

## Eme-sal Cult Songs and Prayers

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Recent years have seen the publication of a considerable amount of new material, with some excellent editions and discussions, of the several genres of Sumerian cult songs and prayers composed in Eme-sal<sup>1</sup>. Although the primary texts of many more compositions still await reconstruction, it is an honour to offer Miguel Civil, who has contributed so much to the reconstruction of Sumerian literature, some reflections on the interpretative research work which has been done, and which remains to be done, on this body of cultic literature, in the context of a schematic survey of the compositions, with particular emphasis on the need for complex answers to the many questions which arise about literary structure, religious content and historical setting. For instance, it is hardly in keeping with criteria employed in other areas of historical research to ascribe a unitary function to literary genres which had a functioning history of nearly two thousand years against a background of ever-changing historical events<sup>2</sup>. And it is simply not legitimate to “extrapolate” backwards from first-millennium compositions and ritual practices to what might have been the case in the Old Babylonian Period<sup>3</sup>. The longevity and homogeneity of Mesopotamian tradition is a commonplace among its modern students: all the more reason to focus on complexity and change.

The Eme-sal cultic literature seems at all periods to have been the exclusive repertoire of religious personnel called *kalû*<sup>4</sup>. This repertoire included two types of cult song, the *balaġ* and the *er-šema*, and

1. An exact definition of the phenomenon of Eme-sal, perhaps a “sociolect”, is still far from with us. However, the use of specialised dialects for certain musical or poetic purposes is widely enough attested, e.g. “E. Kōngās-Maranda me disait qu’aux îles Salomon les femmes chantent le lamento en *pidgin*, langue dans l’ordinaire spéciale aux hommes et qu’elles-mêmes n’emploient jamais en d’autres circonstances”, P. Zumthor, *Introduction à la poésie orale* (Paris, 1983), p. 138. See now Schretter, *Emesal-Studien*.

2. “The function of the *balag* lamentation being to assuage divine anger ...”, Cohen, *CLAM*, p. 21.

3. Cohen, *Eršemma*, p. 5; *CLAM*, p. 14.

4. For convenience this and other terms are given throughout in their Akkadian forms; the names of the genres are given in a transcribed form of their Sumerian names. In addition to *kalû*, there were also the ranks *kalamāhu* (see Renger, *ZA* 59 [1969], pp. 195-9) and *kalaturru*, but the exact differences between these are not clear. Maul’s statement (“*Herzberuhigungsklagen*”, p. 27) that *er-ša-huġas* were often performed by the king in royal rituals is based on the translation of *ana šarri tušadbab* as “sollst du den

possibly a third, the *šir-nam-šub*; a specialised type of prayer, the *er-ša-huḡa*; and, probably as a later development in the tradition, another type of prayer, the *šu-ila*. All these genres are fairly clearly differentiated, and among the *balāḡs* there is also considerable variation. Written texts of the compositions are preserved from "Old Babylonian" to as late as the first century B.C.<sup>5</sup>, and the extensive repetition in these, together with certain so-called "musical" annotations in some manuscripts, suggest that the written texts are likely to be rather close to actual performance, a remarkable fact in Mesopotamian tradition. It is likely that *balāḡs* and *er-šemas* were still being performed in the Seleuco-Parthian Period in temple rituals<sup>6</sup>. If these are the elements of continuity, then the occasions and circumstances of performance, the reasons for performance, and the particular cities and temples, are factors that must have changed over the centuries.

The *er-šema* in the Old Babylonian Period was a shortish song consisting of a single stanza (occasionally as long as 100 lines), with an exclamatory opening passage involving a sequence of epithets, cities or names of temples. An allusive mythical narrative (sometimes referring to otherwise unknown myths) might follow, often including the destruction of temples<sup>7</sup> and laments over them. Praise of the deity addressed might also be included. In first-millennium versions, the mythical narratives are absent, but the number of sections may be increased to two or three, with the final section being a prayer for the "calming" or "cooling" of the savage emotions of various deities. This development may have been influenced by similar themes in some *balāḡs*<sup>8</sup>, but is closely comparable with the tone of many *er-ša-huḡas* (see below). *Eršemmakū kidudē* ('ritual *er-šemas*') seem to have preserved the single-stanza form of the older compositions, without the prayer<sup>9</sup>. A characteristic of the later versions is the expansion of the lists of cities and temples with references to, especially, Babylon, Borsippa and Sippar<sup>10</sup>.

The *šir-nam-šub* was a hymn, sometimes similar in tone to and with some of the formal characteristics of the *balāḡ*<sup>11</sup>, and listed together with *balāḡs* and *er-šemas* in an Old Babylonian catalogue<sup>12</sup>. Eight such compositions are preserved, all Old Babylonian. One *šir-nam-šub* may even duplicate some of the content of one *balāḡ*<sup>13</sup>, but the genre may not have been the exclusive province of the *kalū* singers since not all are written in Eme-sal<sup>14</sup>. Further analysis is required of the structure of these songs, which apparently did not survive into the later tradition.

König sprechen lassen". This interpretation was suggested by Thureau-Dangin, *Rituels*, p. 56, n. 90, and followed by Langdon in *AJSL* 42 (1925), p. 120; similarly Caplice, in *OrNS* 39, pp. 119f., line 27, translates *ana šarri tušadbab* as "You have the king recite". However, such a replacement of the accusative by *ana* is extremely rare in Standard Babylonian, in which embedded subjects are expressed in the accusative, not the dative. The use of *ana* in this sense is a dialectal feature, not uncommon in NA, NB and LB, doubtless as an Aramaism (see *GAG* §§ 144c, 145g). But in this SB ritual *ana šarri tušadbab* is much more likely to mean "you shall cause to be recited to, in front of the king". Otherwise it would constitute the sole evidence for performance of cultic literature in Eme-sal by persons other than the specialist *kalū*.

5. Cohen's dates (in *CLAM*, p. 25, nn. 55 and 56) are incorrectly transcribed and therefore generally too high. S. Maul has made complete collations of the Reisner tablets in Berlin, which will be published by him as *Kollationen zu G. Reisners Sumerisch-babylonische Hymnen nach Thontafeln griechischer Zeit*, together with the publication of a group of tablets from the same archive, presently in the Metropolitan Museum, New York, to be published as *CTMMA* II. These were originally studied by K. Volk. Some 12 joins have been made between the MMA tablets and those in Berlin.

6. As perhaps implied by [dšūd-dē še]-eb É re-eš ki dē-en-gi<sub>4</sub>-[gi<sub>4</sub>], van Dijk and Mayer, *TRHVV* (AfO Beiheft 2), no. 21.

7. Cohen, *Eršemma* pp. 18-20; nos. 30, 32, 79, 106, 159.

8. Cohen, *ibid.*, p. 21.

9. Cohen, *ibid.*, p. 27.

10. Cohen, *ibid.*, pp. 38f.

11. Cohen, *JAOS* 95 (1975), 592, nos. 2 and 5; see also no. 7.

12. Cohen, *loc. cit.*, p. 594.

13. Cohen, *WO* 8 (1975-6), p. 24.

14. This is a difficult point. Both versions of Cohen's no. 1 are effectively in Eme-gi (Cohen, *JAOS* 95 [1975], p. 594, n. 8) since the only Eme-sal forms in 1b are *urú* and *ù-mu-un-zu* in line 3; but this very slight mixing of Eme-sal forms raises the possibility that texts virtually or even completely written in Eme-gi might be intended to be performed in Eme-sal.

The er-ša-huḡa<sup>15</sup> was a type of prayer of a rather stylised form, consisting of an address to the deity (male or female; even *diḡir lú-u<sub>18</sub>-lu* “a man’s god”, or *diḡir dū-a-bi* “any god at all”); a lament; a request for pity; a request for intercession with the deity in the form of a litany addressed to other gods; and a closing formula. Not all exhibit all these sections<sup>16</sup>. A small number of Old Babylonian mss. of comparable prayers, including one which bears the subscription *ér-ša-hun-gá*, shows that the form was established early on. The only evidence for the use of er-ša-huḡas is from first-millennium rituals of various sorts, some involving the king; they were often performed following a *balag* and its er-šema. Although er-ša-huḡas, including the Old Babylonian compositions, are cast in first person singular, personal, mode, there is no evidence for their use as private, rather than public ritual, prayers.

The Sumerian *šu-ila* is a quite different genre from the similarly named Akkadian *šullakku*<sup>17</sup>. Like the er-ša-huḡa, the *šu-ila* was a prayer recited<sup>18</sup> in various temple rituals. (The *akītu* is specified in two separate texts.) Its structure is very simple: after an address to the deity, various gods and temples are called upon to “calm” the god’s anger. One *šu-ila* calls in addition for vengeance against the destroyers of the god’s temple, and another adds a prayer for Assurbanipal (Nineveh text) or Sīn-šar-iškun (Kalhu text), suggesting their use in royal rituals. The *šu-ila* as a form was probably created after the Old Babylonian Period. Although only four such prayers survive, a first-millennium catalogue gives the incipits of some forty-seven, some of which have identical incipits to Old Babylonian er-šemas, which may suggest a line of descent. Except for Marduk, the range of deities addressed is that of the Old Babylonian tradition.

In terms of their variety and complexity, it is the *balag* compositions which are bound to attract our attention most<sup>19</sup>. The first-millennium division into *balag*s of Enlil and *balag*s of Inana<sup>20</sup> (clearly not as simple as a division into compositions addressed to male and to female deities)<sup>21</sup> reflects their thematic content: praise, or self-praise, of the deity; passive contemplation of the deity’s *eneḡ* (word); all-powerful, violent and irrational gods whose purpose cannot be divined; fragmentary mythic narratives; and laments over destruction, by an unnamed enemy, of now deserted temples, haunted buildings and ruin mounds. Modern research has only begun to grapple with the complex analysis of these profound religious and literary themes, which seem, from the readiness with which the compositions were adapted to a variety of ritual functions, to have been resonant with a whole host of allusions. The striking but limited range of images and key-words common to this group of compositions (and to the Laments) – the enemy, the

15. Akk. probably *eršahungū*; in late copies from Uruk of SB rituals the variant term *eršemšahungū* is found.

16. See Maul, “*Herzberuhigungsklagen*”, intro.; Black, rev. of Maul.

17. Or from Sumerian or bilingual *mīs pī* or *pīt pī* incantations with the subscription *šu-il-lá diḡir-ra ka-duh-hu-da*, see Cooper, *Iraq* 32, p. 51, and *Festschrift Sachs*, p. 84, referring to Mayer, *OrNS* 47 (1978), pp. 431ff.

18. Maul’s statement (“*Herzberuhigungsklagen*”, p. 25) that *šu-ilas* were also sung must be questioned, as it is based on two passages in Thureau-Dangin, *Rituels* (p. 110, ll. 17 and 19f.), where the verb is broken away both times (restoration *izammur* also in *CAD*, s.v. *balaggu*). *Šu-ilas*, like other prayers and incantations, are idiomatically said to be “offered” (*našū*), i.e. recited, using the same verb as is used of the “offering” of *Enūma eliš*, *ibid.*, p. 136, ll. 280-2: *enūma eliš [ištu riš]išu adi qītūšu šešgallu ... [ana Bēl i]-na-aš-ši*. However, the case of *Enūma eliš* is perhaps not certain, since two versions of the idiosyncratic Neo-Assyrian text called “Marduk’s Ordeal” do refer to *Enūma eliš ša dabibūni ... izammurūšūni*, see A. Livingstone, *Mystical and mythological explanatory works of Assyrian and Babylonian scholars* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 238 and 244.

19. The other four genres are all so short that they never span more than one tablet; *balag*s, on the other hand, may run to over a thousand lines. The term *ÉR*, probably to be read *taqribtu*, is used in first-millennium texts instead of *balag* (except in colophons). When used in ritual texts with the verb *iššakkan* (*ÉR GAR-an*; cf. *dik bīti iš-šak-kan Rit. acc.*, p. 92) it probably refers to performance of a *balag* together with its associated ritual. Jacobsen’s suggestion (*AJSL* 58 (1941), p. 223) that “*balag*” stands for “*ÉR + er-šema*” does not seem to be supported by the forms of colophons in first-millennium mss., see *BiOr* 44 (1987), pp. 36f.

20. In the catalogue of *kalūtu* or the “repertoire of the *kalū* singers” (from the Temple of Nabū, Nineveh), which has been collated and edited by S. Maul, to be published by him in the future, together with a new publication of K.14818 (with a join and two further fragments), described by him as possibly a Nineveh “library record” (see Cohen, *CLAM*, p. 23; Parpola, *JNES* 42 [1983], pp. 1-29).

21. Cohen, *CLAM*, pp. 17f.; Black, *ASJ* 7 (1985), pp. 11f.

sheepfold, the cowpen, the flood, the storm, abandonment, humiliation, lamentation, nostalgia – has yet to be studied in detail<sup>22</sup>. Unlike the er-šemas, the balaḡs exhibit considerable and extended variety of structure, and it is difficult so far to discern coherent patterns or relationships between their different sections. A particular question which arises is whether it is possible to discern any *specific* historical context, or group of contexts, which might be seen as, if not original, then at least crucially formative, in shaping the poetic tone, individual voice and atmosphere evoked in these lyric cult songs.

We can consider first the evidence about the performers of balaḡs. The *kalû* singers may have been employed in groups<sup>23</sup> during the Third Dynasty of Ur and appear to have performed either in groups or solo during the Old Babylonian Period<sup>24</sup>. A passage in a Gudea statue inscription suggests that *kalû* performed with balaḡ drums in the city cemetery, apparently in connection with burial rites<sup>25</sup>. An Old Babylonian copy of a literary letter, which may therefore be older, refers by name to a known balaḡ composition<sup>26</sup>. An Old Babylonian (excerpt from a) balaḡ contains a mythical narrative in which Enki creates the *kalû* singer, and the ub and lilis drums, in order to soothe the raging heart of Inana<sup>27</sup>. An Old Babylonian ritual, in a copy from Mari, gives evidence for the performance of cult songs by *kalû* in a ceremony on a particular day of the month, in which the king is involved<sup>28</sup>. Another Old Babylonian ritual (from Larsa) has *kalû* taking part in various offerings, but the full context is not clear<sup>29</sup>. Otherwise, there is no further information from the earlier stage of the tradition concerning the cultic activity of the *kalû*. However, plentiful information concerning the administrative and private lives of individual *kalû* has been collected<sup>30</sup>. The existence of a *kalû* prebend at Nippur in the Old Babylonian Period was noted by Renger<sup>31</sup>, probably to be distinguished from the offices held by professionally trained *kalû*. It is generally assumed that *kalû* were always men, although two Archaic Old Babylonian letters from Awal in the Himrin Basin suggest that women could function as *kalû*<sup>32</sup>, probably as prebend-holders<sup>33</sup>:

22. Discussed by Krecher, *RIA* 6, p. 5.

23. I. J. Gelb, *StOr* 46 (1975), pp. 45-76; Black, *AJO* 29/30 (1983/4), pp. 112f.

24. To judge from verb forms in the Mari ritual, see Cohen, *Eršemma*, pp. 40f. The sentence *ištēn ina kalē izzazma [i]na halhallatim ER.S[1.SI.M]U? ana Enlil izammur* "One of the *kalû* shall stand and sing ER.SI.SI.MU<sup>?</sup> to Enlil to the accompaniment of the *halhallatum*" seems unequivocal, despite Cohen's incorrect translation (p. 41) "Together with the gala-priests he will stand and he (the king?) will chant ER.SI.SI.MU to Enlil to the accompaniment of the *halhallatum*-drum". There is no evidence for performance by the king of these compositions, see note 4 above. The verb forms in first-millennium ritual texts are mostly singular, e.g. *kalû ... izammur*, *Rit. acc.* p. 44.

25. *St. B* v 1ff.

26. *PBS* 12/1, no. 32; see Hallo, *JAOS* 88 (1968), p. 89, and Civil, *RA* 68 (1974), p. 96.

27. Kramer, *ASJ* 3 (1981), pp. 1-9, lines 20-26.

28. See, conveniently, Cohen, *Eršemma*, pp. 40-41.

29. See Renger, *RA* 49 (1969), p. 191.

30. Hartmann, *Musik*, pp. 129ff., Krecher, *SKI*, pp. 35ff., Renger, *ZA* 59 (1969), pp. 187-199. More can be expected in due course from the archive of Ur-Ūtu, the *kalamāhum* of Annunitum at Sippar-Amnānum (Tell ed-Dēr), see *RAI* 28 = *AJO* Beiheft 19, pp. 280-3.

31. *ZA* 59 (1969), p. 194.

32. I am extremely grateful to Dr. Farouk Al-Rawi, of Baghdad University, for making available to me transliterations and copies of these letters from Tell Sulaimah (Awal or Batir: see *Iraq* 47 [1985], p. 225). They will be published in copy later. The script and orthography is almost exactly consistent with that of the earlier group of Archaic Old Babylonian letters from Ešnunna (R. M. Whiting, Jr., *Old Babylonian Letters from Tell Asmar*, AS 22 [Chicago, 1987]), which are dated between the reigns of Bilalama and Ušur-awassu, ensis of Ešnunna.

33. However, contemporary documents from Ešnunna and elsewhere do indicate the existence of a religious women's establishment, see Gelb, *RA* 66 (1972), pp. 3f., the inmates of which were perhaps called SAL.BALAḠ.DI, see Steinkeller, *OrNS* 51 (1983), pp. 367f.

IM 85456<sup>34</sup>

obv. [a-na ]  
     <sup>r</sup>qi-bi<sup>r</sup>-ma  
     <sup>r</sup>NIN<sup>r</sup> i-li-šum-mi-id  
     <sup>r</sup>na<sup>r</sup>-as-ḥa-at  
     <sup>m</sup>wi-ir-ri  
 rev. NAR ù UŠ.KU<sup>r</sup>tum\*      \* over erasure  
     na-di-šum  
     a-wa-tum  
     la i-tù-ra-am

“Say to ...: The sister of Ili-šummid has been removed. Wirri has been given the offices of *nārum* and *kalūm*. The matter is not to return to me again”.

 IM 85455<sup>35</sup>

obv. a-na tul-pi-ip-še  
     qi-bi-ma  
     ši-bu-tum  
     li-zi-zu  
     NIN i-li-šum-mi-id<sup>r</sup>  
     i-na UŠ.KU-ú-tim  
     na-as-ḥa-at  
 rev. šar-ru-um  
     a-na <sup>m</sup>wi-ri  
     kà-la-ú-tam  
     ù NAR-ú-tám<sup>r</sup>  
     i-ta-di-in<sup>r</sup>  
     a-na URU<sup>kl</sup>-im  
     wu-di-šu

“Say to Tulpi-ipše: Let the witnesses come forward. The sister of Ili-šummid has been removed from the office of *kalūm*. The king has given the offices of *kalūm* and *nārum* to Wiri. Make it (/him) known to the City”.

It is possible that the first of these is the letter of decree sent by the “king”, and that his decision is transmitted to Tulpi-ipše in the second letter with the request that he is to communicate it to the “City”. Tulpi-ipše and Wirri seem plausible Hurrian names<sup>36</sup>. The spelling *kà-la-ú-tám* is unique; possibly it should be read *GA.LA-ú-tám*, which would also be unique. These are probably the earliest occurrences of both terms, *kalūtum* and *nārūtum*, as well as of the logogram UŠ.KU. The identity of the “king” (*šarrum*) is uncertain. The rulers of Ešnunna did not take the title LUGAL until Ipiq-Adad II; at this period they were still called *ensi*. Connected with this is the (also problematic) identification of the “City” (URU.KI). In Old Babylonian texts URU.KI (for *ālum*) is used fairly commonly to refer to whichever the local city may be, in a number of different places<sup>37</sup>. It does not seem obvious, then, which town or city might be referred to here, although clearly the city as a social organisation is meant.

34. = Sulaimah 411; 3.8 × 3.4 × 1.7 cm.

35. = Sulaimah 410; 2.7 × 3.1 × 1.7 cm.

36. E. Cassin and J. J. Glassner, *Anthroponymie et anthropologie de Nuzi*, I (Malibu, 1977).

37. E.g., Babylon: TCL 7 40:9, probably OECT 3 40 r. 25; probably Dilbat: TCL 1 30:19; Ur: UET 5 210:1, 246:8, Larsa (written *a-lu-um*): TCL 19 90:4; and *a-lu-um*, *a-lam* and the genitive *a-lim* KI are frequent in Old Assyrian texts referring to Aššur.

The *balāḡ* instrument, which gave its name to the principal genre, seems to have been the main accompaniment to the *kalû*'s performance, although *ub*, *šem* (*halhallatu*), *meze* and *lilis* (*lilissu*) drums are also mentioned, especially in first-millennium sources<sup>38</sup>. That the *balāḡ* too was a drum is beyond doubt<sup>39</sup>, so that it is clear that the music of the *kalû* consisted of the human voice with drum accompaniment, exclusively. The construction of a *balāḡ* drum was an important enough event to be commemorated in a year name; individual drums bore names<sup>40</sup>, and their noise, like thunder or the bellowing of a bull, is remarked on. It seems likely, then, that the enormous drums depicted in several third-millennium representations are in fact *balāḡ* drums<sup>41</sup>, shown end on, i.e. so that the long cylindrical body is not visible, and that their players are *kalû* musicians.

While the evidence for the cultic activities of the *kalû* in Old Babylonian times is relatively limited, it is apparent that during the first millennium the use of *balāḡ*s together with their *er-šemas*, as well as the

38. The OB *balāḡ* *ša-zu ta-àm-ir* (Kramer, *ASJ* 3 [1981], pp. 1-9), mentions the *kušub* and *li-li-is* as instruments of the gala singer.

39. Cohen argued plausibly that the *balāḡ* was a drum, not a harp, in *SANE* 1/2 (1974) p. 31, but seems to have renounced this view in *CLAM* (1988), p. 28 n. 73; p. 60, line 86 etc. The meaning "harp" was confidently assigned by *CAD* s.v. (and now also by *PSD*: "lyre" and/or "harp"). These statements, like those of Hartmann and Stauder (cited by *CAD*, *ibid.*), and more recent commentators relying on them, derive entirely from a single sentence of Falkenstein's ("Möglicherweise setzt sich das Zeichen [= *ATU* no. 349] in den späteren *BALAG* (*LAK* Nr. 41) fort" (*ATU*, p. 56), which seems never to have been questioned (and is now accepted without question by M. W. Green and H. J. Nissen, *Zeichenliste der archaischen Texte* [Berlin, 1987], no. 47). In fact there is not a shred of plausibility in its favour – the two signs do not resemble one another at all – and without this, there is no remaining evidence for an identification of the *balāḡ* as a stringed instrument, with the possible exception of the first-millennium lexical tradition represented by Hh. tablet VIIB, lines 39-135, and the related passage in Diri tablet III (see A. Spycket in *AnStud* 33 [1983], especially pp. 45f.). The remarks of B. Lawergren and O. R. Gurney in *Iraq* 49 (1987), p. 43, concluding "The principle of arrangement is by no means clear", summarise the present state of interpretation of this extraordinarily complex and still not fully reconstructed section. While it might then be thought that the section dealt in turn with drums (excepting *halhallatu*, *manzû* and *lilissu*, treated under copper objects, and *uppu*, under leather), stringed instruments and wind instruments, the possibility exists that the first sub-section dealt instead with obsolete terms, perhaps no longer understood. This possibility would need to be investigated in connection with the use at various periods, in non-literary, non-lexical texts, of the names for the instruments. In literary contexts names of musical instruments can be used in colourful, inaccurate ways. It is a fact that *balaggu* is used only very rarely in ritual texts of the first millennium, e.g. *Rit. acc.*, p. 110 r. 20. I am at a loss to account for *balāḡ* = *G1-na-ru<sub>12</sub>-tum/rûm/lum* in the Ebla Vocabulary (*MEE* 4, p. 264:572).

40. Gudea, year 3: *mu balāḡ ušumgal kalam-ma ba-dím-ma* "Year when the *balāḡ* Dragon-of-the-Land was constructed" – an instrument which was erected in the *aga-balāḡ-a* (*Balāḡ* Hall) in E-ninnu, see *Cyl. A* VI 24; VII 24; XXVIII 17; B X 14; XV 21; XVIII 22; a second named *balāḡ* drum, set up in a courtyard in the E-ninnu, was *Lugal-igi-huš-àm* "Fierce-looking King", see *Cyl. B* XI 1; note also *Ibbi-Suen*, year 21: *mu di-bi-dsuen lugal uriki-ma-ke<sub>4</sub> nin-igi-zi-bar-ra balāḡ dinana-ra mu-na-dím* "Year when *Ibbi-Suen* ... constructed the *balāḡ* *Nin-igi-zi-bara* for *Inana*". Two year names (or possibly two variants of one name) of the *Mananâ* Dynasty are also interesting: *mu kuš-á-lá é-dnanna mananâ mu-na-an-dím*, and *mu li-li-is zabar é-dnanna mananâ mu-na-an-dím* (information kindly provided by Dr Stephanie Dalley).

41. (1) Part of the Stela of Gudea from *Ĝirsu* (Cros, *NFT*, pl. ix, no. 4) with three more fragments also from the same stela, showing parts of (a) similar drum(s) (*ibid.*, nos. 3, 5 and 6; text pp. 287ff.).

(2) Fragment of a stone vase in the Louvre (no provenance) showing two beardless men (*kalû* priests?) playing a drum (L. Heuzey, "La musique chaldéenne", in *RA* 9 [1912], pl. III).

(3) Rear of the Stela of *Ur-Nammu* (originally *Antiquaries' Journal* 5 [1925], plate 46); later illustrated in Woolley, *UE* 6 (Philadelphia/London, 1974), pl. 41-4 and pp. 75-81, where the restoration in the University Museum, Philadelphia, shows the right-hand drummer of the right-hand drum holding a drumstick.

(The above are illustrated by H. Hartmann, *Die Musik in der sumerischen Kultur* [Frankfurt, 1960], ill. nos. 36-8, citing V. Christian, *Alturkundkunde des Zweistromlandes von der Vorzeit bis zum Ende der Achämenidenherrschaft* [Leipzig, 1940], pl. 426, where the captions to 2 and 4 are mistakenly reversed.)

(4) Perhaps also relevant is the fragment of an Early Dynastic stela found near *Badrah* (ancient *Dër*) (F. Safar, "The *Badrah* Stela", in *Sumer* 27 [1971], pp. 15-21, pl. 1-5 [in Arabic]; S. A. Rashid, *Mesopotamien* (W. Bachmann, ed., *Musikgeschichte in Bildern* [Leipzig, 1984]), pp. 68f., ill. 50) showing a bearded man playing a shoulder-high drum with his hand, with a naked male figure (apparently) on top of the drum.

prayer genres, was incorporated into a wide variety of temple ceremonial. The texts themselves were considerably expanded. The šu-ila appears to have been a later addition to the *kalû*'s repertoire. Thus the Eme-sal cult songs and prayers developed, finding new usefulnesses and continuing until the latest periods of cuneiform culture. In a ritual for protecting the king in battle, the *kalû* performed balaġs, er-šemas and er-ša-huġas<sup>42</sup>. The performance of balaġs and possibly er-šemas during *namburbû* rituals was apparently intended to avert divine anger during the razing of sacred buildings prior to their reconstruction<sup>43</sup>; the cult songs were performed during libations or sometimes while the offering tables were in place. They were performed during a lunar eclipse ritual<sup>44</sup> and during a ritual for recovering a *lilissu* drum<sup>45</sup>. There is proof of the cyclical performance of balaġs on certain days of each month<sup>46</sup>. In addition to this Babylonian evidence, it is clear that the repertoire of the *kalû* was performed in various Assyrian temple rituals also<sup>47</sup>. All this seems to imply that ancient cult songs and prayers were perpetuated as part of the religious repertoire, often without any direct reference to the specific appropriateness of their content.

A crucial problem for the history of the balaġs, as well as of er-šemas, is that posed by the so-called litanies<sup>48</sup>, which are more highly developed in the first-millennium texts<sup>49</sup>. There appear to be three forms of litany. First, there are those in which the god's name is systematically alternated with the names of other deities, sometimes in a true litany or address to many deities<sup>50</sup>, but at other times as if the names were all synonymous. Second, there are litanies in which names of temples and their cities are listed. Finally, there is a slightly different sort of repetitious passage, in which epithets of a deity are concatenated in a fixed sequence<sup>51</sup>, not so much a litany as a decoration of the text built up by a known sequence rather than by systematic replacement of one deity or temple by another. Cumulative parallelism of this type is an established feature of Sumerian poetic structure. There is room for further study of these litanies, especially the litanies of deities, from a literary point of view<sup>52</sup>. Apparently the full litanies were

If one can legitimately compare these representations, then it appears that (pairs of) drums, about shoulder-high, or a little higher, resting on the ground (in one case surmounted by an animal-headed figure), are played with the hands each by two persons (beardless in one representation). The restoration of the Ur-Nammu Stela is then likely to be incorrect in respect of the drumstick (see J. V. Canby, in *Expedition 29/1* [1987], p. 54-64). It is possible that the Lament for Ur refers to the placing of the balaġ drum on the ground when the goddess is just about to commence her lament: *munus-e ... -a-ni balaġ ir-ra ki* (var. *ki-a*) *al-ġar-ra-a-ba* "The lady, after her ... (attendant?) has placed the balaġ of lament on the ground, ..." (Kramer, *AS* 12, p. 86; translation following Jacobsen, *AJSL* 58 (1941), p. 223, n. 18). The terms *kunnu* or *šakānu* (to set up) and *dekû* (to take away) are standard referring to the *lilissu* in Akkadian texts. Frequently *mahāšu* (to strike) is used of playing the *lilissu*; perhaps also *epēšu* (*ēpiš* BALAĠ, var. BALAĠ.DI, *CT* 38 4:86 [Alu]).

42. See Elat, *BiOr* 39 (1982), pp. 5-25.

43. That this use of the cult songs could not in any sense be their original function was clearly shown by Krecher, in *RIA* 6 p. 3, pointing out that the destruction described in the compositions themselves is always by an external, hostile, agent and is portrayed as a source of humiliation to the goddess.

44. BRM 4 6:48f.

45. Unfortunately the interesting commentary on this ritual, the so-called "Theology of the *kalû*" text, is still imperfectly understood owing to its very technical vocabulary, see A. Livingstone, *Mystical and mythological explanatory works of Assyrian and Babylonian scholars* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 187-204.

46. Cohen, *CLAM*, p. 14; *Eršemma*, pp. 47, 50.

47. See B. Menzel, *Assyrische Tempel*, vol. 1, pp. 233-7. Thus the scribes of the Nineveh libraries would be very likely to have been familiar with the performance of Eme-sal cult songs (see Cohen, *CLAM*, p. 20).

48. Litany: "a series of supplications, deprecations or intercessions ... with the same formula ... being repeated for several successive clauses; ... a continuous repetition or long enumeration" (*The Oxford English Dictionary*).

49. Thus the balaġ *u<sub>4</sub>-dam ki am-ús* mentions E-kur in the Old Babylonian text, but thirteen temples in the first-millennium version; e-lum *gu<sub>4</sub>-sún* is addressed to Enlil in the Old Babylonian version, but expanded to include Enki, Asarluhi, Enbilulu, Muzeba-saa and Diku-maham in the later version (Cohen, *CLAM*, p. 40).

50. As in the requests for intercession in *am-e amaš-a-na*, lines 30ff. and *b+139'ff.*, Cohen, *CLAM*, pp. 152ff.

51. As in passages such as *e-lum di-da-ra*, lines 1-10 (Cohen, *CLAM*, p. 176); *a-še-er gi<sub>6</sub>-ta*, lines 226ff. = 280ff. = 328ff. (*ASJ* 7 [1985], pp. 25ff.); or *urú am-ma-ir-ra-bi*, Old Babylonian version *VAS* 2 29 2ff. = first-millennium version, tablet 19:44ff. (Volk, *Die Balaġ-Komposition urú am-ma-ir-ra-bi*, pp. 32 and 83).

52. See the short discussion in Krecher, *RIA* 6, p. 5.

included in performance, if the remark *ilū adi iggammarū* after the first divine name of a litany in one Old Babylonian balaḡ ms. is correctly interpreted (where duplicates write out instead the full sequence of divine names)<sup>53</sup>. What interest us especially are the litanies of temple and city names. These can be studied from a geographical point of view, although it appears impossible to perceive any particular pattern<sup>54</sup>. Probably the sequences of names in the first-millennium texts are not particularly significant, because by this stage the texts are to some extent compilations and elaborations of earlier material. One has the feeling that ancient names (sometimes of no longer existent cities) were perpetuated for their resonances. It does not seem possible that with the proliferation of names it was intended that only one should be included in performance and those not relevant omitted<sup>55</sup>. No investigation has yet been undertaken into the precise significance of the inclusion of individual names<sup>56</sup>, and in particular the addition of Babylon, Borsippa, Sippar, Kiš, Kutū and Dilbat with their temples by the date of the first-millennium texts<sup>57</sup>.

Any consideration of a possible historical context for these compositions must compare them with the poetic Laments, which resemble the balaḡs in important ways while being geographically and historically more specific about almost everything<sup>58</sup>. The five major Laments (Ur, Sumer and Ur, Nippur, Uruk and Eridu) deal in general with the collapse of the empire of Ur following attacks by the Elamites and various tribal and nomadic peoples<sup>59</sup> and their composition can probably be placed within a century of the fall of Ur. The Laments for Uruk and Nippur can be dated in the reign of Išme-Dagan. Cohen,

53. NBC 1315, see Cohen, *CLAM*, p. 272ff.; cf. the first-millennium practice of abbreviating litanies in written texts by the notation x MU.MEŠ GU<sub>4</sub>.UD.MEŠ "x lines jumped over (= omitted)".

54. See *ASJ* 7 (1985), pp. 40f.

55. Especially since the same name sometimes occurs at more than one point in the same litany, see *ASJ* 7 (1985), pp. 40f.

56. An interesting case is that of Larag, which must have been a small cult centre (probably of Pabilsaḡ) near Isin. It is mentioned in a Middle Babylonian legal document from Isin (*Isin-Išān Bahriyāt*, vol. II [Munich, 1981], p. 101, IB 1052 r.5) and is known as a local name in the first millennium (see Borger, *ABZ*, p. 155). Apart from this it is known principally from literary texts. According to the Sumerian King List, it was the home of an antediluvian dynasty (*SKL*, i 19-24). It is mentioned in the Pabilsaḡ Tale, and in the opening stanza of the Lament for Ur (*AS* 12, line 19) as well as in several balaḡs: the Old Babylonian version of B51 (see Krecher, *SKL*, pp. 86f. and 131f.; numbering of balaḡs according to *BiOr* 44 [1987], 31ff.), in the Old Babylonian balaḡ CT 15 24f. r. 20f. (parallel to B37), and in the Old Babylonian balaḡ BE 30 2:57; in the first-millennium B10 (see Cohen, *CLAM*, p. 224), B11 (Cohen, p. 257) and B37 (Cohen, p. 621) and also in the late copy of an Akkadian lamentation poem, BM 33541:4, 18 (*PSBA* 23 [1901], pl. after p. 192 = *SBP* 263ff., tablet dated 287 BC). This may be taken to suggest a town which had perhaps early on been an important ancient religious centre but which was later more or less abandoned (surviving only in literary sources), although it had a modest afterlife in the mid-second and first millennium. One could hypothesize resettlement of a deserted ancient mound. Parallels might be sought with Agade (see McEwan, *A/O Beih.* 19 [1982], pp. 8-15) and Eridu; Keš, on the other hand, seems never to have revived. In the Old Babylonian balaḡ CT 15 24f. r. 20f., it is evident that the original text must have been *urū-mu - ḡ<sub>6</sub>-pār-imin-mu*, with local reference to Uruk, and that this has been expanded by the insertion of the sequence *še-eb i-si-in<sup>ki</sup> - èš é-gal-mah-mu - še-eb la-ra-ag<sup>ki</sup>*. The precise reason for this sort of development of the text still remains to be explained.

57. The first three cities mentioned here are added to the litanies of first-millennium er-šemas also, see Cohen, *Eršemma*, p. 38.

58. See most recently the discussion by Michalowski, *The lamentation over the destruction of Sumer and Ur* (Winona Lake, 1989), pp. 4-10, with earlier literature. However, Edzard, *Zweite Zwischenzeit*, p. 52, rightly regards parts of the Ur Lament, especially the (possibly originally separate) litanies, as quite literary and unhistorical. In lines 9f. the desertion of Isin, supposedly the victorious successor of Ur, is described.

59. E.g. in Lament for Ur (*AS* 12), "Su" (i.e. Šimaški, see n. 68 below) and Elam (244); in the Lament for Eridu (*JCS* 30 [1978], pp. 127-67), Subir (i 21), Su and Elam (iv 10); in the Lament for Uruk (*JAO* 104 [1984], pp. 253-79) Gutium (4.11, 4.20) and Subir (4.22, 5.20 etc.); in the Lament for Nippur (*ASJ* 13 [1991], pp. 1-26), Tidnum (235) and frequently "the enemy"; in the Lament for Sumer and Ur, Su and Elam (33-5), Elam (166, 172, 261, 401), Gutium (75, 146, 230), Elam, Tidnum (256-7), Tidnum, Gutium and Anšan (488-91). In the last-cited passage, Michalowski's translation makes it appear that Tidnum, Gutium and Anšan are other victims of the invasion, not the invaders themselves. His commentary on the lines (p. 106) implies that he is following Wilcke, but Wilcke, *loc. cit.*, translates *u<sub>4</sub> ... zal* as "to break (of day)", not "to blow (of storms)", which makes a considerable difference to the sense; Wilcke also considers the possibility that the verb forms are 2nd person precatives.



comparing the balaḡs with these Laments, notes several similarities in content: the storm of Enlil as a cause of destruction, the pleading goddess, and certain almost identical passages<sup>60</sup>. However, the balaḡs are almost without explicit historical detail. Structurally, the laments exhibit the same form of kirugus interspersed by regular, short sections labelled giš-gi<sub>4</sub>-ḡál; the occasional one-line sections of balaḡs are probably also giš-gi<sub>4</sub>-ḡál<sup>61</sup>. Portions of some of the Laments are composed in Eme-sal, like the balaḡs<sup>62</sup>. It is probably indefensible to conclude on the basis of these similarities that the balaḡs are a development from the Laments and were first composed a few years after the Laments<sup>63</sup>, although a general connection between Laments and balaḡs must be allowed, with no clear direction as yet of the influence either had on the other.

Is it then possible to detect original localisations for any of the balaḡs, to which (it might be assumed) extra names of cities and their temples have been added? To some extent geographical groups can be recognised in the litanies, which can be assumed in some cases to be the original references of particular compositions, e.g. Nippur and Keš; Isin and Larag; Uruk and Kulab; Eridu and Kuara; Lagaš, Ğirsu and Niḡin(AB×HA<sup>KJ</sup>). It should be possible to distinguish two phases of additions: those cities and temples added to the original local reference which are already present in Old Babylonian mss. (additions which might have been made at any time between the possibly traditional origin of the balaḡs and their [probably first] writing down in Old Babylonian times); and those which are present only in first-millennium mss. and might then have been added at any time between the Late Old Babylonian Period and the date of the mss., which is of course variable.

The often-repeated observation that by the last decades of the 18th century BC dated tablets had "disappeared" from the southern cities of Sumer<sup>64</sup> may or may not be lent further support by the results of future excavations. Adams speaks of a "deep disruption in the routine fabric of civil administration and ritual"<sup>65</sup>. It is possible that a decline throughout Sumer might reflect the complete drying up of the Adab-Umma channel of the Tigris, perhaps owing to an increase in water use upstream caused by irrigation work and the founding of new settlements in north Babylonia by the predecessors of Hammurabi. The possibly decreasing fertility of the land, ascribed to salinisation, and the uncontrollable, devastating floods of the Tigris, exacerbated by the torrential storms endemic to the region, may have been further factors<sup>66</sup>. Over a period of some centuries, the *σεισάχθειαι*, laws and edicts of the kings of Isin, Ešnunna and Babylon<sup>67</sup> give evidence of debt slavery and other social problems. The political divisions of the local kingdoms, and their sufferings at the hands of various incursive enemies, whether nomadic (Martu, Tidnum), tribal (Gutium) or more "nationally" organised (Elamites, Su [i.e. Šimaški]<sup>68</sup>, Subir, Kassites,

60. *CLAM*, pp. 34-38.

61. Explicitly marked as giš-gi<sub>4</sub>-ḡál only in CT 42 15 (OB balaḡ to Dumuzi). But the argument that the giš-gi<sub>4</sub>-ḡál of the balaḡ is a remnant of that of the Laments (Cohen, *CLAM*, p. 39) is a weak one, since no clear evidence for the direction of influence exists.

62. The first two of the eleven kirugus of the Lament for Ur (and also those parts of the third and fourth which form the goddess' lament), and parts of the Lament for Nippur.

63. The Old Babylonian balaḡ to Dumuzi *TCL* 15 8 lists kings down to Būr-Sin of Isin, and the Old Babylonian version of balaḡ 43 (also addressed to Dumuzi) contains a list which continues past Būr-Sin with at least eight further names (Cohen, *CLAM*, pp. 676-7). These lists tell us little more than the date of the mss., since lists of this nature can very easily have been expansions of earlier versions in the same manner as the litanies. Similarly, the balaḡ from Me-Turan was written down in about the time of Ibāl-pi-El II of Ešnunna (*ASJ* 7 [1985], p. 69); this tells us nothing about its date of "composition" – if it is not in origin a traditional work.

64. See for instance R. M. Adams, *Heartland of Cities*, p. 165.

65. *Ibid.*; but the general cautions expressed by J. A. Brinkman in *JNES* 43 (1984), pp. 169-180, should be borne in mind.

66. See H. Nissen in *AS* 20, p. 24 n. 79; M. A. Powell, *ZA* 75 (1985), pp. 7-38.

67. Išme-Dagan, Lipit-Eštar, Ur-Ninurta, Enlil-bāni; Narām-Sin of Ešnunna; Hammurabi, Samsu-ilūna, Ammi-šaduqa.

68. See Steinkeller, *JAOs* 108 (1988), pp. 197-202, and *NABU* (1990), n. 13, who proposes that LÚ.KUŠ.(A) (LÚ.SU.(A)) should be read as a rebus writing for *šu maškim*, which is close to the Akkadian nominative Šimaškim.

Assyrians), over a long period beginning already under the Third Dynasty of Ur, have been well described, and further indicate the gradual dissolution of the regular patterns of settled life<sup>69</sup>.

While the Laments express these conditions most explicitly, several of these elements can be found reflected in the *balāḡ*s also. The preoccupation with violent images of divinity, such as

a gal-gal-la buru<sub>14</sub> sù-sù mu-lu ta-zu mu-un-zu  
*butuqtu muṭibbat ebūru gattuk mannu ilammad*

“Mighty flood which drowns the harvest: who can understand your nature?”<sup>70</sup>

and other metaphors drawn from natural phenomena; images relating to change in social status (“slave-girl”, “servant”, “ransomed”)<sup>71</sup>; and the constant reference to destruction of cult-places and interruption of ritual practices by “the enemy”<sup>72</sup> all seem to mirror in general terms the circumstances suggested by the historical sources for this period.

Some recent work suggests that it may be possible to be more specific about a historical background against which the inclusion (between the Late Old Babylonian Period and the date of the first-millennium mss.) of Babylon, Kiš, Sippar, Borsippa, Kutū and Dilbat in the *balāḡ* litanies can be understood. Documents show priestly individuals originating from Uruk living at Kiš during the reigns of Abī-ešuh, Ammī-ditāna, Ammī-šaduqa and Samsu-ditāna<sup>73</sup>. They are priests of three goddesses: Ištar-of-Uruk (AN.<sup>4</sup>INANA.UNUG<sup>KI</sup>), Nanaya and Kanisurra, of whom the first evidently had a temple at Kiš, perhaps a shrine within the temple of Zababa. (The temple E-tur-kalama, for which *balāḡ* no. 44, a composition originally centred on the cult of Uruk, was adapted, was a temple of Ištar-of-Uruk and Nanaya at Babylon<sup>74</sup>.) Thus we encounter E-ana-tum, a *kalamāhum* of Ištar-of-Uruk, in Ad35, and Riš-Marduk, also a *kalamāhum* of Ištar-of-Uruk, in Sd 2, and Igmil-Ištar, a *kalamāhum* of Nanaya, in Ad 31, buying into property in Kiš with their families, perhaps in one particular area. Onomastic practices in Late Old Babylonian Kiš reflect these cults, with frequent names with the element Nanaya; while names such as Uruk-libluṭ (“May Uruk live again!”) and E-ana-libluṭ (“May E-ana live again!”)<sup>75</sup> are unmistakable in the nostalgia they evoke for abandoned homes, exactly the nostalgic tone so characteristic of the *balāḡ*s. Perhaps the destruction of the walls of Ur and Uruk (Samsu-ilūna year name 11) can be given as a *terminus post quem* for these relocations: the earliest attestation being that of a house-purchase at Kiš by one Utul-Ištar, an *išippum* of Ištar-of-Uruk, in Ae 1. Interestingly, some gardeners originating from Uruk are known to have been working in north Babylonia (growing dates) from at least Samsu-ilūna year 11<sup>76</sup>. In Si 19, the gardener Ilī-bani pays *iptirū* to ransom his daughter, expressly described as a “citizen of Uruk”<sup>77</sup>. Meanwhile at Babylon a certain Ur-du-kuga, a *šangūm* of Ištar-of-Zabala, appears as witness in a contract dated Si 30. The cult of this divinity is well attested at Larsa<sup>78</sup>, and this may possibly be a further indication of the movement of clergy from the south to another northern centre, as the existence of the

69. Edzard, *Die "zweite Zwischenzeit" Babylonien*, esp. pp. 53-8, 86-90; N. Yoffee, *The economic role of the crown in the Old Babylonian Period* (Malibu, 1977), esp. chapter 5, is also relevant.

70. Incipit of *balāḡ* no. 31.

71. E.g. a-še-er gi<sub>6</sub>-ta 343-350, see *ASJ* 7 (1985), p. 29.

72. In Sumerian (lú) kúr. In the Nippur Lament the unnamed kúr seems to be identified with the Tidanim or nomad (*TCL* 15 15 ii 9', 13' etc.; ḡarza kúr-re ib-suh-ām, PBS 10/4 I iv 29).

73. See D. Charpin, *Le clergé d'Ur au siècle d'Hammurabi (cix<sup>e</sup>-xviii<sup>e</sup> siècles av. J.-C.)* (Geneva/Paris, 1986), pp. 403-15 and 487-9.

74. See *ASJ* 7 (1985), p. 63: “built” in Apil-Sîn 13 and Hammurabi 34.

75. Charpin, op. cit., pp. 413ff.

76. *ibid.*

77. Charpin, *ibid.*, refers to Ilī-bani's “caractère d'exilé”. Cf. zú-gub ka-naḡ-ḡá-mèn / *ipterū māti anāku* in a-še-er gi<sub>6</sub>-ta ll. 347f., *ASJ* 7 (1985), p. 29.

78. Charpin, op. cit., pp. 488f.

cult of Ištar-of-Uruk at the temple E-tur-kalama already suggests. It is conceivable that the impetus to commit to writing compositions which were perhaps earlier orally tradited derived from this northward movement, and that it was responsible for the numerous mss. of balaḡs and other cult songs from northern Babylonia, dateable to approximately the time of Hammurabi or slightly later<sup>79</sup>; although at least one ms. appears to be definitely earlier than Hammurabi<sup>80</sup>, so that this otherwise attractive hypothesis may not be altogether certain<sup>81</sup>.

It is of crucial importance to separate from the Old Babylonian history of the balaḡs their later use and adaptation as ritual music in a variety of temple ceremonial, just as it is important to edit Old Babylonian mss. as separate texts from the more numerous first-millennium mss<sup>82</sup>. The study of the tradition – catalogues, colophons, rubrics, “musical” annotations<sup>83</sup>, bilingual editions – belongs, generally speaking, to this latter phase of their history<sup>84</sup>. The value of the information to be derived from study of the physical forms of tablets for reconstructing the various editions that were in use and the circumstances for which each was produced cannot be underestimated.

As an example of this, the group of Late Babylonian mss. of one or more excerpts of balaḡs from Ur, some “phonetically” written, is a case in point (*UET* 6/2 140, 191, 200-207)<sup>85</sup>. Of these 201 (5-line excerpt

79. H. Zimmern, *Sumerische Kultlieder aus altbabylonischer Zeit*, *VAS* 2 (Leipzig, 1912), p. v. These include a few tablets in which mention is made of northern cities, notably *VAS* 2 16 rev. v 27 (zimbir<sup>ki</sup>), vi 12ff. (tin-tir<sup>ki</sup>, kiš<sup>ki</sup>, hur-saḡ-kalam-ma, gú-du<sup>g</sup>-a<sup>ki</sup>, [dil]-bat<sup>ki</sup>), assigned by Cohen, *CLAM*, p. 267, to B 11; *VAS* 10 107:3 (tin<sup>2</sup>-tir<sup>ki</sup>) and *PBS* 10/2 12 ii 5f. (zimbir<sup>ki</sup>, tin-tir<sup>ki</sup>), joining *VAS* 2 12 vi 9ff. (tin-tir<sup>ki</sup>, gú<sup>2</sup>-du<sup>g</sup>-a<sup>ki</sup>, [dil]-bat<sup>ki</sup>); and, as might be expected, some Kiš tablets: *PRAK* B 396 + 444 (hur-saḡ-kalam-ma) and *PRAK* C 52+ (Old Babylonian versions of B36, see Volk, *Die Balaḡ-Komposition urú àm-ma-ir-ra-bi*, pp. 19f.).

80. The text of a balaḡ from Tell Haddād, to be published by Dr. A. Cavigneaux and Dr. F. Al-Rawi, assigned to the reign of Ibāl-pī-El II; see *ASJ* 7 (1985), pp. 69-70.

81. Cf. Charpin, op. cit., p. 489, “A partir de l'époque paléobabylonienne tardive, la tradition fut davantage confiée à l'argile, sans doute parce que les événements avaient montré la fragilité de la chaîne humaine pour en assurer la tradition”. It would be necessary to assume that prayers for the restoration of destroyed temples, which are attested so far in only four Old Babylonian balaḡ mss. (Great Temple of Keš [RA 17, p. 50]; E-babbar (probably of Larsa) [MAH 16066, cited by Krecher, *SKL*, p. 30; see also p. 22, n. 22]; and E-kur, Nippur [OB mss. of balaḡs 12 and (probably) 4, see Cohen, *CLAM*, p. 30]) were original and had some sort of historical reference, while those added by the time of the first-millennium mss. for other temples, especially northern Babylonian ones, were secondary. This whole problem of the precise reason for the inclusion in the litanies of the northern cities which may have become the new homes of the *kalû* singers is clearly far from understood yet. Possibly we may be correct to envisage adaptation of the cult songs for performance in the temples to which the *kalû* were henceforth attached as clergy. But certainly the prayers do not allow us to assume the use in Old Babylonian times of the balaḡs as an accompaniment to ritual demolition, in accordance with first-millennium ritual practice (as Cohen suggests, in *CLAM*, p. 31).

82. See the careful study by K. Volk, pp. 16-47, with the discussion of “Versatzstücke”, pp. 46f (also Krecher, *RLA* 6, p. 2). In fact there is no hard evidence for the “uninterrupted transmission of much of the *emesal* material” (Cohen, *CLAM*, p. 12), since there is a gap in our knowledge of the tradition of almost a thousand years (admitted by Cohen, *CLAM*, p. 17). The colophon of the Nineveh catalogue might even be taken to imply the reverse, that there had been a break in the transmission. The dating of the Aššur fragments VAT 10544 and 10556 (*LKA* 33 and p. ix) to the Middle Assyrian Period (“c. 1100 B.C.”, *CLAM*, p. 346; presumably the reconstructed “library of Tiglath-pileser I” is meant, see O. Pedersén, *Archives and Libraries in the City of Assur*, part 2 [Uppsala, 1985], pp. 31-41) is without any foundation, since the excavation numbers are lost and the fragments cannot thus be assigned to any part of the site (*LKA*, p. ix) and, as the copy of VAT 10544 shows, there are no palaeographic grounds for such a dating (see *BiOr* 44, p. 43).

Whether the pairing of balaḡs with er-šemas is to be dated to the same point as the standardisation or re-editing of the texts of these compositions, is an unanswerable question at present (Cohen, *CLAM*, p. 43). One may be a question of ritual practice, the other a question of editorial work, and thus they may belong in quite different categories.

83. See Krecher, *WO* 4 (1967-8), p. 277, *RLA* 3, p. 435; Lambert, “The Converse Tablet ...”, in H. Goedicke, ed., *Near Eastern Studies in honor of W.F. Albright* (Baltimore and London, 1971), pp. 335ff.

84. Although of course there are also four short Old Babylonian catalogues of balaḡs, and some rubrics in Old Babylonian texts. According to Cohen (*CLAM*, p. 20), *TCL* 16 no. 69 is the only Old Babylonian balaḡ ms. with Akkadian glosses. For the colophons of tablets copied or owned by *kalû*, see Hunger, *Kolophone*, index, s.v.

85. Some seem to give excerpts from a sequence of balaḡs which follows the Nineveh catalogue (204, 205) while others appear, so far as we can tell, to give a variety of extracts (203: balaḡs 16, 26, 37, x, y and 5).

only; 6.7 × 4.5 cm.) and 202 (4, 3, 7, 7 lines respectively; height 4.5 cm.) are small, transversely inscribed (“landscape”) tablets, with largish and not particularly fine writing. 202 in particular is a very clumsy student’s hand<sup>86</sup>. A second group consists of 200 (obv. 6, 7, 7, rev. 9(?), 5+4 lines respectively; 5.5 × 8.5 cm.), 204 (obv. 7, 7, 10, rev. 5, 8, 7 lines respectively; with 2-line colophon of a scribe, Nabû-šuma-ētir, who describes himself as *šamallû kalû agašgû*, “novice apprentice *kalû*”<sup>87</sup>; 6.25 × 9.75 cm., slightly flatter in cross section) and 207 (obv. 8, 7, 9, rev. 7 (ruled, not shown in Gadd’s copy), 7, 7, respectively; 6 × 9.75 cm.), all of which are drawn with a median line of pair of lines. 204 and 207 observe the caesura. These are all in moderate to good hands. A different format is found with 203 and 205 (both 4.75 × 8.5 cm.). 203 (obv. 6, 8, 8 rev. 7, 4, and 3 of which the second line has an Akkadian gloss)<sup>88</sup> is written in a good and regular hand, observing the caesura. 206 is the upper portion of a one-column tablet (width 7 cm., height c. 7.5 cm.) written in a fairly small and elegant Late Babylonian literary hand, smaller on the reverse, without a caesura. It ends with a catch-line. Here a considerable range of types of tablet is preserved, from the coarsest scribal practice, through the (signed) work of the most junior apprentice *kalû*, to what we may assume to be a true “library” tablet. The “phonetic” orthography occasionally reveals information about the history of Sumerian pronunciation. Thus while it would be naive to claim that a Late Babylonian “phonetic” spelling tells us anything about the pronunciation of Sumerian when it was a living language, we can observe that *u<sub>4</sub>-re-èn-na* was pronounced, and therefore written, *u<sub>4</sub>-ri-il-le-né* in the Late Babylonian Period, i.e. the standard orthography was reinterpreted as *u<sub>4</sub>-re-le-na*, showing ignorance of the demonstrative /ren/<sup>89</sup> – showing, in fact, that Sumerian was a dead language. On the other hand *ba-ab-ra-ke<sub>4</sub>* for standard *bára-bára-ga* (in the same line) conforms to what is already attested about the pronunciation of reduplicated forms from Old Babylonian lexical texts (e.g. *gi-ig-ri* for *gir<sub>3</sub>-gir<sub>3</sub>*)<sup>90</sup>, and the two spellings together may perhaps indicate a tendency to pronounce final –a as –e in this period.

In conclusion, it seems that the *balaḡs* and *er-šemas* were traditional cult songs, elements of which were found to speak to human experience in a multitude of ways at various periods and which were therefore enabled to live a long and rich life in the ritual practice of Mesopotamia over two thousand years at least. If the ubiquitous theme of the destruction and abandonment of temples has its ultimate origin, as Cohen implies<sup>91</sup>, in otherwise lost mythical narratives concerning the decline or destruction of E-ana at Uruk during Inana’s detention by Ereškigal in the underworld (and involving somehow the maiden Ama-namtaga)<sup>92</sup>, the destruction of the E-gal-mah during Ninisina’s absence in Arali, or the destruction by Enlil of Šerida’s temple the E-babbar (presumably at Larsa), narratives whose antiquity can only be guessed at, then this theme later became a powerful image for the transcendental expression of the historical and social circumstances of the early second millennium. Among other ritual adaptations in the first millennium, the appropriateness of the material to, for example, rituals attending the demolition of a buckling temple wall prior to its rebuilding, was evidently perceived, but must be seen as a more or less incidental use of a body of poetry rich in allusions and complex resonances<sup>93</sup>.

86. The tablet has a double ruling between lines 7 and 8, and no ruling between lines 9 and 10, although the last sign of line 9 (AL) has two horizontals, extended from further to the left, running through it. The sign following NU in line 2 is as copied by Gadd, but presumably intended for MU; the last sign of line 4 is clearly RA. In line 19 the sign between RU and GA seems to be an ineptly formed DA.

87. Already noted by *CAD* s.v. *kalû* A c) 1’ b’.

88. Reverse not noted by me in *BiOr* 44 (1997), pp. 31ff.

89. *UET* 6/2 200:14.

90. E.g. *Diri* II 41.

91. See *Eršemma*, p. 20.

92. See the discussion by Volk, *Die Balaḡ-Komposition urû àm-ma-ir-ra-bi*, pp. 48-54.

93. Some aspects of this paper were presented in a seminar held at the Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia Project in Toronto, in November 1987.

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