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WAS THERE AN INTEGRATED GILGAMESH EPIC IN THE OLD BABYLONIAN PERIOD?

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Although it is generally agreed that the "canonical" version of the Gilgamesh Epic (henceforth GE) was composed in the last half or quarter of the second millennium, probably in the Kassite period,¹ it is widely assumed that the integrated Akkadian epic, with its plot and unifying themes, is a product of the Old Babylonian period. In the past two decades a number of scholars have noted that this assumption has never been substantiated.² They ask, in effect: is there any evidence against an assumption that the Akkadian Gilgamesh texts of the Old Babylonian period are simply independent, disconnected episodes, like the Sumerian Gilgamesh compositions? The purpose of this paper is to adduce evidence in support of the view that the integrated epic existed in the Old Babylonian period.

I

Since the adventures of Gilgamesh first became known to modern scholars in the form of GE, it is not surprising that the subsequently discovered Sumerian forerunners of the epic were also first taken to be parts of a single integrated epic.³ This view was rejected by Kramer in 1944.⁴ Kramer argued, on the basis of the varying lengths of the six Sumerian tales then known and their character as "individual, disconnected tales,"⁵ that the Sumerian tales comprised independent narratives which had not been united into a single epic, and that the composition of the epic, with an unfolding plot linking the episodes, was a Babylonian contribution. Some years later further evidence for this position was adduced by L. Matouš.⁶ He noted that GEN and the Sumerian account of the flood began with mythological introductions, a feature which typically appears at

1. W. von Soden, MDOG 85 (1953) 23; ZA 40 (1931) 187; 41 (1933) 129f.; W. G. Lambert, JCS 11 (1957) 1-14; F. Böhl, *Het Gilgamesj-Epos*² (1952) p. 16; RLA 3/5 (1968) 364; cf. W. W. Hallo, IEJ 12 (1962) 15f. B. Landsberger dates the Gilgamesh Epic about 1250 B.C. (Garelli, *Gilg.* p. 34), and L. Matouš dates it about 1100 (Garelli, *Gilg.* p. 93f.).

This article is dedicated to the memory of J. J. Finkelstein, in appreciation for the privilege of being among his students.

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Special abbreviations:

DG The Death of Gilgamesh, ed. Kramer, BASOR 94 (1944) 2-12; ANET³ pp. 50-52
GA Gilgamesh and Agga, ed. Kramer, AJA 53 (1949) 1-18; ANET³ pp. 44-47
GBH Gilgamesh and the Bull of Heaven (cf. P. M. Witzel, AnOr 6 [1933] 45-68)
GE The late ("canonical") version of the Gilgamesh Epic, cited according to Thompson, *Gilg.*
GEN Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld, ed. Shaffer, as below
Gilg. Bo. KUB 4 12: Thompson, *Gilg.* pp. 43f.; ANET³ p. 82 (obv.)
Gilg. Har. B van Dijk, Sumer 13 (1957) 66 and 91, ed. van Dijk, Sumer 14 (1958) 114-21; ANET³ p. 504
Gilg. Me. Meissner, MVAG 7 (1902); ANET³ 89f.
Gilg. Meg. Goetze and Levy, Atiqot 2 (1959) 121-28 pl. XVIII
Gilg. Mi CT 46 16, ed. Millard, Iraq 26 (1964) 99-105; ANET³ p. 507

Gilg. O.I. Bauer, JNES 16 (1957) 254-62; ANET³ pp. 504f.
Gilg. P Langdon, PBS 10/3 (1917); ed. Jastrow and Clay, YOR 4/3 (1920) 62-86; Thompson, *Gilg.* pp. 20-24; ANET³ pp. 76-78
Gilg. Ur UET 6 394, ed. Gadd, Iraq 28 (1966) 105-121
Gilg. Y Jastrow and Clay, YOR 4/3 (1920) 87-102; Thompson, *Gilg.* pp. 25-29; ANET³ pp. 78-81
GLL Gilgamesh and the Land of the Living, ed. Kramer, JCS 1 (1947) 3-46; van Dijk in Garelli, *Gilg.* pp. 69-81
Hit. Gilg. The Hittite version(s); Tablet I cited from ed. Otten, Ist.Mitt. 8 (1958) 93-125; other fragments from ed. Friedrich, ZA 39 (1929) 1-82 (cf. Laroche, RHA 82 [1967] 121-38); for no. 8, see ANET³ pp. 85f.
Shaffer, Sources A. Shaffer, Sumerian Sources of Tablet XII of the Epic of Gilgameš (unpubl. Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1963)
2. C. J. Gadd, Teachers (1956) p. 7f.; D. O. Edzard, in H. W. Haussig (ed.), Wörterbuch der Mythologie 1 (1965) 72; T. Jacobsen and W. W. Hallo apud H. N. Wolff, JAOS 89 (1969) 393 n. 2. Cf. the doubt about Gilg Me implied by von Soden, MDOG 85 (1953) 21.
3. S. Langdon, JRAS 1932 912; Shaffer (Sources, p. 4) also cites SRT 35.
4. S. N. Kramer, "The Epic of Gilgameš and its Sumerian Sources: A Study in Literary Evolution," JAOS 64 (1944) 7-23, 83.
5. Kramer, JAOS 64 (1944) 18. Cf. Jack M. Sasson, "Some Literary Motifs in the Composition of the Gilgamesh Epic," Studies in Philology 69 (1972) 264. For a possible seventh Sumerian episode see Kramer in UET 6/1 p. 7 no. 60.
6. Garelli, *Gilg.* p. 87f.

the beginning of a composition,⁷ and that GLL (version A),⁸ GA, and GEN were listed as separate entries in Sumerian literary catalogues.⁹ These facts show that none of these tales was preceded by another.¹⁰ That GLL A, GA, GEN, and fragment B of DG were not followed by any other episode is shown by the doxological formula (DN) zà-mí(-zu du₁₀-ga-àm) with which they end, since this formula typically appears at the end of a composition.¹¹

The demonstration of the separateness of the Sumerian tales at first had no effect upon general opinion concerning the Old Babylonian tablets and fragments of the Akkadian version. They were still taken to be parts of an already unified epic, rather than independent tales like the Sumerian ones. This assumption is still widely taken for granted.¹²

The direct textual evidence in favor of such an assumption is not extensive. The Old Babylonian Gilg P is identified in its colophon as tablet two of its series and Gilg Y, its sequel, is, to judge from its appearance and script, from the same edition.¹³ This edition thus contained at least four tablets, the first not extant, the second dealing with the advent of Enkidu, and the third with preparations for the journey to the Cedar Mountain; the latter implies at least one more tablet describing the journey itself. While this evidence points to a composition which contains more than a single episode, it hardly adds up to the full, integrated epic known from GE. None of the other Old Babylonian texts demonstrably belongs to this edition and most, with their different appearance, number of columns, and find-sites, clearly do not. Their mere existence in itself implies nothing about the possible integration of the epic in this period.

Recently H. N. Wolff attempted briefly to adduce some evidence which might overcome doubts about the epic's early unification.¹⁴ She noted the use of a "week-long suspension" followed by a "change of the character and outlook of the person concerned"¹⁵ twice, at strategic points, in the Old Babylonian version, and inferred that this indicates "the work of an author pursuing a specific line of thought." She concluded, however, that this implies at most a single author (not necessarily a single composition) and is, in addition, subjective.

II

The earliest direct evidence for a fuller Gilgamesh epic comes from the 14th-13th century Gilgamesh texts unearthed at Boghoköi. The Akkadian fragment Gilg Bo, which is not part of the "canonical" version¹⁶ covers part of the journey to the Cedar Mountain on its obverse, while its reverse contains part of the Bull of Heaven episode.¹⁷ These two episodes were therefore connected by the time of this fragment, the 14th-13th centuries,¹⁸ and the connection is not limited to the "canonical" version.¹⁹

In the Hittite version²⁰ a number of tablets likewise cover several episodes each. The first tablet covers in abbreviated form the events narrated in GE I-V. The events of GE VI (as well as III-V) are presupposed by Hit. Gilg No. 8 and its partially overlapping duplicate No. 9, which include episodes found in GE VII-X, from Enkidu's dream in which the gods condemn him for his part in killing Huwawa and the Bull of Heaven,

7. See G. Castellino, VT Supplements 4 (1957) 117f. for a list of texts, and compare the comment of E. A. Speiser, Genesis (1964) p. lvii.

8. The same is true of GLL version B (i(NI)-a-lum-lum): see catalogues B:16, L:39, P:14, and UET 6/1 123:10 (see the next note for bibliography).

9. Kramer, BASOR 88 (1942) 10-19 (catalogues P and L). Further catalogues listing Gilgamesh texts have since come to light: UET 5 86 (catalogue B; see I. Bernhardt and S. N. Kramer in WZJ 6 [1956-57] 393 n. 4); UET 6/1 123 (see Kramer, RA 55 [1961] 169-76).

10. This type of argument is challenged by C. Wilcke, Lugalbanda (1969) p. 8.

11. Cf. also UET 6/1 60:17.

12. A. Heidel, The Gilgamesh Epic² (1949) p. 15; T. Jacobsen, in H. and H. A. Frankfort (ed.), Before Philosophy (1949) p. 223; E. A. Speiser, ANET³ p. 73; T. Bauer, JNES 16 (1957) 261; B. Landsberger, in Garelli, Gilg. pp. 33f.; J. R. Kupper, Garelli, Gilg. p. 102; H. W. F. Saggs, The Greatness That Was Babylon² (1968) p. 370; J. J. Stamm, Asiatische Studien 6 (1952) 12; J. Laessøe in Studia Orientalia Pedersen (1953) p. 211.

13. Jastrow and Clay, YOR 4/3 (1920) 17f. A. Shaffer has now confirmed that *šūtur eli* [] in the colophon of Gilg P was the Old Babylonian incipit and hence the title of the epic; see his note apud D. J. Wiseman, "A Gilgamesh Epic Fragment from Nimrud," Iraq 37 (1975) 158 n. 22. For the position of the incipit in the colophon cf. the Old Babylonian colophons in Lambert and Millard, Atra-ḥasīs (1969) p. 32.

14. JAOS 89 (1969) 393 n. 2.

15. Cf. Sasson, Studies in Philology 69 (1972) 272.

16. Von Soden, MDOG 85 (1953) 22.

17. The reverse apparently skips from Gilgamesh's toilet (=GE VI 1ff.) to Ishtar's indignation (=GE VI 80ff.), omitting, with the possible exception of rev. 8f., Ishtar's proposal and Gilgamesh's rejection. Cf. J. R. Kupper in Garelli, Gilg. p. 100 and von Soden in ZA 59 (1959) 221.

18. H. Otten, in Garelli, Gilg. p. 139; cf. B. Landsberger and H. Tadmor, IEJ 14 (1964) 214.

19. See n. 16.

20. See the works cited in the list of abbreviations s.v. Hit. Gilg., and A. Kammenhuber, Münchner Studien zur Sprachwissenschaft 21 (1967) 45-58.

through Gilgamesh's mourning over Enkidu and his meeting with Siduri. These tablets clearly bespeak an integrated epic. According to A. Kammenhuber the Hittite Gilgamesh fragments date from the second half of the fourteenth century,²¹ giving a *terminus ad quem* for the integration of the epic.

Whether the Akkadian fragment and the Hittite tablets point to the state of affairs in the Old Babylonian period cannot be determined, since the derivation of the Boghazköi Akkadian texts²² and the Hittite versions of Babylonian literature²³ is still an open question.

III

Despite the paucity of direct evidence for the integration of the epic in the Old Babylonian period, there is ample indirect evidence to this effect. A comparison of GE with its Sumerian forerunners reveals certain features which are either unique to the Akkadian epic or play a unique role in it and constitute the cement unifying its episodes. These features are all attested in the Old Babylonian version.

The theme which unifies the epic's several episodes is, as is well known, Gilgamesh's quest to overcome death in some fashion, a quest also recognized in a collection of omens about Gilgamesh where he is said to have "sought life like Ziusudra."²⁴ Dossin has noted that "the unity [of the epic] is assured for it as much, if not more, by the role given to Enkidu as by that of Gilgamesh."²⁵ It is Enkidu's death, which gave Gilgamesh a first-hand experience of death, which became the turning point from Gilgamesh's pursuit of lasting fame to his literal quest for immortality. In order for Enkidu's death to have such a decisive effect on Gilgamesh, Enkidu should be more than a servant. In the Sumerian episodes Enkidu was once or twice affectionately termed Gilgamesh's friend (*ku-li*),²⁶ though his status as servant (*ir, šubur*) and Gilgamesh's as king/master (*lugal*) predominated.²⁷ The epic seized upon these sporadic hints of a loftier status for Enkidu and applied them across the board, consistently terming Enkidu Gilgamesh's friend and companion (*ibru, tappu*), brother (*aĥu*), and equal (*mašlu, kima*).²⁸ Already in GEN Gilgamesh had grieved over Enkidu's capture by the netherworld; he truly cared for Enkidu, servant though he was,²⁹ and tried to recover him. But there Gilgamesh's emotional response was not one of distraction, and did not issue in an attempt to escape death himself. Finally, it is only Enkidu's status as a friend and equal which creates a need to account for his origins.

All these developments in the character and role of Enkidu, which constitute decisive integrating factors in the epic, are already present in the Old Babylonian fragments and tablets.³⁰ An unpublished Nippur fragment³¹ describes the creation of Enkidu to contend with Gilgamesh and bring relief to Uruk, a role which

21. Kammenhuber, *Münchener Studien* 21 (1967) 46.

22. Cf. A. L. Oppenheim, *AnBib.* 12 (1959) 292.

23. H. G. Güterbock in S. N. Kramer (ed.), *Mythologies of the Ancient World* (1961) p. 154; Otten, in Garelli, *Gilg.* p. 139; Kammenhuber, *Münchener Studien* 21 (1967) 46, 55; Otten (Garelli, *Gilg.* p. 140) and Kammenhuber (*Münchener Studien* 21 47) have raised the possibility that the Hurrian Gilgamesh material still consisted of separate episodes. However, the reference to Enkidu as Gilgamesh's brother (cf. Kammenhuber) implies the integrated epic, as we shall see below.

24. Lambert in Garelli, *Gilg.* pp. 44f.; see also GE I i 39 (Wiseman, *Iraq* 37 [1975] 160). Cf. the Sumerian text quoted by M. Civil, *JNES* 28 (1969) 72 no. 18.

25. "... cette unité lui est assurée autant, sinon davantage, par le rôle prête à Enkidou que par celui de Gilgameš." *Académie Royale de Belgique: Bulletin de la Classe des Lettres*, 5e série, 42 (1956) 588; cf. Shaffer, *Sources* pp. 19, 21-25; Kramer, *JAOS* 64 (1944) 18-19.

26. GBH: VAS 10 196 r. "ii" 11; GEN 247 (237 in C. Wilcke's citation of the passage, *ZA* 59 [1959] 71; Wilcke's restoration of *ku-li* in the previous line seems ruled out in Shaffer's edition, *Sources* p. 86). GEN is the Sumerian original of GE XII, and although the Akkadian translation is hardly the work of the creator of the integrated epic, its treatment of Enkidu's status is the same. Where the Sumerian text terms Enkidu Gilgamesh's servant (*ir* or *šubur*), the Akkadian either drops the word or reads otherwise (GEN 177, 241, 243=GE XII 6, 80, 84); the Akkadian also adds two lines, with no counterpart in the known Sumerian manuscripts, calling

Enkidu Gilgamesh's brother (*aĥu*) and friend (*ibru*) (GE XII 81 and 87, added after the translations of GEN 241 and 245). On the other hand, GE XII 54 adds to the translation of GEN 222 a clause which calls Enkidu Gilgamesh's servant (*IR*); perhaps the clause is based on an unknown Sumerian *Vorlage*.

Jastrow's references to Enkidu as Gilgamesh's brother in Sumerian texts are erroneous (YOR 4/3 33): the first involves Ishtar, not Enkidu, and in the second the sign is *lugal*, not *šeš*.

27. E.g., GLL 3, 8, 9, 95, 96, 103, 153; GBH r. "ii" 17; GEN 177, 178, 206, 241; GA 42. Note, however, the similarity of GEN 250=GE XII 93, 95 to Gilg P i 20, 32-34.

28. For Old Babylonian examples of friend, equal, and like, see below, nn. 35 and 36. For friend in the later versions see Gilg Bo obv. 8, 10, 13, 21; Gilg Meg r. 2, 7, 17; Gilg Ur obv. 5, r. 60 (all Middle Babylonian); GE I iv 41; vi 1, 21; II vi 3, 6, 9; etc. For brother, see Hit. Gilg. no. 8:19, 22 (on the Hurrian version, see above. n. 23). On GE XII, see above, n. 26.

29. Cf. Shaffer, *Sources* pp. 22f.

30. Most of the Old Babylonian material is translated in ANET³ pp. 76-81, 504-505, 89-90, and 507 (see above, n. 1, s.v. Gilg Har B, Me, Mi, O.I., P, and Y). Two unpublished fragments are UM 29-13-570 and 2 N-T 79 (partially quoted by Shaffer, *Sources* p. 23 n. 3, from a copy by J. J. Finkelstein). Dr. Aage Westenholz has kindly shown me the copies he has made of both; they are to be published by W. G. Lambert.

31. 2 N-T 79:4: [*li-iš*]-*ta-an-na-an-ma* UNUG.KI *li-iš-tap-ši-iĥ*, "Let them contend, that Uruk may have peace" =GE I ii 32 (the passage is quoted by Shaffer, *Sources* p. 23 n. 3).

he plays in the Old Babylonian Gilg P as well.³² This role presupposes an account of Gilgamesh's tyranny over Uruk, which is also mentioned in Gilg P.³³ Enkidu's introduction to civilization is partly narrated in the same tablet.³⁴ Throughout the Old Babylonian material Enkidu is called Gilgamesh's friend³⁵ and "like" him.³⁶ The Old Babylonian version of Gilgamesh's journey to Utnapishtim has the journey motivated by grief over Enkidu.³⁷ (Presumably Gilgamesh reached Utnapishtim in this version; there is no way to know whether the account of their meeting included a full rehearsal of the flood story, as it does in GE.³⁸)

Given their absence from the Sumerian episodes, each of these developments makes sense only in the context of the integrated epic,³⁹ the existence of which in the Old Babylonian period is thus confirmed.⁴⁰

32. Gilg P. cols. v-vi.

33. Col. iv.

34. Cols. ii-iii.

35. Gilg Y ii 40; iii 14; iv 5, 26; v 21f; vi 27; Gilg Har B 3, 10; Gilg O.I. obv. 14; r. 5 (cf. 1); Gilg Me ii 7; Gilg Mi iii 4'.

36. Gilg P i 17; v 15.

37. Gilg Me ii; Gilg Mi iii.

38. Cf. the opposing views of Landsberger and Matouš in

Garelli, *Gilg*, pp. 34 and 90.

39. Cf. also Bauer, *JNES* 16 (1957) 261f.

40. That some of these developments took place in Sumerian forerunners which are not available to us is ruled out by Kramer, *JAOS* 64 (1944) 16 n. 60. More recently discovered variant recensions of the Sumerian compositions show no greater similarity to the Akkadian epic in matters which touch upon the essence of that epic.