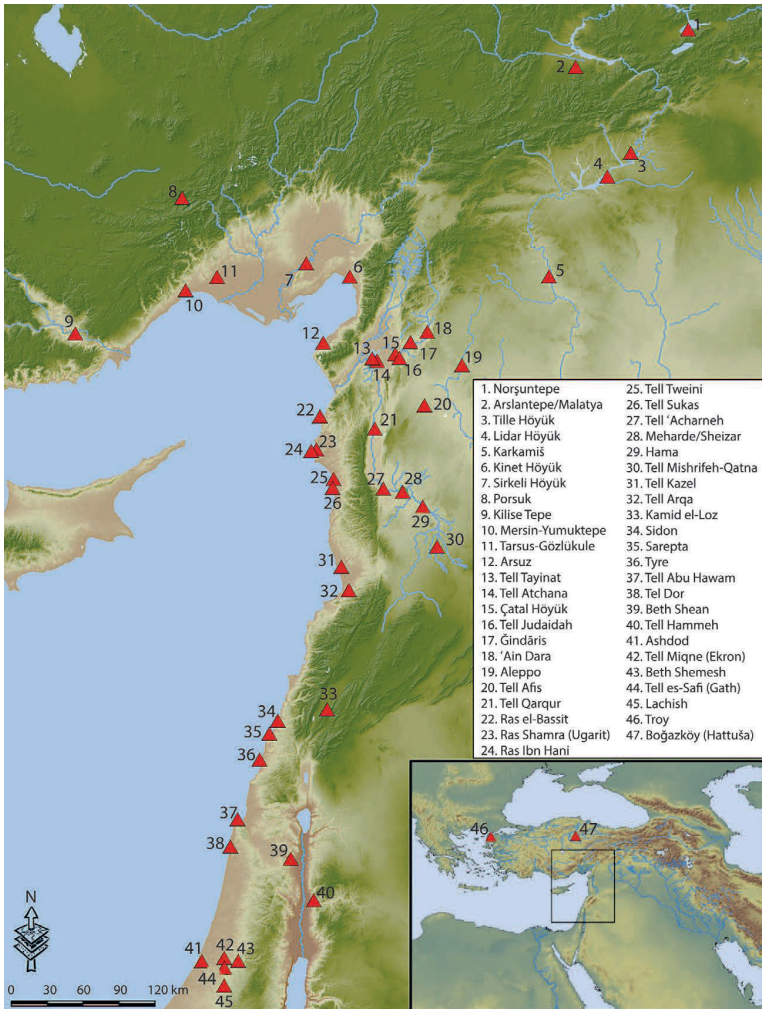


Figure 1
Map of the Amuq Plain showing the location of Tell Tayinat and other settlements mentioned (Welton et al. 2019, 293)

These evident references to the Hittite cultural heritage which turns up in inscriptions, names and titles of rulers of W/*Palistin*, despite the lack of precise evidence, could connect directly with the Mishrifeh-Hama region.[38] The future kingdom of Hamath could, in fact, have benefitted precisely from a weakening of the kingdom of *Palistin* to progressively extend its power starting from the last quarter of the ninth century – a period to which three basalt heads from Mishrifeh date back, which present significantly stylistic and iconographic characteristics that seem to connect them to the findings of Tell Tayinat and Arsuz.[39]

We would, therefore, be entitled to assume that the reign of a king Taita II attained as early as the tenth century BCE (or at the beginning of the ninth century) a notable political power combined with a vast territorial extension in the Syrian region of the Orontes. Could, therefore, the ruler mentioned in 2 Samuel (8:9-10) as a contemporary of King David be defined by the biblical authors as king of Hamath rather than *Walistin*?[40]

38 Welton et al. 2019, 291-333.

39 These similarities thus seem to connect some artistic creations from Tayinat with other later ones found in Mishrifeh during the reign of Hamath, whose capital Hama was only about thirty km north of Mishrifeh. See in regard Morandi Bonacossi 2013, 121-46.

40 Cf. Steitler 2010, 81-99. Also, Galil 2013, 159-74, supports the hypothesis that King David had realistically managed to create a state powerful enough, capable of retaliating, and counting itself among the powers of the time, taking advantage of the ongoing clash between the Arameans and the Sea Peoples for the control of the territories once dominated by the Hittite and Egyptian empires. Therefore the epigraphic testimonies of Taita found in the temple of Aleppo would confirm what is reported in 2 Samuel regarding the diplomatic and military power enjoyed by David in that particular time.

It poses the problem of a possible connection of the kingdom of *Palistin* with the subsequent biblical Philistines and with one of the Sea Peoples (prst/plst) defeated by Ramesses III at the beginning of the twelfth century.[41]

The origins of this population and their cultural and material tradition, as well as their location according to the biblical account and Assyrian sources, along the southern coastal strip (up to Gaza) with continuous friction with the Israelites, seem to place them somewhere other than the kingdom of *Palistin*.[42] This potentate, as far as it has been possible to ascertain thus far from various excavations,[43] beyond an actual similarity in the name (later modified, as mentioned, to Walistin),[44] does not seem to differ much from other neo-Hittite states. We find, in fact, the use of Luwian-hieroglyphic inscriptions by its rulers with significant real names and of some architectural and decorative elements (such as false windows and lion figures) taken directly from the Luwian-Hittite tradition.[45] This culture seems to have been particularly resilient, as it was capable of transmitting itself, at least in part, to the subsequent kingdom of Hamath[46] which was being established around the ancient city of Hama.[47]

The kingdom of Hamath extended east and west of the Orontes River and included important territories that had been part of key kingdoms in the political-economic balance of Late Bronze Age Syria such as Ugarit, Amurru and Nuḫašše. The power vacuum created in the following centuries due to the presumed decline of the kingdom of *Palistin* evidently made the creation of the prosperous influential kingdom of Hamath possible. At the current point of research we have no hint as to who may have founded this potentate. However, the first rulers who in the second half of the ninth century began to explicitly define themselves in their Luwian-hieroglyphic inscriptions as rulers of Hamath were Urḫilina[48] and his son Uratami.[49]

Urḫilina, according to Assyrian royal sources, allied himself with Ahab of the kingdom of Israel for the first time in 853 BCE[50] to halt a military campaign undertaken by Shalmaneser III towards Syria. The first dynasty of Hamath, despite probably ruling over a kingdom with growing multi-ethnic characteristics, appears historically to continue in the wake of the Luwian-Hittite tradition[51] at least until the accession to the throne of Zakkur, a parvenu originally from Anah on the Euphrates.[52]

We do not exactly know whether or not the good relations between Hamath and Israel were maintained during the reign of Zakkur. However, the conquests of this sovereign, who retained his power for more than twenty years from the beginning of the eighth century BCE, seem to concern mainly the territories located to the north of his kingdom.[53] This seems possible with a pacified southern border and an Israel which was not hostile towards it, as Israel's failure to participate in the coalition against Hamath organised by the King of Damascus Bar-Hadad seems to confirm.[54]

The choice of the Aramaic language for the inscription of Zakkur could also indicate, in addition to an effective and progressive change in the new elite of Hamath compared to that of previous centuries,[55] the desire of the new sovereign to present himself as the progenitor of a generation more representative

41 Knapp, Manning 2016, 99-149.

42 See Görg 2005, 526-8; Harrison 2006-2007, 85-8; Emanuel 2015, 11-40.

43 Cf. Janeway 2017, 115-23; Osborne et al. 2019, 261-312.

44 Weeden 2015, 65-6.

45 The renovations of the temples of Aleppo and 'Ain Dara, both dating back to the reign of Taita I, hark back, albeit with some imperfections, to the Hittite imperial period. See Aro-Valjus 2010, 1-9; Harrison 2017, 277-99.

46 See also the previous footnote 15 in this regard.

47 However, some studies seem to favour a hypothetical connection of the kingdom of Palastin with the Philistines and other sea peoples. See in particular Venturi 2007, 297-300; Galil 2014, 79-80. For Hawkins 2011, 53, this connection remains only a possibility without any concrete proof. Put more categorically, Singer 2012, 468, asserts: "In short, the hastily generated association between the Neo-Hittite Kingdom of Taita and the Philistines in the northern Levant is misleading".

48 Attested as "Irḫulēni" in the royal inscriptions of Shalmaneser III in the period 853-845 BCE, the first references to Hamath in Assyrian texts date back to the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta II (890-884), while the city of Hama has been mentioned in the Ebla archives since the third millennium.

49 Uratami can instead be identified with "Rudamu". Hawkins 2000, 403-23; 2016, 183-90.

50 Cf. Grayson 2001, 185-7; Dion 2006, 43-8; Younger 2007, 243-71; Payne 2012, 63-4.

51 Bryce 2012, 133-8; Hawkins 2016, 183-90. Cf. also Mazzoni 2014, 44-52; Cecchini 2014, 58-63.

52 The latter managed to usurp the throne from a legitimate descendant of Uratami by exploiting a change already underway in the Hamatian ethnic-political balance in favour of the Aramean component.

53 Amadasi Guzzo 2009, 336-47; D'Alfonso, Lovejoy 2023, 202-3.

54 In fact, at that moment Israel seemed to fear Damascus's expansionism more after the past aggressiveness of King Hazael, than the neo-Assyrian forces that supported Zakkur.

55 Niehr 2020, 76.

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of the now preponderant Aramaic component of the population. Even if the actual importance of the Luwian-Hittite cultural and historiographical heritage[56] still partially shines through in the Zakkur inscription itself and is documented throughout the existence of the kingdom of Hamath.[57]

This kingdom, in fact, could have proved favourable, during the course of its history, as we will see later, to the transmission of some concepts and traditions from the Hittite and Luwian worlds to Israel.[58]

During the reign of Adad-nirari III, two Assyrian military campaigns against Damascus in 803 and 796 BCE allowed Zakkur to consolidate his power, creating the opportunity for a parallel strengthening of the kingdom of Israel.[59] These events most likely favoured the political consolidation and expansion of the kingdom of Jeroboam II (787-747 BCE) as the biblical writers also seem to confirm, despite the recurring malicious description of this Israelite ruler as "a sinner in the eyes of the Lord".[60]

We do not know for certain who was Zakkur's successor to the throne of Hamath. However, we know that the Syrian kingdom, after reaching its fullest height around the second half of the eighth century, began a slow political and economic decline. Again Tiglath-pileser III (745-727) managed to progressively conquer part of the territories of Hamath, while Sargon II in 720 definitively put an end, as previously mentioned, both to the kingdom of Hamath by repressing the rebellion of its last sovereign Yahu-bihdi, and to the kingdom of Israel, which had once again decided to join its historic ally in an anti-Assyrian function.[61] The two kingdoms, whose history appears to be inextricably linked to each other and to that of the Assyrians, were thus both finally destroyed and eradicated, going on to constitute the nucleus of the two richest provinces of the empire.[62]

In 2 Kings (17:24; 17:30-33; 18:34) the deportation of the population of Hamath is mentioned. It was forced, with its divinities, to settle in the cities of Samaria in place of the Israelite inhabitants who themselves were evidently obliged through a forced migration to move elsewhere, most likely south to the kingdom of Judah. Here we do in fact have archaeological evidence of a population growth towards the end of the eighth century, accompanied by the appearance of objects typical of Northern Israelite culture.[63]

4 Conclusion

Returning to the hypothesis that "Toi king of Hamath" can be identified with Taita king of *Palistin*, we can affirm that, given the great importance of the close relations between Israel and Hamath and the latter subsequently occupying a territory almost coinciding with the kingdom of *Palistin* of which it was part,[64] Toi may have been cited incorrectly by the biblical editors, more or less knowingly, as king of Hamath.[65]

56 See Dion 2006, 43-8; Archi 2016, 25-30; Simon 2019, 127-48.

57 In fact, precisely from the analysis of extrabiblical sources, in particular from the Luwian-hieroglyphic inscriptions of the first millennium relating to the kingdom of Hamat, alongside a certain discontinuity with respect to the great Hittite cultural and linguistic heritage of the previous centuries, some imperial traditions, even after the end of the Hittite kingdom in Anatolia, were maintained and constituted an important unifier in various Syrian potentates, with different characteristics and forms especially compared to the Aramaic component. Cf. in general Hawkins 2000; Payne 2012; Niehr 2020, 61-78.

58 Cf. Mazzoni 1987, 35-6; Hutter 2004, 425-42; Singer 2005, 430-51.

59 In this regard, see Weippert 1992, 42-67.

60 See 2 Kings (14:25-28), where, however, the story clearly overstates a hypothetical reconquest and expansion into territories that never actually belonged to the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Cf. Blum 2016, 50-1.

61 King Yahu-bihdi of Hamat therefore tried in vain to oppose Sargon II with a new anti-Assyrian alliance which Israel had eventually joined.

62 In particular, the excavations at Mishrifeh have highlighted a rich and vast artisan district active especially during the Iron Age II, specialized not only in the wool and textile industry, but also in the storage of various agricultural products and controlled by a centralised administration. See Morandi Bonacossi 2006, 73-114. Also cf. Na'aman 2005, 220-37.

63 Cf. Na'aman 2014, 1-14; Finkelstein 2015, 188-206.

64 Steitler 2010, 90-1; Hawkins 2016, 183-90.

65 As mentioned, the temporal correspondence with David and in certain aspects also the very historicity of the Davidic kingdom remains problematic, precisely due to the actual uncertainty surrounding the events of this character, probably mythologised and overstated like the reign of his son Solomon to the detriment of others Israelite rulers considered less central to the biblical epic. See Liverani 2006, 109-13; Lipinski 2010, 251-72. Cf. also Niehr 2019, 376-7; Faust 2023, 67-82.

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In summary, in the first half of the eighth century some Assyrian military campaigns led to the progressive nullification of the military push of the Damascene king Hazael and to the subsequent new political and economic recovery of the kingdom of Israel, especially with Jeroboam II.[66]

Precisely to this sovereign, in our opinion, they could perhaps refer to the military successes and diplomatic contacts with Hamath described in 2 Samuel.[67]

Therefore, the biblical authors may have preserved the memory of the two important rulers named Taita who reigned over *Palistin*, calling this territory by the name of Hamath, whose kingdom, in a later era closer to the same authors, bordered the kingdom of Israel for a significant period.[68]

The kingdom of Hamath therefore appears, according to the biblical text, to border northern Israel. This northern border, which was evidently also recognised in the divine historical plan, although not achieved, as previously mentioned, in the first Davidic-Solomonic monarchy, was part of YHWH's promise and blessing to David.

Furthermore, as is evident in the biblical text, there is a continuous respect towards this Syrian state which, despite a context of strong regional political instability, never seems to have constituted, unlike other potentates, a threat to the Israelites. Indeed, we can hypothesise that the close commercial, cultural, military and perhaps even partly religious contacts, supported by a likely political equality, were actually more profound than those we can deduce from both biblical and extra-biblical sources, including archaeological.

Hamath, therefore, both for its geographical proximity and for the historical-military events, as well as for the final forced resettlement of its population in Samaria, may have played a role of mediation and, therefore, transmission towards the Israelite world of some elements of the ancient and rich Syro-Anatolian Hittite cultural tradition, which from the great empire managed to be passed down and preserved through the centuries in some states such as the kingdom of *Palistin* and in particular subsequently in the kingdom of Hamath.[69]

As highlighted, some linguistic clues, although not definitive, could confirm the identification of King Toi of Hamath with King Taita of *Palistin*, who would more likely coincide with the later sovereign Taita II.[70] It is in fact possible that at the time of Taita II and his successors the centre of "Hama" had acquired an important function in the political-administrative organisation of the powerful kingdom of *Palistin*, a position that gradually increased with the subsequent decline of the latter, remaining imprinted in the historical memory of the Israelites who, later, perhaps mistakenly, identified Toi/Taita as the ruler of what would then be, with a chronological gap of several decades, the autonomous potentate of Hamath, with which Israel had continuous and profitable direct contact.

To conclude, none of the rulers of Hamath that we know of seem to recall, even vaguely, the name of the ruler "Toi" mentioned in the Bible. The name Taita of *Palistin*, documented in various Luwian-hieroglyphic inscriptions, remains the most historically plausible candidate at the current point of scholarly research.

66 Cf. Sergi 2017, 329-53; Römer 2020, 127-40.

67 Israel and Hamath had actually both managed, thanks to the downsizing of Damascus, to expand and consolidate their territories to the point of becoming two neighbouring powers with close good relations, a political reality which, in terms of territorial size and international prestige, hardly seems to be able to date back to the modest and limited Davidic kingdom. Therefore, in a chronologically altered historical perspective, aimed at glorifying and exalting the figure of David and his political influence, the direct and equal relations with King Taita mentioned in 2 Samuel were incorrectly traced back to his reign.

68 Certainly the kingdoms of Hamat and Israel, in addition to excellent political relations, also had profitable and strong commercial exchanges, of which unfortunately we do not have extensive archaeological evidence, but which also appears to be benefit from the fact that both were strategically located at a crossroads of communication routes between Egypt, Assyria and Anatolia. Cf. Heltzer 2001, 133-5; Simon 2014, 732.

69 From various parallels between the Hittite and the biblical world, significant similarities can be identified in various architectural, religious and legal fields, which may have reached Israel through a means of transmission perhaps represented precisely by the close and continuous relations with the Hamathite state. Cf. Warburton 2007, 310-28; Christiansen 2013, 131-53; Taggar-Cohen 2019, 27-37; Bemporad 2023, 129-71.

70 The reign of Taita II appears to have been more extensive and important than that of the previous Taita I. Furthermore, the closer chronological proximity to Taita I may have influenced the memory of the biblical writers who had more direct knowledge of their allied kingdom of Hamath, compared to the previous reign of Palistin. But that could represent a further indication against a possible connection of the kingdom of Palistin with the people of the Philistines, well known and mentioned hundreds of times in the Bible.

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Kurunizurumeri as a Luwian name

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Abstract The Cilician name Kurunizurumeri attested in a Neo-Assyrian tablet from Tarsus is generally held to be a theophoric name based on the Anatolian theonym Kuruntiya. This paper argues that this is not formally possible and, instead, Kurunizurumeri is yet another case of a typical Luwian compound name with **kuwalaniya-* 'of the army, military' as its first member.

Keywords Cilician. Luwian. Anatolian religions. Neo-Hittite religions. Anatolian onomastics

Kurunizurumeri (^{I}*Kù-ru-ni-zu-ru-me-ri*) is an individual attested in a Neo-Assyrian tablet from Tarsus.[1] Although the tablet is not dated, a seventh-century BC date is assured by the palaeographic evidence;[2] more precisely, on historical grounds, it could have been produced any time after 715/709,[3] and there are arguments for a date between 708 and 658.[4] We are presumably dealing with a local, Cilician, i.e., linguistically speaking, Luwian name as it dates roughly to the period of the last known Hieroglyphic Luwian inscription *bis dato* (PORSUK, c. first half of the seventh c. BC,[5] at a site, which is, significantly, not far from Tarsus).[6] The following explanations have been proposed for this name.

According to Goetze, Kurunizurumeri is a compound name analogous to the Cilician compound theophoric name Pω(ν)ζρυμερις which has the theonym 'Pω(ν)–' as its first member: *zurumeri* is the regular Neo-Assyrian rendering of -ζρυμερις and Kuruni would then be an otherwise unknown deity.[7] Goetze drew attention to Koiranos, an alternative name of the local river Saros, which may have had this form due to Greek folk-etymology (cf. below).

Since later research identified 'Pω(ν)-' as the Cilician equivalent of the Anatolian deity Kuruntiya, Houwink ten Cate saw Kuruni as yet another variant; furthermore, he identified *zurumeri* / ζρυμερις with the deity Šarruma, and thus, assumed a double theophoric name.[8]

Unfortunately, neither of these explanations can be upheld. While double theophoric names are well-attested in Anatolia (type Arma-Tarḫunta), *zurumeri* / ζρυμερις cannot be identified with Šarruma

1 Goetze 1939, 7-9.

2 Goetze 1937, 288.

3 Adalı 2023, 1 n. 1.

4 Dalley 1999, 76-7.

5 Simon 2021, 679 with refs., cf. Hawkins 2024, 298.

6 That said, a name from any neighbouring or more distant language (e.g., Phrygian, Greek, other Luwic languages, etc.) cannot *a priori* be ruled out – it depends upon the etymology. However, an explanation from the local language should be the starting point, unless there is compelling evidence for the contrary, and no fitting comparandum has emerged from languages other than Luwian.

7 Goetze 1939, 9 with n. 20.

8 Houwink ten Cate 1961, 129, 131, 135-6 (followed by Laroche 1963, 301 and Adiego 2019, 156-7 [who consistently misspelt it as ^{I}*Ku-ru$_{3}$-ni-zu-ru-me-ri*], explaining Kuruni as a diminutive form). Although probably inspired by Houwink ten Cate's analysis, the translation 'Devotee of the Stag-god/Protective god Šarruma' given by Lipiński in the Neo-Assyrian prosopography (2000) is not comprehensible from either an Anatolian or a linguistic point of view.

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due to the obvious formal difference[9] (which led Adalı to describe this identification as 'not completely certain').[10] Šarruma was still Sarruma at that time (ÇİFTLİK §§6, 10, dated to mid-eighth c. by Hawkins),[11] and thus one would need a (currently) *ad hoc* local (sound) change (as assumed by Adiego)[12] to identify them.[13] This also entails that the meaning of the element *zurumeri* / ζρυμερις must remain open.

The identification of Kuruni with Kuruntiya is not probable either. Kuruntiya was known in Iron Age Luwian as Runtiya and the change Kuruntiya > Runtiya is due to a sound law,[14] and thus, it simply could not have been Kuruntiya in the seventh c. BC (although Adalı was aware of this sound law, he did not rule out the preservation of the form Kuruntiya, but his only (cautiously presented) evidence is the name Kurti, which, in his view, could be based on Kuruntiya;[15] this is certainly wrong, on obvious formal grounds).[16] However, one could argue that theonyms, and thus, theophoric names, may keep their archaic form despite ongoing sound changes (as in the case of Kuruntiya itself, if the quoted sound change is indeed that early). Theoretically, this is a possibility, but when Runtiya was spelt syllabically in the Iron Age, then it was Runtiya (MARAŞ 1 §6 and ŞIRZI §1)[17] and never Kuruntiya; furthermore, Runtiya is the source of later Cilician forms as well[18] (cf. below). Finally, there is no sufficient evidence for the assumption of an irregular shorter form [kruni-] from Kuruntiya (an 'abbreviated form', as suggested by Adalı)[19] or an even more irregular diminutive form [kru-ni-] from Kuruntiya, as proposed by Adiego (not to mention his idea of 'simple graphical divergence' from 'Ρων-').[20] It must be noted that Cilician names containing Ρω- and Ρων- (Ροαρβασις, Ρωμναμις, Ρωσγητις, Ρωζαρμας and Ρουνις, Ρωνησις, Ρωμβιγρεμις, resp.) do not provide evidence for the existence of **Kruni*- from Kuruntiya, since their derivation from (Ku)Runtiya is more than doubtful:[21] while an explanation from (Ku)Runtiya is formally irregular, they can regularly be explained from the Anatolian name *Ruwa*[22] (it is not a theonym, but a so-called *Lallname*, type CV+*a*)[23] with regular contraction (cf. below, Ροαρβασις may even show the uncontracted form) and from its derivative **Ru-ni*- (<**Ruwa-anna/i*-, with a diminutive suffix).[24] All assured continuations of Kuruntiya in the Cilician material show the expected stem Ρωνδ- (Ρωνδας, Ρωνδβερρας, Ρωνδερβεμις, Ρωνδινασις, Ρωνδινεσις, Ρωνδβιης, Αρμαρωνζας). This also implies that the traditional explanation of Ρω(ν)ζρυμερις (as per above) is now doubtful: Ρωζρυμερις belongs to the former group based on Ruwa (and thus, not theophoric), while Ρω(ν)ζρυμερις is ambiguous: it may contain the theonym Ρωνδ-, but the form Ρων- is equally possible, and in this case, it would not be a theophoric name either. This means, in turn, that a compound name with *-zurumeri* is not necessarily a theophoric name, contrary to Goetze's analysis as a compound name with *-zurumeri* and a theonym 'Kuruni'. This is not unexpected on general grounds, either: consider, for instance, the compound names with *-muwa*-, several of which are indeed theophoric (*Sauska-muwa*), while others contain a toponym (*Mizra-muwa*) or an appellative (*Piha-muwa*).[25]

Most recently, following Goetze's analysis and leaving the connection with Kuruntiya open, Adalı attempted to identify the deity Kuruni.[26] He argued that we are probably dealing with a river, i.e., a

9 Simon 2020b, 194 n. 6; see already Zgusta 1964, 34.

10 Adalı 2023, 2 fn. 5.

11 Hawkins 2000, 448.

12 Adiego 2019, 156.

13 For a possible solution of the 'suffix' see esp. Yakubovich *apud* Adiego 2019, 157.

14 See, e.g., Melchert 1994, 256; for the possibility of a pre-*kārum* period date of this sound change, see Vertegaal 2021, 298. This date depends on the interpretation of the personal name *Ru-tí-a* in Old Assyrian transmission convincingly identified as Runtiya by Yakubovich 2010, 211-12 (and hesitatingly accepted by Kloekhorst 2019, 61). However, upon realising that this identification is at odds with his view that Hieroglyphic Luwian writing was created much later, Yakubovich now attributes this name to a different, otherwise completely unattested Luwian dialect (2022, 56, cf. already 2010, 211 fn. 6 ['perhaps']).

15 Adalı 2023, 2-3, following Demanuelli 2015, 87, 131.

16 On the name Kurti, see Simon 2017.

17 Hawkins 2024, 621, 327 with refs., resp.

18 Houwink ten Cate 1961, 128-31.

19 Adalı 2023, 3.

20 Adiego 2019, 156.

21 *Contra* Houwink ten Cate 1961, 128-31; Adalı 2023, 2.

22 For the attestations see Hawkins 2024, 657.

23 Laroche 1966, 244.

24 For its role in Anatolian onomastics see Zehnder 2010, 42-5 and Melchert 2013, 48-9.

25 Melchert 2013, 42-3, with several examples.

26 Adalı 2023, esp. 4-10 (the connection with Kuruntiya is 'obscure' [2021, 12], although 'possibly' [2021, 7]).

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river-god, whose name is preserved in Koiranos, the Hellenised name of the river Saros, and in 'BᶜL KR(N)', a locally attested Storm-god (thus, Kuruni would have the features of a Storm-god as well).[27] However, there is no evidence for this analysis either. First, while it is possible that Koiranos represents a Hellenised version of Kuruni via folk-etymology (there is a homonymous Greek word meaning 'ruler, leader, commander'), precisely this alleged distortion prevents us from conclusively identifying the original form of Koiranos (Adalı's claim that Kuruni and Koiranos may represent different variants of the same underlying Cilician name[28] requires a linguistic demonstration that he did not provide). Second, Adalı's BᶜL KR(N) is a blend of two different gods: BᶜL KR (attested in Çineköy and Cebelireis Dağı) and BᶜL KRNTRYŠ (attested in Karatepe). Leaving aside the fact that these are Storm-gods that is hardly reconcilable with a river-god (though one could argue that the identification with a Storm-god is the only correct option), the association of Kuruni with BᶜL KR and BᶜL KRNTRYŠ is not formally possible. Both gods are the Phoenician *translations* of a local, Luwian god, that of Tarhunza (ÇİNEKÖY §11[29] and KARATEPE §XLVII, XLIX, LI)[30] such as BᶜL ŠMM of Celestial Tarhunza in the same inscription (KARATEPE §LXXIII). Accordingly, they cannot underlie the Cilician / Luwian name of Kuruni (note that since Phoenician was only a written language in Hiyawa,[31] Phoenician terms could not replace Luwian names). There are two possibilities for any connection: the first is that the epithets KR and KRNTRYŠ are built on Luwian appellatives, but there is currently no evidence for this. BᶜL KR was explained from Kurra, a northern Syrian divinity by Younger[32] and there is a plethora of suggestions for the identification of BᶜL KRNTRYŠ, but none of them could prevail,[33] and it remains an object of ongoing discussion.[34] Second, if these epithets are built on local toponyms. I am not aware of any similar suggestion regarding KR, and in any event it would be highly problematic, as KR does not show any morphological expression of appurtenance. KRNTRYŠ was mainly connected with Kelenderis.[35] If it turns out to be correct,[36] it would exclude any connection with Kuruni. On a theoretical level, a connection of Kuruni with the assumed toponyms underlying KR and KRNTRYŠ would require a linguistic demonstration, but this is not possible in the case of KRNTRYŠ for obvious reasons.[37] A derivation of Kuruni from a toponym *KR faces not only the problem mentioned above that KR probably does not refer to a toponym but also a formal difficulty (**Kurawann(i)-* would have led to †*Kurauni*) and the lack of any fitting toponym (although Hiyawa's toponyms are known only partially, numerous Late Bronze Age toponyms are known from this region,[38] and thus, although not decisive, this absence is notable).[39]

All in all, Kuruni has no solid explanation. Having no other evidence at our disposal, the only way to address the semantics of Kuruni is to establish which Luwian forms might be underlying the Neo-

27 He wants to add the river Kydnos (Tarsus Çayı) and even Kalykadnos (Göksu), identifying it with Kuruni via the Luwian sound change called rhotacism affecting, among other sounds, /d/ (Adalı 2023, 9; he did not address the formal problems of the connection with Kalykadnos). However, Luwian rhotacism is an intervocalic change, and thus, Kydnos and Kalykadnos cannot be connected to Kuruni (note that Neumann's etymology of Kalykadnos from Luwian **ḫalluwaḫḫatar*/*ḫalluwaḫḫatnaš* 'Eintiefung' referring to its geography [1978, 130-1] that would exclude this comparison [but not addressed by Adalı] has formal problems, see the discussion in Simon 2022 with refs.).

28 Adalı 2023, 4.

29 Cf. Tekoğlu, Lemaire 2000. On the reading problems see most recently Hawkins 2024, 113.

30 On Cebelireis Dağı (*editio princeps*: Mosca, Russell 1987) and the Phoenician translations in general, see Simon 2018, 324 with refs. and discussion; on Cebelireis Dağı and the deity see most recently Giusfredi 2024, esp. 39.

31 See the critical overview in Simon 2018, 321-6.

32 Younger 2099, 11-12.

33 See the overviews in Younger 2009, 13-16 and Simon 2018, 315.

34 See now Demir 2021; Matessi 2025, 238-40; Melchert 2025, 101-2.

35 First by Alt 1948, 124 fn. 15, for the supporters see the references in Vattioni 1968, 71 and Younger 2009, 13 fn. 79; add now Matessi 2025, 239-40.

36 But see its criticism in Younger 2019, 14; Melchert 2025, 101.

37 As for BᶜL KRN TRYŠ, Adalı 2023, 6-7 accepts Röllig's segmentation and interpretation of BᶜL KRN TRYŠ as containing *bēl kurinni*, the epithet of a Storm-god in Kaḫat mentioned in the treaty of Šuppiluliuma I with Šattiwaza of Mittani (Röllig 2001, 49). This theory can certainly be excluded since Kaḫat is a Northern Mesopotamian city and neither Röllig's nor Adalı's attempts to explain TRYŠ lead to a formally regular explanation: Röllig proposed 'Tarḫuiš 'Storm-god'', which is not only a non-existent form but also fails to explain the lack of the laryngeal and leads to an awkward equivalence showing two deities, 'Baᶜal KRN (und) Tarhuis' for a single Tarhunza (cf. already Younger 2009, 15). Adalı connected it with Tarsus, but this does not explain the lack of the sibilant – Adalı saw it in the last consonant, but this is not possible since the appurtenance must be expressed. Adalı's alternative that TRYŠ corresponds to the Luwian epithet *ARHA u-sa-nú-wa/i-ni-mi-sá* 'highly blessed' lacks any evidence.

38 Šelestin 2020; Kryszeń 2026.

39 Adalı's explanation of BᶜL KR from Kuruni that "[i]t is possible that the final *nun* was not written in Çineköy and Cebel İres" (2023, 8) is egregiously *ad hoc*.

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Assyrian spelling and check if there is any appellative or onomastic material that coincides formally. While *Kuruni-* may simply reflect **kuruni-*, several other forms are regularly possible due to ongoing Luwian sound changes: on Luwian side, both ‹u›-s can reflect a contraction of *-(u)wa-* and *-(u)wi-*, both of them including [kʷa/i-].[40] A Luwian intervocalic ‹r› can reflect not only /r/ but also /l/, /d/, and even /n/ due to the so-called rhotacism producing a sound that is conventionally called 'flap *r*' (therefore, strictly speaking, ‹n› may reflect a hypercorrect pronunciation or spelling of an underlying /r/, /l/, or /d/, even though this is less probable). Finally, there is a certain amount of evidence for a variation of *a/i ~ u* after the 'flap *r*'.[41] All these possible sources imply an underlying form *Ku/(u)wa/(u)wir/l/d/na/i/u/(u)wa/(u)win/l/r/di-*. Since theonyms are richly attested in both Hittite and Neo-Hittite Anatolia,[42] it is significant that the only theonym that would fit, Kūdūili, refers not only to an unimportant deity (attested altogether four times)[43] but also to a Hattian one,[44] and thus, we would hardly expect to find it in seventh c. Cilicia. Therefore, we can be fairly sure that we are not dealing with a theophoric name, *contra* the general assumption (assuming an otherwise unattested deity based only on the possibility that Kuruni-zurumeri might be a theophoric name is methodologically obviously inferior). The lexicon of Luwian is, however, attested in a far more limited way, and thus, it would not be surprising if no lexical connection could be detected. Fortunately, this is not the case: formally speaking, several Luwian words could underlie this name element:[45] *:kuruta-* 'pointed crown (or similar)', **kuwalan-* 'army' (attested in Hieroglyphic Luwian *n*-stem EXERCITUS.*LA/I/U-*[46] and in its derivative, *kuwalanalliya/i-* 'of an army, military'),[47] and *kuwaluti-* 'ring (?)' (the first two words require an ubiquitous appurtenance adjectival form with the suffix *-iya-* > *-i-*). *:kuruta-* and *kuwaluti-* are less probable, on both formal and semantic grounds: both require a hypercorrect spelling and their meaning does not really fit that of a proper name, and, accordingly, they are not (yet) attested as such. Unlike **kuwalan-*, which is well-attested as a first member of compound proper names (*Kuwalanamuwa*, *Kuwalana(ku)runtiya*, *Kuwalanaziti*),[48] and, moreover, its *-iya-*derivative, **kuwalaniya-* regularly leads to *kuruni-* with the above mentioned sound changes (according to Melchert, **kuwalaniya-* is attested,[49] but this is only Melchert's emendation of the attested *kulawani-* ['metathetic writing or genuine metathesis'], attested twice [KUB 19.55+ rev. 43', 44'], and, accordingly, a completely different meaning is generally assumed).[50]

To sum up, Kuruni-zurumeri is not a theophoric name, but consists of two Luwian words, **kuwalaniya-* 'of the army, military', a well-known element of Luwian onomastics, and *zurumeri-*, a word that requires further research.

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40 On the former rule see, e.g., Yakubovich 2015, §5.2.1; on the latter Simon 2016 and now, in more detail, Simon 2024a, 436-7.

41 Iron Age Luwian *ala/ini-* vs. *aruni-* 'enemy'; *ala/i* vs. *aru* 'in high measure' (Rieken, Yakubovich 2010, 204-5, 213-14; *Hil/rika-* → Neo-Assyrian *Hili/a/ukku* (Simon 2024b); *tura/pi-* 'bread' vs. Hitt. *turuppa-* ' sort of bread' (Simon 2026); [tarusa] 'tree' (nom.-acc. sg. n.) spelt as ‹tara/i-sà› (İVRİZ 1 §3) and as ‹tara/i-sa› (NİĞDE 1) (Melchert *apud* Rieken, Yakubovich 2010, 217 fn. 16); for the phonetic explanation see Blevins *apud* Yakubovich 2008, 14.

42 Cf. the theonym catalogues of van Gessel 1998; Hawkins 2024, 628-38.

43 Van Gessel 1998, 275.

44 Laroche 1946-47, 29; Kammenhuber 1969, 462; Otten 1980-83.

45 Cf. Melchert 2024, 121-3.

46 Bauer 2020.

47 Busse 2020.

48 For the attestations see, e.g., Laroche 1966, 102; Herbordt 2005, 147-8; Hawkins 2024, 649.

49 Melchert 2024, 123.

50 See the critical discussion already in Simon 2020a with refs.

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From the *Electronic Babylonian Literature* Lab 54-56

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Abstract Three new fragments from the Electronic Babylonian Literature project are presented. BM.109141, a large Old Babylonian tablet, restores several passages of *Atram-ḫasīs* Tablet II, including Atram-ḫasīs's river-bank prayer, Ea's messengers, the drought famine, and Enlil's accusation against Ea (no. 54). K.22880 joins a Middle Assyrian manuscript of Standard Babylonian *Anzû* I (no. 55). Four fragments of the 76-11-17 consignment join or duplicate BM.32255+, a Late Babylonian manuscript of the Cuthaean *Legend of Narām-Sîn* (no. 56).

Keywords Atram-ḫasīs. Anzû. Cuthaean Legend of Narām-Sîn. Cuneiform. Electronic Babylonian Literature.

Summary 54 A Newly Identified Old Babylonian Fragment of Atram-ḫasīs in the British Museum. – 55 A New Fragment of SB *Anzû* I. – 56 Fragmentary Additions to a Manuscript of the *Cuthaean Legend* (BM.32255+).

54. "A Newly Identified Old Babylonian Fragment of Atram-ḫasīs in the British Museum", A.R. George
55. "A New Fragment of SB Anzû I", Adrian C. Heinrich
56. "Fragmentary Additions to a Manuscript of the *Cuthaean Legend* (BM.32255+)", Tonio Mitto

As announced in the last collection, this constitutes the final series of articles written under the aegis of the eBL project. The original project came to an end over a year ago, in the summer of 2024, and the present collection contains editions of fragments that were identified mostly before that time.

This instalment features contributions from several collaborators: Andrew R. George presents an important new Old Babylonian manuscript of Atram-ḫasīs (no. 54). Adrian C. Heinrich edits an additional fragment of Standard Babylonian *Anzû*, which should be added to those edited by Hätinen 2023 (no. 55). The new fragments of the *Cuthean Legend* edited by T. Mitto (no. 56), those of the Theodicy edited by Heinrich and Mitto (no. 57), and that of G. Rozzi on the *Šamaš Hymn* (no. 58) expand on previous contributions to these texts.[1] Finally, the Ur III manuscript of *Lugalbanda and Anzû* published by J. Peterson (no. 59) shows that old versions may have circulated side by side with newer, bilingual editions.

1 Mitto 2021; 2023; Mitto, Heinrich 2023; Rozzi 2021; 2022; 2023.

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Of particular importance is the discovery of a fragment that restores the last line of the Theodicy, which invites discussion on the reading of the incipit of this text (no. 57). The new fragment, F.78, belongs to the collection of newly registered fragments in the British Museum, which through the initiative of J. Taylor have been photographed over the last three years. Several other pieces in this collection have been identified among these fragments, which now number over 6,200 photographs, made since 2023 by K. Wagensonner, I. Kerslake, and Zs. Földi.

Two of the articles originally planned for inclusion in this collection, one with multiple fragments of *Enūma eliš* and one with an important new manuscript of the *Syncretistic Hymn to Gula*, could not be accommodated due to time constraints; they will be published independently elsewhere.

Over the last year the eBL platform has continued to grow, in particular thanks to the contribution of the "Cuneiform Artefacts of Iraq in Context" (CAIC) project at the Bavarian Academy of Sciences and Humanities. The Library now contains around 550,000 lines of text, with close to 35,000 text editions. The main gap in the Corpus, the edition of Atram-ḫasīs, is being prepared by the team, but its release will be postponed until the publication of several large manuscripts from the Sippar Library.

Thanks are expressed to J. Taylor for his support over the years, and to C.B.F. Walker, who drew our attention to several of the pieces published here (nos 54 and 57a). The authors thank the Trustees of the British Museum for permission to publish these texts.

54 A Newly Identified Old Babylonian Fragment of *Atram-ḫasīs* in the British Museum

BM.109141 (1914,0406.44) is a large fragment of an Old Babylonian tablet which I was able to study from photographs made by Ivor Kerslake for the Electronic Babylonian Literature project, when I was a guest of the project in Munich in July 2024. I express my gratitude to Enrique Jiménez, not only for hosting me in Munich but also for suggesting that I publish BM.109141 in the eBL series.

The fragment was purchased by the British Museum as part of a collection of cuneiform tablets registered on 6 April 1914. This collection, given the accession number 1914-4-6 and comprising 900+ cuneiform tablets and other objects, was formerly in the possession of Captain H.V. Cowley, who was based in Baghdad in the years 1895-98. According to the museum's records, Cowley sold his collection to Alfred B.W. Holland, who sold it on to the British Museum. The 1914-4-6 collection also includes an Old Babylonian tablet of lunar-eclipse omens (no. 57 = BM.109154).[2] As noted there, Old Babylonian tablets acquired in Baghdad in the mid-1890s are likely to have come from Sippar.

BM.109141 is a considerable fragment from the middle of what was originally a tablet of four columns per side, towards the lower edge. The two left-hand columns are missing entirely; parts of col. ii-vii are extant. The fragment measures in centimetres: 12.1 (W) × 9.6 (H) × 3.7 (D). In the British Museum's online research pages,[3] the fragment is currently identified by some oversight as dating to the Third Dynasty of Ur, but the script is clearly an Old Babylonian cursive. An orthographic feature diagnostic of date is the scribe's treatment of final mimation on case endings. Except in the case of the name *Atram-ḫasīs*, explicit notation (i.e. with V*m* signs) is lacking, and final mimation occurs only as part of a CV*m* sign. This is a typically late Old Babylonian practice.

The text inscribed on the tablet is from the Old Babylonian version of the great Babylonian narrative poem Atram-ḫasīs. Much of col. iii and iv on the obverse hold lines of the poem that are similar to passages that are already known, and parts of col. v and vi on the reverse face also provide parallels to known text. However, decipherment is impeded by the current state of the tablet's surface. The reverse suffers from a heavy outcrop of salt crystals, especially in col. vi and vii. The museum's conservation department assessed the tablet in 2024-25 and thought it best to leave the salt crystals alone. It is to be hoped that in future it will be possible to remove them and obtain a better view of the affected surface. Meanwhile I have made a copy of the obverse only **[fig. 1]**. It is published by kind permission of the Trustees of the British Museum. For the cuneiform text on the reverse the reader is directed to the image on the eBL website.[4]

This new piece of Atram-ḫasīs is a witness to the poem's second tablet, which we know mainly from two duplicate manuscripts, probably both from Sippar. One is part of Ipiq-Aya's three-tablet copy of the poem, written in the reign of Ammiṣaduqa and now in Yale (van Koppen 2011), and the other is a similar

2 Published in George, Taniguchi 2024.

3 See the link at `https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W_1914-0406-44`.

4 See the link at `https://www.ebl.lmu.de/library/BM.109141`.

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Old Babylonian tablet now in Istanbul. These are respectively MSS **B** and **D** in Lambert and Millard's edition (1969), SipOB1-2 in the eBL sigla. Other witnesses for parts of OB Atram-ḫasīs Tablet II are a fragment now in Paris,[5] and another now in Norway (CUSAS 10, no. 2, eBL BabaOB2). Two large tablets of a late recension that is a direct descendant of the Old Babylonian edition add to our knowledge of the text and plot of this part of the poem.[6] Despite these resources, the text of OB Tablet II remains in a fragmentary state, beset by considerable lacunae. The poem's marked proclivity for repetition partly offsets this drawback, but any new witness is to be welcomed for its potential in contributing to the tablet's reconstruction and adding to knowledge of its content.

BM.109141 shares its practice of marking mimation only as part of a CV*m* sign with MSS **B** and **D**, and is probably of like date and provenance. The question then arises as to whether it might be a piece from the missing right-hand part of MS **B** or from the lower part of MS **D**. Both propositions are tenable from the point of view of their respective contents, for the text of BM.109141 nowhere overlaps the text of MSS **B** and **D**. However, the suspicion is ruled out on formal grounds: BM.109141 lacks the marginal "ten-markers" that Ipiq-Aya and the scribe of MS **D** placed in the column margins at every tenth line of their copies. Nevertheless, it seems that all three fragments are close kin, being remains of three very similar copies of OB Tablet II in eight columns. Clearly they are products of an established copying tradition that had fixed conventions in regard to the format and layout of the tablet and the distribution of the text on it.

Tablet II of Old Babylonian Atram-ḫasīs begins at the point where the god Enlil, annoyed by the noise made by the growing human population, afflicts them with a second threat to their existence, on this occasion a terrible drought. It ends with preparations for the Deluge, his fourth and final attempt to exterminate mankind. Six disconnected passages are preserved on BM.109141. They vary in usefulness.

The few ends of lines preserved in col. ii cannot be matched with any known lines and are unplaced. They are not edited here.

The lines extant in BM.109141 col. iii add content to the scene which finds the hero Atram-ḫasīs weeping by a river bank. The river-bank episode is partly preserved in the upper part of MS **D** col. iii. As we know from the Standard Babylonian recension, Atram-ḫasīs's grief is occasioned by Enlil's imposition of a blockade on the people's sources of food. In an attempt to communicate with his divine ally Ea, Atram-ḫasīs makes an offering by night at the river bank. He prays that the river take it to Ea in his watery domain below the earth, in the hope that Ea will be reminded of his plight and communicate with him by means of a dream. Much of this broken passage has already been recovered from the Standard Babylonian recension (SB V 59-72 // MS x rev. i 12-25).

The noise of Atram-ḫasīs's sobs eventually reaches Ea in the Apsû and he sends some of his water monsters (*laḫmu*) to tell Atram-ḫasīs that he has heard his cry.[7] Then, after a few more broken lines on MS **D**, col. iii of BM.109141 comes in: Ea's *laḫmu*s duly arrive in Atram-ḫasīs's presence and explain how his tearful offering reached their master in the Apsû. Apparently at sleep's behest the river water took it there, in fulfilment of his prayer. Thus Ea was alerted to the plight of his servant and sent the *laḫmu*s to him. This passage falls early in the lacuna at the lower part of MS **D** col. iii, but is well represented in the Standard Babylonian recension (SB V 81-96). It repeats some lines of Atram-ḫasīs's prayer in narrative form and, with SB V, enables a better understanding of that prayer (MS **D** iii 17-23).

5 Groneberg 1991, eBL BabaOB1.

6 George, al Rawi 1996, 172-84 SB Tablet V, from Sippar; Lambert, Millard 1969, 116-21 MS x, from Babylon. MS x is now catalogued as BEŞEM 1 no. 1. Enrique Jiménez alerts me to IM.124467, a further SB manuscript from the Sippar library as yet unpublished, which also preserves this part of the poem.

7 MS **D** iii 28-29 // SB V 73-74; **D** iii 30: *a-na la-aḫ-mi ú-*[*ša-an-ni te-er-tam*] "He [gave instructions] to the *laḫmu*s".

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BM.109141 obv. col. iii

1' ...]-*ru*
2' ...]*x-šu*
3' [*ú-ša-an-nu-ú? a-n*]*a* ᶠᵐ*at-ra*¹-*am-ḫa-si-is*
4' [*at-ta a*]-ᶠ*a-ú*¹ *ša ta-ba-ak-ku-ú*
5' [*a-n*]*a* ᶠ*ap*¹-*si-i ú-ri-id di-im-ma-*ᶠ*at*¹-*ka*[8]
6' *i-na me-e* ᶠ*di*¹-*ni-i* ᵈEN.ᶠKI¹ *iš-me-a-an-ni*
7' *me-e i-na mu-ši ú-ša-bi-il na-ra*
8' *ši-it-tum il-li-kam tu-a-am-tum*
9' *is-sà-qar a-na mi-it-ra-ti na-ri*
10' *il-qé mi-it-ra-tum ú-bi-*ᶠ*il*¹ *na-ru*
11' *il-li-ik šu-bu-ul-tum*
12' *a-na ma-*ᶠ*ḫar* ᵈEN.KI¹ *be-lí-ka*
13' *i-mu-ur-ma* ᵈEN.KI *iḫ-*ᶠ*sú-sà*¹-*ak-ka*
14' [*ni*]-*a-ti iṭ-ru-da-an-ni-a-ti*
15' [*a-na*] *ma-*ᶠ*aḫ*¹-*ri-ka*
16' [*iš-ši-iq*] ᶠ*qá*¹-*aq-qá-*ᶠ*ra*¹ *ma-*ᶠ*ḫa*¹-*ar-šu*
17' [.....]-ᶠ*šu?*¹ *is-sà-qar-šu*
18' illegible traces

2' [...] his [...]
3' [they repeated(?) to] Atram-ḫasīs:
4' "Whoever [you are] who is weeping,
5' your mournful sobs went down to the Apsû."
6' "Did Ea hear from me my case by means of the water?"
7' "He made the river water deliver it by night.
8' Sleep came, the twin sister,[9]
9' she spoke to the river channel.
10' The channel received it, the river bore it,
11' the gift went [12'] into the presence of your lord Ea.
13' Ea saw it and remembered you,
14' he sent us [15'] [to] visit you."
16' [He kissed] the ground before him.
17' [...] spoke [to] him....

What happened next is present in the Standard Babylonian recension, although it is not completely legible (SB V 97-108 // IM.124467). Ea tells his vizier, Usmû, to take a message to Atram-ḫasīs, which Usmû does. The message is a short sentence about the "plight of the land". The message is cryptic, as befits its origin with the cunning Ea, but presumably it holds the key to the people's survival of Enlil's third attempt at wiping them out.

Then, at the top of MS **D** col. iv, begins the narrative description of the effects of Enlil's famine on the people. A version of this same passage also survives in the Standard Babylonian recension (SB V 109-16). In col. iv of BM.109141 there is another iteration of the passage. However, this iteration is not narrative, as in MS **D**, but a passage of direct speech, in which a third party reports to Ea the conditions suffered by the people, using the same words as the original narration. It thus follows on from the passage in MS **D** and belongs early in the lacuna that interrupts MS **D** col. iv. The speaker of this passage in direct speech is identified as Ea's messengers (*šiprū*), who appear in broken context as MS **D** runs out (**D** iv 19 ff. // BabaOB1 iv 19 ff.).[10] In BM.109141, after the messengers have reported the effects of the famine to Ea, he then summons the *laḫmu*s again and prepares to give them instructions (iv 15'-18').

8 In SB V 73 and 83 now read not *gim-lat-* but *dím-mat-*, following the example of this line.

9 The background for "sleep" being a "twin" lies in the fact that Atram-ḫasīs's libation to the river was offered at midnight (MS **D** iii 16 *i-na* [*mi-ši-il mu-ši ni-q*]*á-a-šu iq-qí* // SB V 63 *mu-šu i-zu-uz-ma ni-qu-ú iq-qí*). Accordingly in the poetic imagination the two periods of sleep, each in one half of a night divided by a period of wakefulness, were twins. The period of wakefulness that could dissect a Babylonian's night was known in ordinary language as *munattu* (George 2015, 4-5).

10 See Groneberg 1991, 400.

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BM.109141 obv. col. iv

1' [*ṣa-a*]*l-*˹*mu*˺*-tum ip-ṣ*[*ú-ú ú-ga-ru*]
2' ˹*ṣe*˺*-ru pa-ar-ku ma-l*[*i id-ra-na*]
3' *iš-ti-tam ša-at-tam i-*[*ku-la la-bi-ra*]
4' *ša-ni-tam ša-at-tam* ˹*ú*˺*-n*[*a-aṭ-ṭi-a*] / *na-ak-k*[*a-am-tam*]
5' *ša-lu-uš-tum ša-at-tum i*[*l-li-ka-am-ma*]
6' *i-na bu-bu-ti zi-mu-ši-na* [*iḫ-à-ad-ru*][11]
7' *ki-*˹*ma*˺ *bu-uq-li ka-*˹*at-mi*!˺ *pa-nu-ši-n*[*a ka-at-mu*]
8' *i-na ši-it-ku-*˹*ki*˺ *na-pí-iš-*˹*tum*˺ *ga-*[*am-ra-at*]
9' *ar-ku-tum ik-ru-ú* ˹*la*˺*-am-š*[*i-in*]
10' *qá-ad-di-iš i-il-*˹*la*˺*-*[*k*]*a* ˹*i-na*˺ *s*[*ú-qí*]
11' *ra-ap-šu-tum bu-da-ši-*˹*na*˺ *i-s*[*i-qú*]
12' *ar-ku-tum ma-az-za-zu-*˹*ši*˺*-na ik-t*[*a-ru-ú*]
13' *iš-me-e-ma i-lu i-ba-ak-*[*ki*]
14' *re-me-ni-iš i-il-l*[*a-k*]*a d*[*i-ma-a-šu*]
15' *iš-ni-ma* ᵈEN.KI *i-x*[...]
16' *la-aḫ-mu en-qú-t*[*um ip-ḫu-ru-nim*?] / [*ma-ḫa-ar-šu*?]
17' ᵈEN.˹KI˺ *pí-a-*[*šu i-pu-ša-am-ma*]
18' *a-na* ˹*la*˺*-*[*aḫ-mi ú-ša-an-ni te-er-tam*?]
19' x[...

1' "The black [fields turned] to white,
2' the cross-ploughed plain[12] was filled [with salts.]
3' The first year people [ate up old stock,]
4' the second year they licked the store-[house clean.][13]
5' [When] the third year [came,]
6' their countenances [wore the grey pall] of starvation.
7' Their faces [were closed tight] like ungerminated malt,
8' in squabbling[14] the breath of life was [spent.]
9' [Their] tall figures shrank,
10' they walked hunched down along the [street.]
11' Their broad shoulders grew [narrow,]
12' their long stances[15] became [shorter.]"
13' The god heard and began to weep,
14' [his tears] flowing out of pity.
15' For a second time Ea... [...,]
16' the wise *laḫmu*s [gathered before him(?).]
17' Ea [opened his] mouth to speak,
18' [he repeated the report(?)] to the *laḫmu*s...

At this point BM.109141 breaks off and a long lacuna intervenes before the extant text continues in MS **D** col. v.

11 The restoration of *iḫ-à-ad-ru* > *i''adrū* follows the reading by Wilcke (1997, 114) of the corresponding word in HE.529 (MS BabaOB1 iv 10, copy Groneberg 1991, 409). The spelling of the phonemic sequence /i''a/ with the signs *iḫ-à*(WA) recalls the similar spelling *iḫ-a* for the same sequence in other late Old Babylonian texts (see CUSAS 18, 138 iv.2 with fn. 9).

12 On *ṣe-ru pa-ar-ku* see Werner Mayer (2008, 97): "das quer daliegende / quer gepflügte offene Land". Rejecting as "wenig wahrscheinlich" Lambert and Millard's notion that *pa-ar-ku* could represent the Assyrian recension's *palkû* "wide", he saw that instead it derives from the verb *parākum*, "to lie/go across", and noted that both the infinitive and its adjective, in the stative conjugation, occur in a letter from southern Babylonia (Marello 2002, 67-8, since identified as a much-copied school letter, // CUSAS 43, no. 1). The letter suggests that *parākum* has a transitive meaning as a technical term in Babylonian agriculture, meaning "to plough across (existing furrows)"; see now SAD I 66 "cross-plow". In this line the expression *ṣēru parku* makes a strong contrast in productivity between what had formerly been heavily worked agricultural land and was now reduced to a plain made barren by mineral salts.

13 According to later medical contexts cited in CAD N/2, 133 ("unknown meaning"), the rare verb *nuṭṭûm* is something done with or to the tongue, and the tongue can do it to honey in the accusative. The image of people emptying the granaries by licking up the last few grains with their tongues seems suitably desperate.

14 For *šitkukum* see Streck 2003, 22-3 "miteinander streiten".

15 Meaning "strides"?

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Decipherment of the reverse of BM.109141 is hampered by dirt and salt. The line-beginnings preserved in col. v have not been fully deciphered, but a passage of four lines is recognizable as a repetition of lines that have twice occurred earlier in the poem, when Atram-ḫasīs convened the elders of Šuruppak in order to tell them Ea's instructions as to how to overcome Enlil's first two attempts to reduce human numbers (OB I 385-88 and SB V 17-20). Here in BM.109141 col. v Atram-ḫasīs convenes a third meeting of the elders. The context must be the thwarting of Enlil for the third time. This passage can be placed towards the end of the long gap that intervenes between col. iv and v of MS **D**.

BM.109141 rev. col. v

1'-12' illegible traces
13' ᵐ*at-ra-am-ḫa-s*[*i-is il-qé te-er-tam*]
14' *ši-bu-ti ú-pa-aḫ-*[*ḫi-ir a-na ba-bi-šu*]
15' ᵐ*at-ra-am-ḫa-si-is* [*pí-a-šu i-pu-ša-am-ma*]
16' *is-sà-qar a-na* [*ši-bu-ti*]
17' illegible traces

13' Atram-ḫasīs [received the instruction,]
14' he assembled the elders [at his gate.]
15' Atram-ḫasīs [opened his mouth,]
16' he spoke to [the elders...]

In col. vi of BM.109141 the signs beneath the encrustation of salt crystals cannot be read, but enough is legible to recognize the lines as belonging to an iteration of another well-known passage, in which Enlil accuses Enki of frustrating his plans. In the preserved parts of MS **D** this passage occurs three times, twice in col. v and again in col. vi. The first iteration of the accusation is spoken by Enlil to the gods; the second by Enlil to two messengers who will go to fetch Ea from the Apsû; and the third by Enlil to Ea in person. With the help of a tablet of the Standard Babylonian version (MS x), Jacob Klein has very plausibly reconstructed the plot to include yet another iteration, when Enlil's messengers repeat his accusation to Ea in the Apsû before escorting him to Enlil's assembly (Klein 1990). This fourth iteration should occur in MS **D** in the gap between col. v and vi, and is thus the third in a sequence of four repetitions of Enlil's accusation. It so happens that the last two lines of BM.109141 col. vi that are at all legible on the photograph hold the narrative formula in which the person spoken to begins to respond to his interlocutor. The very last sign of that formula is clearly *-ri* (vi 11'), which determines that the interlocutor is not Enlil himself – as now read in the final iteration of the passage at MS **D** vi 31-32[16] – but the two messengers whom Enlil earlier sent to Ea (*šina mār šipri*). Thus BM.109141 col. vi is witness to the iteration of Enlil's accusation that is missing in MS **D** but present in the Standard Babylonian version (x ii 9-15).

BM.109141 rev. col. vi

N.B. The signs transliterated in parentheses cannot be distinguished under the salt but are supplied by the parallel passages of MSS **D** and BabaOB1 (Groneberg 1991; Wilcke 1997, 115).

1'-2' illegible traces
3' (*iṣ-ṣú-ur a-nu*) ᵈIŠKUR *e-le-e-nu*
4' *a-na-ku aṣ-ṣú-ur* (*er-ṣe-tam ša-ap-li-tam*)
5' *a-šar at-ta ta-al-li-ku-ma*
6' (*ṭa-ap-ṭú*)*-ur ul-*ˈ*la*ˀ
7' (*an-du-ra*)*-ra ta-aš-ku-un*
8' (*tu-ma-aš-še-er a-na*) *ni-ši mi-še-er-tam*
9' (*ta-aš-ku-un x-ša*/*ta-na i-na aš-qú-la-lu*) *ša-am-ši*
10' (ᵈEN.KI *pí-a-šu*) *i-pu-ša-am-ma*
11' (*is-sà-qar*) *a-na* (*ši-na* DUMU *ši-ip*)*-ri*
12'-15' undeciphered traces

16 So Klein 1990, 79 fn. 5; Shehata 2001, 128.

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Enlil is speaking to Ea:
3' "Anu guarded Adad in the heights,
4' I guarded the earth below.
5' But there, where you went,
6' you undid the yoke, [7'] you set things free.
8' You released the sea's bounty for the people,
9' you put... in the glare(?) of the sun."
10' Ea opened his mouth,
11' he spoke to the two messengers...

Dirt and salt render the reading of any part of BM.109141 col. vii impossible.

This newly discovered piece of Atram-ḫasīs helps to fill in several of the gaps that afflict OB Tablet II. By providing more lines of the Old Babylonian version of the poem, as known at Sippar, it further demonstrates how faithful the Standard Babylonian text remained to its ancient antecedent, one thousand years later. The Babylonian literary tradition contained compositions of remarkable longevity. In the case of the poem of Atram-ḫasīs, this longevity was undoubtedly helped by the remarkable tale it told.

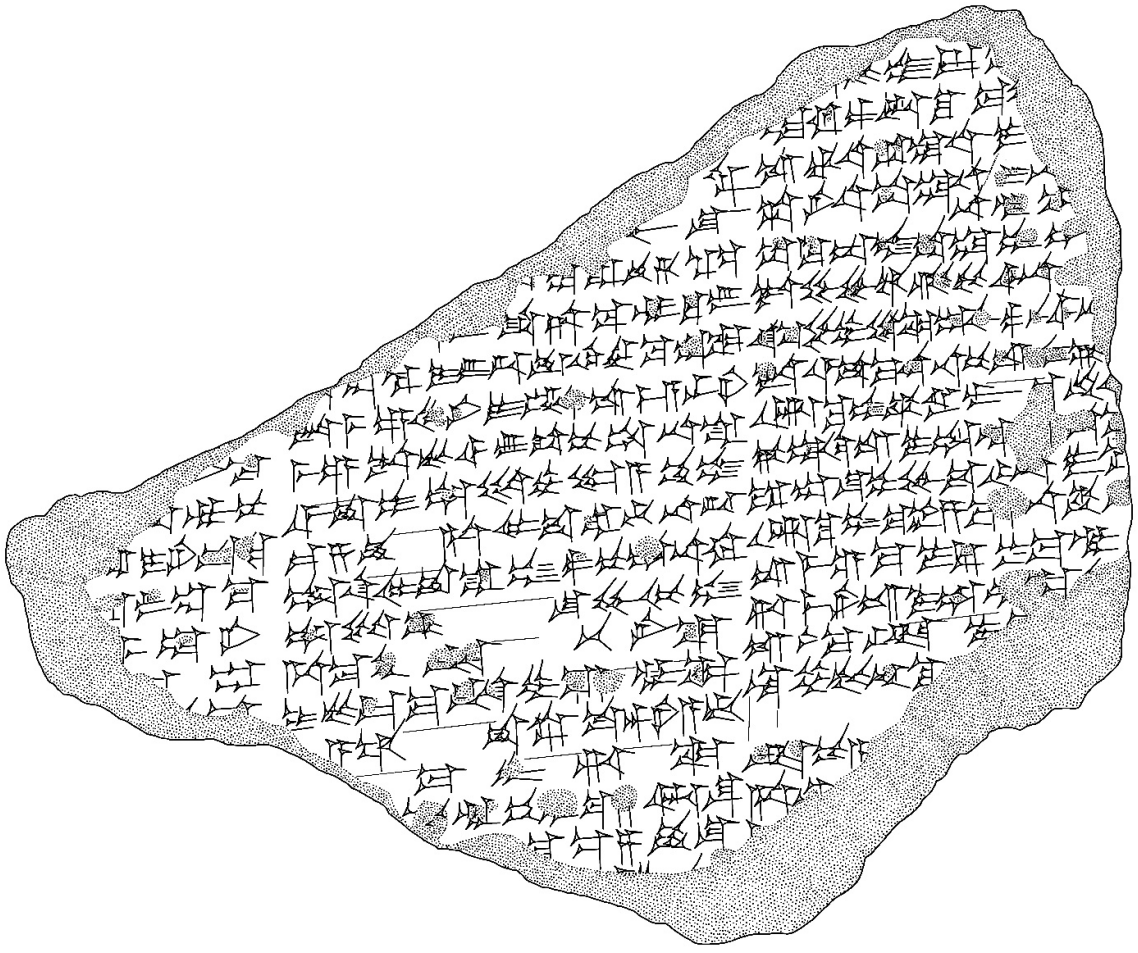


Figure 1 BM.109141 obv., copy by A.R. George

A.R. George

55 A New Fragment of SB *Anzû* I

The Standard Babylonian *Myth of Anzû* (hereafter SB *Anzû*) is a rare classic of Babylonian literature. On the one hand, the text has a long history of transmission that reaches back into the second millennium

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BCE and is deeply rooted in the tradition of Mesopotamian literature in terms of its motifs, narrative structure, and literary history.[17] On the other hand, first-millennium copies are relatively rare. The core of the preserved manuscripts comes from Assyrian cities, where the text seems to have been valued as a kind of antique, whereas extracts from *Anzû* on first-millennium Babylonian school tablets are – so far – exceptional.[18] This overall state of preservation makes even the smallest contributions to our knowledge of the text noteworthy.[19]

The Middle (or early Neo-) Assyrian fragment K.22880 constitutes such a small addition to the list of manuscripts of SB *Anzû*. The small piece (18 mm wide and 16 mm high) joins the already known manuscript Sm.1807+Sm.2195 (MS NinMA2 in Heinrich 2022).[20]

SB *Anzû* I (line numbering according to Heinrich 2022)

b+132 r 8′ [^{d}*šara is*]-*su*-˹*ú*˺ *bu-kúr* ^{d}*iš-ta*[*r*]
b+132 r 9′ [*šá-kin ṭe*]-˹*e*˺-*ma* ˹*a*˺-*n*[*a šá-š*]*u-ma* ˹*i-zak-kar-šu*˺
b+133 r 10′ [^{d}*šara gaš-ru* ^{d}]ˢ*šara*˺ [*da-pi-nu*] ˹*a-a*˺ ˹*i-ne*˺-*e*ᵓ-*a* ˹*qa-bal-ka*˺

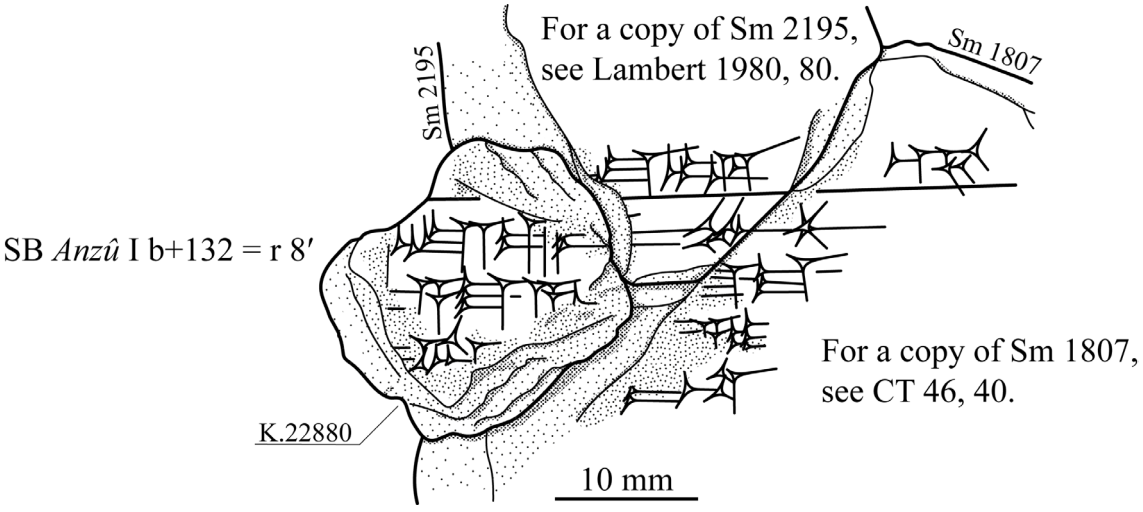


Figure 2 Sketch of the Join K.22880+Sm.1807+Sm.2195, drawing by A.C. Heinrich

Adrian C. Heinrich

56 Fragmentary Additions to a Manuscript of the *Cuthaean Legend* (BM.32255+)

In the late 19th century, when the Trustees of the British Museum began registering the tablets and fragments arriving in ever larger numbers, they focused mainly on the larger pieces. For every consignment, boxes with ‘waste’, i.e. scraps of tablets deemed too tenuous to be recorded, passed unheeded.[21] Only recently, in 2023, was the bulk of these fragments registered and photographed.

17 See, for example, Wisnom 2019.

18 Heinrich, Jiménez 2021. Currently, a total of 21 manuscripts of SB *Anzû* are known: 14 from Assyria and 7 from Babylonia, three of which can be classified as school tablets with excerpts. For details, see Heinrich 2022.

19 Note that CBS.13959 (Jiménez 2022, pl. 7) // SU-1952.197 (STT 1, 20, id. Mitto) may be part of Anzû III.

20 Vogelzang (1988, 12) and Annus (2001, xxxvi sub d) incorrectly classified Sm.1807+Sm.2195 as a “Neo-Babylonian” tablet (cf., for example, the clearly Assyrian KA-sign in r 7′). Lambert (1980, 81), on the other hand, identified the tablet as “late Assyrian”. The script on K.22880+Sm.1807+Sm.2195, however, is quite similar to that of BM.121087 (see, for example, the ḪI-group with four instead of three *Winkelhaken*), which in turn has been classified by Lambert (CT 46, p. 5 *sub* no. 37) and others as Middle Assyrian. This is the basis for the choice of sigla (NinMA1 for BM.121087 and NinMA2 for K.22880+) in Heinrich 2022.

21 Cp. Reade *apud* Leichty 1986, xxvi.

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While they are indeed mostly minute, missing pieces for well-known compositions hide among them, such as the four fragments of the 76-11-17 consignment published here. They belong to a manuscript of the *Cuthaean Legend of Narām-Sîn*: BM.32255+.

This LB manuscript was first published in print in an earlier instalment of the present series (Mitto 2021, 188 fig. 11) and added to the eBL edition[22] as MS BabLB1b. An additional LB fragment[23] probably belongs to the same manuscript as well. Published here are four further fragments, two joining BM.32255+ directly (76-11-17, 2713, 76-11-17, 2737) and two indirectly (76-11-17, 2735, 76-11-17, 2742). With their help, the transliteration of the manuscript can be improved on as follows (new signs underlined):

Reverse, col. iii (?)

14′ (104) [*zagmukku*] *šá rebūti*(ᵀ4ᵀ-[*t*]u_4) *šatti*(ᵀMUᵀ.AN.NA) ᵀ*i*ᵀ-*na ka-šá-du*
15′ (105) [*ina tēmēqi ša*] *Ea*(ᵀdᵀIDIM) *ina su-pe-*ᵀ*e*ᵀ ᵀ*šá*ᵀ *ilī*(DINGIR^{meš}) *rabûti*(GAL^{meš})
16′ (106) [*nīqī*] *zagmukki*(ᵀZAG.MUKᵀ) *ellūti*(ᵀKÙᵀ^{meš}) ᵀ*aq*ᵀ-*qí*
17′ (107) [*te-r*]*e-e-ti ellēti*(KÙᵀ^{meš}ᵀ) *e-*ᵀ*te-ši-ru*ᵀ
18′ (108) [*a*]*l-si-ma mārī*(DUMU) *bārî*(^{lú}+ḪAL^{meš}) *ú-m*[*a-*ʾ*i-ir*]
19′ (109) *sebet*(ᵀ7ᵀ) *ana pān*(IGI) *sebet*(7) *puḫādī*(^{udu}SILA$_4^{meš}$) *al-*[*pu-t*]*u*
20′ (110f.) [*ú-k*]*in*ʾ *guḫšī*(ᵀ^{gi}GÚḪŠUᵀ^{meš}) *ellūti*(KÙ^{meš}) [*ašāl-ma i*]*lī*(DIᵀNGIR^{meš}) *rab*[*ûti*(GAᵀL^{meš})]
21′ (112) [*lšt*]*ar*([^{d}1]5) *i*[*l*]-ᵀ*a-ba*$_4$ᵀ <<ᵀBAᵀ>> ^{d}*za-ba*$_4$*-b*[*a*$_4$ ^{d}*a-nu-n*]*i-tu*$_4$
22′ (113) [*Šullat Ḫaniš Šamaš qu-ra*]-ᵀ*du*ʾᵀ
(ca. 5 lines broken)
28′ (120) [*ina libbīšunu šinšeret ṣābī ip-par-šu-*ʾ]*i-*ᵀ*in*ᵀ*-n*[*i*]
29′ (121) [*arkīšunu ardud aḫmuṭ ur-r*] *i-iḫ-ma*
30′ (122) [*ṣābī šâšunu ak-šu-us-su-n*]*u-ti-*ᵀ*ma*ᵀ
31′ (123) [*ṣābī šâšunu ú-tir-ra-áš-š*]*u-nu-ti-m*[*a*]
32′ (124) [*kīam aqbi ana libbīya umma lū a-n*]*a-*ᵀ*ku-ma*ᵀ
(rest of column broken)

Commentary

17′ (107). *e-*ᵀ*te-ši-ru*ᵀ: The parallel manuscript probably reads *u*[*šʾ-te-ši*]*r*ʾ, *i.e. uštēšir* "I performed correctly". The spelling found here might be interpreted as *ētešir* / *ētešra* (G perf.) "(and then) I was correct, healthy" or *ēteššir*(*a*) (Gtn pret.) "I was always correct, healthy", but neither of these possible forms is transitive. Hence the form is probably a scribal mistake.

21′ (112). [*il-a*]-ᵀ*ba*$_4$ᵀ <<ᵀBA$_4$ᵀ>>: The same dittography of BA$_4$ is attested, in a different line of the text, in BM.41501, iiʾ 6′, which reinforces the suspicion that the fragment belongs to the same manuscript as BM.32255+.

gap (114-119). Six lines of composition are missing in the gap according to the line count employed in Goodnick Westenholz 1997, 294-368 and maintained in the eBL edition. However, ll. 118 f. ([*dāmīšunu* (?)] *ušardâ qulmû* | [*i*]*na dāmī iṭeb*[*bû*]) were probably understood as one line in antiquity, for which reason a gap of only five lines is proposed for the fragments edited here.

22 Mitto 2022.

23 BM.41501; Mitto 2023, 119 fig. 15; BabLB1a in the eBL edition.

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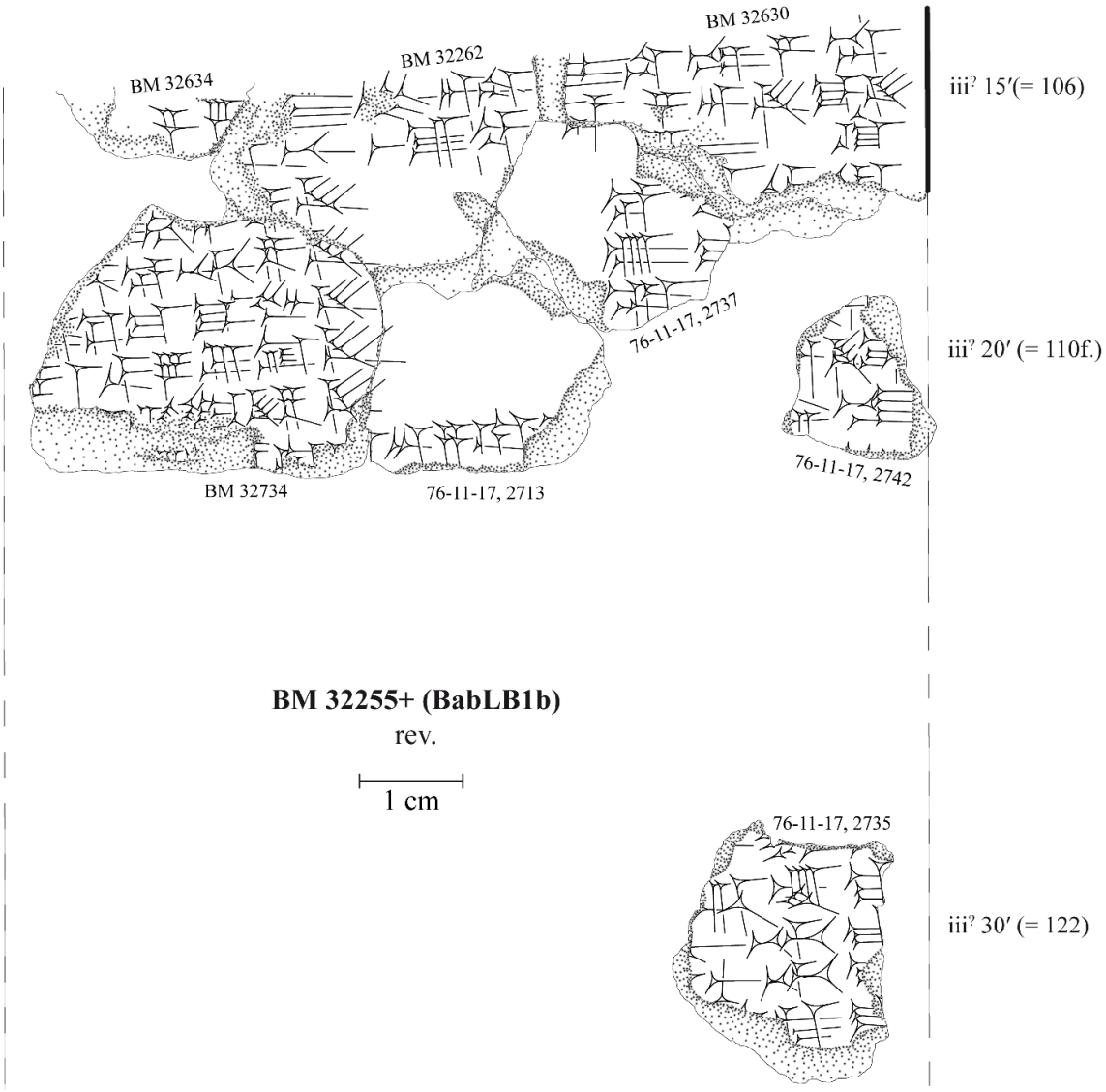


Figure 3 Partial copy of BM.32255+with new fragments, by T. Mitto

Tonio Mitto

Abbreviations

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From the *Electronic Babylonian Literature* Lab 57-59

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Abstract This instalment features contributions from several collaborators: the new fragments of the *Cuthean Legend* edited by T. Mitto (no. 56), those of the Theodicy edited by Heinrich and Mitto (no. 57), and that of G. Rozzi on the *Šamaš Hymn* (no. 58) expand on previous contributions to these texts. Finally, the Ur III manuscript of *Lugalbanda and Anzû* published by J. Peterson (no. 59) shows that old versions may have circulated side by side with newer, bilingual editions.

Keywords Atram-ḫasīs. Anzû. Cuthean Legend. Theodicy. Shamash. Lugalbanda. Cuneiform.

Summary 57 New Fragments of the Theodicy – Part 2. – 58 New Fragments of the Great Šamaš Hymn (4). – 59 A Fragment of a Manuscript Reflecting an Ur III Version of Lugalbanda and Anzu from the Rassam 1880-11-12 Lot.

57. “New Fragments of the Theodicy – Part 2”, Adrian C. Heinrich and Tonio Mitto
58. “New Fragments of the Great Šamaš Hymn (4)”, Geraldina Rozzi
59. “A Fragment of a Manuscript Reflecting an Ur III Version of Lugalbanda and Anzu from the Rassam 1880-11-12 Lot”, Jeremiah Peterson

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57 New Fragments of the Theodicy – Part 2

1. BM.94273+BM.94331

BM.94273+BM.94331 is a fragment from the lower left corner of what must originally have been a four-column tablet containing the entire text of the *Theodicy*.[1] The bottom and left-hand edges are partly preserved. The left edge shows two so-called firing holes located at obv. i 4′ and i 12′.

The find-spot of the tablet is unknown. According to the British Museum's online catalogue, both pieces were purchased from I.É. Géjou and registered in the collection in 1901 under the numbers 1901-7-13, 119 and 1901-7-13, 177, respectively.

On the basis of paleography alone, the time of writing is difficult to ascertain. The script is typical of Late Babylonian literary tablets, with some diagnostic sign forms (UG, GI, AḪ, LU) that point to a date of origin in the late Achaemenid or early Seleucid period. Furthermore, BM.94273+ closely matches BM.68589[2] in spelling and content, which A.R. George characterizes as "Late Babylonian" in the catalogue to CTL 1.[3] Consider, for example, the spelling *ak-kab-ti-ia* (SipLB1 i 3′ // BM.94273+ i 5′) for *ak-kabtî*. As already discussed by Jiménez,[4] the ending *-ia* seems to represent the lengthening of the final vowel, thus marking the sentence as a question.

Preserved are ll. 45-66 in column i on the fragment's obverse and ll. 217-28 in column iv on its reverse. The total number of columns can be calculated with a high degree of certainty since (a) the total number of lines of the *Theodicy* is known to amount to 297 (because of the composition's regular strophic and acrostic form, with 27 stanzas of 11 lines each) and (b) the last line of column i is preserved and corresponds to *Theodicy* 66.[5] Although it can thus be excluded that the tablet originally contained six columns, a simple calculation based on the number of lines of text preserved in column i alone does not yield a satisfactory reconstruction of the tablet's original layout, since it leaves 33 lines of text unaccounted for. Most likely, the scribe – realizing that he was running out of space in column iv – in some lines decided to break with the even colometric layout, in which each of the four accentual units in a line occupies its own subcolumn, and instead placed two lines of text in a single line of tablet (presumably separating them with a *Glossenkeil*). This layout not only explains why ll. 222 and 225 seem to be missing from the manuscript, but also how the scribe managed to fit the 69 lines following l. 229 in column iv 10 into the same space that, in column i, contained only the 44 lines preceding l. 45 (i 1′). Although BM.94273+ contains some textual variants (see below), this explanation seems preferable to the hypothetical claim that the scribe not only omitted ll. 222 and 225 but also inserted two yet unknown variant lines (in ll. 228ff.) to complete the 11 lines of the *pu*-stanza (*Theodicy* 221-231).

New text

First signs of **217** (*re*]-ᵍe¹-[) and **220** (*re-e*-x [*lū*); first half of **221** (*pūḫ sakkili* [) and **224** (*puḫḫurū illata*)

New orthographic variants

47 (*a*]*k-*ᵍ*ka-a*¹-[*ta* || *ak-k*]*a*ʾ-*ta*, *ak-*ᵍ*ka*¹-*ta*), **61** (ᵍ*ge*¹-*ri bu-ul* [*lab-bu* (?) || *ge-er bu-li*, *g*]*e-er bu-lu*$_4$), **65** (ᵍ*ge*¹-*ri an-nu-*[*ti-ía* || *ge-er-ri an-nu-tu-ú*, *an-n*]*u-*ᵍ*ti*¹-*ía*), **219** (*ri-de-e-*(ras.)-*m*[*a* || *ri-di-ma*), **223** (*bu-*ᵍšа¹-[*a*) || *bu-šá*)

New attestations of known textual variants

57 (ᵍ*gi-mir*¹ *n*[*ag-bi* as in SipLB1 *gi-mir nag-bi* vs. *gi-mil na-gab* in NinNA2 and SipLBCom1), **59** (ᵍ*gi-it-mul*¹ as in SipLB1 [*g*]*i-it-mul* vs. *gít-ma-lu* in BabaLBCom1),[6] **60** (ᵍ*gi-mir*¹ as in SipLB1 [*g*]*i-*ᵍ*mir*¹ vs. *gi*]-ᵍ*mil*¹ in NinNA2 and unclear *gi-mi*[*s*ʾ in BabaLBCom1), **63** (*ge-gu-né-*[*e* as in SipLB1 *ge-g*]*u-né-e* vs. *gi-is maš-re-e* in NinNA2)

1 For the first part of this series of notes on additions to the textual reconstruction of the *Theodicy*, see Mitto, Heinrich 2023. In addition to the two new pieces published here, BM.35252 (Sp-II.819), a badly abraded fragment from the middle of the first column of a multi-column tablet from Late Babylonian Babylon, is probably another new manuscript of the *Theodicy*; see, e.g., i 3′: *na-ad-nu*]*-ú ab-bu-n*[*i* (*Theodicy* 16), i 4′:] *ḫu-bur* ᵍ*ib*¹¹*-bi-ri* [(*Theodicy* 17?), i 7′: [*na-a*]*m-*ᵍ*ra-a*¹ [(*Theodicy* 20), and i 11′ʾ: ᵍ*ku-mur-re*¹-[*e*/*ma* (*Theodicy* 24?). However, corroboration of the identification of BM.35252 as a library manuscript of the text requires collation of the original.

2 MS SipLB1 in Heinrich 2022.

3 George, Taniguchi 2019, 14 sub no. 252.

4 Jiménez 2014, 103 fn. 10.

5 Note that although in BM.40098(+) (MS BabLB3 in Heinrich 2022) the last line of column i also corresponds to *Theodicy* 66, BM.94273+BM.94331 and BM.40098(+) do not join and hence belong to different manuscripts.

6 Formerly SipLBCom1. On the likely provenance of the *Theodicy* commentary from Borsippa, see below sub no. 2.

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Obverse

45 i 1′ [*ak*]-⌜*tam*ʔ⌝-[*sak-ku rūʾa ātaḫaz milikka*]
46 i 2′ [*a*]*q*-x-[x *duššupa siqar šaptīka*] (?)
47 i 3′ [*a*]*k*-⌜*ka-a*⌝-[*ta* o o (o o) *gana luqbīka*]
48 i 4′ [*a*]*k-ka*-[*nu serrēmu ša iṭpupu šumuḫ šammi*]
49 i 5′ [*a*]*k-kab-ti-i*[*a pakki ilī uzunšu ibši*]
50 i 6′ [*a*]*g-g*[*u lābu ša ītakkalu dumu šīri*]
51 i 7′ ⌜*ak*⌝*-ki-mil-t*[*i iltī šupṭuri ubil maṣḫassu*]
52 i 8′ ⌜*ak*⌝*-kab-t*[*i bēl pāni ša uṣṣubūšu naḫāšu*]
53 i 9′ *aq*-⌜*ra*⌝-[*a ṣārira iḫīṭ ana māmi*]
54 i 10′ *ak-la-*⌜*ma*⌝-[*a nindabâ iliš usappi*]
55 i 11′ *ak-ru*-[*ub sattukki iltim-ma qibītī* o o o]

---

56 i 12′ ⌜*gi-šim-ma*⌝-[*ri iṣ mašrê aḫī aqru*]
57 i 13′ ⌜*gi-mir*⌝ *n*[*ag-bi nēmeqi illuk* o o (o o)]
58 i 14′ ⌜*gi*⌝*-na-t*[*a-a ammatiš nesi milik ili*]
59 i 15′ ⌜*gi-it-mul*⌝ [*ṣēri serrēma uṭul ina …*]
60 i 16′ ⌜*gi-mir*⌝ ⌜*qar*⌝*-b*[*a-a-tú irḫiṣu itâršu mulmullu*]
61 i 17′ ⌜*ge*⌝*-ri bu-ul* [*lab-bu* (?) *ša taḫsusu gana bitri*]
62 i 18′ *gi-*⌜*il*⌝*-lat né-*⌜e⌝-[*šú īpušu petâssu ḫaštu*]
63 i 19′ *ge-gu-né*-[*e bēl pāni ša qurrunu makkūra*]
64 i 20′ *gi-ri*-[*iš ina ūm lā šīmati iqammīšu malku*]
65 i 21′ ⌜*ge*⌝*-ri an-nu*-[*ti-ía īkušū alāka taḫšiḫ*]
66 i 22′ ⌜*gi*⌝*-mil du*[*m-qí ša ili dārâ šite*ʾʾ*e*]

(end of column)

Reverse

217 iv 1 [*re*]-⌜*e*⌝-[o o o (o o) *palkû nibīssu*]
218 iv 2 ⌜*ri-i*ʔ⌝-[*ši našši baši ṣabûšu*]
219 iv 3 *ri-de-e-*(ras.)*-m*[*a ūs ilī uṣur mēsīšu*]
220 iv 4 *re-e-*x [*… šipil-ma ana damiqti naškin*]

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221 iv 5a *pu-uḫ* ⌜*sak-ki-lu*⌝ [*ma-qu-ru ḫarḫaru*] →
222 iv 5b [:… *kalīšunu isḫappū*]
223 iv 6 *bu-*⌜*ša*⌝-[*a kitmusū lā āšibu ša …*]
224 iv 7a [*p*]*u-*⌜*uḫ*⌝*-ḫu-ru i*[*l-lat šitkunū ḫubūršun*] →
225 iv 7b [: *būlu … lā māgiri …*]
226 iv 8 [*p*]*u-ut*-[*tu-ú kikurrêti … tabīnī*]
227 iv 9 *pu-uq-q*[*a-ak ana ṭēm*(-)……]
228[7] iv 10 *b*[*u-liš lutūr*ʾ …]
(rest of column broken)

Translation

221[7] In place of *the hoarder* [the *deprived one* (?) is (seen as) a crook].
222 [… all of the… (call him) a villain],
223 [(while) he who amasses] possessions [is (considered) tireless *(and) of*…].
224 (When) they (scil. the people) assemble as a gr[oup, each armed with their beer-stein].

7 For a translation of lines 45-66, 217-20, and 225-8, see Foster *apud* Heinrich 2022. In what follows, italics denote tentative translations.

Commentary

46. Given the space left between *aq-* and the following unidentifiable sign traces, it seems unlikely that the restoration initially proposed (*aqtana'ʾal* "I take to heart")[8] is correct, because the necessary signs would hardly fit into the available space of the first accentual unit's subcolumn; [*a*]*q-t*[*u-ul* "I took to heart", however, can still be considered a semantically fitting reading of the line's first word.

58. Of the two other manuscripts that partly preserve the first word of the line, one (K.9290+ = NinNA2) spells the enclitic with *-ma*, whereas the other (BM.68589 = SipLB1) features the Late Babylonian spelling *gi-na-ta-a* with *-a* expressing -/ma/ reduced to -/wa/ (or -/â/).[9] The spelling in BM.94273+ probably corresponded to BM.68589, but this is not certain.

60. The reconstruction of the spelling follows BM.68589 = SipLB1 i 14′.

65. The reconstruction of the formulation and spelling follows BM.68589 = SipLB1 i 19′.

223. The spacing suggests that the word constituting the first accentual unit – *būša* "possessions" – is written here with three signs rather than two, as in VAT.10567 (AššNA1) iii 2b: *bu-šá*. BM.94273+ thus appears to use the variant form *bušû* of the word (AHw. 144a).

220. The last two signs of the first word in this line's second accentual unit ([...]... *šipil-ma*) are preserved in BM.47745 = BabLB4 iii 16. Collation has shown that, contrary to the published copies of the piece,[10] the reading ˹*lu*ʾ˺ cannot be maintained. Instead, the traces are best be read as (o]-)x-˹*ir*˺; a reading o-*m*]*uk* is a second possibility.

221. The hitherto unattested adjective *sakkilu* (*si vera lectio*) is understood to be derived from *sakālu*(*m*) I "sich (heimlich) aneignen" (AHw. 1010b) by the nominal pattern *parris* (GAG^3 §55 Nr. 20a) and thus to describe a person characterized by habitually acquiring or hoarding possessions; hence the proposed translation of the word as "hoarder". – *ma-qu-ru* remains problematic. As already noted in the commentary on this line,[11] the spellings with KUM in VAT.10567 (AššNA1) and BM.40098 (BabLB3) make it difficult to parse the word as a form of *makkūru* "possessions".[12] The attested spellings of *makkūru* show no alternation between /q/ and /k/. Content and poetic form suggest that the line was constructed around a polar word-pair, so *ma-qu-ru* is presumably a kind of antonym to *sakkilu* and may describe a person without, or bereft of, possessions.

222, **225**. See the introductory remarks.

223. Collation of BM.40098 iv 13 showed that the first partly preserved sign in the line cannot be *ma* (traces of four horizontals) and is better read *la*, which yields a new reading of the third accentual unit as *lā āšibu* "tireless" (lit. "one who does not sit down"). For the meaning "tireless", compare the collocations of *lā āšibu* with *lā āniḫu*.[13] According to Lambert's copy,[14] the traces of the corresponding sign in VAT.10567 (AššNA1) can likewise be taken to belong to *la* rather than *ma.*

224. The spelling *il-lat* is taken to express an adverbial accusative.

227f. In iv 9, the signs are written very closely together. This may be taken as an indication that, as in iv 5 and iv 7, the scribe placed two lines of text in a single line of tablet. In this case, iv 10 would contain Theodicy 229 rather than 228, as suggested in the transliteration above.

8 Heinrich 2022.

9 On this phenomenon, see Jiménez 2017a, 278 ad E.

10 CTL 1, no. 253; Oshima 2014, pl. xv.

11 Heinrich 2022.

12 As proposed by Oshima 2014, 363.

13 Collected by Jiménez, Rozzi 2022, 174 ad 7.

14 Lambert 1960, pl. 23.

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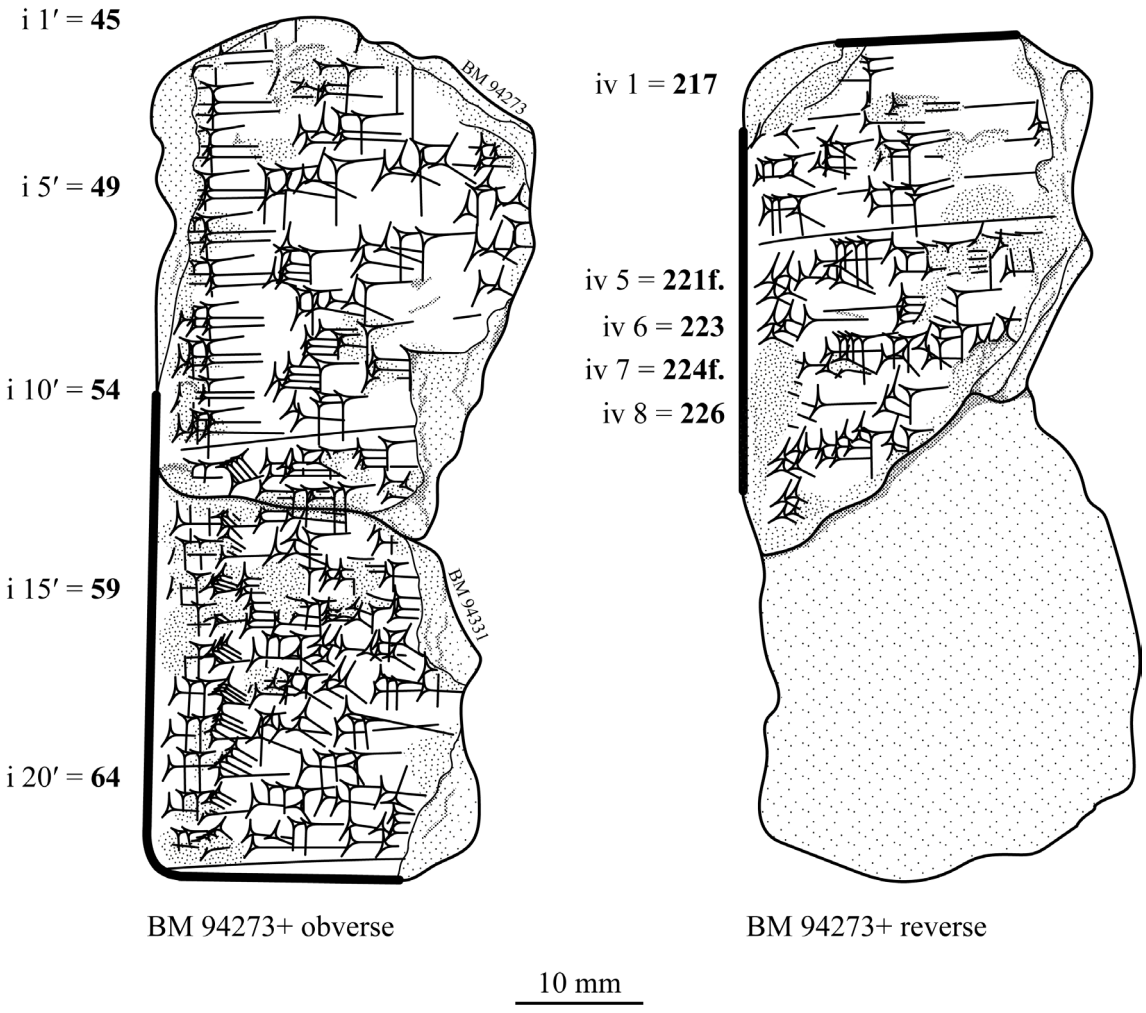


Figure 1 Drawing of BM.94273+ by A.C. Heinrich

2. BM.66882++F.78

F.78,[15] recently photographed by K. Wagensonner, joins the *Theodicy* commentary BM.66882+,[16] restoring its upper right corner. With the words discussed in it, the new fragment helps to better understand the broken lines at the beginning and the end of the *Theodicy*.

Moreover, it allows to complete the colophon of the commentary by revealing the filiation of its scribe. The *lišlim* formula at the beginning of the tablet had already cast doubt on its supposed Sippar provenance:[17] since it invokes Marduk and Nabû, it was suggested that the tablet may have originated from Late Achaemenid or Hellenistic[18] Borsippa (or possibly Babylon).[19] With the new join, the scribe is now identified as a member of the well-known Iddin-Papsukkal family, active in both Babylon and

15 For the "F collection", see Finkel 2014, 264-5. The fragment was first included in the *eBL* edition (Heinrich 2022) in October 2024. It has already been discussed in the postscript to a recent article by N. De Zorzi (2024).

16 CTL 1, no. 255; Jiménez 2017b.

17 The fragments making up the commentary tablet belong to the 82-9-18, A.H.83-1-18 and 83-1-21 consignments, which, by and large, contain material from Tall Abū Ḥabba, i.e. Sippar (see Reade *apud* Leichty 1986, xxvii, xxxiii-xxxiv), hence the assumption followed in Lambert's (1960, 69) and, conventionally, also in the *eBL* edition (Heinrich 2022) of the *Theodicy*.

18 For the temporal distribution of the *lišlim* formula, see Roth 1988.

19 See accordingly Oelsner 1986, 227 (with reservations Oelsner 1986, 225); Jiménez 2017b.

Borsippa,[20] which confirms this suspicion.[21] The lines affected by the join run as follows (new signs underlined):[22]

1 [*āšiš*$^{?}$] | *itpēšu* || *gana* | *luqbīka*	O sagacious [*mentor*], come, let me tell you,
(1) ⌜*a-šiš*$^{?}$⌝ *it-pe-šú* : °\MIN° : *ma-li-ku* : *ga-na* : *al-ka* ⌜:⌝ *g*[*a-na* : o]-x [:] ⌜*ga*⌝-*na* : *i-na-an-na* :	"*encompassing*, expert": ditto = "counsellor" *gana* = "come!"; *g*[*ana* = ...]...", *gana* = "now"
2 [*attamṭal* (?) | *tappê* || *namrāṣ*]*a* | *lušannīka*	Let me recount to you, [my friend],[(for) constantly have I seen (?)] hardship.
(1) *a-ta-*⌜*am-ṭa*$^{?}$*- li*$^{?}$⌝ : *a-tu-*⌜*u*⌝ [*ø*] | (2) MIN : *la-mad*: *tap-pu-ú* : *šu-ta-pi* : MIN : *šu-za-pi* : *tap-pu-*⌜*ú*⌝: ⌜*šu*⌝-*ta*[*š-nu-ú* :]	"I have seen constantly" (→) "to find"; ditto (→) "to learn" "friend" = "partner" (*šutāpu*); ditto = "partner" (*šuzāpu*); "friend" = "do[ubled]"
[*n*]*am-ra-ṣa* : *mar-ṣa-a-*⌜*tú*⌝ :	"hardship" = "suffering"
3 [...] | *litmunu* || [...] ... | *karšukka*	[...] the most grievous [...] in your mind.
lit-⌜*mu*⌝*-nu* : *ana* ⌜*le*⌝*-m*[*e-nu*]	"very bad" → "to be b[ad]"
5 *a*[*yyāna* | *b*]*ēl pakki* || [*m*]*aṣi* | *malāka*	Where is another man of wisdom who is a peer to you?
(3) *a-a-na* : *ai-*°*a-nu*° ⌜:⌝	*ayyāna* = "where"
6 *ay*[*yiš* | *m*]*ūdû* || *iššanin* | *ištīka*	Whence a man of knowledge who could be compared to you?
a-a-iš : *ai-a-nu-uš* : *mu-du-u* : *tup-šar-ri* ⌜:⌝ [*šá-na*]-⌜*nu*⌝ [:] *k*[*a-š*]*á*$^{?}$-⌜*di*⌝ ⌜:⌝ ⌜*iš-ti-ku*⌝ [:] *i*[*t-t*]*i*$^{?}$-⌜*ku*⌝ [:]	*ayyiš* = "whence" "wise" = "scribe" "[to equ]al" = "to r[ea]ch" *ištīka* = "w[it]h you" (*ittīka*)
7 *a*[*li*] | *mundalkum-ma* || *nissata* | *lūtamīšu*	Where else be such a counsellor I can tell of woe?
[*mun-dal-ku* (?) : o o (o)]	["counsellor" = "..."]
(4) *ni-is-sa-tú* : *ni-iš-šá-tú* :	*nissatu* = "wailing"

20 For the Iddin-Papsukkal family in the Late Babylonian period, see Gabbay 2014, 242-3, 236-7, 250-1, 274-5. Genealogical trees of the Babylon and Borsippa branch of the family can be found in Young 2023, 609, 612.

21 For another Late Babylonian commentary tablet written by a member of the Iddin-Papsukkal family in much the same Pseudo-Neo-Babylonian hand, compare BM.42286 (CT 41, 39; Jiménez 2015).

22 Translation based on Foster *apud* Heinrich 2022.

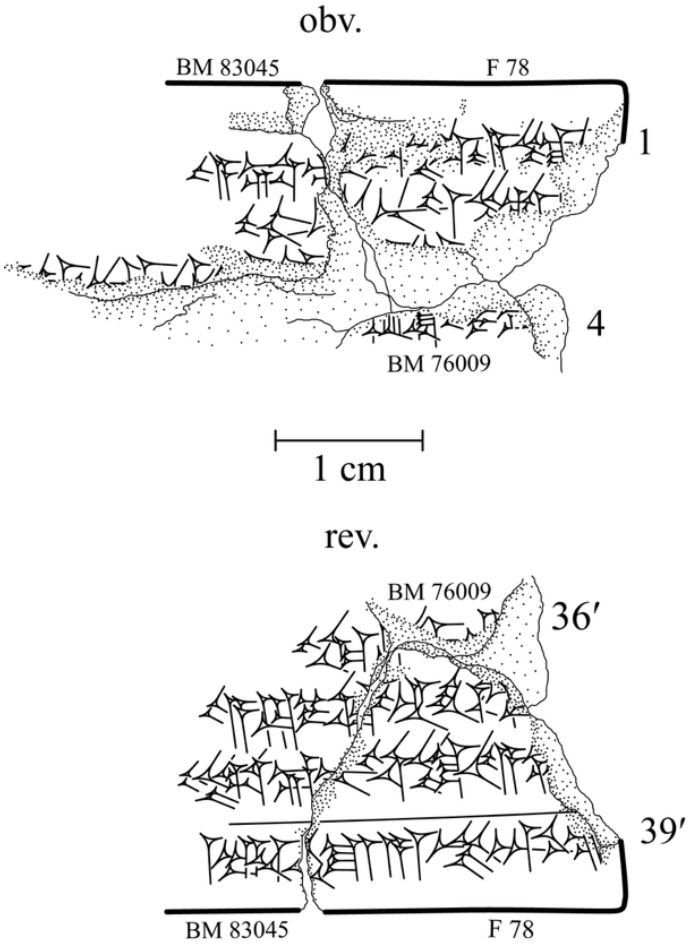


Figure 2 Drawing of join BM.66882++F.78 by T. Mitto

286 *šarbābiš* | *ušḫarammūšu* || *uballûšu* | *kīma lāmi*
They make him go numb with fear, they snuff him out like an ember.

(35′) ⌜*šar*¹-*ba*-*ba* ⌜:¹ x [o o] | (36′) [o o o]-°*na*° : *uš*-⌜*ḫa*¹-°*ram*°-*ma*-*mu*-*uš* : *n*[*a*-*ḫar*-*mu*-*mu* : *n*]*a*-⌜*ḫar*¹-*muṭ* : MIN : *la*-*ba*-*ku* : *la*-*a*ʾ-*me*: *di*-⌜*iq*-*me*¹-e[*n*-*nu*]
"impotence" =... [...]; [...]...
"they make him collapse" (→) "to c[ollapse" = "to di]ssolve"
ditto = "to become soft"
"ember" = "ash[es]"

288 *rēṣam*-(*ma*) | *namrāṣa* || *amur* | *lū tīdi*
Help me, see (my) distress, you should be cognizant of it.

(37′) [*re*-*ṣa*-*a*]*m*-*ma* : *ra*-*a*-*ṣa* : *a*-*lak*: *šá*-*niš* DAḪ : *r*[*a*-*a*-*ṣa* : DAḪ : *a*-*ṣ*]*a*-*bu* : Á.DAḪ : *re*-*ṣa* : °\MIN° : *a*-*lik i*-⌜*dí*¹:
"[help m]e!" (→) "to go to aid" = "to go"
alternatively: *daḫ* = "to g[o to aid"; *daḫ* = "to a]dd"
a-*daḫ* = "helper"; ditto = "companion"

289 *rēšu* | *palkû* || *mutnennû* | *anāku*
I am a suppliant, versatile servant,

mut-*ne*[*n*-*nu*-*u*] | (38′) [*mu*-*ṣ*]*al**-*lu*-*u*:
"sup[pliant" = "pr]aying"

294 *rēšiš* | *ul ātallal* || *ina puḫur* | *itbā*[*rīya*]
I was not given to servile flattery among my associates.

re-*ši*-*iš* : GIM ÌR :
"servilely" = "like a slave"

295 *rēṣa* | *lišku*na || *ilu* | *ša iddânni*
May the god who has cast me off grant help,

šá id-*dan*-*ni* : ŠUB [: *na*-*du*-*u*: ŠUB :] ⌜*e*¹-*zeb* °\:°
"who has cast me off": *šub* [= "to cast off"; *šub* =] "to abandon"

296 *rēma* | *liršâ* || *ištar* | *ša i*[*pparkânni*]
May the goddess who has [forsaken me] take pity,

na-*par*-*ku*-*u* : *ba*-*ṭa*-*lu* :
"to cease" = "to interrupt"

297 *rēʾû* | *šamši nišī* || *iliš* | *lī*[*tânni*]
May the shepherd, the Sun of the People, select [me] as a god would!

li-*tan*-⌜*nu*¹ : *ut*-*tu*-*u* : *a*-*m*[*ar*]
"may he select me" (→) "to discover, choose" = "to se[e]"

Colophon

(39′) [*ṣa*]-˹*a*¹-*tú u šu-ut* KA *maš-a-a-al-tú* ˡᵘ*um-man-nu šá a-š*[*iš*? *it-pe-š*]*u*?
ⁱᵐ*gì-ṭi Nabû-šumu-iddin*(?, ᵐᵈAG-MU-MU)[23] *mārīšu*(A-*šú*) <*šá*> *Bēl-bullissu*(ᵐᵈ+EN-˹TIN¹-*su*)
mār(a) *Iddin-Papsukkal*(ᵐMU-ᵈ*pap-*˹*sukkal*¹)

"[Bili]ngual equations and oral explanations, a scholarly 'questioning' of 'O [*sagacio*]*us men*[*tor*]'. One-column tablet of Nabû-šumu-iddin (?), son <of> Bēl-bullissu, descendant of Iddin-Papsukkal."

Really *āšiš itpēšu*? The Theodicy's incipit reconsidered

The first word of the *Theodicy* is thus far only attested in the commentary discussed here. The two signs which make up this word, however, are preserved only fragmentarily. Therefore, the reading now so commonly agreed upon, *a-šiš*, is not as certain as it might seem. In fact, in the *editio princeps* of the *Theodicy*, Landsberger[24] admitted to not being able to positively identify the signs in question, mentioning *a-šiš* merely in the commentary as "nicht unmöglich".[25] Only with Lambert's edition,[26] who read the first entry of the commentary as "*a-š*[*i*]*š* <:> *it-pe-šú* : A (! error for MIN) : *ma-li-ku*", was the reading cemented. Read this way, the commentary seems to explain *āšiš*(*u*) "engulfing" first with *itpēšu* "expert" and subsequently with *māliku* "counsellor", which indeed makes good sense.

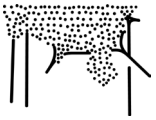
Note, however, that Lambert had to emend the entry by adding a *Glossenkeil*. Moreover, the Babylonian version of the *Catalogue of Texts and Authors* (BM.34487 11′)[27] now offers a new attestation of the *Theodicy*'s incipit: [o o] *it-pe-šú* [*ga-n*]*a lu-*˹*uq*¹-[*bi*]-*ka* and thus proves that *itpēšu* is not part of the explanation but of the base text. This means that MIN likely refers back to the first two words together, which are then explained as *māliku* "counsellor". Hence, a re-evaluation of the extant traces of the *Theodicy*'s first word as preserved in the commentary is in order. Here is how they have been depicted:


(CT 41, pl. 40)


(Lambert 1960, pl. 26)


(Oshima 2014, pl. XXVI)


(CTL 1, 177)


(authors' collation)

The last representation in this row is based on the photographs available on the website of the *CCP* project.[28] In the meantime, all but traces of the final wedges have chipped off from the tablet. The doubled wedge heads as copied by Gadd in CT 41 are likely the result of encrustations in the respective wedge heads. In this assessment, the authors agree with Lambert's own judgment in his later copy. The last wedge, however, is vertical beyond doubt, as is apparent from its continuation beneath the *Winkelhaken*. Only Gadd's drawing shows this final vertical wedge. As a result, the sign can only be maintained as ŠEŠ if we presuppose an erasure. However, the identification of *itpēšu* as the second word of the *Theodicy* implicates that its uncertain first word does not need to mean "expert, scholar" anymore. It may thus be preferable to read ˹*a-ḫu*?¹[29] *itpēšu gana luqbīka* "O my sagacious brother, come, let me tell you".

Adrian C. Heinrich and Tonio Mitto

23 Or possibly Nabû-nādin-šumi. On both names and their spelling conventions, see Thissen 2024, 104-5.

24 Landsberger 1936, 44 fn. 1.

25 Landsberger 1936, 72 ad Z. 1.

26 Lambert 1960, 70.

27 Mitto 2022, 132.

28 Jiménez 2017b.

29 Probably to be understood as *aḫī* "my brother", compare, e.g. BM.35405 (MS BabLB2) i 39′ // *Theodicy* 56: [*a*]-*ḫu a*[*q-ru*] for *aḫī aqru* "my treasured brother". For the sign form, compare, e.g. ḪU in *na-as-ḫu-ri* in obv. 17 of the same tablet.

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58 New Fragments of the Great Šamaš Hymn (4)

BM.48914: a new fragment of the LB school tablet BM.33465+

This school fragment comes from the excavations of H. Rassam.[30] It joins BM.33465+, a school manuscript of the 2a type (according to Gesche's classification) probably from Babylon. BM.33465+ contains extracts from incantation, literary and lexical texts. On the obverse, it preserves: (a) *Muššu'u* VII 7-9;[31] (b) *Great Šamaš Hymn* 69-80;[32] on the reverse, a lexical extract (*Ura* VIIB, probably 221-3).[33] The new fragment BM.48914 duplicates lines 78-84 of the *Great Šamaš Hymn*, contributing to the reconstruction of l. 80 of the hymn.

BM.48914, obv.

1′. ⌜*ta*⌝-⌜*par*⌝-[*ra-as arkāti*ʾ *taše*ʾʾ*e napšāti*ʾ]
2′. *tu*-⌜*ub*⌝-⌜*bal*⌝ [*... ana nišīšu*]
3′. [*ina*] KUR.⌜NU⌝.GI$_4$.⌜A⌝ K[Iʾ-*tì lā târi*ʾ *tuballaṭ mīta*]
4′. ⌜d⌝15-MEŠ [*šabsāti ana nišī tusallam*]
5′. [*ṣ*]*i-ra-t*[*a-ma ul innennâ qibīt pîka*]
6′. [dUT]U ⌜*i-na*⌝ *š*[*u-uš-kal-li-ka ḫābila tasaḫḫap*]
7′. [*ina*ʾ *gi*]*š-par-ri-k*[*a lāpit dāmi ul uṣṣi*]

Translation: Foster *apud* Rozzi 2021a

BM.48914, rev.

1’. [geš]ur-abʾ-[x(x)] […] // MSL 6, 131: 221
2’. ⌜geš⌝ur-[x (x)] […] // MSL 6, 131: 222
3’. gešur-[gu-la] […] // MSL 6, 131: 223

Commentary

o 3′. This fragment allows for a revision of the previous reading of line 80 of the *Great Šamaš Hymn*, which had so far been reconstructed as following: *ina kurnugê tuballaṭ mīta*.[34] However, the present fragment makes it clear that the sign following KUR.⌜NU⌝.GI$_4$.⌜A⌝ cannot be TU. In fact, the visible traces seem to be reconcilable with KI, hence the restoration offered here: K[Iʾ-*tì*]. The Nineveh manuscript NinNA1 corroborates this reading, showing a partially visible KI after KUR.NU.GI$_4$.A (ii 13′):[35] KUR.NU.GI$_4$.⌜A KI⌝-[*tì*ʾ x x x x x x x x (x)].

Fragment BM.33465, which belongs to the same manuscript as BM.48194, preserves the end of the line, previously read as:...] x *tu-bal-l*[*a-ṭ*]*u* ⌜*mi*⌝-⌜*i*⌝-⌜*tu*$_4$⌝.[36] In light of the new reading in BM.48194, a new reconstruction of the second half of line 80 can be suggested. In BM.33465, before TU, a vertical wedge and, at the bottom, faded traces of an oblique wedge are visible, making the sign RI a likely candidate for

30 Leichty, Finkel, Walker 2019, 700; cf. Reade *apud* Leichty 1986, xxxii. Identification by Zs. Földi.

31 Lambert 2013, 157, MS G.

32 Cf. CTL 1, no. 137; Rozzi 2021b, 220-2.

33 The lexical extract preserved on the reverse of this tablet fills a gap in the text of *Ura* VIIB as published in MSL 6, 131-2 (MS U = UET 7, 135), likely containing lines 221-34 of the composition, which until now had been only partially reconstructed. Three additional fragments overlapping with this same section of *Ura* are known: a recently identified fragment probably from Babylon, BM.37492 (transliteration available at: `https://www.ebl.lmu.de/library/BM.37492`); a fragment from Warka, W.23698 (Cavigneaux 1979, 131-2); and the school fragment Ashm-1924.1883 (MSL SS/1, 24). An edition of the lexical extract preserved in BM.33465+ and its duplicates is currently being prepared by the author.

34 Cf. Rozzi 2021b, 221-2 no. 5.

35 See Rozzi 2021a.

36 Rozzi 2021b, 222.

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restoration (although RU cannot be excluded). Line 80 of the *Great Šamaš Hymn* would thus contain the phrase: *kurnugê erṣeti lā târi*, widely attested in literary texts (e.g., in *Ištar's Descent*, l. 1: ˹*a-na* KUR.NU˺.GI$_4$.A *qaq-qa-ri l*[*a*$^?$ *târi*?]),[37] incantation texts (such as an incantation ritual against witches: ˹KUR˺.NU.GI$_4$.A KI-*tì la ta-ri*),[38] and lexical sources (*CAD* E sub *erṣetum*, lex. sec.).[39] Hence, the whole line now reads: *ina kurnugê er*[*ṣeti lā târ*]*i tuballaṭ mīta*, "You rescue the dead from the *kurnugê*, the land of no return".

r 3′. ^{geš}*urgula* has been restored from the duplicates, cf. UET-7.135, v, r. 6′ (MSL 6, 131: 223) ^{geš}ur-gu-[la]; W.23698 o.10′ ^{geš}ur-g]u-˹la˺; Ashm-1924.1883 o. 6′ ^{geš}ur-g[u-la], o. 7′ ^{geš}ur-˹gu˺-[la]; BM.37492, o. 7′ ^{geš}ur-g[u-la], o. 8′ ^{geš}ur-g[u?-la]. It probably denotes a musical instrument fashioned in the shape of a lion or bearing the name of the *urgulû*-lion; see the commentary on the entry in MSL 6, 124 ad 84-86.

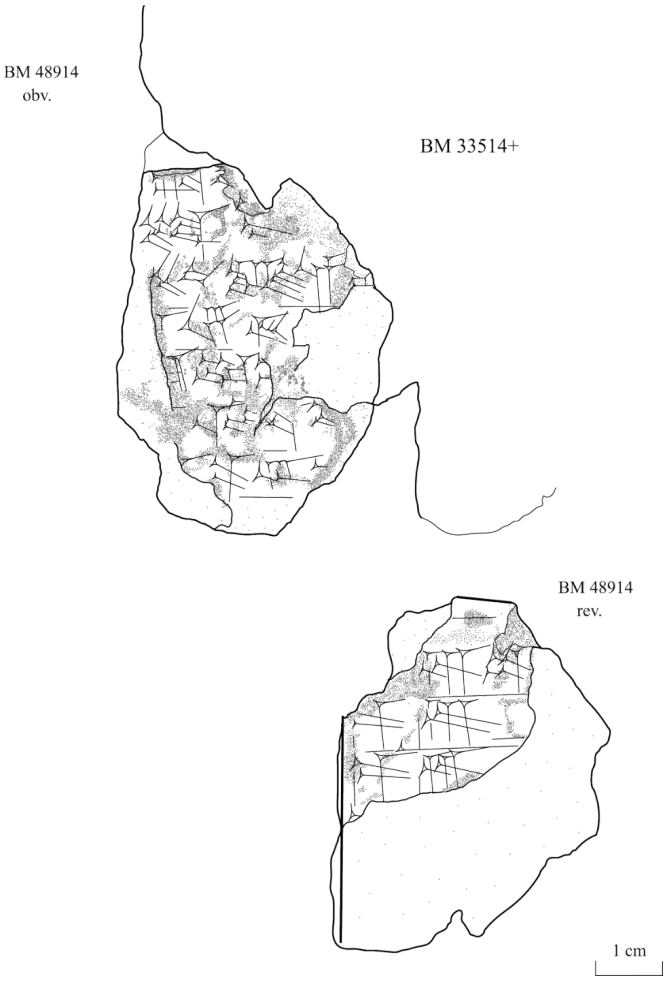


Figure 3 Drawing of BM.33465++BM.48914, by G. Rozzi

37 Setälä 2022.

38 Abusch, Schwemer 2016, Text 8.25, l. 224 r iv.

39 I am thankful to M. Luukko who kindly suggested this reading to me, pointing out the parallel in the incantation ritual mentioned above.

The Fragment 1880,0617.2987

As with most pieces in the 1880,0617 collection, the exact provenance of this fragment is uncertain, though it most likely comes from Babylon.[40] Its small size does not allow for any reconstruction of the tablet's original format. This fragment preserves lines 131-6 of the *Great Šamaš Hymn*. As is typical of late Babylonian orthography, the use of case endings is often inconsistent, and the distinction between nominal and accusative endings is frequently confused (see e.g., l. 1′ *kit-mu-su* for *kitmusa* and l. 2′ *dun-na-ma-a* for *dunnamû*).

1′ (131). [*šukenna kit-mu-s*]*u*ʾ ˹*lit*¹-˹*ḫu*¹-[*ša*ʾ *labān appi*]
2′ (132). [*ana ḫurri pîšu d*]*un-na-*˹*ma*¹-*a* [*išassīka*]
3′ (133). [*ulālu enšu ḫu-ub-b*]*u-lu* [*muškēnu*]
4′ (134). [*ummisalla ma-as-d*]*a-ri g*[*i-na-a imaḫḫarka*]
5′ (135). [*ša rūqat kimtašu né-s*]*u-ú* [*alûšu*]
6′ (136). [*ina šūrubat ṣēri rēʾû i*]-˹*maḫ*²¹-[*ḫar-ka*]

Translation: Foster *apud* Rozzi 2021a

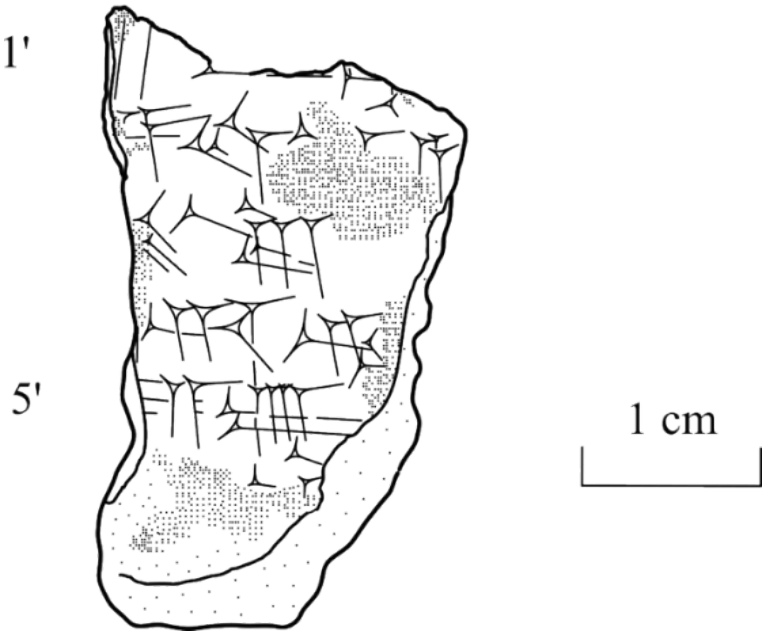


Figure 4 Drawing of 1880,0617.2987, obv., by G. Rozzi

The School Fragment BM.40396

This school fragment, exhibiting a Neo-Babylonian ductus, belongs to the 1881,0324 collection excavated by H. Rassam at Babylon.[41] Its obverse preserves two literary extracts: ll. 117-21 of the *Great Šamaš Hymn* and ll. 106-8 of Tablet I of *Enūma eliš*; the reverse is lost.

40 Leichty, Finkel, Walker 2019, 316.
41 Leichty, Finkel, Walker 2019, 438.

§1. *Šamaš Hymn*
1′ (117). [*ana bītīšu ul ir-r*]*u-*˹*bu*¹ ˹*šu*¹-[*nu aḫḫūšu*]
2′ (118). [*ummânu ki*]-˹*ni*ʔ¹ ˹*na*¹-*din* ŠE-*i*[*m ina kabri*(?) *pāni ušattar dumqa*]
3′ (119). [*ṭa-a-a*]*b*ʔ ᵈUTU *ba-la-ṭ*[*u uttar*]
4′ (120). [*urappaš ki*]*m-tu*$_4$ ˹*meš*¹-˹*ra*¹-*a* ˹*i*¹-[*ra-áš-ši*]
5′ (121). [*kīma mê na*]*g-*˹*bi*¹ ˹*da*¹-˹*ru*¹-˹*ú*¹ [*zerūšu(nu) dāri*]

§2. *Enūma eliš*
6′ (106). [*qa-tu-uš-š*]*ú*ʔ *ú-mál-la-a m*[*a-ri limmellū*]
7′ (107). [*ibšim-ma* SAḪAR-Ḫ]I.A *me-ḫa-a ú-*[*ša-az-bal*]
8′ (108). [*ušabši a*]-˹*ga*¹-˹*am*¹-˹*ma*¹ [*idallaḫ tiāmta*]

Translation: §1. Foster *apud* Rozzi 2021a; §2. Foster *apud* Heinrich 2021

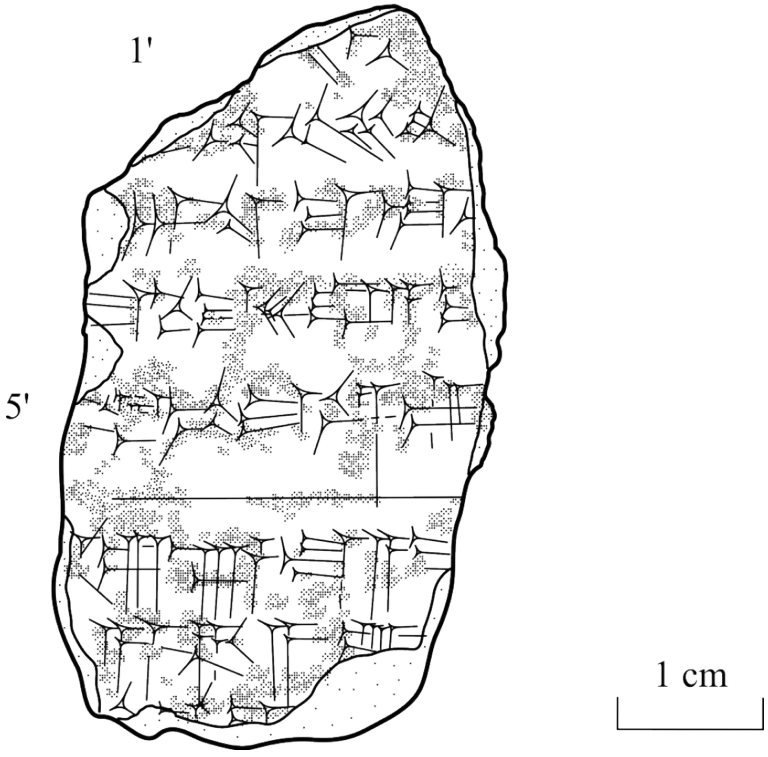


Figure 5 Drawing of BM.40396, obv., by G. Rozzi

Geraldina Rozzi

59 A Fragment of a Manuscript Reflecting an Ur III Version of Lugalbanda and Anzu from the Rassam 1880-11-12 Lot

The fragment BM.39482 = 1880,1112.1368 almost certainly reflects an Ur III recension of Lugalbanda and Anzu (Lugalbanda II) as indicated by its close reflex of lines 393-4 of the Old Babylonian version. It is therefore to be provisionally added to two fragments from the Inana temple at Nippur that have been previously associated with Lugalbanda and Anzu by Civil, Rubio, and Alster (6N-T908b = ISACM-A.33656.B and perhaps 6N-T 912 = IM.70115).[42]

The paleography of the fragment is unequivocally Ur III. However, it is not entirely clear when

42 See Civil 1985, 27; Rubio 1999, 90-2; Alster 2005, 61.

BM.39482 was written. It was catalogued by Leichty, Finkel and Walker,[43] where it is described as "a Late Babylonian copy of an Ur III or Old Babylonian Inscription". This is a perfectly reasonable initial supposition, given the general character of the antiquarian tablet finds within the vaguely provenienced Rassam 1880-11-12 lot, the bulk of which are attributed to Babylon.[44] The high quality of the hand of the Lugalbanda fragment, however, suggests a scribe that was very familiar with the particulars of Ur III script, as demonstrated by the distinct incision angles and the use of exceedingly light and prolific supplementary incisions.[45] This hand is distinct from the more laboured and inexact hands seen with archaizing copies in the 1880-1112 lot, and the format of the fragment, with roughly square-shaped registers advanced in narrow columns, is also compatible with an original.[46] It seems quite possible, therefore, that rather than reflecting an antiquarian copy this fragment instead reflects an Ur III original, either as a complete outlier to the lot with no connection to the other pieces, or perhaps it was collected by the antiquarian scribe or scribes that produced the archaizing copies found within the lot.

Among the Rassam 1880-11-12 lot are a number of late copies of royal inscriptions from Sargonic, Ur III, Old Babylonian, and Kassite kings, some of which are preserved colophons that include descriptions of findspots,[47] as well as copies of the Laws of Hammurabi and copies of Akkadian Old Babylonian letters.[48] Additionally, there are numerous published and unpublished manuscripts of Sumerian literary compositions that were maintained within contemporary tradition in the series of *Sidu*,[49] several of which have been identified and reconstructed by Tonio Mitto. In some instances, these preserve colophons that prove mutual authorship of the antiquarian copies. These include BM.39675 = 1880,1112.1562,[50] which reflects the obscure composition reflected by *Sidu* 12, and BM.38370 = 1880,1112.252(+)1880,1112.2536,[51] a copy of the *Poem of Early Rulers* from a wax tablet in Assur, which was *Sidu* tablet 35.[52]

There are also published and unpublished manuscripts of earlier Sumerian literary compositions not currently attributable to *Sidu* within this lot. This includes several late bilingual copies of *Lugalbanda and Anzu*, BM.38195 = 1880,1112.77 (identified by Mitto: this piece is attributed, however, with the more generic provenience of Babylonia), BM.39507 = 1880,1112.1393 (identified by Jiménez), and BM.39620 = 1880,1112.1507+1884,0211.634.[53] It is possible that these contemporarily rendered bilingual copies of Lugalbanda and Anzu may have been compiled using the potentially original Ur III manuscript that is reflected by BM.39482 for reference. The fact that there are also several later copies of the text and an entry in a catalogue from Assurbanipal's library[54] suggests its general maintenance in later literary traditions, although it is certainly possible that the text could have been obscured and re-discovered

43 Leichty, Finkel, Walker 2019, 419.

44 See Reade *apud* Leichty 1986, xx; Leichty, Finkel, Walker 2019, 381.

45 There are, however, clear examples from elsewhere of expertly rendered archaizing copies whose intent was to mimic the original (see, for example, the instances compiled by Hallo 1989, 244-5 and fn. 65).

46 For example, multi-column exemplars of this approximate type are found among the Ur III literary manuscripts from the Inana temple at Nippur.

47 Note especially BM.38162 = 1880,1112.44 (see the eBL version by Jiménez), a compilation of Amar-Suen and Ur-Nammu baked brick inscriptions found at various unclear locations within the ziggurat and Ekišnuĝal temple at Ur and BM.38947 = 1880,1112.833 (RIME 3/2.4.6.1), a copy of an inscription from the *šakkanakku* period of Mari (perhaps of Itlal-Erra) with a colophon designating it as being copied from a stela that was located in Sippar, signed by the junior scribe Rēmūtu. Another junior scribe, possibly to be restored as Kabti-ilāni-Marduk, who was the author of several manuscripts in the 1880,1112 lot, was the author of BM.39374 = 1880,1112.1260, a copy of a Šulgi inscription possibly found at Kutha and dated to what may be the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar II (see the eBL version by Uri Gabbay and Zsombor Földi).

48 BM.38892 = 1880,1112.778, see Lambert 2007, 156, pl. 57.

49 For an overview of this series, see Frahm 2010, 169-72; Cohen 2018, 47-54.

50 Authored of a son/descendant of Suḫaya, name not preserved. Identified by Mitto.

51 Authored by Kabti-ilani-Marduk, scribe and son/descendant of Suḫaya. Identified by Mitto.

52 Identified by Mitto. For the *Ballad of Early Rulers* in later tradition, see Rutz 2013, 268-70, Viano 2016, 298-310.

53 The former was identified by Leichty, Finkel, Walker 2019, 422 and the latter was identified and joined by Mitto. BM.36263 and BM.39620+ end with line 142, with line 143 advanced as a catchline. This could point to a six tablet distribution of the text of roughly 70 lines per tablet, while the division at NA Nineveh may have been seven tablets to judge from the 61 line *nisḫu* extract reflected by K.4628 (4R², 14/1, CT 15, pl. 41-2, Wilcke 1969, 86).

54 K.4628, K.5187+ (CT 15, 43, Wilcke 1969, 86), and BM.123396 (CT 51, 181, Wilcke 1976, 219 fn. 31), and the catalogue entry K.13684+ (Lambert 1976, 314).

independently in separate traditions.[55]

Our current knowledge of the Ur III versions of the Lugalbanda tales are limited. In fact, there is no decisive reason that *Lugalbanda Ḫurrim* (Lugalbanda I) and *Lugalbanda and Anzu* (Lugalbanda II), which are clearly chapters of the same tale,[56] could not have been parts of an undifferentiated and significantly different composition or compositions in the Ur III period. Currently, we only have the significant testimony of one substantial exemplar reflecting *Lugalbanda Ḫurrim* (6N-T 638), which suggests a marked divergence with the Old Babylonian version.[57]

The meager preserved contents of this fragment would seem to reflect Inana's exchange with Lugalbanda at the conclusion of the Old Babylonian version of Lugalbanda and Anzu, where she responds to Enmerkar's plea for her intervention in the siege of Aratta by provisioning a meal offering of a baked ^{ĝeš}u r i$_3^{ku_6}$ fish for her *a'ankara* weapon that will secure victory for Enmerkar and his troops. The fish is to be procured from a marsh along with tamarisk growing by the waterside for the construction of a ^{ĝeš}b u n i ĝ container[58] (here to be employed as a container to hold the fish[59] or possibly as a trap)[60] and dead reeds (perhaps for fuel, to decorate a container in emulation of a marsh, or to disguise a trap). This may reflect a rare description of a protocol for the acquisition and preparation of a fish offering under pristine conditions.[61]

The passage in r i′ 2′ perhaps reflects a substantially differing version of Inana's query to Lugalbanda about the state of the campaign to Aratta in lines 353-6 of the OB version. If this parallel holds, then the order of the columns would be right to left, suggesting that it belongs to the reverse of the tablet. This would exclude the possibility that this fragment came from a prism.

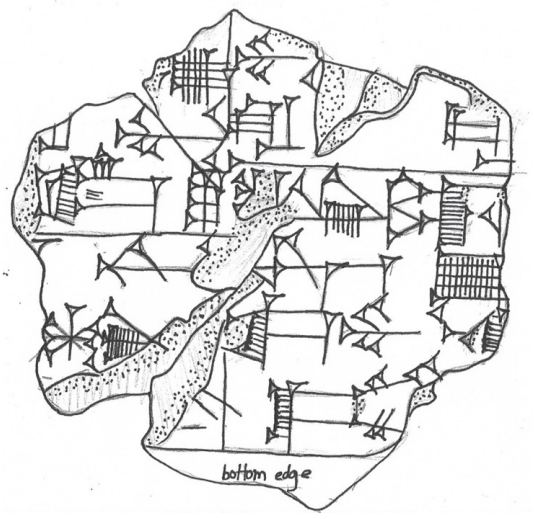


Figure 6
Drawing of BM.39482, by J. Peterson

55 Although it is hardly a decisive marker of overall textual superiority, one could point to the superiority of a Babylonian over an Assyrian exemplar for line 67, where BM.39507 appears to have the 10 gur of the Old Babylonian versus the divergent variant NIM of the NA version K.5187, where U GUR was reinterpreted (perhaps prompted by reliance on a partially broken or effaced source text) as the paleographically similar NIM, perhaps for a nim "highland water" rather than "tidal pool" (*lā'irānu*(*m*)). Additionally, ZE$_2$ was reinterpreted as LA and DE$_2$ was reinterpreted as SA$_{10}$, both probably paleographically conditioned errors that were was more likely to have occurred with an a misunderstood or more likely partially broken or effaced Assyrian source text. For this line and the divergence of this NA source, see Civil 1972, 386.

56 See the discussion of Wilcke 1969, 5-8; Falkowitz 1983, 103-4; Rubio 1999, 91; Michalowski 2010, 13.

57 Rubio 1999, 88-118; Michalowski 2010, 13.

58 For this passage and the various attested uses of tamarisk wood, see Streck 2004, 276 fn. 56.

59 For various containers used to hold caught fish that also functioned as units of measure from Ur III administrative contexts, see Englund 1990, 149-52.

60 Thus Wilcke 1969, 13 "eines Gerätes zum Fischfang". I am not currently aware of explicit evidence that the ^{ĝeš}b u n i ĝ was a technical term or nickname for a fish trap.

61 See the discussion of Black 1998, 72, 108 who describes it as an "oracular response", and Michalowski 2010, 16, who understands it as a magical procedure.

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Reverse col. i′
0-1′. [... gu$_3$?] | m[u-...]-|ra-˹ra˺
2′. ˹d˺[L]ugal-ban$_3$-da | ˹d˺Inana-ke$_4$ | gu$_3$ mu-na-/d[e$_2$]

Reverse col. ii′
1′. [...] x | [...] u$_2$ | [kur?-r]a? ˹mu˺-|[(x)]-gu$_7$-e
(// OB Lugalbanda and Anzu 393)
2′. [(x) ĝe]š?uri$_3$ / diĝir ˹suḫur˺[k]u$_6$?
(// OB Lugalbanda and Anzu 394)

Commentary

r i′ 1′. Perhaps the compound verb gu$_3$ ... ra.ḫ "to shout" is to be restored here. If correct, it may describe Inana screaming at Lugalbanda before she speaks with him, perhaps as a reflection of a heavenly or bellicose manifestation. This would contrast the OB version, where Inana seems to be located within her temple at Uruk/Kulab.

r ii′ 1′. From the available space, it seems most likely that the generic designation u$_2$ "grass, plants" occurs here rather than the specific floral designation ^{u_2}*i-li-a-nu-um* of the OB version.[62] This version uses the highly transitive and agent-centered conjugation prefix mu- versus the conjugation prefix i$_3$- of the Old Babylonian version, where the action may be understood as being conducted by a secondary actor, the ki ĝ$_2$-tur^{ku_6}, which has been conventionally understood as a type of frog, functioning within the scenery as background to the main plot.[63]

The ensuing kur-ra has been understood as a genitival, *de facto* attributive construction (ETCSL 1.8.2.2)[64] as the direct object of the verb. This geographic designation is utilized for secondary floral and faunal terms elsewhere. It may, however, be a locative construction, although it is not marked as such in the prefix chain, which would fit the depiction of a more peripheral amphibious water dweller that could inhabit fully dry land as a peripheral actor to the ^{ĝeš}uri$_3^{ku_6}$ carp that could inhabit river bottoms, as well as flooded banks and meadows (u$_2$-sal) as described in line 391.

r ii′ 2′. The fish term ^{ĝeš}uri$_3^{ku_6}$ is also found in Šulgi R 76,[65] where it also occurs in conjunction with the semi-mythical suḫur-maš$_2^{ku_6}$ among the numerous fishes reacting to Ninlil's barge as it sails.[66] From the position of what is likely the final diagonals of the KU$_6$ sign before a small break, there may have been an indent where the maš$_2$ sign occurred. Note, however, the more mundane variant suḫur^{ku_6}, "carp" in the OB source T (W-B 162 = Ashm-1922.162, OECT 1, pl. 5f.).

This version seems to determine only the second fish term. For the varied usage of the fish determinative in the Old Babylonian sources with the two terms, only one of which (source A = CBS 1451+) determines both, see Wilcke 1969, 217. The status of the grapheme diĝir here as a determinative or noun (i.e., "divine goat carp" versus "god of the goat carp", the latter of which seems to be dependent on an explicit genitive, as it occurs in some OB exemplars (source A, W = HS 1463), with similar effective meanings, cannot be currently speculated upon, but the former seems more likely given the likelihood that the line was not resumed with the new column.

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62 See Wilcke 1969, 187-8; Rubio 1999, 119; Attinger 2023, 710, the former of whom relates it to *allānu*(*m*), traditionally "oak, acorn" (see also ETCSL 1.8.2.2) but perhaps reflects the hazelnut (for this identification, see the study of the Old Assyrian evidence by Sturm 2009), which also occurs in line 243.

63 For this function of the prefix i$_3$-, see Woods 2008, 135-7.

64 Wilcke 1969, 127.

65 Klein 1990, 106, 127-8.

66 For the faunal term, see Attinger 2023, 1456.

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