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"ENDOWED WITH ELOQUENCE:"
ORAL PRESENTATION IN ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA

by
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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the
DEPARTMENT OF SPEECH COMMUNICATION
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS
In the Graduate College
THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

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DEDICATION

To my family and extended "family" -- for all of their love,
prayers, and support..

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to acknowledge and thank the members of my thesis committee: chairman, Andrew A. King, for three years of encouragement, patience, and mental stimulation, David A. Williams, ever ready with a rope, gallows, and an unspoken promise not to let me actually fall through the trap, and William E. Bailey, a most agreeable third. A special thanks is due Peter B. Machinist, without whose advice and expertise this thesis could not have achieved its current form; errors which may remain must be seen as the result of my own stubbornness. Finally, I wish to thank my undergraduate professors of archaeology and speech at Wheaton College who consistently encouraged my varied interests, and my attempts to combine those interests.

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ABSTRACT

Long before the Greek rhapsodes began their recitations of Homer, literature was spoken, sung, and read aloud for ancient Mesopotamian audiences. Assyriologists have compiled an abundance of evidence concerning what was being presented. Statements outlining methods and purposes of presentation are necessarily fewer and more tenuous. Oral presentation was used extensively in cult where antiphonal recitation is evidenced in congregational laments and some other liturgical hymns. Perhaps because of the involvement of the king in some rituals and cult drama, some literature of the liturgy has political overtones. Within the royal court itself, oral presentation was used for court ceremony, public relations, and entertainment. The scribal schools maintained the written literary heritage of Mesopotamia, but running alongside that written tradition, and sometimes mingling with it, was a related oral stream of tradition. Only faint traces of this second stream remain.

CHAPTER ONE

In 1915, faced with a discipline crippled by academic disfavor, Charles Woolbert termed oral expression "the one greatest problem" of public speaking. Skeptics were demanding stable answers to basic questions: what is expression, and how can it be taught? Woolbert (1915, pp. 127-43) sought support in a study of then current theory. Marion Robinson (1946, pp. 357-67), responding to this sense of philosophical uncertainty, attempted to form a stronger foundation for the discipline by tracing the development of its theory and practice in a "Diary of a Problem Child" beginning in Athens, 600 B.C. Bahn and Bahn's expanded history also began "in Greece, with Homer and the great men who followed him." (Bahn and Bahn 1971, p. 1). Neither of these histories of the theory and practice of oral expression goes back far enough. Over a thousand years before the rhapsodes, Mesopotamian civilization held the rudimentary elements of the art of oral interpretation. Increasing archaeological research over the last few decades has made the dead civilizations of the Tigris and Euphrates river valleys more accessible. Around 2000 B.C. one Sumerian poet described life in the former capital of the region:

In those days the dwellings of Agade were filled with gold,
Its bright-shining houses were filled with silver,
Into its granaries were brought copper, lead, and slabs of
lapis lazuli,
Its silos bulged at the sides,
Its old women were endowed with counsel,
Its old men were endowed with eloquence,

Its young men were endowed with the "strength of weapons,"
 Its little children were endowed with joyous hearts, . . .
 Inside the city (was full of) tigi-music,
 Outside it (was full of) reed-pipe and zamzam-music,
 Its quay where the boats docked were all abustle,
 All lands lived in security,
 Their people witnessed (nothing but) happiness

(Pritchard 1969, pp. 656-48)

The description is obviously exaggerated, but it gives us a vision of what the Sumerians valued: wisdom, security, music, happiness, and eloquence. Fine speaking was a Mesopotamian concern, yet students of rhetoric and oral interpretation have largely ignored their pre-Greek heritage. This thesis will deal with those lost years in the life history of the problem child.

One realizes, however, that analysis of anything as ephemeral as orality in an ancient civilization has certain attendant dangers. In studying another transitory subject, Mesopotamian religion, A. Leo Oppenheim (1977, pp. 172-83) warned Assyriologists of the problems inherent in basing conclusions on inadequate evidence like often misunderstood building plans and texts which focus on a specialized segment of the population. His sense of caution must also be applied to the study of orality, for the written texts were read by a small segment of society, and evidence of the nature of oral performance is often tenuous. Assyriologists have compiled an abundance of evidence concerning what was being presented, but, as we have no cuneiform critiques of a dramatic performance, statements outlining the methods and purposes of presentation are necessarily fewer and more tentative.

The study must begin with the problem of definition: what is orality? The ground breaking work in oral theory was done by Milman

Parry and Albert Lord. For them "oral" literature is composed at the moment of the oral performance (Lord 1971, pp. 5 and 14). Some literature undergoes oral transmission: a selection presented repeatedly over time changes as the teller embellishes, enriches or abbreviates it according to need or whim (Culley 1976; Ortutay 1959; Lord 1971). The simplest level, the basic definition, is oral presentation, that is the spoken, sung, or read performance of a literary selection. This last definition does not specify whether the selection is composed at the moment of performance, or performed from a written text. This definition, oral presentation, and its application to current knowledge of Mesopotamian civilization is the focus of this study.

Assyriologists differ in their understanding of the orality of Mesopotamian literature. Following in the work of Parry and Lord, Bendt Alster (1972) derives elaborate evidence of an oral poetic tradition in the literature. Samuel Noah Kramer states that Sumerian written poetry "has its roots in the pre-literate and illiterate court minstrel and temple singer-musician." (Kramer 1969, p. 23). He gives Sumerian epics a bardic origin, citing the use of the deeds of an individual hero, the exaggeration of a historical base, the repetitive formulaic style, and the lengthy speeches which all parallel qualities of Greek, Indian, and Teutonic epics (Kramer 1963, p. 184). Oppenheim (1977, p. 258) objects to such cultural extrapolation and William W. Hallo flatly refuses to review the discussion stating that the arguments are founded on "a combination of hypotheses and analogies from later, in part much later, world literature." (Hallo 1975, p. 195).

In the midst of this controversy William R. Millar interjects a simple question, ". . . could the literature--at least some of it--have been created to be heard rather than read?" (Millar 1980, p. 28). With that thought the written or oral origin of the literature no longer enters the discussion, and at the very least, scholars do generally agree that parts of Mesopotamian literature were performed orally (e.g. Oppenheim 1977, p. 259; Jacobsen 1975; Lambert 1975).

To fully delve the intricacies of the oral composition debate would require a knowledge of Akkadian and Sumerian which this writer does not have. It would also go beyond the scope of this study, which is not intended as a final statement on a research area in ancient near eastern studies. This thesis seeks to fill a hole in the history of oral interpretation by bridging the gap between two fields. Through an analysis of translated texts and a review of scholarly opinion this study will attempt to provide the field of oral interpretation with a comprehensible, accessible introduction to the development of oral interpretation within Mesopotamian civilization.

Given the three main subjects of Sumerian literature--gods, kings, and scribes, Hallo (1970, p. 117) distinguishes three related settings for the use of that literature: the temple, the court, and the school. To that list one could add a fourth setting which many scholars mention briefly, but few discuss in detail: the populace. While recognizing that no cultural literary categories are neat, this study approaches oral presentation through the useful divisions provided by setting. Chapter two examines oral presentation within the

temple cult through a study of laments, ritual drama, and hymns. Chapter three reviews the use of god letters for political purposes. It also discusses hymns used for the exaltation of the king, and texts presented for royal entertainment. Chapter four explores the role of oral presentation in education, and the role of the scribal schools in our understanding of oral presentation. Chapter five assesses the evidence for oral presentation among the populace. Chapter six provides a summation of the development of oral presentation in Mesopotamian civilization, and presents areas for further study. The chronology in the appendix gives a basic historical framework for the names and periods mentioned in the text.

CHAPTER TWO

This chapter will examine oral presentation within the temple cult through a study of laments, ritual drama, and hymns. Before exploring these oral mediums it may be well to detail some initial reservations.

Perhaps because religion, specifically Old Testament studies, was a major concern for early students of the Near East, ancient religious practice has continued to be a focal issue for Assyriologists. It has been jokingly said that any artifact an archaeologist doesn't understand he assigns a cultic function. In a similar lack of complete understanding, most of Sumerian literature was once thought to have a cultic origin and use. This wholesale designation became untenable as the literature was more closely studied: the proverbs and school essays clearly belong to the edubba, the scribal schools, while certain other genre originated in the royal court. Nevertheless, many laments, dramatic ritual groups, and hymns of praise have demonstrable cultic functions.

It must be accepted that our knowledge of Mesopotamian religious practice is incomplete, at best. Assumptions can be made on the basis of building plans, but these remain assumptions, not certainties. Conclusions about the extent of individual involvement in religion can be drawn from the texts, but as Oppenheim (1977, pp. 172-83) warns most of

these texts relate to a small segment of Mesopotamian society. With similar apprehension we approach the subject of oral presentation in Mesopotamian cult.

Laments

In a land of relative unrest where security was uncertain and the gods were somewhat unpredictable, ritual laments for the propitiation of the gods gained a logically significant place in cult practice. These congregational laments have been divided into two major categories: Neo-Sumerian city laments existing in Old Babylonian copies, and late Sumerian laments existing in Neo-Assyrian and Seleucid copies (Kutscher 1975, p. 1). These laments are broadly designated balags, i.e. laments for major public disasters like the destruction of a city or temple. As Kutscher (1975, p. 3) points out the recording scribes did not consider balag as a genre, but rather as a function: the text was to be recited or chanted at the ceremony for which it was composed. The accompanying balag-instrument may have been a drum, or it may have been a "bull" harp with a booming voice box (Jacobsen 1980). Whatever the instrument was, the lament itself was an indispensable part of the ritual accompanying the demolition and rebuilding of temples (Jacobsen 1941, p. 222). It was a sort of "liturgical apology to the deity." (Hallo 1970, p. 119). Such apologies were necessary, for while historical catastrophes might partially destroy a temple, the building would still need to be razed before it could be rebuilt. Thus, to avoid drawing a personal attack from a god already unhappy about the state of

his house, the congregational lament was developed as a liturgical explanation for an otherwise unacceptable destruction.

The Neo-Sumerian laments dealt with specific historical catastrophes, and were used for specific temples. Thus we find two laments for Ur: "Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur." and "Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur." Three other city laments are known: "Lamentation over the Destruction of Nippur." "Lamentation over Sumer and Uruk," and "Lamentation over Eridu." The best known of these is the "Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur" which commemorates the fall of that city to the Elamites in the event which marked the end of the Third Dynasty of Ur. Jacobsen (1941, p. 223) suggests that the lament was composed for the restoration of Ur by the kings of the city of Isin.

This lamentation is composed of eleven kirugus, or songs, which break into the two major subdivisions of balag-form: the er and the ershemma. The first seven songs comprise the er. The first two songs provide a narrative account of the abandonment of Ur by the gods, and the resulting destruction of the city:

O city, a bitter lament set up as thy lament;
 Thy lament which is bitter--how long will it grieve thy weeping
 lord?
 O thou brickwork of Ur, a bitter lament set up as thy lament;
 O Ekishnugal, a bitter lament set up as thy lament.
 (Pritchard 1969, p. 456, 11.40, 46, 48-50)
 O city, thy name remains whilst thou (thyself) art destroyed,
 O city, thy wall rises high whilst thy land has perished.
 (Jacobsen 1941, p. 223, 11.65-66)
 O my city, like an innocent ewe thy lamb has been torn away
 from thee;
 O Ur, like an innocent goat thy kid has perished
 Thy lament which is bitter--how long will it grieve thy weeping
 lord?

(Pritchard 1969, p. 456, 11.67-68, 71)

The rest of the er presents the goddess Ningal lamenting to her husband, the moon god Nanna, about the destruction Enlil was bringing upon the city. In the fourth kirugu Ningal tells of her appeal to the assembly of the gods:

I dragged my feet and I stretched out my arms,
truly I shed my tears in front of An.
Truly I myself mourned in front of Enlil:

"May my city not be destroyed!"

I said indeed to them.

"May Ur not be destroyed!" I said indeed to them.

"And may its people not be killed!"

I said indeed to them.

But An never bent towards those words,
and Enlil never with an, "It is pleasing, so be it!"
did soothe my heart.

(Jacobsen 1976, p.88, 11.154-61)

Ningal's appeal is denied, and the fifth kirugu deals with the coming of the destructive storm sent by Enlil. It is dominated by the use of a refrain, as are the first and second kirugus, suggesting that the lament may have been read antiphonally:

Enlil called the storm.

The people mourn.

Winds of abundance he took from the land.

The people mourn.

Good winds he took away from Sumer.

The people mourn.

Deputed evil winds.

The people mourn.

Entrusted them to Kingaluda, tender of storms.

(Jacobsen 1976, pp. 88-89, 11.173-77)

In the sixth kirugu the resulting horror is painted with the vividness of fresh memory--a characteristic the later laments lack:

Its people('s corpses), not potsherds,
littered the approaches.
The walls were gaping;
the high gates, the roads,
were piled with dead.

In the wide streets,
 where feasting crowds (once) gathered,
 jumbled they lay.
 In all the streets and roadways bodies lay.
 In open fields that used to fill with dancers,
 the people lay in heaps.

The country's blood now filled its holes,
 like metal in a mold;
 bodies dissolved--like butter left in the sun.

(Jacobsen 1976, pp. 89-90, 11.211-18)

The second part of the lament, the ershemma, consists of an address to Ningal and Nanna from the remaining people of the city lamenting the ruined state of Ur, but offering hope for its restoration. It closes with a prayer to Nanna to look with favor on the "man of offerings," the worshipper, and to purify the hearts of the people. His city would be restored to praise him:

May the heart of those who dwell in the land be good before
 thee!
 O Nanna, thy city which has been returned to its place exalts
 thee.

(Pritchard 1969, p. 463, 11.434-35)

Thus Ur, destroyed by Enlil with a "storm" of Elamites, is razed and restored, "returned to its place." The congregation has pacified the gods.

As noted above the frequent use of refrains throughout the lament makes the concept of antiphonal recitation plausible and even inviting, but this performance mode is by no means certain. In studying another problem in the structure of this lament, Cohen (1974, p. 32) posits a different performance method. "Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur" was written in a combination of two Sumerian dialects: Emesal, the dialect associated with women and with the kalû-priests

who recited the balags, and Emegir, the main dialect of Sumerian. It opens in Emesal and is thus established as a text of the kalû-priests. After the first two kirugus, Emegir and Emesal are intermingled. Without providing specific textual evidence Cohen suggests that the two dialects were used by one reciter or chorus to distinguish dialogue and narration. That explanation leaves a certain inconsistency unaccounted for: the text opens with narration in the Emesal dialect, but narrative songs five and six are written in Emegir. The question of presentation mode thus remains undetermined. The problem of dialect mix must be clarified. The concept of antiphonal recitation is inviting, but unproven.

From texts related to the late Sumerian laments we get a clear picture of the specific ritual use of the balag form. Three texts of the first millenium B.C. discuss ritual for the repair of a temple. The procedure is complex:

When the wall of the temple of the god Anu falls into ruin-- [for the purpose of demolishing and founding anew the temple in question], you shall prepare three sac[rificial stands for the god of the temple, the goddess of the temple, and the household god of the temple] in an auspicious month, on a favorable day, in the night. You shall sacrifice [the sheep] (and) offer the thigh, . . . and roas[ted meat. You shall make a libation of beer, wine and milk.] You shall light a fire for the gods Ea and Marduk, sacrifice [a sheep to Ea and Marduk], and make a libation of prime beer, wine, (and) milk. You shall sing the lamentation (entitled) "Utudim eta" and the lamentation (entitled) "U'uaba muhul."

(Pritchard 1969, p. 339)

Text A of these ritual texts continues with a detailing of further cleansing, sacrifice, libation, and lamentation. A related text specifies that throughout the demolition and rebuilding of a temple "lamentations shall be made, (and) the kalû-priest shall not cease strewing

(aromatic?) flour (about?) and making libations and recitations." (Pritchard 1969, p. 341). A third ritual text refers to a singer who makes "groaning noises" in addition to the kalû-priest's lamentation. References to an older omen on text A involve the king in ritual lamentations after earthquakes or tremors: after the standard sacrifices and lamentations the king was to "speak the (special) poems of appeasement." (Pritchard 1969, pp. 339-341). Thus, balag recitation was only one part of a complicated ceremony.

At least within the first millenium B.C. the reading of balags was not limited to temple restoration. One of these late balags, "a-ab-ba hu-luh-ha," was scheduled for ritual reading in the cult calendars of Assur and Uruk (Langdon 1926, pp. 110-127). In Assur it was to be recited as a litany to Marduk on the twenty-fifth day of a textually illegible month, while in the city of Uruk it was scheduled as a litany for the god Anu on the mornings of the second and fifteenth of Nisan, and the eighteenth of Arshamma. It may also have been adapted for use as a lament in Uruk and Nippur (Kutscher 1975, p. 5).

This multiple use suggests the major difference between the Neo-Sumerian city laments and the later balags: the Neo-Sumerian texts were written for one specific ceremony and were retired to the scribal schools for textual study after that presentation. They lost the functional balag designation. The various Neo-Sumerian lamentations for Ur, Sumer and Ur, and Nippur were all listed in the literary catalogues from Ur (Hallo 1966, p. 90). Further, copies were found in scribal schools outside the city of their origin: "Lamentation over

the Destruction of Ur" was originally published from copies originating at Nippur, while "Lamentation over Nippur" is known in copies from both cities (Kutscher 1975, p. 3). While having balag structure, and originally a balag function, after the Neo-Sumerian city laments served to appease the gods on one specific occasion they were retired to the scribal schools where, being non-functional, they were not termed balags.

The later Sumerian laments did not lose their balag designation, and are not seen in the scribal literary catalogues. They retained their cult function. Kutscher's detailed study of "a-ab-ba hu-luh-ha" suggests that it was a multi-purpose balag for the pacification of the gods and the dedication of temples. In addition to the Assur and Uruk cult calendar references mentioned above, "a-ab-ba hu-luh-ha" is listed twice in a Neo-Assyrian catalogue containing the repertoire of the kalû-priests: once as a balag of Enlil, the god of Nippur, and once as a balag of Marduk, the god of Babylon (Kutscher 1975, p. 5). Known as a Neo-Babylonian balag, "a-ab-ba hu-luh-ha" has been traced back to Old Babylonian roots through a colophon, a scribal tag, on one copy of the text: "Its lines are seventy. Mouth of Shabatu, second day; year: Samsu-iluna became king," i.e. circa 1749 B.C. (Kutscher 1975, p. 11). "A-ab-ba hu-luh-ha" may have been composed because of some actual destruction of Sumer, but historical details were suppressed: it was adapted for specific use, but not designed for specific use. References to Nippur were added in a later editing of the text (Kutscher 1975, p. 7). Its structure, with the standard lament opening and hopeful

ershemma closing, is more repetitive than that of earlier laments, and less imaginative. Descriptions of violence tend to be generalized, and the extensive references to specific places and people found in earlier laments are avoided through most of "a-ab-ba hu-luh-ha:"

Father Enlil, until when will he not calm down? King of the Foreign Lands, until when will he not calm down?

Father Enlil, until when will he not calm down? Master of the Fulfilled Speech, until when will he not calm down?

Father Enlil, until when will he not calm down? Shepherd of the Black-Headed, until when will he not calm down?

Father Enlil, until when will he not calm down? The Warrior Who Leads the Troops, until when will he not calm down?

The Great Warrior, the Lord Enbilulu, until when will he not calm down?

Since that day, since that day long ago, until when will he not calm down?

Since that night, since that night long ago, until when will he not calm down?

Since the day the wives were delivered unto the enemy, until when will he not calm down?

Since the day the sons were delivered unto the enemy, until when will he not calm down?

To devastate your city, the shepherd rampaged in the Holy of Holies like a wild ox, until when will he not calm down?

Since he (Enlil) swept away the temple tower like a big reed mat, until when will he not calm down?

The onlooker is saying, "Woe is my house! Where is it? Woe, my city! Where, or where is it?" Until when will he not calm down?

Oh bitter lament and crying, how long will it go on like this? Until when will he not calm down?

(Kutscher 1975, pp. 143-44, 11.2-3, 5, 7, 10, 13-14, 16-17, 21, 23-24, 27).

Throughout most of the balag specific god or city names could simply be inserted as needed.

A glance at the passage above reveals another important aspect of these late laments: refrains, like "Until when will he not calm down," were used extensively. A refrain is repeated after almost every single line through the eighteen songs comprising "a-ab-ba hu-luh-ha."

Kutscher (1975, p. 7) reasonably suggests antiphonal choral presentation with one chorus for the text and one for the refrain. Given the nature of the service, the explicit reference to the first person plural: "You have overwhelmed us, you have destroyed us" (Kutscher 1975, p. 150, l. 191), and the extensive refrains, Kutscher considers it "obvious that it was recited in congregational services." (Kutscher 1975, p. 7).

Remembering the cult calendar listings we know "a-ab-ba hu-luh-ha" was used frequently, and there seems to have been some concern that it be presented well. The text is written entirely in the Emesal dialect of the kalû-priests; one copy of the text comprises a sort of phonetic pronunciation guide to the lament. In that copy syllabic consonant-vowel vowel-consonant signs are used instead of representative consonant-vowel-consonant signs, common value signs are used rather than rare signs, and no logograms are used. This copy seems to have been an extra-canonical teaching aid to assist the kalû-priests in recitation of the balag (Kutscher 1975, pp. 22-23).

Thus, in the Neo-Sumerian city laments and the later Sumerian balags, we gain an understanding of liturgical apology. We see a recitation form designed for the congregation to use in placating a distraught deity.

Rituals and Cult Drama

Mesopotamian cult life included many ritual actions designed to assist in the understanding and influencing of the numinous power immanent in their world. Some of these, like the Neo-Babylonian kettle

drum head ritual, relate directly to temple practice. Specific instructions are provided in this ritual for the selection and ceremonial sacrifice of a perfect bull. The priest-performer protests his innocence of the ritual killing: "These acts--it is the totality of the gods who have performed (them); it is not (really) I who performed them." (Pritchard 1969, p. 336). After careful preparation of the hide, the performing kalû-priest recites a balag, possibly as a test of the new drum (Cohen 1974, p. 55).

Other rituals seem more closely related to the practical traumas of daily life. One Neo-Babylonian text provides a rather delightful glimpse of ancient dentistry. As a part of the treatment of toothache an incantation about the origin of the ailment was to be recited three times:

After Anu [had created heaven],
 Heaven had created [the earth],
 The earth had created the rivers,
 The rivers had created the canals,
 The canals had created the marsh,
 (And) the marsh had created the worm--
 The worm went, weeping, before Shamash,
 His tears flowing before Ea:
 "What wilt thou give me for my food?
 What wilt thou give me for my sucking?"
 "I shall give thee the ripe fig,
 (And) the apricot."
 "Of what use are they to me, the ripe fig
 And the apricot?
 Lift me up and among the teeth
 And the gums cause me to dwell!
 The blood of the tooth I will suck,
 And the gum I will gnaw
 Its roots!"
 Fix the pin and seize its foot.
 Because thou has said this, O worm,
 May Ea smite thee with the might
 Of his hand!

(Pritchard 1969, pp. 100-101)

Fluent presentation of such rituals was important as is clear from Šulgi's boast in a royal hymn:

If my barû-diviner /pronounced/ that blessing like a street
 vagabond,
 (Then) I myself investigated the sheep ready (for
 extispicy) (Castellino 1972, p. 45, 11.145-146)

In some rituals, gesture and myth combined into a simple cult drama. One rather unusual series of first millenium B.C. love lyrics between Marduk, the city god of Babylon, and Ishtar of Babylon, his concubine, has been related to a ritual tablet labeled "regular rites. . ." by its colophon (Lambert 1975, p. 98). The combination seems to provide the outline of a cult drama. The ritual tablet consists of a series of incipits, opening lines, of the Ishtar love lyrics, in connection with what seem to be skeletal statements of the actor/reciter's movements, e.g.:

At the side of the dias of the Annunaki, in the district of
 the Street of the Eturkamma up to the garden [. . . .]
 The Lady will pass through the Gate of My Lady and will . . . [.]
 Zarpānîtum will go down to the garden and will keep crying
 to the gardener,
 "Gardener, gardener, building inspector [. . .]
 What is the plant you have that belongs to my friend?"
 Zarpānîtum to the garden . . . [.] will stand,
 "Gardener, gardener, be the building inspector of my city!"
 (Lambert 1975, p. 105, 11.11-16)

Since the text was broken many of the rubrics are missing. The few remaining suggest the priest performers were quite familiar with the detail of the ritual, and only needed a text of bare reminders. Even these fragments provide some interesting insights:

He/She will. . and
 will depart from the city gate and facing the Hursagkamma
 the Kurgarrû-priest will kneel on his knees and
 recite prayers and utter his chants. He will arise and sing.

"Let me see great Kish, let me look on lofty Babylon."
 "Hursagamma, city of beauty."
 Facing Ninlil they will set up. Facing Esabad,
 "My friend, my friend,
 go out. . . .," and "Battle is my game, warfare is my game,"
 he/she will utter and the Assinnu-priest will go down to
 battle, he will . . . a jig [. . . .]

(Lambert 1975, p. 105, col. iii, 11.11-17)

The end of a day's rites was marked by a double line across the appropriate column of the ritual text. The fourth day of the month at midday or evening was the favored performance time. Most of the action centered at "the street of Eturkamma," the temple of Ishtar of Babylon (Lambert 1975, p. 98) though there are references to other shrines.

Some of the listed incipits have been connected with the love lyrics of Marduk and Ishtar. Three incipits listed in the first five lines of the ritual tablet relate to known lyrics: "Together with the pleasant breeze," "You, whoever you are," and "[You are the] mother, Ishtar of Babylon." These three provide a cross section of the tone of the lyrics. The first contains some rather explicit sexual references typical of this lyric group:

Together with the [pleasant] breeze [. . . .]
 It is cut off . . . [. . . .]
 In your vulva is honey (?) [. . . .]
 In its recesses. [. . . .]
 My seeder plough . . . [. . . .]
 That which is not pleasant of [your] vulva [. . . .]
 The sailor of [your] vulva [. . . .]

(Lambert 1975, p. 113, 11.1-7)

The text continues through the listing of a menagerie, and ends in ambiguity. The second lyric relates the theme of violence:

You, whoever you are, whatever your name is,
 who always go to the dwelling of my lord,
 Come and do as I tell you!

Fall from the roof on to a dagger,
 Get an iron spike in your side,
 Get sharp arrows.

(Lambert 1975, p. 119, 11.26-30)

The last of the three lyrics is a song of praise for the concubine

Ishtar:

You are the mother, Ishtar of Babylon,
 The beautiful one, the queen of the Babylonians.
 You are the mother, a palm of carnelian,
 The beautiful one, who is beautiful to a superlative degree,
 Whose figure is red to a superlative degree, is beautiful to
 a superlative degree

(Lambert 1975, p. 123, 11.18-22)

The lyric texts are fragmentary, and their style is considered unusual, so they are not well understood, but coupled with the ritual tablet they reveal a rather formalized cult drama in Babylon of the first millenium B.C.

Earlier texts also provide evidence of possible cult dramas. From the cult of the god Dumuzi/Tammuz and similar fertility gods, Thorkild Jacobsen (1975, pp. 65-67) distinguishes four separate ritual dramas dating to the Old Babylonian period and earlier: the Mourning drama, the Road of No Return drama, the Search and Fetching drama, and the Sacred Marriage drama.

These dramas primarily revolve around the life of Dumuzi/Tammuz, a fertility god whose exact concern, field or flock, varies with the economic base of the worshippers. Tales of the courtship vary: in one, Inanna chooses to marry the mortal Dumuzi and seeks him, while another text tells of her initially rejecting Dumuzi as not sufficiently productive. A third text tells of a light-hearted courtship with some interference from Dumuzi's younger sister. Whatever the method, the

the end is a formal wedding in the rite of the Sacred Marriage which consummates the fertility of the land, and elevates Dumuzi to godship. After the marriage Inanna's bemusing nature comes into play. Apparently in quest of greater power, Inanna descends into the underworld, but there, rather than gaining authority over a new realm, she is proclaimed "dead" and is not allowed to leave until she produces a substitute. Observing that Dumuzi is not properly mournful, she appoints him as her replacement. Another myth provides a variant version of his death which leaves Inanna as an innocent widow. The result of either is the same: the untimely death of the young god. This unhappy event brings the lamentations of the Mourning drama.

The Mourning drama consists of a procession into the desert to mourn the slain Dumuzi. Cult statues or other representations of his mother, sister, and widow, Inanna, were probably carried in the procession. Each woman was definitely represented by a lament expressing her grief over the loss of the god (Jacobsen 1975, p. 67). Somewhat ironically from our perspective at least, the most beautiful of these laments is sung by Inanna:

The wild bull, who has lain down, lives no more, the wild bull
 who has lain down, lives no more,
 Dumuzi, the wild bull, who has lain down, lives no more, the wild
 bull, who has lain down, lives no more.

O you wild bull, how fast you sleep!
 How fast sleep ewe and lamb!
 O you wild bull, how fast you sleep!
 How fast sleep goat and kid!

I will ask the hills and the valleys,
I will ask the hills of the Bison:

"Where is the young man, my husband?"

I will say,

"He whom I no longer give to drink"

I will say,

"And my lovely maids"

I will say,

"And my lovely young men?"

"The Bison has taken thy husband away up into the mountains!"

"The Bison has taken thy young man away, up into the mountains!"

"Bison of the mountains, with the mottled eyes!
Bison of the mountains, with the crushing teeth!
Bison!--He sleeps sweetly, he sleeps sweetly,
He whom I no longer serve food sleeps sweetly,
He whom I no longer give to drink sleeps sweetly,
My lovely young maids sleep sweetly,
My lovely young men sleep sweetly!"

"My young man who perished from me (at the hands of) your men,
My young Ababa who perished from me (at the hands of) your men,
Will never more calm me (with) his loving glance
Will never more unfasten his lovely bright clasp (at night)
On his couch you made the jackals lie down,
In my husband's fold you made the raven dwell,
His reed pipe--the wind plays it,
My husband's songs--the north wind sings them."

(Jacobsen 1970, pp. 102-103)

The related Road of No Return drama seems to have been rooted in the cult of Damu, the god of rising sap. Here, a procession following the mother and sister searches for the dead god in stations representing the Nether World. "The Road that Destroys Him Who Walks it," "The Traces of the Kings," and "The Threshing Floor of the Anointed Ones" were all tombs housing various forms of Damu and the dead kings of Ur III who were also somehow involved in the cult. The spirit of Damu reproaches his mother for leaving the land of the living, but she continues to follow: "If it is required, O lad, let me walk with you the road of no return." (Jacobsen 1976, p. 66). Apparently meeting a group

of travelers along the way, Damu attempts to send a message to his mother, but the travelers are also dead:

(Damu:) "Let me instruct you about (the road to) the city of
my mother who may enquire about me,
O you may let me instruct you! O you lad, let me instruct you!
(Spirit:) "O you lad, please do not instruct me about
anything! . . .
At your cry that resounds in the desert, O you lad, your mother
will not come to you!
'Alas,' she cries, 'alas' . . ."
(Spirits:) "I was a man!" "I was a lad!"
"I was a maiden!" "I was a woman!"
"We were children (lost) in the streets in an unknown place!"
(Spirit man:) "I was a man, I am treading the mourning measure
to the (strains) of the harp,
waiting for sunset I pass the day with you, am treading the
mourning measure."
(Damu:) "O that afflati would occur to my mother, . . .
I am another petitioning lad,--may she demand my release!"
(Narrator:) "He cries in the desert, the cry resounds!"
(Jacobsen 1975, p. 88)

His mother approaches, calling, but he cannot answer, as the living cannot hear the dead:

I am not one who can answer my mother
who cries for me in the desert,
who makes the cry for me echo in the desert,
she will not be answered.
I am not the grass,
may not grow up (again) for her
(Jacobsen 1976, p. 66)

Jacobsen (1975, p. 67) assumes that different singers performed the laments of the different characters.

The Search and Fetching drama, possibly a continuation of the other Damu rite, deals with Damu as a child. A reference in one of the early songs of the cycle to the sacred cedar of the temple Eanna in the city of Uruk suggests that this rite may have begun at that tree. After lamenting her fear that Damu will not return, the mother then seeks him at the tree who has been nursing him:

O my (good) nurse, from whom I was parted,
 I put a child to dwell with you, . . .
 I put the lad, my Damu, to dwell with you, . . .
 my eyes I have adorned with eyeblack for him,
 my forearms I have adorned with cedar perfume for him,
 my head I have adorned
 with a splendid turban for him. (Jacobsen 1976, p. 69)
 You were having that child sleep in
 your core, sleep in your bark (Jacobsen 1975, p. 91)

The songs continue telling how Damu had been left sleeping in the grass and rushes, but these plants have released him to the desert which will watch him till the coming of the flood. That flood would mark the return of the god, for with the return of the water the sap rose in the vegetation.

The last songs of the cycle are hymns of praise to the returning god as he is taken in procession to his father, the river god Enki. One short song in this group seems to be an invocation to the ox towing the god's boat, thus providing a possible reference to the dual level of the procession: the procession being relived in the mythic songs, and the actual procession to the river during which the worshippers sang the rite. Most of the songs closing the rite are anthems of praise with extensive refrains suggesting possible antiphonal involvement by the worshippers:

Noble, noble that lord is noble!
 Damu the noble householder,
 that lord is noble!
 The mother who bore him is a goddess, Urash (i.e. the tilth),
 that lord is noble!
 His father is the wild bull of Eridu (Enki),
 that lord is noble!
 His glance is fraught with awesomeness,
 that lord is noble!
 His utterance is full of deliciousness,
 that lord is noble!
 His word takes precedence,
 that lord is noble! (Jacobsen 1976, pp. 70-71)

The same song is repeated two more times using "be at ease with us!" and "we will appease him!" as the new refrains (Jacobsen 1976, p. 71).

The next song reminds us of the importance of the king in these fertility rites, for while the worshippers accompany Damu to Enki they name Ur-Nammu, the first king of the Third Dynasty of Ur:

You, whom I accompany, in whom I rejoice,
 walking with speed under the stars in peace; . . .
 my Damu, whom I accompany to the father,
 in whom I rejoice,
 shepherd Ur-Nammu, whom I accompany to the father,
 in whom I rejoice (Jacobsen 1976, p. 71)

The song continues with a listing of the kings of Ur III and the First Dynasty of Isin. Each king who had acted as a ritual representative of the god is named, for the king as god brought food to the land and was worthy of praise.

The peak of the ruler's liturgical role in renewing the fertility of the country came in the Sacred Marriage of Dumuzi and Inanna. Identification of the king's acts with the renewal of vegetation is clearly seen in one text describing the union of the king as Dumuzi and his ritual partner as Inanna:

At its rising augustly, at its rising augustly,
 Did the shoots and the buds rise up
 The king's loins! At its rising augustly
 Did the vines rise up, did the grains rise up
 Did the desert fill (with verdure) like a
 pleasurable garden. (Jacobsen 1975, p. 69)

This marriage of king and priestess expressed slightly different things in different regions. In Nippur the marriage was a fertility rite of spring coincident with the arrival of new vegetation, as in the text above. In Erech the marriage of Inanna-of-the-storehouse to Dumuzi-Amaushumgalanna, the bud of the date palm, was a harvest festival

symbolizing the city's renewed security in a replenished storehouse (Jacobsen 1970, p. 29). By the time of Šulgi in Ur III the Sacred Marriage was a national rite: it was the pleasant duty of the king to marry the goddess of fertility and thus insure the prosperity of his land. "The Blessing of Shulgi" tells of the arrival of that king, ritually garbed and wigged with sacrificial animals in hand, at the dock of Eanna, Inanna's shrine in Erech. The goddess sings her approval:

"When for the wild bull, for the lord, I shall have bathed,
 When for the shepherd Dumuzi, I shall have bathed, . . .
 When with amber my mouth I shall have coated,
 When with kohl my eyes I shall have painted,
 When in his fair hands my loins shall have been shaped,
 When the lord, lying by holy Inanna, the shepherd Dumuzi,
 With milk and cream the lap shall have smoothed [?]. . . ; . . .
 When like his narrow boat, he shall have brought life to it,
 When on the bed he shall have caressed me,
 Then shall I caress my lord, a sweet fate I shall decree for him,
 I shall caress Shulgi, the faithful shepherd, a sweet fate I
 shall decree for him,
 I shall caress his loins, the shepherdship of all the lands,
 I shall decree as his fate." (Kramer 1969, pp. 63-64)

The ritual elevation of Iddin-Dagan took place "On the New Year, the day of rites." (Kramer 1969, p. 65). A "sleeping place" of cedar and rushes was prepared in the palace for the couple by "the people." Precisely what people, and how many remains uncertain. The goddess was bathed and led to the bed for the consummation of the union. Afterward there were sacrifices and celebrations:

He embraced his beloved wife,
 Embraced the holy Inanna,
 Led her forth like the light of day to the throne on the great
 dais, . . .
 Paraded abundance, cheer, and plenty before her,
 Prepared a goodly feast for her,
 Paraded the black-heads before her, [saying]

"With the drum [?] whose speech is louder than storm,
The sweet-voiced lyre [?], the ornament of the palace,
The harp that soothes the spirit of man,
O singers, let us utter songs that rejoice the heart."

(Kramer 1969, pp. 65-66)

Both these accounts and others known leave us uncertain as to exact ritual details or participants. One text suggests that the ceremony occurred not in the palace, but somewhat more logically in the temple of the goddess. There, presumably some priestess representing Inanna was bathed and brought in procession to await the king:

Going to the lad, my young husband,
To my young husband, to whom I cling as the apple to the
bough, . . .

To whom I, Inanna, cleave as the date to the date leaf, . . .

Ama-ushungal-anna, whom I so love. (Jacobsen 1970, p. 72)

The king was also brought to the temple. Kramer provides one text of the lukur-priestesses which may have accompanied such a procession:

You are our brother, . . .

[You are] the . . . brother of the palace, . . .

You are our high official of the chariot, . . .

You are our city father and judge, . . .

Our mother provides you with all that is good.

Your coming is life,

Your entering the house is abundance,

(Pritchard 1969, p. 644)

At the temple the king was told to "Approach her with a chant, a heart (moving) melody." (Pritchard 1969, p. 642). The response was a request for Inanna to give the king the "field" of her breast.

Yet another song was provided for chanting at some point in the ceremony:

He has sprouted, he has burgeoned, he is lettuce planted by the
water,

My well-stocked garden of the . . . plain, my favored of the womb,

My grain luxuriant in its furrow--he is lettuce planted by the
water,

My apple tree which bears fruit up to (its) top--he is lettuce
planted by the water.

The "honey-man," the "honey-man" sweetens me ever,
My lord, the "honey-man" of the gods, my favored of the womb,
Whose hand is honey, whose foot is honey, sweetens me ever.
Whose limbs are honey sweet, sweetens me ever. . . .

It is a balbale of Inanna. (Pritchard 1969, p. 645)

By the Babylonian period the Sacred Marriage had become part of the New Year's Akitu festival. It was not an act specific to the Tammuz cult, but apparently might involve any chief god and goddess of any city. The New Year's festival, with its detailed ritual, appears as the liturgical high point of the year. One part of that liturgy was a sacred marriage, though the ceremony then only involved the joining of cult statues. A cult calendar tells of a festival to Marduk on the eleventh of Nisan after which he, in the form of his cult statue, hastens to the wedding feast. One posits the existence of a wedding prior to the feast. Earlier texts of Gudea, a ruler of Lagaš around 2200 B.C., refer to a New Year's festival of Bau to which Gudea brought wedding gifts for "Bau, full of love, lies down to rest by the couch of her husband, Ningirsu; their union engenders the fertility of Lagaš."

(Pallis 1926, pp. 198-199). A later Assyrian text provides yet another version of the marriage ritual:

To the king, my lord, from your servant Nergal-šarrani. The images of Nabû and (his spouse) Tašmētu enter tomorrow, the fourth day, toward evening, the bed chamber (of the temple). On the fifth day one serves them a royal meal; the hazannu-official (in charge of the temple) will be present; they bring the lion-headed (object) on a bier to the palace. From the fifth to the tenth day the gods stay in their bed chamber and the hazannu-official remains as a guard (at its door). On the eleventh Nabû comes out to have some exercise; he goes to the

park, kills (there) wild bulls. He (then) returns and takes his usual place. He (then) [blesses] the king. . . .

(Oppenheim 1967, pp. 168-169)

The king was no longer a participant in the ceremony, but the god is seen "living" as the king did.

The other fertility dramas also survived in variant forms. An Assyrian incantation to Dumuzi states that the twenty-eighth of the month of Dumuzi was the day of the cattlepen, thus a remembrance of the god's death. On the twenty-ninth Dumuzi's couch was set up, evidently for the dead god to lie in state. Two Assyrian letters concerning the rites of Dumuzi in several garrison towns call for a similar display on those dates. How many of the texts survived with these rites is unknown, though one rather ambiguous comment from an Assyrian cultic calendar states: ". . .they install the brother [Dumuzi] in office according to what they say." (Jacobsen 1975, pp. 71-72). Something was still being said, though exactly what is uncertain. In the case of the Road of No Return drama, we know that it survived as a literary document for many late copies exist. There is, however, no proof of its survival as a performed rite.

It must be admitted that we lack solid evidence for the performance of some of these rites even in early times. Account texts of the Ur III period mention expenses in connection with the Sacred Marriage and Mourning drama (Jacobsen 1975, pp. 67, 85). Other than these references, as Jacobsen realizes, "the existence of these dramas is conjectural, based on the style of the texts relating to them, a style which it is difficult to account for unless one assumes that they were

Its shade is spread over all the lands, . . .
 All the lords, all the princes,
 Conduct thither (their) holy offerings,
 Offer (their) prayers and orisons to you.

(Pritchard 1969, p. 575, 11.155-56, 158-64)

After more praise to Enlil, the hymn moves into praise of his divine spouse Ninlil in a passage which is reminiscent of the themes of the Sacred Marriage:

She who has sweet graciousness, the star-covered,
 Mother Ninlil, the holy wife, whose word is gracious, . . .
 The faithful woman--having lifted (your) eyes (upon her) you took
 her in marriage,
 The attraction of the Ekur, the queen who knows what is seemly,
 The eloquent one who is elegant of speech,
 Whose words are sweet to the flesh,
 Has seated herself by your side on the holy dais, on the pure
 dais,
 Speaks eloquently with you, whispers (tender words) by your side,
 Decrees the fates in the "place where the sun rises."

(Pritchard 1969, p. 575, 11.155-56, 158-64)

Given the references to "the holy wife," "marriage," and the decreeing of "the fates," Kramer's suggestion that this was composed for an Enlil-Ninlil Sacred Marriage in the Ekur seems reasonable (Pritchard 1969, p. 573, n. 4).

Just as the hymns of some forms of the Sacred Marriage deal with the involvement of the king in that rite, so some other cult hymns include references to the king amidst praise of the deity. Frequently the exact purpose or rite is unclear, but as a viable possibility Hallo suggests "that they were commissioned for occasions such as the installation of a high priest or priestess (who was often a son or daughter of the king) or the presentation of a royal votive offering." (Hallo 1970, p. 118). One such royal cult hymn of Ur-Nammu, a king of the Ur III period, deals with his act of building the Ekur and his blessing by Enlil:

[To restore] the brickwork of the Ekur in accordance with the
me,
 Enlil, the Great Mountain, who [makes glorious] his [lofty]
 shrine, the Ekur, like the light of day,
 Set his . . . heart,
 Commissioned Ur-Nammu, the shepherd, to lift the head of the
 Ekur heaven-high,
 Exalted the king [in] the land, lifted (his) head heaven-high.
 For the faithful shepherd Ur-[Nammu] who with (the support of)
 Enlil is heroic with distant days,
 He who knows decisions, the lord of [great understanding],
 directed the brickmold,
 (Pritchard 1969, p. 583, 11.7-13)

This song is designated a tigi, one of the two basic forms for royal
 cult hymns. Both the tigi and the adab were so designated because of
 the accompanying instruments: the tigi used a sort of lyre (Pritchard
 1969, p. 583, n. 1).

A second set of hymns is concerned with the praise of temples.
 A collection of these temple hymns was compiled by Enheduanna, priestess
 and daughter of Sargon of Akkad (2334-2279 B.C.) (Sjöberg and Bergmann
 1969, p. 5). Her compilation underwent changes and additions over the
 years resulting in a collection of forty-two known hymns. One of these,
 dedicated to the house of Nanna in Ur, is particularly interesting to us
 because of its reference to the adab-songs in the banquet hall:

Shrine (built on) a pure place, earth of An,
 House of Suen, your front (is) a prince,
 your back (is) a king,
 Your banquet(-hall) is (filled with) adab-songs,
 your 'Holy of Holies' with . . .-drums and . . .-drums,
 The light which emanates from you (and) your true en-ship are
 mighty?,
 Gipar, lofty shrine of holy me's, shining as? the sun
 (Sjöberg and Bergmann 1969, p. 23, 11.105-109)

In one hymn we see formalized temple praise, and we are provided another
 setting for the aforementioned adab-songs.

Enheduanna did not limit herself to the compilation of temple hymns. We see her work again in the third cult hymn category: hymns in praise of a deity. Given the elaborate care lavished upon deity statues throughout much of Mesopotamian religious history, cf. above in the Assyrian letter concerning the image of Nabu, Hallo (1970, pp. 120-21) suggests that many of the Neo-Sumerian hymns to deities were written for recitation at the dedication of a statue. On great cult occasions the statue was carried in procession and hymns in its honor were again recited. As a way of endowing the statue with power it sometimes underwent a ceremony of mouth-opening (Hallo 1970, p. 121, n. 1). One hymn to Nisaba refers to this process:

Oh Lady colored like the stars of heaven, holding the lapis lazuli
 tablet,
 Nisaba, born in the great sheepfold by the divine Earth,
 Wild kid nourished (as) on good milk with pure vegetation,
 Mouth-opened by the seven flutes,

(Hallo 1970, p. 128, 11.1-4)

This same hymn is of further interest in that it closely duplicates a text found at Lagash inscribed on a stone shaped like a dedication tablet and pierced through so that it could be suspended (Hallo 1970, p. 122, n. 3). This monumental copy gives a stronger basis to the formal association of statue and hymn: such a stone tablet would have been prepared for a special purpose, like the dedication of a cult statue.

Enheduanna provides us with a lengthy divine hymn which has a significantly different underlying purpose. This daughter of Sargon was a priestess of the moon-god Nanna at Ur and Uruk during the time of Sargon and her nephew Naram-Sin. In addition to the temple hymns, she

composed a hymn cycle to Inanna. In the peroration she speaks of the pain of composition, and the desire for message repetition:

One has heaped up the coals in (in the censer),	prepared the lustration
The nuptial chamber awaits you,	let your heart be appeased!
With "It is enough for me, it is too much for me!" I have given birth,	oh exalted lady, (to this song) for you.
That which I recited to you	at midnight
May the singer repeat it to you	at noon!

(Hallo and van Dijk 1968, p. 33, 11.136-40)

The columnal division is used by the translators to express the caesuras used throughout the text (Hallo and van Dijk 1968, p. 44).

Enheduanna's composition, "The Exaltation of Inanna," relates to her own difficulties during the unsuccessful general revolt against Sargon late in his reign. She begins by elevating Inanna to the level of An, the chief god of the Sumerian pantheon (Hallo and van Dijk 1968, p. 50). The hymn continues praising Inanna's awesome power both with men and the gods:

Oh my lady, the Anunna	the great gods,
Fluttering like bats	fly off from before you to the clefts,

(Hallo and van Dijk 1968, p. 19, 11.34-35)

Inanna is established as the discipliner of mankind through battle:

In the van of battle	everything is struck down by you,
Oh my lady, (propelled) on your own wings,	you peck away (at the land).

(Hallo and van Dijk 1968, p. 17, 11.26-27)

This warlike nature is more typical of the Akkadian Ishtar, than the Sumerian goddess of fertility. The hymn continues with expressions of Inanna's wrath and power:

Blood rises in its rivers for you, its people have nought to drink,
It leads its army captive before you of its own accord.

(Hallo and van Dijk 1968, p. 21, 11.45-46)

The focus then shifts to an unnamed Sumerian city where the goddess has not been granted her due, and hence has removed her favors:

Over the city which has not declared	"The land is yours,"
. . .You have spoken your holy command,	have verily turned it back from your path,
. . .Its woman no longer speaks of love	with her husband.

(Hallo and van Dijk 1968, p. 21, 11.51, 53, 55)

After invoking Inanna's power, Enheduanna tells of her own banishment from the religious center of Ur:

I carried the ritual basket (but now) I am placed in the lepers' ward,	I intoned the acclaim. I, even I, can no longer live with you!
--	--

(Hallo and van Dijk 1968, p. 23, 11.68-69)

She has been thrown out by a usurper she names Lugalanne. She accuses him of blasphemy:

(Lugalanne) has altered the lustrations of holy An and all his
(other rites).

He has stripped An of his (temple) Eanna.

(Hallo and van Dijk 1968, pp. 25-27, 11.85-86)

With An thus stripped of power, Enheduanna calls for his new equal, Inanna, to curse the rebel city. In the twelfth stanza Inanna responds:

This city--	may it be sundered by An!
. . .Oh lady, the (harp of) mourning	is placed on the ground.
One had verily beached your ship of mourning on a hostile shore.	
At (the sound of) my sacred song	they are ready to die.

(Hallo and van Dijk 1968, p. 27, 11.94, 97-99)

Enheduanna rebukes Nanna whose service she has been driven from, and appeals to Inanna as "my queen beloved of An." (Hallo and van Dijk 1968, p. 31, 1.121).

The hymn then reaches its peak in a magnificent proclaiming the greatness of Inanna:

That one has not recited as a "Known! Be it known!" of Nanna,	that one has recited as a "'Tis Thine!":
---	---

"That you are lofty as Heaven (An)--	be it known!
---	--------------

That you are broad as the earth--	be it known!
That you devastate the rebellious land--	be it known!

That you roar at the land--	be it known!
That you smite the heads--	be it known!
That you devour cadavers like a dog--	be it known!

That your glance is terrible--	be it known!
That you lift your terrible glance--	be it known!

That your glance is flashing--	be it known!
That you are ill-disposed toward the. . .--	be it known!

That you attain victory--	be it known!
That one has not recited (this) of Nanna,	that one has recited it as a "'Tis Thine!"--
(That,) oh my lady, has made you great, you alone are exalted!	

Oh my lady beloved of An, I have verily recounted your fury!
(Hallo and van Dijk 1968, pp. 31-33, 11.122-135)

Even in the English translation the refrain running throughout the stanza is obvious. The antiphonal nature of this magnificent becomes even clearer in the Sumerian. The first line employs two liturgical terms: hé-zu-hé-za_x(zu)-a and za-a^f-kam...du₁₁. The first term employs a vowel alternation which was used in Sumerian to indicate "to and fro" (Hallo and van Dijk 1968, p. 77). The second term indicates an "it is thine" refrain in honor of a deity (Hallo and van Dijk 1968, p. 94). Thus, together the two terms provide a basis for understanding this as a magnificent which was performed antiphonally, possibly with the congregation providing the affirming "be it known" response.

This involvement of the worshipper in the actual exaltation of Inanna would have suited Enheduanna's underlying purpose. Sargon required a theological support to strengthen his attempt to unify his own Akkad with Sumer and its religious centers, Ur and Uruk. His own background and kingly authority seems to have been related to the Akkadian goddess, Ishtar. Enheduanna's hymn sought to accomplish two necessary theological goals: carefully, through the process already outlined, she elevated the Sumerian goddess Inanna to an authority equal with An, the supreme god of the pantheon. At the same time she began the equation of Inanna with the Akkadian Ishtar. In the course of one hundred and fifty-three lines, the name of Inanna is invoked only four times. One reference is in the one stanza which is not addressed to the goddess, and even here Inanna is also ambiguously referred to as "that woman." The final name reference is in the standard closing formula. This evidences a remarkable and abnormal restraint on the part of Enheduanna: most divine poetry uses the deity's name frequently. Here forty different epithets are used instead of the name. This ambiguity, combined with the transfer of war-like characteristics, noted above, encouraged the merger of Inanna and Ishtar, and thus enhanced Sargon's attempts to unify his empire (Hallo and van Dijk 1968, pp. 6-11). Direct involvement of the worshippers in the recitation of the magnificent would help to commit them to the new theology.

"Enuma Elish"

Political exploitation of cult was not limited to one hymn cycle. It is seen again in "Enuma elish," an Akkadian mythic poem

commonly known as the "Babylonian Creation Epic." This poem, of uncertain date, provides a cosmology, but not an orthodox one: it asserts the supremacy of Marduk.

The story is brief: the emphasis is on Marduk's rise to power. Tiamat (Chaos) has risen, and has paralyzed the great gods with fear. They turn to Marduk to be their saviour. He agrees to champion them on the condition that all the other gods will relinquish their individual authority to him. After Marduk overcomes Tiamat in battle, the other gods are set to the task of building Babylon and its sacred precincts. They do this work joyfully, though in the earlier, Old Babylonian "Epic of Atrahasis" the same gods were the unwilling slaves of Enlil in the building of Nippur.

This story, simple and direct, was well used. Ritual texts tell us that "Enuma elish" was recited during the New Year's Akitu festival in Babylon:

[after] the second meal of the late afternoon, the urigallu-priest of the temple Ekua shall recite (while lifting his hand?) to the god Bel the (composition entitled) Enūma eliš. While he recites Enūma eliš to the god Bel, the front of the tiara of the god Anu and the resting place of the god Enlil shall be covered.

(Pritchard 1969, p. 332)

As Oppenheim (1977, pp. 232-233) points out this is a reading to the cult statue, not necessarily to the crowd. The ending of the text however, suggests that the crowd was expected to be quite familiar with the story:

Let them be held in remembrance and let the first one teach (them);
 Let the wise (and) the knowing consider (them) together;
 Let the father repeat (them) and teach (them) to his sons;
 Let the ears (even) of shepherd and herdsman be opened (to them).

Let (man) rejoice in Marduk, the Enlil of the gods,
 That his land be fruitful (and) it be well with him.
 Reliable is his word, unalterable his command;
 The utterance of his mouth no god whatever can change.
 He looks on and does not turn his neck;
 When he is wroth, no god can withstand his indignation.
 Unsearchable is his heart, (all-) embracing his mind;
 The sinner and the transgressor are an abom[ination] before him.
 The instructions which an ancient(?) one spoke before him(?).

(Heidel 1963, p. 60, 11.143-157)

He wrote down and (thereby) preserved (it) for the future.
 The [dwell]ing of Marduk which the gods, the Igigi, had made,
 . . . let them speak.
 . . . the song of Marduk,
 [Who] vanquished Ti[amat] and achieved the kingship.

(Pritchard 1969, p. 503, 11.158-162)

The wise, the knowing, father, sons, shepherds, herdsmen, all were to hear the story and know of the exalted kingship of Marduk.

Why, we might ask, was the kingship of Marduk important when An and Enlil were the traditional bearers of divine authority? A variety of answers (Finkelstein 1969; Jacobsen 1976) has been proposed. Each revolves around the idea in Mesopotamian thought which ties the rank of a god to the significance of his temple and city. Enlil and the Ekur in Nippur held early primacy, though the city of Nippur was not an important political power. "Enuma elish" was an attempt to shift religious primacy to Marduk and the Esagil in Babylon, thus centralizing authority. Hence, Marduk is called Enlil, he takes Enlil's names, and the other gods work joyfully for him.

The attempt seems to have been successful, for as Finkelstein states (1979, pp. 94-95), "Enuma elish" supplanted all preceding cosmologies in Mesopotamia. One scholar terms it "the Authorized Version of Neo-Babylonian religion." (Contenau 1954, p. 194). The people heard and they came to accept the new cosmology.

Summary

The temple with its liturgy and cult literature was a center of Mesopotamian oral presentation. Congregational involvement through antiphonal recitation is seen in various hymns and lamentations. Some form of cult drama is evidenced through much of Mesopotamian religious history. The rites often involved the participation of the kings, and as might be expected in such circumstances, the literature of the liturgy sometimes departed from a purely religious intent. We cannot be certain of the extent of popular involvement in liturgy: many of the rites only involved the king and his circle. Nevertheless, within the temple cult we see oral presentation being used in myriad ways for many purposes.

CHAPTER THREE

Šulgi's, the king of Ur,
This is the song of his power, this is the hymn of his valour;
Of the wise, in all things foremost, this is the lasting record.
In order to pass down word to the generations of the future,
For the valiant, the Son of Ninsun,
He (the singer), the deep of his wisdom brought him to the fore.
The art of the singer utters unto a declaration,
And ardently extols in whatever fine thoughts that surge from the
heart. (Castellino 1972, p. 31, 11.3-10)

Just as Mesopotamian kings were often surrounded by the literature of cult: laments in earthquake rituals, hymns in Sacred Marriage ceremonies, or even songs to plowing oxen in agricultural festivals (Civil 1976); even so their own courts seem to have been literary centers. Aššurbanipal boasted of his library, and Šulgi, of the text above, claimed to be a scholar and a poet. At least in the earliest periods there were travelling singers who entertained in the court. Several texts of the Early Dynastic period refer to singers moving between Sumerian city-states, and being received as visiting dignitaries. A "master singer" from Adab was given land in Nippur, while another singer was given a rich imported garment (Westenholz 1974/1977, pp. 109-10). Oral entertainment was important at the court. This chapter will provide an introductory exploration of the literary involvement of the royal court. The study will survey those literary forms which were presented orally at or for the court: royal hymns and epics, god letters, and disputations.

Royal Hymns and Epics

During Ur III a genre flowered which was designed to glorify the king as public benefactor, scholar, judge, military hero, and athlete. These en-du-lugal, royal songs, do not have the liturgical rubrics of their temple counterparts. The royal hymns are either addressed to the king, or in the case of Šulgi, are spoken by the king. They seem to provide a glimpse of court ceremony rather than temple rite. Proportionally, more of these secular royal hymns are known from Ur, a political center, than Nippur, a religious center (Hallo 1970, pp. 117-18). Šulgi, in a hymn he claims as his own composition, makes it clear that these poems of royal glorification were not merely intended for the small audience of those who could read:

I, the king, my arm is the protecting genius and this is the
 song of my valour,
 Which I placed in my "Library" for (the use of) the singer.
 My compositions are not to be dropped from the mouth,
 And my songs are not to be forgotten,
 I am the good king of the land!

(Castellino 1972, pp. 64-65, 11.328-32)

Šulgi's own compositions provide a good overview of the themes and settings of these royal songs. One of the more picturesque, rather whimsically entitled "The King of the Road" by the translator, tells of Šulgi the great athlete. After expounding on the gifts that are his as a favorite of the gods, Šulgi tells of his feat:

That my name be established unto distant days that it leave not
 the mouth (of men), . . .
 I, the runner, rose in my strength, all set for the course,
 (And) from Nippur to Ur,
 I resolved to traverse as if it were (but a distance) of one
danna.
 Like a lion that wearies not of its virility, I arose,
 Put a girdle about my loins,

I swing (my) arms like a dove feverishly fleeing a snake,
 I spread wide the knees like the Indugud-bird that has lifted
 (its) eye toward the mountain.

(Pritchard 1969, p. 585, 11.36, 39-45)

In short, Šulgi claims to run about one hundred miles from Nippur to Ur in one day. Arriving in Ur amidst admiring crowds, he takes charge of the temple sacrifice, bathes, eats, and makes the return run to Nippur during a howling thunderstorm. As the text includes references to Šulgi's efforts at highway building and improvement, Finkelstein (1979, p. 100, n. 43) suggests that this was composed for the inauguration of a new highway between the cities.

"Šulgi Hymn B," already quoted above, provides a summation of the entire career of the king. Later kings lacked some of the qualms Šulgi expressed about what a future singer should find worthy of praise:

Let him extol my openmindedness and my strong arm;
 Let him derive from my songs the excitement (they produce)
 Let him keep in high esteem my very intelligence.
 What the strong one, the hero, may have achieved in his
 expeditions
 Is not something that depends on his power.
 As really my own, let him praise my generous deeds,
 Let him make known my good name.

(Castellino 1972, p. 61, 11.290-96)

This hymn, with all that it covers seems to have been written for the dedication of the royal palace, the é-hur-sag, for the closing lines tell of the building of the palace and praise the builder:

Of my [palace] I was its founder,
 Of that house I am (therefore) the right man to walk across
 its threshold, . . .
 [My palace, the palace of my kingship, its praise is
 exceedingly great. . . .
 I excell all (former) kings
 (As) in all places I have made perfect works.
 My praise is sweet!

(Castellino 1972, p. 69, 11.373-74, 378, 382-84)

Hallo associates one of these royal public relations efforts with the coronation of Ur-Nammu, the predecessor of Šulgi. The hymn opens by asking who will dig the canal to purify the reservoirs; it then responds that "Divine Ur-Nammu, the wealthy one, will dig it. . . ." (Hallo 1966, p. 141, 1.5). Then Ur-Nammu's accession to the throne under the guidance of Enlil is described:

(I,) Ur-Nammu, the youth who is pleasing to Enlil the 'great mountain.'

Am chosen in Sumer and Akkad by Nunamnir.

In Nippur, the mountain of life, he has made my fate good for me. Looked upon me with his shining forehead, given me the kingship.... He has placed the crown peculiar to kingship on my head, Has pressed the holy scepter for guiding all the people in my hand, The staff and crook for directing the numerous people.

(Hallo 1966, p. 141, 11.10-13, 15a-17)

The hymn then continues with the story of canal construction. Given the complex historical-political background of the time it is clear that this hymn does not relate to Ur-Nammu's original accession as king of Ur; at the very beginning of his independent reign Ur-Nammu could not claim the public improvements which dominate the hymn, nor did he have the allegiance of Nippur necessary to assume the title of king of Sumer and Akkad. Therefore on the basis of historical evidence, Hallo (1966, pp. 138-39) suggests that the hymn was composed for a ceremonial coronation at least four years into Ur-Nammu's reign. The event would have served to symbolically solidify the shift in national allegiance to this new ruling dynasty.

Other hymn texts have been related to the actual marriages of kings, and to their death and burial (Hallo 1970, p. 118, 1966, p. 135). On the basis of parallels between royal inscriptions, royal hymns, and

date formulas, i.e. the significant phrase or event chosen as the reference term for the year, Hallo posits a yearly ceremony, possibly linked to the New Year's celebration "in which one and the same event was memorialized in three discrete formulations: at its most concise in the official proclamation of the date formula; more fully in an appropriate royal building or votive inscription; and at its most elaborate in the royal hymns." (Hallo 1970, p. 119).

These idealized praise hymns continued. Tiglath-pileser I, an Assyrian king, had at least two stock laudatory hymns. One closes with the directive: "Let the present [generation] hear [this hymn] and recite it to the later." (Finkelstein 1979, p. 72). Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian kings maintained the tradition with more expressions reflecting the mood of the time and the desired image of the king. One letter addressed to a king of this period ends: "as it says in a song of Akkadi (i.e. Babylonia): 'All people listen to you, my shepherd, on account of your sweet voice.'" (Oppenheim 1979, p. 140, n. 16).

A related genre developed in Assyria coincident with the renewal of Assyrian military power in the mid-fourteenth century B.C., and the desire of the Assyrian kings to become an international power rivaling Egypt, Mitanni, and the Hittites. Aššur-uballit I and Enlil-Nirari began hostilities to overthrow the neighboring Kassite rulers. Tukulti-Ninurta I sacked Babylon, the center of Kassite rule. The events are remembered in a series of military epic poems.

The first known of these poems focuses on the wars of Adad-Nirari I with the Kassite king, Nazimaruttash. This text survives only in a fragment (Finkelstein 1979, pp. 69-70).

The heroic military epic of Tukulti-Ninurta I is better understood. Though surviving only in part, it is known to have had at least seven hundred lines. The poem opens by establishing the hero and the villain: the gods are angry with the truce-breaking Kassite king, but everyone is praising Tukulti-Ninurta. After the hymn of praise, the sequence of events is related. The Kassite king breaks his oath repeatedly, and Tukulti-Ninurta complains about this sin to Shamash. The Assyrian then writes to Kaštiliaš, the Kassite king, castigating him for raiding his land while avoiding battle: Tukulti-Ninurta threatens war. Kaštiliaš realizes the gods have deserted him, but he leaves the sacrifice he had been offering and leads his troops to battle anyway. Very soon however, "He [w]ithdrew and turned. . . [. . .] He fled as a refugee like. [. . .]" (Lambert 1957/1958, pp. 47, 49). Tukulti-Ninurta captures the land, but the Kassite avoids surrender. The Assyrian then sends a messenger to Kaštiliaš telling him that his cities have been sacked, and taunting him for retreating. The Kassite replies with a threat, and Tukulti-Ninurta's officers urge him to deal with the conniving Kassite quickly. Battle is joined, with the gods leading Tukulti-Ninurta. He despoils Babylon, bringing treasures for the temples of the Assyrian gods, and a library for his own quest for knowledge. While the Kassites were taunted, their military might was never downgraded, so the Assyrian victory is even greater. The text closes with standard praise:

Glorious is his might, it sco[rches] the [ir]reverent in front
and behind;
Blazing is his impetuosity, it burns the unsubmitive left and
right;
Fearful is his splendour, it overwhelms all his enemies.

He who. . .the extremities of the four winds, all kings without exception live in dread of him:

As when Addu bellows, the mountains tremble,

As when Ninurta lifts his weapons, the quarters of the world are reduced to continual anguish.

(Lambert 1957/1958, pp. 49, 51)

Thus, Tukulti-Ninurta I, the pious, just, brave, and humane seeker after truth is exalted.

Some of the passages provide dialogue between the two antagonists, while others quote soliloquies of the Kassite king, and his meetings with his advisors (Finkelstein 1979, p. 70). Historical sources validate the fact of the wars and the outcome, but not the embellishment. The epic is not pure history, nor is it an attempt to justify the king's actions; rather, in the tradition of the én-du-lugal, it is a glorification of Tukulti-Ninurta's kingship. As a part of this tradition, rather than historiography, Finkelstein asserts "that the epic was intended for oral recitation before large (and illiterate) audiences." (Finkelstein 1979, p. 71). Thus in hymns and epics the kings were glorified for their courts.

God Letters

Mesopotamian kings had other, less poetic ways of broadcasting desired information. As early as 2500 B.C. Mesopotamian rulers were demonstrating a discernible interest in formal methods of information dissemination: the official post of "herald" or "crier" was included in the lists of professions (Finkelstein 1979, p. 52). Almost two millennia later, in the Neo-Assyrian period, some type of herald was using a distinctive method to communicate the king's message.

Beginning in the Old Babylonian period, we have examples of letters written to the gods expressing the piety and devotion of the author. These may have been deposited in the sanctuary of the appropriate god, or they may have been scribal exercises (Oppenheim 1977, p. 279). By the Neo-Assyrian period at least some of these god letters had a new purpose.

Oppenheim (1960, 1979) examines three god letters written for Shalmaneser IV, Sargon II, and Esarhaddon; the Shalmaneser letter survives only in a small fragment, but the Sargon letter, better understood, has a noteworthy salutation. It is addressed to the god Aššur, the rest of the Assyrian pantheon, and the citizens of the city of Aššur. The Esarhaddon letter has a similar focus. The postscript of TCL 3, the Sargon letter, indicates that it was written by "the head of the royal chancellery" and delivered by another official (Oppenheim 1960, p. 145, n. 22). On the basis of stylistic detail, Oppenheim (1960, 1979) suggests that these Neo-Assyrian god letters were actually read to an assembly of priests and at least part of the populace.

Both the Sargon and Esarhaddon letters present reports of their annual military campaigns. The Sargon II report follows a formulaic account of victories and destructions. After detailing one major victory, the reporting of a string of minor operations is interrupted with the announcement that the army was marching home. The number and nature of digressions from the stereotyped battle reporting in this initial section of the letter is intriguing, for descriptive passages are uncommon in earlier Assyrian royal inscriptions (Oppenheim 1960,

p. 138). The strength of the enemy Urartean fortresses is expounded in impressive technical terms; and the irrigation methods of the region of Ulhu are elaborated along with an explanation of conditions prior to irrigation: "They (the inhabitants) could not even drink their fill of water." (Oppenheim 1960, p. 142). The description of the increased fertility of the region provides an effective contrast with the accounts of the Assyrian devastation of the same region. It should be noted that Sargon demonstrated a fondness for expensive water projects. The Assyrians normally got their horses from Urartu, so a longing account of the observed horse raising procedures and the numerous horses is included. The difficulties of the road and the splendor of the surrounding country with snow-capped mountains, thundering waterfalls, frightening gorges, and awesome forests are detailed (Oppenheim 1960).

The latter portion of the letter turns on the obstinant failure of the city of Muşaşir, the capital of Urartu, to pay tribute. Sargon is unhappy, nevertheless he orders the march home. At that point the gods intervene promising Sargon II the victory over his proud opponent. One of the signs involved a reminder of Sargon's religious duty to pillage foreign temples of their treasure and statues so that foreign gods could pay homage to Aššur. This reminder would serve a justification for Sargon's destruction of the temple of Haldia in Muşaşir. The actual battle description is brief, but the booty is tallied in detail in Assyrian terms rather than scribal jargon. The list ends with an unusual light touch of humor: "One hundred and twenty large and small

copper utensils of native make whose designations (in their--the Urartean's--tongue) it is not possible to render in writing." (Oppenheim 1960, p. 143).

Oppenheim (1960, 1979) reasonably theorizes that these apparent digressions served an important purpose: they kept a listening audience interested. Foreign customs, natural wonders, and rich treasure jogged audience minds to attention, and some of the digressions, like irrigation procedures, furthered the king's own interests.

The Esarhaddon letter differs. Here the author uses vivid battle descriptions, quoted speeches, and an occasional proverb to enliven the message which is a bit more ominous. Faced with the desertion of several major Assyrian leaders, Esarhaddon offers them amnesty and a safe conduct home from their refuge with the Šubriyans. The king of Šubriya refuses, Esarhaddon beseiges Šubriya, and the enemy king, dressed as a slave, comes to beg for mercy. His plea is rejected, the city is taken, the mutilated refugees are returned to Assyria, and the city is rebuilt with an Assyrian name. The Esarhaddon letter is filled with elaborate statements about the sanctity of a vassal oath and the necessity of unwavering obedience to the monarch. Through the punishment of a dissenting non-Assyrian city, Esarhaddon warns the occupants of his own city to remember their responsibilities and his power. The letter report reinforces the warning (Oppenheim 1979, pp. 125-33).

Oppenheim (1960, pp. 144-45) contends that these letters were part of a ceremony marking the end of the annual campaign: national gods and soldiers received their booty, thanksgivings were made, and

the king as high priest of Aššur reported to his god and the city. In the case of the Esarhaddon letter, the city of Aššur received no booty, hence, another warning about the evils of dissent. The Neo-Assyrian god letters, rich in the vivid detail needed to maintain interest, served to inform, involve, and warn the occupants of Aššur of the military actions of their kings.

Disputations

The preceding account of rather egotistical hymns, and biased, somewhat bloody letters should not be allowed to give a warped impression of ancient Mesopotamian courts: literature was also a source of pleasure. Disputations, adaman-du₁₁-ga, are solidly linked to the royal court. Both the "Disputation of the Wood and the Reed" (Hallo 1962b, p. 29, n. 214) and the "Disputation of the Bird and the Fish" (Roth TS, pp. 33, 38) contain references which connect them to the court of Šulgi. Ibbi-Sin is mentioned in the "Dispute between Summer and Winger." (Alster 1976, p. 110). Two economic texts from the Drehem archive (Kang 1972, pp. 157, 222) mention, in reference to the performance of a disputation, the slaughter of several sheep by the kitchen. This suggests that the disputations belong to a festal setting.

A well defined genre in Neo-Sumerian literature, disputations (Hallo 1970, p. 117) are a sub-group of a form of antiphonal recitation known as balbal-e (see above, p. 27, for an example of a balbal-e). The name adaman-du₁₁-ga indicates the contest structure of the genre. Adaman is written with the sign for "man" together twice in this manner: man_uu. Du₁₁-ga means "a word" or "speaking" (Saggs 1968,

p. 408). Thus, adaman-du₁₁-ga is speech between two people who oppose each other: a verbal battle.

These disputes typically involve two non-human characters: cattle and grain, bird and fish, summer and winter, tree and reed, silver and copper, pickax and plough, millstone and gulgul stone. One of the longer texts, "The Dispute between Summer and Winter," provides an easy view of the normal structure. It begins with a mythological setting for the argument: in order to bring prosperity to earth Enlil creates two semidivine brothers, Emesh or Summer, and Enten or Winter. Each is given specific duties:

Enten made the ewe give birth to the lamb, the goat give birth to the kid, . . .
 The fish of the sea--in the canebrake he made them lay their eggs,
 In the palm grove and vineyard he made honey and wine abound,
 The trees, wherever planted, he caused to bear fruit,
 The gardens he decked out in green, made their plants luxuriant
 Made grain increase in the furrows, . . .
 Emesh brought into being the trees and the fields, made wide the stalls and the sheepfolds,
 In the farms he multiplied produce, bedecked the earth. . . .,
 Caused the abundant harvest to be brought into the houses, the granaries to be heaped high,
 Cities and habitations to be founded, houses to be built in the land,
 Temples to rise mountain high. (Kramer 1963, pp. 218-219)

Prosperity established, the two brothers bring offerings to Enlil.

Summer brings animals, birds, and plants, while Winter brings trees, fish, and precious metals. At the temple the two begin quarreling, with each extolling his own virtues at length. Finally Summer challenges Winter's claim to be "farmer to the gods." Each states his case to Enlil. Winter complains:

Father Enlil, you have given me charge of the canals,
 I brought the water of abundance,

Farm I made touch farm, heaped high the granaries,
 I made grain increase in the furrows,
 Like Ashnan, the kindly maid, I made it come forth sturdily,
 Now Emesh, the . . . , who has no understanding for fields,
 Has jostled by . . . arm and . . . shoulder,
 At the king's palace. . . .

(Kramer 1963, p. 219)

Summer responds with some subtle flattery, but Enlil declares Winter the winner since he is responsible for "the life-producing waters:"

In the dispute between Emesh and Enten,
 Enten, the faithful farmer of the gods, having proved himself the
 victor over Emesh,
 . . . Father Enlil, praise!

(Kramer 1963, p. 220)

The "Disputation of the Bird and the Fish" includes a typical swapping of insults and self exaltation. One metaphor applied to the fish may be a possible reference to the performer:

When the Bird had insulted the Fish,
 The Fish, perturbed, with the might of heroism and pride (?),
 Like a heavy cloud which has settled on the ground, took a stand
 in the dispute.

(Roth TS, p. 33, 11.81-83)

The "heavy cloud" image seems an unlikely way to describe a fish, though it could readily be applied to the stance of an actor performing "fish."

After a lengthy exchange of insults Fish urges:

". . . , let our case be decided.
 "To the judge, the arbiter, Enki, (thus) let us have our case
 decided."
 The two, shoving and quarrelling,
 . . . its greatness, knowing (?),
 [In the shr]line Eridu, the quarrel continues, the disputation
 goes on
 . . . like its racket,
 [Šu]lgi, son of Enlil,
 [], he calmed (them) down, seeking a (just) verdict.

(Roth TS, pp. 37-38, 11.142-47, 149-50)

The reference to Šulgi reaching a verdict provides a solid foundation for the assertion by Hallo (1970, p. 117) that the king played the role of arbiter between the disputants. Evidently, in the performance of "Bird and Fish," Šulgi was the judge.

The performers may have been costumed. Sumerian art includes representations of animals in human situations like playing musical instruments. Examination of these depictions sometimes reveals human hands or feet protruding from the skins. From Nimrud, in a later period, we know of men in fish-cloaks, and masked dancers in lion skins (Hallo 1967, p. 63).

The disputation form did continue into later periods. Old Babylonian and Assyrian fragments exist of an Akkadian contest between "The Tamarisk and the Palm." This text and "The Ox and the Horse" seem to retain the old contest structure, though neither text is fully known. "The Tamarisk and the Palm" opens with the planting of each tree in the king's courtyard. The two trees begin arguing:

The Tamarisk opened his mouth [and. . .] "Consider my equipment
in the king's palace. What of mine [is found]
[In] the king's house? The king eats from my dish, from [my]
goblet [. . . .]
From my plate. The warriors eat from my breadbasket [. . . .]
The baker takes up flour. I am a weaver, [beating up] the threads.
I clothe the troops.[. . . .]
.of the god. I am the chief exorcist and renovate the temple.
[I am] indeed an arisocrat [. . .]
[.]I certainly have no rival."
[The Palm] answered with exaggerated utterance [. . .] "I am
superior to you. Six times I excel, seven times.[.]
I am the successor to the corn goddess; for three months.[.]
The orphan girl, the widow, the poor man.[.]
Eat without stint my sweet date.[.]
(broken). . . [.]
They worship my offshoots [.]"

(Lambert 1960, pp. 159, 161)

More arguments of the same sort are heard, just as in the Sumerian disputations. The genre seems to have been a source of pleasurable entertainment from Ur III at least until shortly before the Neo-Assyrian period.

Summary

The royal court provided another center of oral presentation in Mesopotamia. Court poets, and sometimes the king, produced hymns to glorify the king during court ceremonies like coronations and road or palace dedications. Along with later military epic poetry, these hymns depicted the ideal king to his court. Neo-Assyrian god letters allowed the king a chance to broadcast his version of the annual military campaign. Performances of disputations provided banquet entertainment. Thus, at the court, literature was presented orally for praise, public relations, and pleasure.

CHAPTER FOUR

A house with a foundation like heaven,
A house which like a . . . vessel has been covered with linen,
A house which like a goose stands on a (firm) base,
One with eyes not opened has entered it,
One with open eyes has come out of it.
Its solution: the school.

(Sjöberg 1975, p. 159)

The edubba or "tablet house," the scribal school: students entered in blind ignorance, and left with a vision which enabled them to serve as the literate core of an illiterate society. With a base in Sumerian, writing, surveying, music, and literature, edubba graduates were enviably prepared for a variety of tasks. The title of dubsar, or scribe, was a respected one to which even kings like Šulgi aspired:

During my youth there was the edubba [school] where
On the tablets of Sumer and Akkad I learned the scribal art,
No youth could write as well as I on clay,
I was instructed in the learned places of the scribal art,
I am accomplished in subtraction, addition, counting and
accounting,
The gracious Nanibgal, the goddess Nidaba,
Has given me graciously of wisdom and understanding,
I am a dextrous scribe whom nothing impedes.

(Kramer 1979, p. 63)

Little did seem to impede these early scribes. Lexical records include fifteen distinct varieties of dubsar. Most were secretaries, but higher or more varied posts were available to some (Kraeling and Adams 1960, p. 99). Pressed for detail in this area Landsberger has stated: "If I were to make an intuitive sweeping estimate, I would say that perhaps seventy per cent of the scribes had administrative positions, twenty

per cent were privately employed, and the remainder became specialists in the diagnosis of illness, charms, magic, and other activities calling for some knowledge of writing." (Kraeling and Adams 1960, p. 119). During Ur III, high government posts were available to the scribe trained in the professional school (Kraeling and Adams 1960, p. 99). In later periods, when the concept of a professional school was replaced by small family teaching units reflected in text "ancestors" or editors (Lambert 1962), specialization diminished sharply. One new scribal specialist developed, however: the astrologer (Kraeling and Adams 1960, p. 97). The chief kalû-priest was also educated as a scribe (Sjöberg 1975, p. 170, n. 39). High administrative posts were still available to scribes during the Middle Assyrian, Neo-Assyrian, and Neo-Babylonian periods (Oppenheim 1977, pp. 242-43). The wearisome path of learning ended in significant job opportunities.

The sons of the edubba suffered a long process of educational preparation. Students worked under a headmaster called "the father," and "big brother" assisting instructors (Kraeling and Adams 1960, p. 95). This "family" had a disciplined work atmosphere. In a text known as "Schooldays," an old graduate reminisces:

I recited my tablet, ate my lunch, prepared my (new) tablet, wrote it, finished it; then my model tablets were brought to me; and in the afternoon my exercise tablets were brought to me.

(Kramer 1963, pp. 237-38)

The next day does not go so smoothly. He is flogged for being late, missing information in his tablet, talking without permission, standing without permission, not speaking Sumerian, and on and on until it seems every official of the school has punished him for one reason or another

(Kramer 1963, pp. 238-39). The nature of the punishment is clear, for the Sumerian sign is a combination of the signs for "stick" and "flesh" (Kramer 1959, p. 8). The whole wretched day is followed by what Kramer (1959, pp. 8-11) terms "the first case of 'apple-polishing:'" at the sufferer's urging the headmaster is brought to his home, feasted, praised, given a raise in pay, and dressed in a new set of clothes.

While "Schooldays" provides a glimpse of the system, other texts give us a clearer understanding of the curriculum. One text includes a list of the areas the aspiring scribe was to understand:

3. Translation and explanation from Sumerian to Akkadian and vice versa.
4. The three Sumerian equivalents of each Akkadian word (the second and third belonging to an occult language).
5. Sumerian grammatical terms. . . .
6. Sumerian conjugation. . . .
9. Writing of phonetic Sumerian.
10. To understand the occult language of all classes of priests and members of other professions.
11. How to draw up, cover, and seal a document.
12. All categories of songs and how to conduct a choir.
13. The technical jargon of silversmiths and jewelers.
14. Other complicated and intentionally distorted languages of professional groups. . . .
15. Mathematics, division of fields, allotting of rations.
16. The use and technique of various musical instruments.

(Kraeling and Adams 1960, p. 100)

The detail of the list can be broken into several broad subject areas: cuneiform writing, vocabulary, the Sumerian language, composition, music, literature, mathematics, and surveying.

The focus of study was knowledge and effective use of the Sumerian language. This concern remained when Sumerian was no longer a living language (Sjöberg 1975, pp. 161-62). The memories of unfortunate "Schooldays" tell us there was an instructor for that language:

The fellow in charge of Sumerian said:
 "Why didn't you speak Sumerian," caned me.

(Kramer 1963, pp. 238-39)

Other edubba dialogues demonstrate the bilingual aim of scribal education. In one a participant challenges "do you, as I do, speak Sumerian?" (Sjöberg 1975, p. 162), while in the dialogue between Enkitalu and Enkihegal, one boasts "(and) that I will tell you in both languages, Enkihegal!" (Sjöberg 1975, p. 162).

Even when much of Sumerian literature had dropped from use in favor of the current Akkadian, sometime late in the Old Babylonian period, Sumerian lexical texts continued in study for Sumerian was, as Landsberger terms it, "a kind of mental superstructure" (Kraeling and Adams 1960, p. 97). Sumerian provided a sort of scribal shorthand, and it still served as a liturgical language. Lengthy lists of Sumerian terms were studied, with the resulting accusation:

You may recite from the scribal art but you cannot place it in
 its (right) place,
 You have written (the names of) the animals living in the steppe
 up to (the names of) artisans.

(Sjöberg 1975, p. 163)

Another boasted:

The whole vocabulary of the scribes in the eduba
 I will recite for you, I know it much better than you.

(Sjöberg 1975, p. 164)

As indicated above by the examination text of the curriculum, the student was expected to know far more than animal and artisan names.

Several methods of study were employed. In the Old Babylonian school at Nippur, the long process began with the memorization of around four hundred fifty cuneiform signs, beginning with the sign which was

pronounced "a," "ya," "duru," "e," and "a." These signs were repeated on lentil-shaped tablets until the pupil achieved a good hand. Once the writing and pronunciation of the basic signs were mastered, the student began on the encyclopedic lexical lists (Hallo and Simpson 1971, pp. 156-57).

The process was sometimes made more pleasant by the learning of a proverb. Many practice tablets were found at Nippur with a single proverb written in a clean hand on the upper part of the obverse, and the same proverb repeated below in a poorer hand (Gordon 1959, p. 7). Such proverbs related to all aspects of life:

Tell a lie (and then) tell the truth: it will be considered (?)
a lie!

(Gordon 1959, p. 229)

He who does not support either a wife or a child, his nose has
not borne a leash.

(Gordon 1959, p. 120)

One could be a reference to the still proverbially impecunious student:

A junior-scribe is overmuch concerned with food for his stomach;
he does not pay attention to (his) scribeship.

(Gordon 1959, p. 210)

Some proverbs deal directly with the concerns of the scribal school:

A scribe who does not know Sumerian,
What (kind of) a scribe is he?

(Gordon 1959, p. 206)

The proverbs obviously provided writing practice. As Alster (1975, p. 13) suggests, they also instilled a code of behavior, and provided the future writer a useful stock of phrases.

One proverb refers to the practice of taking dictation wherein the instructor dictated a text, the student repeated it orally, and

simultaneously wrote the text down: "a scribe (whose) hand rivals (his) mouth, he is indeed a scribe." (Sjöbert 1975, p. 79). Landsberger (Kraeling and Adams 1960, pp. 116-17) contends that the practice of "exact replication" was limited to the later periods when there is a distinction between the terms for "to dictate" and "to take dictation." Civil, however, specifically relates oral instruction, not necessarily dictation, to the earlier Old Babylonian edubba in Nippur: "a scribe from Boghazköy or from Assurbanipal's library may have learned his Sumerian from tablets. The OB Nippur scribe, however, learned to associate sounds and meanings with the signs he was being trained to write from the teacher's oral instruction, and certainly not from consulting a tablet." (Civil 1975, p. 130). Citing the absence of the expected pronunciation column in many early tablets, the unexpected presence of information in one group of lexical texts which was not present in the best copies of the related preceding texts, and similar phenomena, Civil (1975, p. 130) supports his contention.

Remembering with the reminiscing scribe the beginning of a school day, "I recited my tablet," we know that oral work was also a part of the student's concern. Landsberger (1954, p. 124) cites two terms from the school texts of the Old Babylonian period which reiterate this: "sid=manû, 'recite,' memorise" and "ka-ka-sè-ke=têlu, 'to make equal in the mouth,' read aloud a written document." The stumbling beginning student heard the proverb, "A fellow who cannot produce (the vocabulary beginning with) a-a, how will he attain fluent speech?" (Sjöberg 1975, p. 63). An older scribe was taunted: "your tongue is not adapted to the Sumerian language." (Sjöberg 1975, p. 161).

The dispute "Enkitalu and Enkihegal" also refers to oral work, though the focus here is song:

(Even if) he had a zami-instrument he could not learn the art
of singing,
he, the most backward of (his) classmates,
has not been able to make a beautiful tremolo and sound,
he is 'heavy' for the Sumerian language, he is not able to
move his tongue correctly,
he cannot sing a song, cannot open his mouth.
and you are an accomplished man?!

(Sjöberg 1975, p. 169)

Kramer (1963, p. 170) suggests that singers were taught songs in the edubba. Westenholz (1974/1977, p. 107) affirms that musicians of the Isin-Larsa period were instructed by the scribes. In the text of "Dumuzi's Dream," the god connects the two arts when he calls for his sister:

Bring my tablet knowing scribe, bring my sister!
Bring my song knowing singer, bring my sister!

(Alster 1972, p. 55, 11.21-22)

"Šulgi Hymn B" provides an unmistakable linking of the two arts:

In the "House of Learning" of Nidaba, the splendent, there are
my songs!
Up North, in Nippur, they are entered into the "Large Place,"
In order that my homage should be established in the Ekur.
The scribe will go and take them into his hand,
The singer will go and perform them.
In the edubba they will last, things never to be changed.
In the "Academy" they will be everlasting, things never to
fail.

(Castellino 1972, p. 63, 11.309-315)

In seven lines Šulgi links the scribe, the singer, the temple and the royal court. Sjöberg's recounting of the third and fourth lines of that same passage suggests a practice of recording the king's prayers for study:

May the scribe stand ready for my prayer in the Ekur. . . .
may he take it in his hand, (Sjöberg 1975, p. 174)

Other royal hymns also mention the edubba:

Your surpassing wisdom, which the tablet of Nisaba has given
 you,
 shall never end on the clay in the eduba,
 in the eduba, which is like a shrine that creates everything,
 a place that never ceases,
 to the young scribe, who has 'brought his hand to it' and who
 has written a clay (tablet),
 Nisaba, the lustrous lady, may give wisdom,
 may she 'open (his) hand'
 and may she come forth for him like the sun!

(Sjöberg 1975, p. 172)

This praise to the school and the diligent student is unexpectedly extended for a composition designed to glorify the king. Given this passage and other brief references to the scribal school, Sjöberg (1975, p. 172) suggests that some of the royal hymns were composed in the edubba for use in the palace and study in the school. The suggestion is quite plausible, but it is only a possibility. Certainly there was a strong connection between the school and the court: scribes became administrative officials, scribes trained as musicians may have composed for and even performed in the court, and scribes in the schools did preserve the literary heritage. Just as Šulgi said: "In the edubba they will last, things never to be changed." (Castellino 1972, p. 63, 1.314).

The scribal schools included Sumerian and Akkadian literature in their curriculum. Sjöberg connects an accusation from one dialogue with the bane of many modern literature students, line identification: "you may recite from the scribal art (the literature), but you cannot put it in the right place." (Sjöberg 1975, p. 172). The texts which we know today survived in the libraries of the edubba where they were

studied and preserved in the literate core of an illiterate society. Multiple copies of texts exist because they were used by many students over time in different schools: for the "Exploits of Ninurta" about one hundred thirty fragmentary copies are known with nearly two-thirds of those originating in the scribal schools of Nippur and Ur (Hallo 1975, p. 183). Literature was canonized in the edubba: historical details were suppressed and the compositions were updated. Sumerian texts were provided with interlinear Akkadian translations or were transformed into new Akkadian compositions (Hallo 1975). Text preservation was a recognized purpose. Two colophons give this as the reason their related texts were copied: "for the listening of future people." (Leichty 1964, p. 153). Literature provided current and future scribal audiences with an advanced course in the use of the Sumerian language. Without that course we would not know what we do of Sumerian literature; because of that course we must realize that what we know is the literature which interested one small segment of Mesopotamian society.

Summary

The edubba or scribal school constituted the literate core of ancient Mesopotamian society. It began as a professional school in the Old Babylonian period, and its educational traditions were carried on by families of scribes in later periods. Through a combination of memorization, recitation, dictation, and manuscript duplication, students were taught mathematics, accounting, music, and primarily the complexities of the Sumerian and Akkadian languages. The schools were the

centers where ancient literature was canonized, for literature study polished the students' use and comprehension of the language. The schools preserved the literature which they valued, but because of the schools we have at least part of the literature which was presented orally in ancient Mesopotamian society.

CHAPTER FIVE

The scribal schools preserved the literature which we know today, but not all Mesopotamian literature was a part of the normal scribal curriculum. Alongside the scribal tradition there existed another tradition. Oppenheim explains:

Any evaluation with respect to topic inventory and style types [of literary texts] should take into consideration the fact that there exists meager, but unquestionable evidence of a rich and productive oral literary tradition in Mesopotamia. It seems to have flourished not only before the period in which the standardization, or "canonization," of the written tradition became effective, but also parallel and subsequent to it.

(Oppenheim 1977, p. 22)

Oppenheim (1977, pp. 22-23) posits the royal court as the setting for most of the songs, legends, animal tales, and riddles from his alternate "stream of tradition." Some non-canonical omen texts have been related to an oral tradition present within the Neo-Assyrian scribal schools (Elman 1975). Other scholars have attempted to connect this tradition with that unmanageable, almost untraceable group: the illiterate populace. Kramer asserts: "It is hardly likely that Sumerian literary works stayed on the edubba 'shelves' for teaching purposes only; in one way or another, they must have been used in public gatherings, whether these took place in the temple, the court, or the market place."

(Kramer 1963, p. 170). Reference was made in chapter one to Kramer's belief that much of Sumerian literature had a bardic origin. Westenholz (1974/1977, pp. 108-110) hypothesizes a history of literary interaction between the temple, the palace, the scribes, the bards, and the

popular oral tradition. Chapter four explored the interaction of the scribes and the singers. The scribal schools stored mainstream literature. Šulgi saw the singers as a second group concerned with preserving tradition:

The songs of yore, of ancient, foregone days,
 To be executed on harp and lyre (?)
 Nowadays the singer and player can no longer recall,
 nor can he retell their text.
 (From now on) whatever belongs to the old lore, he (the singer)
 shall take care of and shall not give it over to neglect.
 He shall (further) apply all his intelligence while they are
 executed on harp and lyre.
 Let him draw honour from the "long chants" of his house of
 relaxation,
 So that nothing be dropped from his hand.

(Castellino 1972, p. 60, 11.272-78)

Remembering Šulgi's connection of the scribe and the singer (quoted above) we cannot claim this as clear evidence of a purely oral tradition, nor given the context of the royal hymn can we claim that these singers were entertaining any of the populace outside of the palace. Neither however, can we definitely state that singers were an entirely upper-class entertainment phenomenon.

Though most recovered songs are hymns to either gods or kings, Kramer (1963, p. 100) believes some of the songs were also entertainment for the home and marketplace. "Love Finds a Way," one of the more light-hearted Dumuzi-Inanna courtship songs is mentioned as a possible source of popular pleasure. The text is more whimsical than liturgical in tone as Dumuzi responds to Inanna's query concerning how she will deceive her mother about their meeting:

Inanna, most deceitful of women, let me inform you,
 Say my girlfriend took me with her to the public square,
 There she entertained me with music and dancing,

Her chant, so sweet, she sang for me,
 In sweet rejoicing I whiled away the time there.
 Thus cheerfully stand up to your mother,
 While we by the moonlight [will] indulge our passion. . . .

(Kramer 1979, p. 79)

Incipits of several other long songs are known: "Thy love is as the scent of cedar wood, oh my lord. . .," "Oh gardener of the garden of desires. . .," and "In the streets I saw two harlots. . . ." (Contenau 1954, p. 100). While these are not clearly related to cult, neither can they be firmly tied to popular use. Song seems a possible form of entertainment for the masses, but it remains an uncertain one.

In a reconstruction of life in the days of Hammurapi, Georges Roux (1966, p. 199) includes a storyteller in the marketplace. This flight of fancy is a bit more plausible, though still not provable. Several known stories seem to have had popular roots. "The Poor Man of Nippur," a poetic text known from one copy from Sultantepe and a fragment from Aššurbanipal's library, is loosely set in Old Babylonian Nippur, a thousand years before the Sultantepe copy was written. Gimil-Ninurta, a poor man cheated of the goat which is his sole possession by the dishonest mayor of Nippur, determines to take his revenge. He borrows the royal chariot, in itself an act out of popular fantasy, and disguised as a lord goes to the home of the mayor where he is wined and dined. When the mayor is lulled to sleep, Gimil-Ninurta beats the mayor, raging that he has been robbed of the gold he was carrying. The mayor replaces the gold which Gimil-Ninurta never really had, and the poor man leaves the house richer than he entered. Still unsatisfied, Gimil-Ninurta disguises himself as a doctor, and on a pretence of

treating his wounds, he beats the mayor again. On a third occasion Gimil-Ninurta uses a lie to lure the mayor from his house, and he beats him yet again (Oppenheim 1977, p. 274; Wiseman 1962, p. 18). Oppenheim suggests that the known copy is the court version of a familiar tale, for "some of the details are lost in the onward rush of the tale. One is under the impression that rendered here in poetic form is a well-known story, since the listener is expected to supply from memory what is passed over all too quickly." (Oppenheim 1977, pp. 274-275). The story survived yet another thousand years in folklore, and emerged in the Supplemental Nights to the Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night where it is sometimes known as the "History of the First Larrikin." (Wiseman 1962, p. 19).

Hallo (1962a, p. 21) suggests that the comparative dearth of preserved Akkadian proverbs and fables is due to their primarily popular oral circulation. Lambert (1960, pp. 213-14) connects a group of Late Assyrian anecdotes with "popular sayings." One of this group has a Hellenized parallel in Aesop:

A mosquito, as it settled on an elephant,
Said, "Brother, did I press your side? I will make [off] at
the watering-place."
The elephant replied to the mosquito,
"I do not care whether you get on--what is it to have you?--
Nor do I care whether you get off."

(Lambert 1960, pp. 217, 219)

Drews (1974, pp. 387-93) uses folk tradition as well to explain the similarity of the rise to power stories of Sargon of Akkad and Cyrus the Great. Both kings were abandoned by their parents, both worked as gardeners for their foster-fathers, both became cupbearers to the king,

and from that post both took over the kingship. Drews (1974, p. 390) suggests that through folk tradition the entire legend of Sargon was associated with Cyrus in the fifth century.

Best known of the stories of ancient Mesopotamia is the "Epic of Gilgamesh." The canonized version of the related Sumerian tales seems to establish their connection with the first dynasty of Uruk (Hallo 1970, p. 117). Fragments of this text are known from Boghazköy in Anatolia, and Megiddo in Palestine (Kraeling and Adams 1960, pp. 120-121). The story is clearly widespread, but it is not known to have had broad popular acceptance in Mesopotamia. Fond images of bards reciting a national epic to the masses are unprovable, but Oppenheim does admit "that the early Akkadian versions of the Epic of Gilgamesh, with their distinct poetic structure, suggest the influence of a background of popular poetry." (Oppenheim 1977, p. 259). Hallo (1975, p. 189) proposes a "pre-existing oral tradition" to explain the wide variations in Old Babylonian versions of Gilgamesh and similar Sumerian hero tales. In the Neo-Assyrian version of the Gilgamesh cycle the whole country is invited to hear of his feats (Hallo 1970, p. 117).

Atra-hasis, the Babylonian flood story, ends with a similar appeal: "I have sung of the flood to all the peoples. Hear it!" (Lambert and Millard 1969, p. 105). Throughout all of these appeals and literary parallels we are left with wistful uncertainty:

Oral performance was necessary since the cumbersome system of cuneiform writing restricted literacy to a small elite of professional scribes, but there is no reason to suppose that only scribes sang epics such as Atra-hasis to audiences, whether for edification or entertainment. No doubt there was a class of illiterate story-tellers who had memorized their stock-in-trade. We must therefore suppose that an oral tradition

existed alongside the copying of texts on clay, but we can only speculate on how the two traditions interacted. The existence of widely differing recensions may be accounted for as arising from oral tradition, which is much more fluid than the written.

(Lambert and Millard 1969, p. 8)

Summary

Scholarly discussion of oral presentation among the populace is minimal because the evidence is minimal. There are clear and tantalizing indications of a popular oral tradition interacting with the written literary tradition, but, beyond a few stories, we really do not know what was happening at the popular level.

CHAPTER SIX

What is expression? How can it be taught? How did it develop? We began with Woolbert and Robinson, seeking a philosophical foundation for the "problem child," oral interpretation, through an understanding of its history. We pushed back beyond the Greeks, and found that while interpretation remained a problem in Mesopotamia, it had an interesting childhood. Admittedly we have been guilty of the "me first" syndrome in regard to Mesopotamian achievements, but perhaps this is forgivable in a "me" so long ignored by its adherents. Oral interpretation had a long childhood in ancient Mesopotamia. It assumed a variety of forms, and served myriad functions.

From what we know, the temple was a major center of oral presentation. Various hymns and lamentations evidence antiphonal recitation, with possible congregational involvement. Given the reference in the scribal curriculum to the necessity of knowing "how to conduct a choir" (Kraeling and Adams 1960, p. 100), choral participation seems almost certain. Priest singer-chanters, who at least in later periods had a scribal education, led the liturgy of lamentation. Ritual incantations and some form of cult drama are evidenced through much of Mesopotamian religious history. The king was often involved in these rites, and the mingling of religious and political concerns is reflected in some of the literature of the liturgy.

Within the royal court, with its poets, singers, and ties to the scribal schools, oral presentation became a method of public relations and a source of entertainment. Royal hymns and epics glorified the king at court ceremonies, god letters explained his actions, and disputations apparently provided his banquet entertainment.

The scribal schools seem to have written some of the royal hymns, and may have trained the singers. They certainly included music as an important part of their course of study. In their concern for the mastery of Sumerian and Akkadian, they included recitation and dictation in a curriculum which served to preserve the written literary heritage of ancient Mesopotamia.

This written heritage had a complementary oral stream of tradition. Fables, stories, and folk history seem to have been part of that tradition, but the distance of years and the ephemeral nature of orality in contrast to baked clay tablets make the understanding of that oral tradition difficult at best. Oral presentation existed among the populace, but we can say little more than that.

Time has obscured detail in some areas, and denied certainty of form in others, but we are left with a picture which is richly colored, in spite of a certain indistinctness of line. Ancient Mesopotamian civilization was indeed "endowed with eloquence."

This thesis has not attempted to provide a detailed scientific etching of oral presentation in ancient Mesopotamia. It is, rather, a sketch with splashes of color; it is, and only claims to be, an introduction to a fascinating area too long ignored.

We may perhaps be forgiven for ignoring our Mesopotamian heritage: only in the last few years have Assyriologists been willing to attempt literary criticism of their texts. Achieving a level of basic comprehension has allowed them new areas of exploration. Miguel Civil is preparing a comprehensive study of the disputation texts which should greatly clarify understanding of that genre. As the number of such textual studies increases, so will our potential understanding of Mesopotamian oral presentation.

The thesis has mentioned and skirted the issue of oral composition and oral transmission of literature in ancient Mesopotamia. The apparent oral stream of tradition discussed in chapter five suggests that oral transmission at least was known, but the debate of degrees continues among Assyriologists. Alster (1972, 1975, 1976) and Millar (1980) have explored the area, with resulting criticism. Kramer (1963) clings to his bardic heritage. The area invites further study, but the detail of the argument necessitates a knowledge of Akkadian and Sumerian.

Kramer's (1963, pp. 183-85) bards and associated claims of Sumerian origin for the epic genre raise another interesting problem: what is the connection, if any, of Mesopotamian oral presentation with oral presentation in other parts of the ancient world? This thesis has not attempted to answer that question with any certainty. We know the language and literature of Mesopotamia traveled through the ancient Near East with known influences in Anatolia. We know the Greeks were concerned with Anatolia: the Iliad deals with wars along the coast of that region. We know Greek culture underwent infusions of Oriental influence.

We cannot state, however, that Mesopotamian oral presentation influenced Greek performance. The topic requires further analysis.

"The Curse of Agade," the text from which the title of this thesis is drawn, closes with a description of the ruined city:

No one walks among the wild goats and darting snakes of the
mountain,
Its steppe where grew the succulent plants,
Grew (nothing but) the "reed of tears."
Agade, (instead of) its sweet-flowing water, salt water
flowed (there),
He who said, "I would dwell in that city," found not a good
dwelling place there.
He who said, "I would sleep in Agade," found not a good
sleeping place there,
Agade is destroyed!

(Pritchard 1969, p. 651, 11.275-81)

This thesis has attempted to return a portion of our heritage from the destructive oblivion of the unknown, so that scholars of interpretation may once again "dwell" in that culture. Details beckon the student, inviting further enquiry, but already we can revel in an ancient eloquence.

APPENDIX

MESOPOTAMIAN CHRONOLOGY

The following chronology, intended as an aid in understanding the unfamiliar names and periods dealt with in the text, is a simplified adaptation of J. A. Brinkman's 1975 chronology of the Mesopotamian historical period (Oppenheim 1977, pp. 335-48). Only a selection of rulers and periods are listed. All dates are understood to be B.C. Names designated with "*" are rulers of both Babylon and Assyria.

EARLY DYNASTIC PERIOD c. 2700-2400

DYNASTY OF AKKAD 2334-2154

Sargon	2334-2279
Naram-Sin	2254-2218

DOMINATION BY THE GUTI

THIRD DYNASTY OF UR "Neo-Sumerian Period" 2112-2004

Ur-Nammu	2112-2095
Sulgi	2094-2047
Amar-Suen	2046-2038
Šu-Sin	2037-2029
Ibbi-Sin	2028-2004

FIRST DYNASTY OF ISIN 2017-1794

LARSA DYNASTY 2025-1763

Iddin-Dagan	1974-1954
Išme-Dagan	1953-1935

FIRST DYNASTY OF ISIN, CONTINUED

Lipit-Ištar	1934-1924
Ur-Ninurta	1923-1896
Lipit-Enlil	1873-1869

FIRST DYNASTY OF BABYLON
"Old Babylonian Period"
1894-1595

Hammurapi	1792-1750
Samsuiluna	1749-1712
Samsuditana	1625-1595

KASSITE DYNASTY
?-1155

SECOND DYNASTY OF ISIN
1157-1026

SECOND DYNASTY OF THE SEALAND
1025-1005

ELAMITE DYNASTY
984-979

MIXED DYNASTIES
978-626

Tiglath-pileser*/Pulu	728-727
Shalmaneser*/Ululaju	726-722
Sargon II*	709-705
Sennacherib*	704-703

LARSA DYNASTY, CONTINUED

Rim-Sin (I)	1822-1763
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KINGS OF ASSYRIA

Šamši-Adad I	1813-1781
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Šamši-Adad II	?
Išme-Dagan II	?
Šamši-Adad III	?
Aššur-uballit I	1363-1328
Enlil-nirari	1327-1318
Adad-nirari I	1305-1274
Shalmaneser I	1273-1244
Tukulti-Ninurta I	1243-1207
Tiglath-pileser I	1114-1076
Šamši-Adad IV	1053-1050
Aššurnasirpal I	1049-1031
Shalmaneser II	1030-1019

"Neo-Assyrian Period"

Tiglath-pileser II	966-935
Tukulti-Ninurta II	890-884
Aššurnasirpal II	883-859
Shalmaneser III	858-824
Šamši-Adad V	823-811
Adad-nirari III	810-783
Shalmaneser IV	782-773
Tiglath-pileser III*	744-727
Shalmaneser V*	726-722
Sargon II*	721-705
Sennacherib*	704-681

MIXED DYNASTIES, CONTINUED

Merodach-Baladan II	703
Aššur-nadin-šumi	699-694
Sennacherib*	688-681
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