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# GILGAMESH, THE CEDAR FOREST AND MESOPOTAMIAN HISTORY

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SAMUEL NOAH KRAMER WAS A PIONEER IN THE STUDY OF SUMERIAN EPICS concerning Gilgamesh and it is due to his work that the first inkling of what took place in the cedar forest became known.<sup>1</sup> I propose to discuss here some aspects of the denouement of *Gilgamesh and the Cedar Forest*. It is a pleasure to dedicate this effort to him.

*Gilgamesh and the Cedar Forest*, like its noble successor the Akkadian *Epic of Gilgamesh*, is an expression of man's struggle against the oblivion of death. Gilgamesh, a king of Uruk, seeks to surmount human mortality by establishing a name for himself in the cedar forest and by setting up his monument there.<sup>2</sup> It

later transpires that this will involve overcoming and then murdering the divinely appointed guardian of the cedars. Thus will Gilgamesh, like later Mesopotamian kings who boast of it, cut cedars in the holy grove; he will be a king of the woods.<sup>3</sup>

The sun god Utu whose domain is the cedar forest agrees and appoints seven genies to help him on his journey.<sup>4</sup> Reaching the forest, Gilgamesh is over-

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... tuppi zaginni šitassi  
[kī š]ū Gilgameš ittallak kalu maršāti  
"... read the lapis tablet,

how he, Gilgamesh, went through all the hardships"

For the author of Gilgamesh, this stele is the bridge between history and myth.

<sup>3</sup> The cedar forest motif is retained in Mesopotamian historical literature in the form of the ritual claim of kings, from the old Akkadian period on, to have gone to the cedar mountain and to have cut cedars there (cf. A. Malamat, *AS* 16, 365f). It also occurs in *Isaiah* 37:24 where Sennacherib is quoted as boasting of cutting the cedars, and in *Isaiah* 14 the marvellous mock elegy over the death of the king of Babylon where the trees themselves express relief that the king is dead, vs 8 "now that you have lain down, no one comes up to fell us."

<sup>4</sup> These demons are brothers, terrifying in their description. In one version of this epic they are clearly astral:

e-ne-ne an-na mul-la-me-eš  
ki-a ḥar-ra-an zu-me-eš  
an-na mul-dé-da il-la-me-eš  
ki-a kaskal-ki-aratta z[u-me-eš]  
dam-gār-ra-gin, giri<sub>3</sub>-bal zu-me-[eš]  
tu.mušen-gin, ab-[lâl]-kur-ra zu-[me-eš]  
má-ùr-má-ùr-hur-sag-gá-ka hu-mu-e-ni-túm-  
túm-mu-ne

They, then, shine in the sky,  
On earth they know the roads,

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<sup>1</sup> Primarily by his editing of Edward Chiera's copies in *Sumerian Epics and Myths*, and with the first edition of Gilgamesh and the Cedar Forest (called by him "Gilgamesh and the Land of Living") in *JCS* 1 1947, 3ff. I hope to complete my edition very soon.

<sup>2</sup> Lines 7f.

kur-ra ga-an-ku<sub>4</sub> mu-mu ga-an-gar  
ki-mu-gub-bu-ba-àm mu-mu ga-bí-ib-gub  
ki-mu-nu-gub-bu-ba-àm mu-dingir-mu (var.  
mu-dingir-re-e-ne) ga-bí-ib-gub

"I would enter the land, I would make a name for myself

Where there are already mounuments, I will set up my name

Where there are no monuments, I will set up my god's name (var. the name of the gods)"

This mythic stone monument (NA<sub>4</sub>.RÚ.A/narû) is referred to in the later prologue to the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, tablet I i 8: *iḥrus ina narê kalu mānaḥti* "he inscribed all his ordeal on a stone stele." This stele is presumably a source for the epic as recounted on the lapis lazuli tablet which the audience is invited to read, tablet I i 25–26 (*Iraq* 37, 161)

welmed with joy and without taking counsel with his servant Enkidu or the Uruk kinsmen who accompany them, cuts down a cedar. In the drama of "The King of the Wood" (immortalized by Sir James George Frazer in the opening of the *Golden Bough*) the plucking of the bough initiates a monomachia between the intruder and the priest of the forest sanctuary which results in death and, perhaps, in a new *rex nemorensis*. So here, Gilgamesh's hasty cutting of the cedar rouses the forest guardian Huwawa from his lair,<sup>5</sup>

Huwawa felt a shudder in his chamber,  
Put on his garment sheen against him.<sup>6</sup>

In another version, this is given as:

Then, as warrior approached warrior  
He twirled his divine sheen on his head like a turban.<sup>7</sup>

Gilgamesh is no match for this supernatural armour. He is overcome and sits in a daze, dreaming. Only after much shouting and prodding is he roused from reveries, in which he had nightmares about Huwawa. In one version, which takes a heroic view of Gilgamesh, the description of these terrors is transferred to

Stars blazing in the sky,  
On earth they know the road to the land of Aratta,  
They know to change paths like merchants,  
Like swallows they know the cracks of the earth,  
They would guide him through the many mountain passes.

<sup>5</sup> Perhaps it is really his slave/companion Enkidu who plays the role. In the *rex nemorensis* it is a fugitive slave who breaks the bough and offers the challenge. In the Sumerian epic here, it is actually Enkidu who kills the guardian of the forest. Many aspects of this Gilgamesh story which match elements of Frazer's tale—the divine grove, the 'ghastly priest,' the plucking of the bough, the *monomachia*—invite comparison. For a recent and stimulating re-evaluation of the "King of the Woods" see the discussion by Joseph Fontenrose in *The Ritual Theory of Myth*, 36ff. A more sceptical view is taken by David E. Bynum in *The Daemon in the Wood*, 147ff.

<sup>6</sup> <sup>d</sup>hu-wa-wa ki-ná-a-ni im-ma-ḥu-luḥ-ḥa ní-te-a-ni mu-na-ra-an-lá (var. [gú m]u-ra-é-a).

<sup>7</sup> u<sub>4</sub>-bi-a ur-sag ur-sag-ra ù-mu-un-na-te me-l[ám-ma-ni sag-gá-na] šu-gur-gin<sub>7</sub> i-in-b[úr].

Enkidu who tries to dissuade Gilgamesh from persisting. In the other version where a more human Gilgamesh is portrayed, Gilgamesh himself describes these horrific dreams while Enkidu urges him on, quoting, it would seem, advice from "your protective deity," Enki-Nudimmud. The latter may also have provided Gilgamesh with a ruse without which Gilgamesh and the Urukians clearly have no chance against Huwawa's supernatural aura.<sup>8</sup>

The traditions of the versions, which differ in several respects, diverge sharply at this point. In one version Gilgamesh tricks Huwawa into giving up his protection by offering him his sisters.<sup>9</sup> A second tradition has Gilgamesh offer Huwawa costly gifts for every one of his seven coats. The text is not complete, nor are all the gifts clear, but they include food fit for the gods and costly stones.<sup>10</sup> In all versions Gilgamesh affects a desire to become part of Huwawa's folk.

By these devices Gilgamesh disarms Huwawa. When the seventh and the last coat of divine sheen is removed and the corresponding cedar lumbered away,<sup>11</sup> Huwawa is powerless. He is betrayed, puts up

<sup>8</sup> "Your god, the divine protective standard, Enki-Nudimmud has divulged a secret to you," dingir-zu d.uri-gal-<sup>d</sup>en-ki-<sup>d</sup>nu-dím-mud-e inim-zu mu-e-ni-è.

<sup>9</sup> Basing himself upon my manuscript, T. Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness*, 200 has already divulged the denouement.

<sup>10</sup> "Fine meal, food fit for the great gods, skins of cold water, dušia-stone, nir-stone, lapis lazuli," zì-esa ní-g-kú-dingir-gal-gal-e-ne <sup>ku</sup>umun a-šed<sub>17</sub> <sup>na</sup>du<sub>8</sub>-si-a <sup>na</sup>nir<sub>7</sub> <sup>na</sup>za-gin-na, *FLP* 1053 obv. 6 and rev. 15 (tablet identified by A. Sjöberg as belonging to *Gilgamesh and the Cedar Forest*).

<sup>11</sup> The relationship between the cedars and Huwawa's powers is not clear. On the one hand these powers emanate from what he wears and at the same time they are embodied in the cedars. As Huwawa gives up his ní-te/me-lám to Gilgamesh the act is translated to the cutting, trimming and lumbering of the cedars. Furthermore, in the Old Babylonian Akkadian Bauer fragment, the cutting of these cedars is termed *nêr* GIŠ.ERIN "murdering the cedars," *JNES* 16, 256: rev. 23, cf. 11, 12, 16; also in the Middle Babylonian Megiddo version, cf. *RA* 62, 121:8, while the *melammū* aura is described as a fallout of luminous particles gradually growing dim: *melammū ihalliḫū namrīrū ṭrupū*, "the divine auras will be lost, now that the radiance has dimmed," *JNES* 16, 256 obv. 12. For a comprehensive treatment of the subject, see Elena Cassin, *La splendeur divine*, and especially the 5th chapter; cf. also Neil Forsyth, *Acta Sumerologica* 3, 13f.

a fight, pulling hair, biting flesh, but in the end is shackled like a beast.

When he had extinguished for him his 7th coat of divine aura,  
It grew dark in his chamber (or: he approached his chamber)  
Like a . . . snake he slithered to his dwelling but instead of giving him a kiss, he struck him a blow on the cheek  
Huwawa tore at his flesh, plucked the hair on his forehead.<sup>12</sup>

Gilgamesh took pity on Huwawa, comparing him to a snared bird or a captured warrior, and would have given him his freedom. One version especially develops this noble side of Gilgamesh's character, and has him say to Enkidu,

"Let us extend a freeing hand to the warrior, let him be our friend,  
he will show us the lay of the paths, let him be our friend,  
Let him be my associate, let him carry my pack."<sup>13</sup>

Enkidu, a sober realist, opposes this suggestion and in an ensuing argument kills Huwawa. Here Gilgamesh has no part in the killing although in one of the Old Babylonian Akkadian versions it is he who strikes the first blow.<sup>14</sup> Huwawa's severed head is put in a

<sup>12</sup> 199 ní-te-ni-7-kam-ma mu-na-til(var. ti)-la-ta da-ga-na(var. ni) ba-te  
200 mûs-kâr-geštin-na igar<sub>x</sub>-na šu im-ta-du-du  
201 ne mu-un-su-ub-ba-gin, te-na tibir-ra bi-in-ra  
202 hu-wa-wa zú ba-da-an-bír sag-ki ba-da-gur<sub>5</sub>-uš.

<sup>13</sup> Version B,  
179 gá-nam-ma ur-sag-ra su ga-àm-bar-re-en-dè-en lú-zu-me hê-a  
180 dúr-kaskal-la igi me-eb-du<sub>8</sub>-dè-a lú-zu-me hê-a  
181 [e-ne lú-t]ab-ba-mu hê-a nigin-mu hê-em-mi-íl-íl.

<sup>14</sup> JNES 16, 256 rev. 1f.

1 [iš]me Gilgameš zikir rā<sup>2</sup>ešu  
2 ilqi haššinnam ina qatišu

sack and, with gross miscalculation and insensitivity, brought before Enlil (and Ninlil) for appreciation.

"Why have you acted so?," asks the god,  
"Why, by what is done his name is destroyed from the earth!  
You should have seated him before you,  
You should have given him food from your food,  
You should have given him drink from your drink."<sup>15</sup>

The heroes fade away, and one version at least ends with an aetiological coda where Enlil distributes the auras of Huwawa, to the fields, rivers, canebreaks, lions, forests, mountains and roads.<sup>16</sup>

Gilgamesh's pitch to Huwawa is formulaic and nearly structurally identical in both versions. The version which has only the sister motif is of interest here. The text reads as follows:

166 zi-ama-ugu-mu-<sup>d</sup>nin-sún-ka a-a-mu-kù-<sup>d</sup>lugal-bàn-da  
167 kur-ra tuš-a-zu ba-ra-zu kur-ra tuš-a-zu hê-zu-àm  
168 en-me-bára-ge-si nin<sub>9</sub>-gal-mu nam-dam-šê kur-ra hu-mu-ra-ni-ku<sub>4</sub>-ra  
169 mìn-kam-ma-šê in-ga-na-mu-na-ab-bé  
170 zi-ama-ugu-mu-d.nin-sún-ka a-a-mu-kù-d.lugal-bàn-da

3 išlup namšaram ina šibbišu

4 Gilgameš inēšū kišādam

Gilgamesh listened to his companion's words,  
took an axe in his hand,  
drew the dagger from his belt,  
Then Gilgamesh pierced him in the neck.

<sup>15</sup> TLB 2, 4 cf. J. J. van Dijk apud P. Garelli, *Gilgameš et sa légende*, 71 (collated)

105 a-na-àm ur<sub>5</sub>-gin<sub>7</sub> i-ak-en-zé-en  
106 ba-du<sub>11</sub>-ga-ke<sub>4</sub>-eš mu-ni ki-ta ha-lam-ke<sub>4</sub>-eš  
107 igi-zu-ne-ne hê-bí-ib-tuš  
108 ninda-kú-zu-ne-a hê-bí-ib-kú  
109 a-nag-zu-ne-a hê-bí-ib-nag.

<sup>16</sup> Here again the versions show substantial differences. In one version Huwawa prays to Utu for help, solicites Gilgamesh's mercy but is opposed by Enkidu. In the other version, Huwawa first appeals to Gilgamesh, is opposed by Enkidu, then in desperation prays to Utu. At this point Gilgamesh begins a second speech to Huwawa, but the text breaks off. One can estimate that only 8 lines or so are left, which makes it rather unlikely that this version had the same ending as the other.

171 kur-ra tuš-a-zu ba-ra-zu kur-ra tuš-a-zu hé-  
zu-àm

172 pèš-tur nin<sub>9</sub>-bàn-da-mu nam-lukur-šè ħu-  
mu-ra-ni-ku<sub>4</sub>-ra-àm<sup>17</sup>

173 ní-zu ba-àm-ma-ra su-za<sup>18</sup> ga-an-ku<sub>4</sub>

174 ní-te-ni-l-àm mu-na-ra-an-ba etc.

“By the life of my mother who bore me, divine  
Ninsun, and my father, divine, holy Lugalbanda,  
The land where you dwell has never been known,  
let the land where you dwell be known!

I promise to bring my elder sister Enmebaragesi into  
the land for you as a wife”

Once again he goes on to say,

“By the life of my mother who bore me, divine  
Ninsun, and my father, divine, holy Lugalbanda,  
The land where you dwell has never been known,  
let the land where you dwell be known!

I promise to bring my younger sister Peshtur into the  
land for you as a concubine!<sup>19</sup>

But do diminish for me (or: make me a gift of) your  
divine sheen, let me enter your folk!”

He then diminished for him (or: made a gift to him  
of) his first divine sheen, etc. . .

Some literary aspects of this denouement, in which Gilgamesh displays characteristics of deceivers and tricksters, will be discussed elsewhere. Of interest here are social and legal background of Gilgamesh's ruse, onomastic features, and possible historical consequences.

For the Old Babylonian scribe who studied (and perhaps even modified) *Gilgamesh and the Cedar Forest* and left us the exercises upon which we base our reconstructions, Gilgamesh's ruse was based upon social and legal norms obtaining in his times. Sororate marriages, where two sisters marry the same man, are documented from the Old Babylonian period. Indeed, such marriage contracts are extant.<sup>20</sup> Alternatively, a subsystem of sisterhood adoption, wherein the first wife adopts the husband's concubine as sister, is even more widely documented in the second millennium.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Var. ħu-mu-ra-ni-túm-en.

<sup>18</sup> Var. su-za-a, su-zu-a.

<sup>19</sup> The other version adds:

su-zu-àm nu-mu-ra-te-gá-dè-en

“As for your folk, I would not approach them against  
your will.”

<sup>20</sup> Cf. R. Harris, *JNES* 33, 369 and S. Greengus, *HUCA* 46, 13ff.

<sup>21</sup> R. Harris, *JNES* 33, 363ff., S. Greengus, *HUCA* 46, 3f.  
for a comprehensive discussion.

Furthermore, there are points of contact with fraternal practices whereby brothers gave sisters in marriage.<sup>22</sup> This is the practice which Gilgamesh is following in his act of trickery. But while there is reason to suppose that to the Old Babylonian student of Sumerian literature the practice upon which Gilgamesh's trick depended was familiar and acceptable, extrapolating backwards to the putative time of Gilgamesh is more difficult. For the earlier periods, and especially for the period of the historical Gilgamesh (presumably the first half of the third millennium), virtually nothing can be adduced for such a social custom;<sup>23</sup> indeed, the available evidence points to the basically monogamous character of early Sumerian society.<sup>24</sup>

However, at least one detail in Gilgamesh's offer harks back to an earlier age. In his proposal Gilgamesh offers his older sister as a wife (nam.dam) and his younger one as a lukur. This lukur can have nothing in common with the lukur of the Old Babylonian age, the *nadītum*, a cloistered priestess.<sup>25</sup> Except for the *nadītum* of Marduk,<sup>26</sup> a *nadītum* could not marry, let alone be offered in matrimony of sorts in junior status, to judge from what can be learned of her social position in the Old Babylonian period.<sup>27</sup> The lukur offered by Gilgamesh to Huwawa, therefore, refers to the lukurs of the third millennium, and especially the lukurs of the Ur III kings who were much beloved, non-cloistered courtesans.<sup>28</sup> The position of Gilgamesh's younger sister as lukur in Gilgamesh's offer parallels that of the younger sister

<sup>22</sup> P. Koschaker, *ZA* 41, 1ff., E. A. Speiser, in *Biblical and other Studies*, 15ff., S. Greengus's survey cf. n. 21: see also the summary by T. L. Thompson, *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives*, 249ff.

<sup>23</sup> Greengus claims a reference to 'sisterhood' in the Ur III period (late third millennium), cf. op. cit., n. 21.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. A. Falkenstein, *NG* 1, 98. The reference to polyandry in Urukagina (*SAKI* 54 iii 20ff.) is unique. The case of two sisters marrying the same person is illustrated by the daughters of Zimri-Lim of Mari (cf. J. M. Sasson, *JCS* 25, 68ff.). This (Amorite?) custom, which seems to be limited to the second millennium B.C., may have some bearing on dating the traditions regarding Jacob in Genesis.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. R. Harris, *Studies Oppenheim*, 106ff., *JESHO* 6, 122.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. R. Harris, *Sippar*, 315.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 305ff.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. J. Renger, *ZA* 58, 149ff. and 179 n. 478, S. T. Kang, *Sumerian Economic Texts from the Drehem Archive*, 261.

in the later sororate marriages of the Old Babylonian period mentioned above. In this arrangement the younger sister is a *šugītum*, “usually the sister, presumably the younger sister of the *nadītu*, who married the husband of the *nadītu* of Marduk in order to bear children for the family. . . . a concubine to the husband.”<sup>29</sup>

The Old Babylonian term *šugītum* is written either syllabically or <sup>m</sup>iš u. gi.<sup>30</sup> However, the lexical series *Lú=ša* preserves an entry equating *šugītu* with *lukur*, an echo of her more ancient role.<sup>31</sup> Thus Gilgamesh’s older sister Enmebaragesi, in this scheme will have been a priestess of high rank, perhaps an *entum* or *ugbabtum*; her name, compounded with *en*-, fits such a role. Such women were usually forbidden to have children. Thus, when given in marriage, Gilgamesh’s elder sister would be joined by a second wife whose function is to bear children. In our case, this second wife was Enmebaragesi’s younger sister Peštur.

The name of Gilgamesh’s younger sister, pèš-tur, (“little fig”) is unremarkable; it falls into a common pattern of Sumerian names.<sup>32</sup> However, the name of the elder sister, Enmebaragesi, is more interesting, for it immediately evokes the name of the ruler of Kish, Enmebaragesi, a contemporary of Gilgamesh.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, the textual evidence for the name is decisive so that we are obliged to consider the name as certain.<sup>34</sup>

Even if the sisters of Gilgamesh are only used as a device supplied by the scribe from his second millennium milieu, a possibility suggested above,<sup>35</sup> Enmebaragesi’s name can be based on an authentic tradition. The daughters and sisters of early Mesopotamian rulers were often *en* priestesses<sup>36</sup> and, as such, assumed names compounded with *en*-.<sup>37</sup> The scribe may have, of course, fished out a suitably impressive *en*- name from the hoary past; indeed, the name is associated with Gilgamesh through *Gilgamesh and Agga*, a historical romance which tells of a conflict between Gilgamesh and Agga, “the son of Enmebaragesi.”<sup>38</sup> Names compounded with *en*- are of common gender (even names compounded with *lú* [“man”] can be feminine<sup>39</sup>), so that the form of the name “Enmebaragesi” is not unequivocal.

Now, it is quite possible that Gilgamesh did indeed have a sister called Enmebaragesi, with no connection to Enmebaragesi of Kish, a sister who simply bore a name of the times. On the other hand, one ought to consider the possibility of identity. The name “Enmebaragesi” occurs in the following contexts:

#### 1 Sumerian King List

en-me-bára-ge-si lú ma-da-elam<sup>ki</sup>-ma giš.  
tukał-bi íb-ta-an-gúr  
lugal-àm mu-900 ì-ak  
ak-kà dumu-en-me-bara<sub>2</sub>-ge-si-ke<sub>4</sub> etc.  
Enmebaragesi, the one who crushed the land of  
Elam together with its armed might, became ruler,  
ruled 900 years, Akka the son of Enmebaragesi, etc.<sup>40</sup>

[x-x-bá]rag-ge<sub>4</sub>-e-si,  
[x-x-bá]rag-ge<sub>4</sub>-e-si,  
[ ]-e-si

Cf. the biographical note A. K. Grayson, *TCS* V, 215ff. with similar spellings from other sources.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. above.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. E. Sollberger, *AfO* 17, 23ff. and J. Renger, op. cit., above n. 28.

<sup>31</sup> Note that the few occurrences of Enmebaragesi’s name in the inscriptions cited above in n. 33, are without *en*.

<sup>32</sup> S. N. Kramer, *AJA*, 53, 1ff., W. D. H. Römer, *AOAT* 209/1. The battle is mentioned in Šulgi “O,” 56ff. (*AOAT* 25, 278) where, however, Enmebaragesi, not Agga, is the combatant.

<sup>33</sup> For example, the incidentally apt *lú-ĥu-wa-wa* game<sub>2</sub> . . . , “Lu-huwawa, the slave girl,” *NG* 126, 2. Note also such logograms as *lú-ki-sikil=ardatum* ‘maiden.’

<sup>34</sup> T. Jacobsen, *AS* 11, ii 35ff.

<sup>29</sup> R. Harris, op. cit., 321.

<sup>30</sup> Seemingly an abbreviated sumerogram.

<sup>31</sup> *MSL* XII 129, 24 [SAL].ME(=*lukur*)=*šu-gi-tu*. Note that the older *Proto-Lú* (ibid., 42) preserves two sets of *lukur* 257–260 *lukur*, *lukur*-<sup>d</sup>*nin-urta*, *ama-lukur-ra* and then after a separation of 2 lines (261 *munus*, 262 <sup>u</sup>*nunus*, “woman”), three lines of *lukur*, 263–265, glossed by *nadītum*, *qadištum* and *batultum* respectively; cf. B. Landsberger, *AfO* 10 146–149, and especially the structural parallel drawn between *dam*= *aššatu* (“wife”)/*dam.kaskal.la*=*še<sup>7</sup>tu* (“concubine”) and *lukur/lukur.kaskal.la*, ibid., 149 n. 43.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. simply E. Huber, *AB* 21, 184ff. s.v. *tur*, *banda*. She is mentioned in *Gilgamesh, Enkidu and the Netherworld*, 174 in Gilgamesh’s lament over the fall into the underworld of his ball and rod which were used in the ritual ball game at Uruk.

<sup>33</sup> For inscriptions of the historical (En)mebaragesi cf. D. O. Edzard, *ZA* 53 9ff.

<sup>34</sup> Variants:

en-me-bára-ge-si,  
en-me-[x<sup>7</sup>]-ge<sub>4</sub>-e-si,

2 *Tummal Inscription*

en-me-bára-ge<sub>4</sub>-si lugal-e uru-na-nam  
 é-<sup>d</sup>enlil-lá in-dù  
 ak-kà dumu-en-me-bára-ge<sub>4</sub>-si-ke<sub>4</sub> etc.  
 Enmebaragesi, the ruler, built The City, the temple  
 of Enlil, Akka the son etc.<sup>41</sup>

3 *Šulgi "O"*

[lugal kiš]<sup>i</sup>ki<sup>k1</sup> en-me-bára<sub>2</sub>-ge<sub>4</sub>-e-si  
 [muš-gin, sa]g-gá-na giri mu-na-ni-ús  
 You (Gilgamesh) placed your foot there on the head  
 of Enmebaragesi, ruler of Kish, as if it were a  
 snake's.<sup>42</sup>

4 *Gilgamesh and the Cedar Forest*  
(quoted above)5 *Gilgamesh and Akka I, 49*

Ak-kà dumu-en-me-bára-ge<sub>4</sub>-(e)-si-ke<sub>4</sub><sup>43</sup>  
 Akka, the son of Enmebaragesi.

6 *Weidner Chronicle*

<sup>m</sup>Ak-ka mār <sup>m</sup>En-me-bár-a-ge-si . . . (broken)<sup>44</sup>

There is nothing in these references which would lead one to suppose that Enmebaragesi of Kish was not a man. On the other hand, one can note that lú (nominally "man") in (1) is simply a relative clause antecedent,<sup>45</sup> and that lugal, usually "king," can also be "queen," in the sense of "reigning monarch." This is clear from the Sumerian King List where the founder of later dynasty of Kish, a woman Kù-Ba-ba<sub>6</sub> is said to have been ruler, lugal-àm.<sup>46</sup> Kubaba is

the only obvious queen in the Sumerian King List<sup>47</sup> and her presence is perhaps an echo of a nearly forgotten Kish tradition.<sup>48</sup>

Furthermore, Kish was a city with a tutelary male deity, Zababa, so that ministering to him would be a female en priestess.<sup>49</sup> Was Enmebaragesi an en priestess of Zababa, and at the same time ruler of Kish, while her brother Gilgamesh was ruler of Uruk and en priest of its female tutelary deity Inanna?<sup>50</sup>

It must be admitted that were it not for the name of Gilgamesh's elder sister here it would never occur to anyone to tamper with the sex of Enmebaragesi. This ruler was *sui generis* and not a royal offspring so that the Sumerian King List does not list him as dumu-X, "son of X," or dumu-mí X, "daughter of X." Nor does the List use gender name determinatives, so that even the name of queen Kubaba, also *sui generis*, would have remained unmarked for gender, were it not for the possibly remarkable fact that she began her career as a barmaid.<sup>51</sup> Later tradition seems to be completely ignorant of Enmebaragesi as queen of Kish. In the *Weidner Chronicle*, for example, Enmebaragesi's name is prefaced by DIŠ (transliterated above by <sup>m</sup>), which usually, but not always, is found before male names, while "Kubaba" is clearly rendered as a female name.<sup>52</sup> On the other hand, an unpublished manuscript of the Sumerian King List from Ur does not mark "Kubaba" as a female name.<sup>53</sup> Is this simply a scribal error (omission of mí) or does this strand of tradition no longer remember that Kubaba was a woman?

Tradition is certainly not always unequivocal or unambiguous. Take the case of Gilgamesh. Here two different traditions co-exist, and occasionally even

<sup>41</sup> *JCS* 16, 42.

<sup>42</sup> *AOAT* 25, 279.

<sup>43</sup> W. H. Ph. Römer, *AOAT* 209/1 23 ff.

<sup>44</sup> A. K. Grayson, *TCS* V, 147.

<sup>45</sup> A. Poebel, *GSG* sec. 271.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. *Sumerian King List*, V 36ff. (cf. n. 40 above)

kiš<sup>i</sup>ki<sup>k1</sup> kù-<sup>d</sup>ba-ba<sub>6</sub>

<sup>m</sup>lú.kurun-na

suḥuš-kiš<sup>i</sup>ki<sup>k1</sup> mu-un-gi-na

lugal-àm mu-100 i-ak

In Kish Kubaba, a bar-maid,

who founded a dynasty in Kish,

became ruler, reigned 100 years.

For the original meaning of lugal cf. Jacobsen, *ZA* 52, 103ff.

<sup>47</sup> Omen traditions recall something irregular in Kubaba's ascent to the throne, she is said to have 'seized the throne' (*ša šarrūtam iṣbatu*), *RA* 38, 84 r 29; cf. the biographical note in A. K. Grayson, *TCS* V 223 with bibliography.

<sup>48</sup> The traditions of Kish are special in many ways, cf. I. J. Gelb, *La Lingua di Ebla*, 9ff.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. J. Renger, *ZA* 58, 115ff.

<sup>50</sup> Gilgamesh is called en ("lord" but also "en-priest") throughout the epic literature. His title is en-kul-aba<sub>4</sub>, i.e. of Kullab, a sacred precinct of Uruk, but he can be addressed as lugal.

<sup>51</sup> <sup>m</sup>lú-kurun-na cf. above, n. 45.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. A. K. Grayson, *TCS* V, 147, 31 and 148, 42; cf. J. Krecher's remarks on the "Personenkeil," *ZA* 63, 161f.

<sup>53</sup> To be published in *UET* 6/3. The scribe writes kù-ba-ba<sub>6</sub> lú-ku[run-na].

merge. The *Sumerian King List*, on the one hand, records the following:

<sup>d</sup>gilgameš ab-ba-ni líl-lá en-kul-ab-ba-ke,  
etc.

Gilgamesh, his father was a 'demon,' the high priest of Kullab etc.<sup>54</sup>

The epic tradition, on the other hand, considers Gilgamesh as the offspring of divine Ninsun and divine Lugalbanda.<sup>55</sup> One wonders whether in our case the epic tradition has perhaps remembered something which historical memory has not.

Whether or not Gilgamesh did actually use his sisters as pawns in a struggle with an otherwise unbeatable opponent is ultimately as much a question of folklore as it is of history. However, the analysis presented above might provide information for the solution of another Gilgamesh puzzle: the actual *casus belli* for the war described in the story of *Gilgamesh and Akka*. May it not be that behind the enigmatic, laconic riddle in the ditty of the "wells"—which ostensibly contains the incomprehensible challenge—there lay the memory of a dynastic struggle involving Gilgamesh and (according to the hypothesis presented here) his nephew Akka, the son of his sister Enmebaragesi, the ruler of Kish?<sup>56</sup>

<sup>54</sup> *Sumerian King List*, III, 17f.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. for example, the proof text quoted above.

<sup>56</sup> Compare, in passing, the inverted parallelism between the story of Gilgamesh and Huwawa and that of Jacob and Laban. In both stories sisters are used for/against a close

In this connection, note the unique way that Kish is referred to when the struggle between Gilgamesh and Enmebaragesi is mentioned in literature, é-Kiš<sup>k1</sup>, "the House of Kish," rather than simply Kiš<sup>k1</sup>, as expected; cf. *Šulgi "O,"* 56,

é-[Ki]š<sup>k1</sup>-šè<sup>81s</sup>tukul-zu ba-ta-a-è<sup>57</sup>

"You (Gilgamesh) went to war against the House of Kish with your armed might"

and *Gilgamesh and Akka* 8, 14, 23, 29,

é-Kiš<sup>k1</sup>-šè gú nam-ba-an-gar-re-en-dè-en<sup>58</sup>

"Do we then submit to the House of Kish?" (Gilgamesh speaking to the council of Uruk).

Thus, to Gilgamesh and Uruk, Kish is not simply another city state against which they wage war: it is the dynastically related royal House of Kish. In the same spirit, a later ruler of Uruk can write to Sinmuballit of Babylon, *anna Uruk u Babilī bītum ištēnma*, "Indeed, Uruk and Babylon are one royal House."<sup>59</sup>

relative/relative-to-be in trickery. In *Gilgamesh and the Cedar Forest* two sisters are "offered" in marriage by a brother/trickster (Gilgamesh) to deprive an adversary (Huwawa) of a divine power (ní-te/me-lám). In *Genesis*, one of two sisters (Rachel) married to a trickster (Jacob) deprives the adversary father (Laban) of a divine power (*terāfīm*).

<sup>57</sup> *AOAT* 25 278.

<sup>58</sup> W. H. Ph. Römer, *AOAT* 209/1 23 ff.

<sup>59</sup> *Bagh. Mitt.* 2 58 ii 1 ff., cf. *CAD* B 293 ff. for similar references from this letter and other Akkadian parallels.