On the Sumerian Epic of Gilgamesh

J. D. BING
The University of Tennessee

Writing some three decades ago in an attempt to identify the possible Sumerian sources for the Babylonian version of the Epic of Gilgamesh, S. N. Kramer confined his approach to isolating and analyzing various episodes within the Babylonian version in the light of known Sumerian material.[1] On this basis, Professor Kramer concluded that there was no Sumerian original which provided the model for the Babylonian epic as a whole. Yet episodes in the latter, he pointed out, do go back to Sumerian prototypes: "Huwawa" in Tablets III-IV, "The Bull of Heaven" in Tablet VI, portions of "The Quest for Immortality" (Tablets IX, X, XI), and the Deluge Story in Tablet XI. But in no case is the Babylonian version a slavish copying of the Sumerian originals.[2] There are no known Sumerian prototypes for the various episodes found in Tablets I-II, and VII-VIII, which include "The Tyranny of Gilgamesh," "The Creation of Enkidu," "Enkidu and the Trapper," "The 'Fall' of Enkidu," "The Dreams of Gilgamesh," "The Civilizing of Enkidu," "The Struggle," and "The Death and Burial of Enkidu."[3] Kramer doubted the existence of a Sumerian account that would include the same sequence of events of Tablets I and II which contain the first seven episodes above, although there may be Sumerian prototypes for various isolated incidents which may or may not have been originally linked to Gilgamesh. On the other hand, Kramer considered the episode of Enkidu's death and burial as originally Babylonian rather than Sumerian on the basis of the strongly contrasting features found in the Sumerian poem "Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Nether World."[4]

In addition to episodes, however, the Gilgamesh Epic contains cultural and mythical motifs as well. Since these themes tend to recur throughout the entire epic, they usually cut across the various episodes discussed by Kramer. The most obvious example is Gilgamesh's pre-

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1 S. N. Kramer, "The Epic of Gilgamesh and Its Sumerian Sources," *JAOS* 64 (1944), 7-23. For a more recent statement by Kramer, see his "Gilgamesh, Some New Sumerian Data," in P. Garelli, ed., *Gilgameš et sa Légende* (Paris, 1960), 59f.

2 Kramer, *JAOS* 64 (1944), 18.

3 Ibid., 18-19.

4 Loc. cit.

occupation with death. A mythical motif of the epic, which has recently been developed, involves an assessment of the comparative advantages and disadvantages of Nature and Culture for mankind.[5] Such themes, used by the Babylonian author to spin together the hitherto unconnected episodes found in Sumerian literature, may have been the means by which the Babylonain version obtained what unity it does possess. Indeed, since Kramer's article, most scholars engaged in tracing the literary history of the Gilgamesh Epic have assumed that the disparate Sumerian Episodes were first unified by the translation of this material into Akkadian in the Old Babylonian period by means of such motifs as the fear of, and revolt against, death, and the emphasis upon earthly human achievement.[6] Yet, one motif does appear to have a definite Sumerian foundation.[7]

This Sumerian theme expresses a cultural issue which emerged at Uruk in the Early Dynastic II period, when the historical Gilgamesh actually reigned.[8] With the rise of the First Dynasty of Uruk, the parochial En, who had been a cult official and an economic manager of the household of Inanna, assumed functions and obligations which were more secular, international, and martial in nature.[9] Gilgamesh, for example, seems to have undertaken activities far beyond the confines of Uruk as a result of his heroic military exploits, which appear to have included a rebellion against Agga of Kish and taking control of the

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5 G. S. Kirk, *Myth: Its Meaning and Function* (Cambridge, 1970), 132-52.

6 See H. N. Wolff, "Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Heroic Life," *JAOS* 89 (1969), 392-98, especially 393, n. 2, where a brief description of the question of the earliest composition of the Gilgamesh Epic is presented with its attendant problems. For a detailed discussion concerning the literary history of the epic, see J. H. Tigay, *Literary-Critical Studies in the Gilgamesh Epic* (unpublished Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1971), 71-95, who states on page 77 that since Kramer's article in 1944 "it has become commonplace that the Gilgamesh Epic is a composite based on originally unconnected single episodes." See also Shaffer, *Sumerian Sources of Tablet XII of the Epic of Gilgameš* (unpublished Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1963), 1-26, and 42.

7 Several scholars have argued for an epic unity earlier than the Old Babylonian composition. The author is acquainted with most of their works only indirectly. L. Matouš has argued for a Sumerian Epic of Gilgamesh composed during Ur III. See his *Epos O Gilgamešori* (Prague, 1958), and his modified view in Garelli, *Gilg.*, 83-94. For a critique of Matouš, see Tigay, *Literary-Critical Studies*, 85-86. F. M. Th. de Liagre Böhl, *Het Gilgamesj Epos* (Paris, 1958), maintained a Sumerian Epic of Gilgamesh was composed after the reign of Šulgi, whose long rule and deification gave rise to moral questions which the epic articulated. See the review article by I. M. Diakonoff, *Bi.Or.* 18 (1961), 66. Diakonoff proposes a Sumerian epic originated in Uruk during the Dynasty of Akkad.

8 Although our historical information concerning Gilgamesh is quite limited, it is now generally agreed that he is a historical personage. See W. G. Lambert, "Gilgameš in Religious, Historical and Omen Texts and the Historicity of Gilgameš," in Garelli, *Gilg.*, 48.

9 See Th. Jacobsen, "Early Political Development in Mesopotamia," *ZA* NF 18 (1957), 107-8, note 32 (=*Toward the Image of Tammuz* [Cambridge, Mass., 1970], 375-76, henceforth, *TIT*), and "The Myth of Inanna and Bilulu," *JNES* 12 (1953), 180-82 (=*TIT*, 343-44), for the initially distinctive functions of the En and Lugal; and for the subsequent combination of both cultic and military functions by the rulers of ED II, see Jacobsen *ZA* NF 18 (1957), 112-22 (=*TIT*, 142-48). See also D.O. Edzard, "Enmebaragesi von Kiš," *ZA* NF 19 (1959), 23. Although Edzard asserts that his study casts no additional light on Jacobsen's thesis with respect to the functions of the En at Kish, nevertheless, his work does tend to support Jacobsen's thesis that the offices of En and Lugal were combined by rulers during EDII.

city of Nippur, where he restored the sanctuary of Enlil.[10] These military and religious activities must have taken Gilgamesh away from his strictly domestic duties in Uruk, and he was in all probability not as completely devoted to the more traditional functions of the En within the city of Uruk.[11]

Such a development must have stimulated a growing awareness regarding the problems of rulership, and this may have provided the context for the composition of the epic cycles concerning the rulers of the First Dynasty of Uruk. These epics share a concern for the institution of rulership and the problem of the growing demands being placed upon the sovereigns of Uruk due to the changing circumstances of Early Dynastic II. The Epic of Gilgamesh as it has survived in its Babylonian, Assyrian, and Hittite versions contains traces of a distinctively Urukian cultural motif which was relevant to the political developments of Early Dynastic II.[12] This motif concerned itself with the potential problems which might arise when the offices of En and Lugal were held by the same man and the counterproductive results when any one activity was pursued to excess and to the neglect of the other. This theme brings together a number of the episodes of the epic, and for this reason grounds exist for claiming that a Sumerian epic of Gilgamesh existed in Uruk

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Edzard states that Enmebaragesi originally ruled Kish as king and only later assumed the office of En. This appears to parallel the development which occurred at Uruk, only vice versa. It seems that a local En who claimed kingship over more extended areas assumed the title of Lugal by establishing his control over Nippur and appealing to the divine appointment of Enlil. A Lugal who succeeded in extending his kingship to other parts of Sumer may have assumed the title of En as a result of claiming a special relationship with Inanna of Uruk or possibly with Inanna of Nippur. According to the Tummal Inscription, Enmebaragesi of Kish was the first to build the temple of Enlil at Nippur, and his association with that city might have been originally strengthened by his becoming En of the Inanna temple which had existed in the city of Nippur for centuries; cf. note 30 below. It is certainly doubtful that Enmebaragesi became the En of the temple of Zababa of Kish! On the other hand, the Tummal Inscription reveals Gilgamesh, who was originally the En of Uruk, as one of the restorers of the Enlil sanctuary at Nippur, and he very likely performed this act as a Lugal of Sumer. Cf. Kramer, "Gilgamesh: Some New Historical Data," Garelli, *Gilg.* 60-63.

10 Loc. Cit.

11 Gilgamesh's reign appears to be more in the tradition of Enmerkar and Lugalbanda whose very names seem to reflect the evolution of rulership at Uruk at the time of Gilgamesh: from the traditional rule of the En who was the consort of Inanna to the rule of the martial and heroic Lugal. This places Gilgamesh in a transitional era during which time the consciousness of the cultural issues involving rulership which combined the functions of the En and Lugal would have emerged. Note that in the epics *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta* and *Gilgamesh and Agga* that these two rulers are referred to as both En and Lugal. The heroic cycles of Uruk probably were originally created as a vehicle for the articulation of the problems and ideals relating to rulership during ED II in that city. For another possible reflection of this emerging cultural issue, see Kramer, "Cuneiform Studies and History of Literature," *PAPS* 107 (1963), 509-10, where there seems to be some conflict between Dumuzi's having to make love to Inanna and having to attend to his royal duties in the palace. Indeed, it would appear that the change of residence from the giparu to the é-gal as the abode of the ruler of Uruk would be an important step in the development of the cultural issue.

12 See the conclusion below, for an explanation of how the unifying theme of the proposed oral Epic of Gilgamesh was lost when the epic tales assumed their first literary form.

dating to Early Dynastic times.

At the beginning of the epic, Gilgamesh appears as the shepherd of Uruk, the economic manager and the mobilizer of society. He is particularly preoccupied with his cultic responsibilities which are designed to assure fertility and abundance for his people. His enthusiasm in this role becomes excessive to say the least when he demands the right of the first night with the bride of each new marriage. The young men of Uruk are also enlisted into service by Gilgamesh for reasons unexplained in the epic.[13] The results of his unrestrained extension of those cultic and managerial responsibilities related to the *hieros gamos* and the office of En are far from being completely beneficial for the community. The people complain repeatedly; they need a rest.

To divert Gilgamesh's preoccupation with his domestic concerns in Uruk, the gods create Enkidu who succeeds in diverting Gilgamesh's interests only after a dramatic scene in which the two protagonists engage in a fierce struggle. Appropriately, the occasion for their great wrestling match arises when Gilgamesh is on his way to perform the sacred marriage presumably with Inanna-Ishtar, the goddess of the city herself.[14] Enkidu blocks Gilgamesh's entry through the doorway, and the fighting ensues during the course of which the *sippu* is destroyed and the wall is damaged.[15]

The struggle between Enkidu and Gilgamesh and the destruction of the *sippu* is a pivotal event in the epic, a turning-point for the character of Gilgamesh—for he and Enkidu become boon companions. An important aspect of the Sumerian epic theme is expressed in Enkidu's pronouncement to Gilgamesh that Enlil has decreed that he (Gilgamesh) is to have kingship over mankind *šarrūtam ša nišī išīmkum Enlil*).[16] Gilgamesh's interest in his cultic respon-

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13 A. Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels* (Chicago, 1946), 18. See also I. M. Diakonoff's translation of OB II, col. iv, 22-37, in *Bi.Or.* 18 (1961), 62, where the excesses of Gilgamesh appear to go even beyond that of *jus primae noctis.*

14 Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic,* 31. The passage mentions the preparation of the bed of Ishḫara, a goddess who was present at the consummation of the *hieros gamos* in the form of a scorpion under the bed according to glyptic evidence found at Tell Asmar. See E. D. Van Buren, "The Scorpion in Mesopotamian Art and Religion," *AfO* 12 (1937), 14, and fig. 16. For Ishḫara's presence in a shrine room in the Eanna precinct in Uruk, see ibid., 17. For Ishḫara in the Gilgamesh Epic, see idem, "The Sacred Marriage," *Or.* 13 (1944), 5-6. See also note 22 below.

15 For the physical encounter of Enkidu and Gilgamesh, and the destruction of the *sippu*, see the Pennsylvania Tablet, *UM* 10, plate 68, vi, 5-14 (=*YOS* IV, 3, col. vi:214-21): *ittamḫarū ina rebītu māti Enkidu bābam iptarik ina šēpīšu Gilgāmeš erēbam ul iddin iṣṣabtūma kīma lîm ilūdū sippam (i'butū) igārum irtut.*

16 Ibid., col. vi:239-40, and the comments on page 86. It is particularly significant that at this point Gilgamesh ceases to function so much as the En of Inanna and assumes the role of the heroic Lugal of Enlil. Although Gilgamesh is repeatedly referred to as the En of Kullab in the Sumerian literature, there is little about his devotion to Inanna or his fulfillment of the ideals of En-ship. On the contrary, Gilgamesh has been destined for kingship and granted supremacy over mankind by Enlil; he was devoted to Enlil, and his unmatched military power is emphasized. See Kramer, "The Death of Gilgamesh," *ANET*^{3}, 50-52 (A, 33-35; B, 38).

sibilities is displaced, and he becomes preoccupied with heroic exploits far from home in the enchanted forest of Huwawa.[17] Indeed, his interests run to the opposite extreme to the point that he later spurns the advances of Inanna-Ishtar. His failure to perform the *hieros gamos* with the goddess inevitably brings to Uruk the loss of fertility, which appears in the form of the Bull of Heaven, released at the behest of Inanna-Ishtar.[18]

The Sumerian origin of this major theme in the Epic of Gilgamesh is indicated by the appearance of the *sippu* at two important points within the motif: the struggle between Gilgamesh and Enkidu and the wooing of Gilgamesh by Inanna. Enkidu's cursing the gate on his deathbed is further evidence for this motif's Sumerian origins and will be considered below.

The significance of the destruction of the *sippu* during the struggle between Gilgamesh and Enkidu is lost in the Old Babylonian version; but it would be readily apparent in early Uruk. It is perhaps the earliest example of religious iconoclasm known. None of the usual translations of *sippu* ('doorpost' and 'threshold' for example) communicates the real significance of this object.[19] Generally, the references to *sippu* indicate that it was often placed in pairs to the immediate left and right of the gate of buildings or walls and that it was used sometimes to mount religious images.[20] Moreover the Sumerian equivalent of *sippē*, za$_3$-du$_8$-za$_3$-du$_8$, functioned as divine emblems (uri$_3$),[21] which suggests that in the Sumerian Gilgamesh Epic the *sippu* of the temple of Inanna which was destroyed corresponded to one of the divine standards which symbolized Inanna herself and which appeared frequently flanking the doorway of her temple.[22] Glyptic evidence, as well as inscriptions

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17 Cf. Kramer, "Gilgamesh and the Land of the Living," *ANET*^{3}, 46-50. In this poem Gilgamesh's expedition against Huwawa appears as a royal expedition with a small army whose weapons were made by the bronze smiths of Uruk.

18 Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic*, 53. The Sumerian theme seems to be reflected rather strongly in the entire "Bull of Heaven" episode. The contrast, and indeed the conflict, between Inanna's temple and Gilgamesh's palace is highlighted by lines 163-73, where Inanna and her followers bewail the dead bull while Gilgamesh with his craftsmen and armorers admire the carcass as a trophy. See Heidel, ibid., 54-55.

19 See A. Salonen, *Die Türen des alten Mesopotamien* (Helsinki, 1961), 62: 'Schwellplatte mit Angelpfannenstein, ausgemuldeten Steinplatten und Torgewänden', 'Schwellstein', 'Schwell'. *Sippu* is rendered 'doorpost' by Spesier, *ANET*^{3}, 78, and Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic*, 32; as 'threshold' by Jastrow-Clay, *YOS* IV, 3, col. vi:220 and 225; von Soden, *AHw.*, 1049, s.v.; and H. Weidhaas, "Der *bīt ḫīlāni*," *ZA* 45 (1939), 123f.

20 See the examples in Salonen, *Türen*, 64-66. Also cf. A. Goetze, *Laws of Eshnunna*, 99–100.

21 See S. N. Kramer, *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta* (Philadelphia, 1952), lines 133 and 206. For the reading uri$_3$, see A. Falkenstein, *Sumerische Götterlieder* (Heidelberg, 1959), 1:47, commentary to line 45; cf. also Deimel, *SL* II, no. 331:1 and 2. See Salonen, *Türen*, 62, for za$_3$-du$_8$=*sippu*.

22 For the evidence that Gilgamesh and Enkidu fought before the gate of the temple of Inanna, see note 11 above. For Enkidu blocking the gate of the *bīt emūti*, see *YOS* IV, 3, col. vi:215, and the note to lines 215-17 on page 85. In Uruk the *bīt emūti par excellence* would have been the temple in which the sacred marriage with Inanna occurred. Cf. *CAD* E, 162 "*emūti* in *bīt emūti*." See below where Inanna refers to the *sippu* of her temple in her marriage proposal to Gilgamesh (VI, 15).

from archaic Uruk, indicate that in Gilgamesh's hometown the gate emblem and Inanna were identical.[23] In fact, the later Sumero-Akkadian sign for the goddess Inanna-Ishtar (INANNA) evolved from the pictograph for this gate insignia, and uri$_3$ (ŠEŠ) as a pictograph bears a strong resemblance to the pictograph for INANNA and seems to have referred to the protecting emblem guarding the temple gate.[24] The destruction of the *sippu* in the Gilgamesh Epic, therefore, was a blatant blasphemy against Inanna and symbolized Gilgamesh's and Enkidu's rejection of the goddess and the cult act in which she played the leading role.[25]

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23 Jacobsen, *ZA* NF 18 (1957), 108, n. 32 (=*TIT*, 375-76). See also E. D. Van Buren, "The Ear of Corn," *An. Or.* 12 (1935), 327-35, and E. D. Van Buren, *Or.* 13 (1944), 13-15. For the doorpost symbol of Inanna in the archaic tablets from Uruk IV, see A. Falkenstein, *ATU* (Berlin, 1936), no. 208, where it appears frequently. The combined evidence of seals and the well known alabaster vase found at Warka indicates that at Uruk the ritual of sacred marriage began with Inanna greeting her consort before the entrance of her sanctuary. The goddess is flanked by gateposts, her symbol, which also appear to stand for the goddess herself in scenes where she is otherwise not present in human form. The gatepost in these ritual scenes is the same as the pictograph from which the cuneiform sign for Inanna-Ishtar was derived. See note 24 below. For a Sumerian literary reference which connects the goddess sexually with her storehouse and its door, see below, note 25.

24 See Deimel, *SL*, I, 165: "Urbild = Türpfosten e. Rohrhütte + Türmatte; Grundbedeutung = Symbol des Tores, der Vulva der Ištar." For this sign with the d i n g i r meaning Inanna-Ishtar, see ibid., II, no. 103:1 and 7. For u r i$_3$, see ibid., I, 622, and III, 1, p. 111. The relationship between u r i$_3$ and ŠEŠ is discussed by Deimel in II, no. 331:1 and 2.

25 A possible explanation for how this event lost its symbolic significance involves the question of the transmission of the Sumerian epic material to its Babylonian context. See the conclusion below. At least as long as the tradition was contained in Uruk, where it very likely had its origins, the *sippu* (za$_3$-dug) must have been an unmistakable reference to Inanna. For Inanna's storehouse and its door as sex symbols in a Sumerian context, see *TRS* 70:23-39, which is transliterated and translated by Kramer, *PAPS* 107 (1963), 495-96. Kramer's translation at least partially misses the sexual imagery of this passage where the sign for vulva (read ga l$_4$) is used as an attribute of the door of the storehouse by which Inanna stands waiting for the arrival of Dumuzi (line 31: giš ig-SAL-é-uš-gíd-da-é-an-na-ka-gub-ba). The storehouse seems to be the goddess's vagina which is to be made long by Dumuzi's entry and consummation of the sacred marriage (lines 37-39: ma-mu ma-mu a-ne ma-ab-gíd-dè, ga-ša-an-mèn ma-mu ma-mu a-ne ma-ab-gíd-dè, ma-gi$_6$-par$_4$-ra-mu a-ne ma-ab-gíd-dè "My house (?), my house (?), let him make it 'long' for me, I the queen—my house (?), my house (?), let him make it 'long' for me, My *gipar*-house (?) let him make it 'long' for me." On the basis of the following comments, gíd in this context might better be translated 'fertile, full, or abundant', i.e. 'let him make it full for me'.

Sexual images and meanings should take priority over other possible translations (such as for line 31: "the narrow door of the house with the long side," which remains a possibility) given the context which is a description of the preliminaries to the sacred marriage ceremony between Inanna and Dumuzi at the Eanna in Uruk. In support of giš ig-SAL as a sexual image, SAL appears as the vulva of Inanna a few lines above (line 23: giš.BU-PÚ-gig-na in-pàd-de SAL-la-na mu-un-gá-gá "She picks black. . . willow, puts it on her vulva." Moreover, é-uš-gíd-da in line 31 is not merely the storehouse, but rather the 'house of abundance or feritility'. This seems preferable to the translation 'the house with the long side' found in *CAD* A, 220, *araḫḫu*. This latter rendering is based on the lexical identification of É.UŠ.GÍD.DA with *araḫḫu*. Although *araḫḫu* may be associated with the idea of being long, it is more likely that the evidence cited in *CAD* A, 220 in conjunction with *CAD* Ḫ 167, *ḫegallu*, and 168, "*ḫegallu* in *bīt ḫegalli*"

Appropriately the *sippu*-emblem appears again at the beginning of Tablet VI when Inanna invites Gilgamesh to be her husband and perform the sacred marriage in his capacity as En of Uruk. Inanna's address to Gilgamesh and his response have been recognized as reflecting a particular Sumerian literary genre, the love duette, within the larger context of the sacred marriage texts of Inanna.[26] Inanna's reference to her temple's *sippu* provides a basis for a partial reconstruction of some of the material pertaining to the Sumerian epic theme which was possibly omitted in the Babylonian and Assyrian versions of the epic. Inanna tells Gilgamesh that upon his entering her house (as the En in the sacred marriage), "The threshold (*sippu*) and dais shall kiss thy feet."[27] These lines suggest that in the interim, between the destruction of the *sippu*-emblem in Tablet II and Inanna's marriage proposal in Tablet VI, the entrance to Inanna's temple in Uruk with its destroyed *sippu* and damaged wall had been repaired.

This supposition seems confirmed by fragments of the Hittite version of the epic. On the basis of KUB VIII 52 and 58[28] the events subsequent to the expedition to the Cedar Forest of Huwawa can be reconstructed. Gilgamesh and Enkidu were not able to return directly to Uruk presumably because of the anger of Inanna over the damage to her temple and what this symbolized (not to mention that Gilgamesh did not consummate the sacred marriage due to Enkidu's interference).[29] Consequently, the heroes returned from the Cedar Forest to the temple of Enlil at Nippur,[30] where they set to work preparing the cedar timber they

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points to É.UŠ.GÍD.DA = *bīt ḫegalli* 'house of abundance, i.e. treasury'. The evidence may be expressed by the following set of equations: IM.DIRI.AN.GÍD = AN.DA.GÍD.DA; *araḫḫu* (= *ḫegallu*) = DUBUR.ÀM.GÍD//AN.DA.GÍD.DA. The salient concept in all of the words and logographs appears to be 'fullness, abundance, and fertility'. The cloud formation IM.DIRI.AN.GÍD seems to be a cloud which fills the heavens. This is probably specified by the logograph AN.DA.GÍD.DA which appears to mean 'the heavens full (of clouds) from side to side, i.e. an overcast sky'. This suggests 'abundance', and calls to mind a preeminent image full of fertility, DUBUR.ÀM.GÍD, which is equated with the storehouse (*araḫḫu*); it is abundance (*ḫegallu*). For further support of this translation of *TRS* 70:37-39, see Kramer, *PAPS* 107 (1963), 510 (*UET* VI, no. 122: line 14), where priestesses seem to be singing to the king on behalf of Inanna the following: é-ku$_4$-ra-zu ḫe-gál-la "Your entering the house is abundance."

26 See J. Van Dijk, "La fête du nouvel an dans un texte de Šulgi," *Bi.Or.* 11 (1954), 83-88.

27 Speiser, *ANET*^{3}, 84; Thompson, *Gilg.*, VI, 14-15: *ana bītini ina erēbika sippū'arattû linaššiqū šēpēka.* Cf. von Soden, *AHw.*, 66, s.v. *arattû*, where the meaning of *šibbū (sippū?) arattû* appears to be unclear.

28 J. Friedrich, "Die hethitischen Bruchstücke des Gilgameš-Epos," *ZA* 39 (1930), 14-15.

29 The question posed by E. von Weiher, "Ein Fragment des Gilgameš-Epos aus Uruk," *ZA* NF 62 (1973), 223, regarding Gilgamesh's assertion in his speech to the city elders that he will enter the city gate of Uruk and celebrate the New Year festival, whether this will be done before or after the expedition against Huwawa, must be answered in favor of the view that only after the victory over Huwawa when Gilgamesh has made amends with Inanna, will he be able to carry out the important New Year festivities. This recently discovered fragment tends to support the view expressed in this paper that Gilgamesh's cultic role in Uruk was at issue prior to his expedition against Huwawa, and that the latter was motivated in part by his desire to regain the favor of the goddess.

30 See below, where Enkidu curses the door, i.e. Inanna's symbol, which he built at Nippur. Cf.

had apparently acquired for some specific project. Gilgamesh was able to extricate himself from this work and after putting on clean clothes went to see Inanna-Ishtar, presumably to make amends with the goddess. The Hittite fragment KUB VIII 58 suggests that the conversation between Gilgamesh and the goddess was more involved than that represented in the Assyrian Tablet VI. In spite of its fragmentary state this portion of the Hittite version indicates that their exchange concerned in part a discussion regarding the reconstruction of Inanna's temple entrance.[31] It is probable that only after the restoration of her temple and its *sippu*-emblem was Inanna reconciled to invite Gilgamesh to come and be her lover.

Gilgamesh's opening words in response to Inanna's proposal may also reflect the Sumerian epic theme. He has already provided for the reconstruction of her temple, and he now asserts that he will provide all her material needs that befit godship and kingship; she will have all the wine and grain her storehouse can hold.[32] But Gilgamesh refuses to marry her. In effect, Gilgamesh seems to be saying that as Lugal he will build Inanna's temple and provide for her economic needs, but that he has no time for the sacred marriage in Uruk.

Enkidu's cursing the gate on his deathbed in Tablet VII supports the above reconstruction of the Sumerian epic theme.[33] After describing its quality cedar and its dimensions, Enkidu states that he built the gate in Nippur, complementing the fragmentary information discussed above which appears in KUB VIII 52:4-7.

Enkidu's cursing the gate, moreover, is an important part of the Sumerian epic theme which was no longer appreciated or perhaps not even understood by the Babylonian poet. The latter was preoccupied with his own epic theme, which involved death and the contrast between life and death on the steppe and in the city.[34] For the Babylonian writer, the curses of Enkidu are due not so much to the fact that he is dying, but rather to the *type of death* he is dying. In the state of nature, death comes swiftly to the weak and aging. But Enkidu's demise is the type frequently found in the state of civilization with its artificial comforts and its protection from the natural elements. His death involves prolonged suffering; hence he curses those responsible for his agony, including the trapper and the harlot, who introduced him to civilization. But prior to mentioning these, Enkidu curses the gate. The Old Babylonian architect of the epic is a bit troubled by this, pointing out that the gate is

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Lugalzagesi in Thureau-Dangin, *SAKI*, 154-55, where this king provided for Inanna at Nippur, which indicates that at least by the end of ED III Lugals saw to the needs of Inanna at Nippur, if not at Uruk.

31 Friedrich, *Die hethitischen Bruchstücke*, 16-17. ^{giš}*kat-ta-lu-uz-zi* is mentioned in lines 4 and 10 as well as silver and precious stone. For the meaning 'threshold' or 'doorframe' for ^{giš}*kat-ta-lu-uz-zi*, see J. Friedrich, *Hethitische Wörterbuch*, s.v., and E. Laroche, *Dictionnaire de la Langue Louvite* (Paris, 1959), s.v., and page 152 (*KUB* XXXV 54, iii:29).

32 See Diakonoff, *Bi.Or.* 18 (1961), 63, for the possible emendation of Tablet VI, 27-32.

33 Much misunderstanding regarding the gate cursed by Enkidu is due to its being identified with a gate in the Cedar Forest which probably is nonexistent. See Diakonoff, *Bi.Or.* 18 (1961), 64, for *ḫalbu* as a poetic synonym for *iṣu*.

34 See note 5 above.

spoken to even though it is not human and does not understand.[35] Yet the Babylonian version retained this curse from the Sumerian epic and even gave it priority in the sequence of curses, although the gate actually had no direct relationship with the Babylonian epic theme; that is, the type of death Enkidu is dying in the city of Uruk rather than out on the steppes.[36] However, if Inanna-Ishtar is substituted in this curse for 'gate', the object so closely associated with her in Sumerian religious iconography, it is possible to obtain what was probably the meaning of the curse in the original Sumerian document: VII:(46) "O 'Inanna,' had I known that this was [thy purpose], (47) And that [thy] beauty [would bring on] this (disaster), (48) I would have lifted an ax (and) [shattered thee all]! (49) I would have constructed a reed frame (out of thee)!"[37] And in the Sumerian epic, why should Enkidu not curse Inanna-Ishtar first? She and her *sippu*-emblem are most responsible for his death. It was the rebuilding of her temple entrance which led to the renewal of her interest in Gilgamesh and the subsequent sequence of tragic events: the release of the Bull of Heaven which was killed by Enkidu (not to mention Enkidu's throwing the 'thigh' of the Bull at the goddess). Indeed, the parts of the gate which Enkidu mentions just prior to his curse (VII, i:44: *šukûki sāḫirki u šagammaki*)[38] appear to be a description of the three

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35 See Speiser, *ANET*^{3}, 86, Tablet VII, col. i:36-39. Note Professor Kirk also has some difficulty in fitting Enkidu's curse upon the gate into this mythical motif; *Myth*, 148, n. 17.

36 In the Babylonian version, the curses of Enkidu and the response by Shamash are an important part of the Nature vs. Culture motif. Within this epic theme, the curse of the gate seems out of place. Its position of priority in the sequence of curses in the Old Babylonian version indicates the latter's dependence on an earlier Sumerian document which contained Enkidu's curse upon the gate emblem of Inanna. Note too that Shamash, in his response to the curses of Enkidu, does not appear to answer the curse of the gate which again suggests that this material does not fit into the Old Babylonian cultural motif for this episode. This curse was, nonetheless, an essential ingredient of the cultural theme of the Sumerian prototype which first contained the episode.

37 As translated by Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic*, 58. The preserved text reads in transcription: (46) *lū īdi daltu kī annû [ ]* (47) *u annû dumuq [ ]* (48) *lū aššī pāšu lū [ ]* (49) *ama lū ušarki[s]*. Cf. R. Campbell Thompson, *Gilg.*, IV, i:46-49, with restorations: (46) *[rubûtika]*, (47) *[né-peš-ti-ki]*. Enkidu's threat to turn "Inanna" into a 'reed frame' *(amu)* may be a subtle reference to the reed construction which lies behind the appearance of the gate-emblem of, and cuneiform sign for, the goddess. For a more complete text of Enkidu's curse on the gate, see A. K. Grayson, *ANET*^{3}, 505, and cf. Diakonoff, *Bi.Or.* 18 (1961), 64.

38 For a general discussion of the meaning of these terms, see Salonen, *Türen*, 68-69 *(šukû)*, 62 *(sāḫiru)*, 66 *(šagammu)*. See Speiser, *ANET*^{3}, 86, Tablet VII, 44. Speiser's translation of these terms as 'pole', 'pole-ferrule', and 'pole-knob', comes very close to the description of the three parts of the pictographic gate emblem of Inanna. Cf. Speiser, "A Note on Certain Akkadian Terms for Door-Equipment," *JCS* 2 (1948/49), 225-27. It seems particularly relevant that s u k u $_2$ in its early usage was interchangeable with INANNA and as an ideogram at Susa was equated with NINNI.ERIN^{KI}. See Deimel, *SL II*/1:102, 14c. *sāḫiru* = gi^{š}u$_4$-sar-ig is probably to be identified with that part of the gate emblem of Inanna which appears as a streamer bound to the gate-pole from which it flares out in a crescent shape. *šagammu* = gi^{š}u$_5$-ig seems to refer to the round knob riding at the top of the gate-pole of the Inanna gate emblem.

parts of the pictographic symbol of Inanna in the archaic texts and glyptic material from Uruk discussed above. It is therefore very likely that throughout the Sumerian Epic of Gilgamesh no distinction was made between the gate, the *sippu*-emblem, and Inanna herself.

In the light of the thesis presented above, it is now possible to speculate concerning the preliterary history of the Epic of Gilgamesh. It is at least conceivable that an oral Sumerian Epic of Gilgmesh was the vehicle for a cultural theme which concerned the problems inherent in the combined functions of the cultic En and heroic Lugal in early Uruk. This oral epic may have taken literary form for the first time only during the Third Dynasty of Ur when it was written in Sumerian. Ur-Nammu may have come originally from Uruk, and he and his son, Šulgi, claimed kinship with the early dynastic rulers of that city which probably resulted in at least some of the oral traditions of Uruk assuming literary form during the Ur III era.[39] By the time of Ur III, however, the cultural motif which had unified the oral epic of Gilgamesh at Uruk no longer appeared as significant as it had been in the Early Dynastic era. Consequently, the Sumerian literary epic material, neglecting the unifying theme, did not possess the integration of the oral epic and may have appeared originally about as episodic as the extant documents.[40] When the episodic Sumerian Gilgamesh literature was translated into Akkadian, the Old Babylonian poet used motifs reflecting the cultural experience of Babylonian and Amorite society in order to rejoin the Sumerian episodes into an epic unity. It is particularly tempting to attribute the Nature *versus* Culture motif in the Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh to the bimodal tribalism experienced by Amorite society in the early second millennium B.C. This would very likely have given impetus to a conscious contrast of the different styles of life and death within steppe and urban environment and a comparison of their respective advantages and disadvantages. It does appear that this motif brings together most of the themes identified so far as those by which the Old Babylonian version acquired its epic unity.[41]

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39 The earliest evidence for any of the Sumerian Gilgamesh literature occurs in a Sumerian literary catalogue dated to about 2000 B.C. See Kramer, "The Oldest Literary Catalogue: A Sumerian List of Literary Compositions Compiled About 2000 B.C.," *BASOR* 88 (1942), 10-19. Also cf. Kramer, "New Literary Catalogue From Ur," *RA* 55 (1961), 169-76. For the connection between the epic cycles concerning the Early Dynastic rulers of Uruk and the genealogy of the dynasty of Ur III, see W. W. Hallo, "The Coronation of Ur-Nammu," *JCS* 20 (1966), 137.

40 See above, notes 1 and 6.

41 The literary antecedents of the early life of Enkidu appear to be more closely related to descriptions of primordial man than to the descriptions of Amorite origins and life style. See Tigay, *Literary-Critical Studies*, 230-72. The Old Babylonian poet, however, was most likely oblivious to the question of literary consistency and historical accuracy in drawing on literary traditions which lent themselves to his own literary purposes.

The pattern of metaphorical death in Wolff, *Gilgamesh, Enkidu,* correlates to a significant extent with the pattern of reversals from nature to culture and vice versa in Kirk's discussion of the epic; *Myth*. As for the concern about real death, see the treatment of Enkidu's curses above. Death is an important concern in the Sumerian Gilgamesh material as well, and may be related to the process of urbanization in the Early Dynastic period. The more urbanized human life becomes, the more meaningless becomes death. Even in ancient Mesopotamia where cities remained closely associated with agriculture and perpetuated the seasonal myths, urban life in many respects was artificial; in many ways men became

separated from the fundamentals of life's processes. In a rural unsophisticated environment, one can readily recognize the close interrelationship between life and death; life is not possible without death--even human death. This fundamental truth becomes increasingly elusive the more urbanized man becomes.