

The Epic of Gilgamesh

The *Epic of Gilgamesh* is the longest and greatest literary composition written in cuneiform Akkadian. It narrates a heroic quest for fame and immortality, pursued by a man who has an enormous capacity for friendship, for endurance and adventure, for joy and sorrow, a man of strength and weakness who loses a unique opportunity through a moment's carelessness. Our interest lies not only in the story and its characters, but also in the unique opportunity the epic provides for tracing earlier, independent folk-tales which were combined in the creation of the whole work, and we can see how the whole work in written form never became fossilized, but was constantly altered through contact with a continuing oral narrative tradition.

It is particularly difficult for the modern student of *Gilgamesh* to come to grips with the subject, for no new edition of the epic has appeared for half a century. In that time many new fragments of the epic have been discovered on a variety of archaeological sites and in museums, and our understanding of the historical background has improved very considerably. But the new information has made it increasingly apparent that we cannot often use one fragment to restore another, because each period and area had its own version of the story, so we cannot simply reconstruct a master version with variants in the way that Hebrew and Classical texts can be edited, and a new fragment may perplex us rather than elucidating an old problem. In fact, the more text fragments come to light, the harder it becomes to produce one coherent edition.

The work is classed as an epic because it features the heroic exploits of a dimly historical figure with, on the sidelines, gods and goddesses who sometimes take a part in the action, and occasionally direct mortal affairs; nevertheless, we gain an overall impression of the free will of man which can fashion its own destiny and occasionally thwart the wishes of heaven. There is no suggestion anywhere that the epic was performed or recited as part of a ceremony or ritual. The specific purpose for which it was composed is a difficult question, but the general

purpose for which the epic and its constituent stories existed in oral form is very probably entertainment, whether in royal courts, in private houses, around the camp-fires of desert caravans, or on the long sea voyages between the Indus and the head of the Arabian Gulf.

GILGAMESH IN HISTORY

We now know for certain that Gilgamesh was considered in antiquity to be a historical character. For a long time it was not clear whether the earlier parts of the Sumerian king list, in which superhuman lengths of reign were attributed to all rulers, were entirely fictional or mythical. Historical inscriptions of a king of Kish, Enmebaragesi, who belongs to the same era, have now come to light.

There are two different traditions concerning the parentage of Gilgamesh. The epic itself says that one Lugalbanda was his father, a man who is known from the Sumerian king list to have occupied the throne of Uruk two kings before Gilgamesh and to have been a shepherd; Sumerian epic stories about Lugalbanda are extant. In spite of extensive and thorough excavations at Uruk, no contemporary inscriptions are yet known for Gilgamesh or for Lugalbanda. Precise dates cannot be given for the lifetime of Gilgamesh, but they are generally agreed to lie between 2800 and 2500 BC.

Another tradition of parentage for Gilgamesh comes, curiously enough, from the king list itself, which mentions parenthetically that the father of Gilgamesh was a *lillu* (a man with demonic qualities), and a high priest of Kullab, which is a part of Uruk. We could, of course, try to reconcile the two traditions by claiming that Lugalbanda must have started life as a *lillu*-man who became a priest at Kullab before he became king of Uruk, but other discrepancies in the epic which cannot be reconciled show two quite different traditions at work. Possibly Gilgamesh conquered Uruk as an outsider, and then 'adopted' as his father a famous ruler of the usurped dynasty. Subsequent usurpers in ancient Mesopotamia often acted in this way. The mother of Gilgamesh plays a part in the early episodes of the epic; she is Ninsun, the goddess Lady Wild Cow, from whom he

inherited divinity as two-thirds of his nature. Tablets dating not long after Gilgamesh's probable lifetime show that he was regarded as a god in Mesopotamia.

The city which Gilgamesh and his father ruled is firmly identified as modern Warka in central Iraq. Excavations by German archaeologists have shown that it was enormously important in the late fourth millennium BC, with an elaborate central complex of monumental architecture. The city originally consisted of two separate towns on either side, probably, of a canal. In one town the chief, patron deity was the sky god An (or Anu); in the other it was Inanna (Ishtar) the goddess of love and war. According to traditions that emanate from Uruk, as does this epic, Inanna was the daughter of An, and the great temple which she inhabited was called Eanna, which could be translated as 'House of An (or, the sky)'. So there is a close connection between the two deities, and together they play a part at a crucial moment in the epic.

Also associated with the city of Uruk is a very early tradition of literacy, and the same is true of Shuruppak, the city of Utnapishtim: early cuneiform and pre-cuneiform clay tablets have been found on both sites. But this fact cannot be connected with the epic as written literature, for there is no evidence that any of the Gilgamesh stories were written down before about 2150 BC. The so-called 'Gilgamesh figure', a hero shown grappling masterfully with wild animals on cylinder seals and sculptures, is attested much earlier than any of the written Gilgamesh stories, earlier even than the putative existence of the hero as king of Uruk. Perhaps at times this powerful, traditional image was associated with Gilgamesh, but other associations, for instance with Nergal, Enkidu, or Shakkan, were probably also valid at different periods of extreme antiquity in Mesopotamia.

EARLY SUMERIAN STORIES FROM URUK

Around 2150 BC, there existed in written form three groups of stories about kings of Uruk. One group featured the exploits of Enmerkar, who was perhaps the grandfather of Gilgamesh. Another group featured the exploits of Lugalbanda, and a third group featured Gilgamesh. Most of the tales were very short;

they were all written in Sumerian, and some of them showed the background influence of 'contest' literature, a form of entertainment in which opposing points of view are aired, whether the merits of two deities, two people, two different animals, or two metals, for example. Such verbal contests were popular at royal courts even in medieval times, and can be found among the *Arabian Nights*.

These short stories, then, were written in Sumerian at a time when the whole land was ruled by kings of Ur in the south of Mesopotamia, a dynasty which seems to have had a special relationship with Uruk and which tried to associate its traditions with that great city. Until quite recently, it was supposed that Sumerian was the indigenous, spoken language of Ur and Uruk at that time, but we now think that this may not have been the case; it has even been suggested that Gilgamesh himself would have spoken in Akkadian, not Sumerian. Many problems concerned with the Sumerian language have yet to be solved, but it should be noted that we do not possess any evidence for groups of Sumerian stories about kings of cities other than Uruk.

The great king Shulgi, who ruled Ur from c.2150 to 2103 BC, as the second king of the third dynasty, took a keen interest in the Gilgamesh stories. He claimed that Ninsun was his own mother, and that Gilgamesh was thus his brother. His reign was a time of innovative composition, and many Sumerian hymns were written about Shulgi, who was regarded as a god during his own lifetime.

Some of the Sumerian tales about Gilgamesh were incorporated, with considerable changes, into the Akkadian epic, but at least one was not. The stories are:

1. *Gilgamesh and the halub-tree*, also known as *Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld*. Two versions exist in Sumerian. A part of the story was used in Tablet XII of the Akkadian epic, some time after the epic had been composed as an essentially eleven-tablet composition. In the process of adaptation, the story was changed enough that we cannot regard all of it as a direct translation, but should perhaps consider that a different version of the story, not yet attested in Sumerian sources, was used.

2. *Gilgamesh and Huwawa*, also known as *Gilgamesh and the Land of the Living*. Huwawa (Humbaba) was a monster who

guarded the pine forest. His face resembled coiled intestines, and he possessed killer rays. The Sumerian version of the story seems to be set in the Zagros mountains on the border of Elam (south-west Iran) to the east of Mesopotamia, but the Akkadian versions say distinctly that the location was Lebanon, west of Mesopotamia. There is no way in which we can reconcile the two sources; instead, they should be considered as variant versions of the same story which a flourishing oral tradition was continually changing in order to fit in with local interests and relate to the experience of particular audiences. There are many other ways in which the Sumerian story differs from the Akkadian versions, and the two known versions in Sumerian differ from each other.

3. *Gilgamesh and the Bull of Heaven*. This short Sumerian story was expanded considerably when it was incorporated into the Akkadian epic.

4. *The Death of Gilgamesh*. The Sumerian story is very fragmentary, but shows the theme of a man's quest for immortality which is denied by the gods. This is important for showing that the theme which runs right through the Akkadian epic was taken from one of the Sumerian short stories and given a new and larger setting. Both in content and in structure, the story resembles a composition known as *The Death of Ur-Nammu* (ruler of Ur 2168–2151 BC), a liturgical hymn recited in honour of the deceased monarch.

5. *The Flood*. This story seems to have been an independent tale in Sumerian. It was used not only as an episode in the final version of this epic, but was also incorporated, perhaps more effectively, into *Atrahasis*, as one method by which the gods tried to reduce overpopulation. It had no connection originally with Uruk or with Gilgamesh, and may not have been included in the Old Babylonian version of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. The hero is a man of Shuruppak, a city not far from Uruk.

The Flood story in two of its versions contains conflicting geographical detail: the Sumerian version says that Ziusudra ended up on the island of Dilmun (Bahrain) in the Gulf, but the Akkadian story says that Ut-napishtim ended up at 'The mouth of the rivers'. Bahrain lies some 300 miles from the delta where the Tigris and Euphrates rivers flow into the sea, but we can reconcile the accounts by using a belief known from Arab

tradition: that the Tigris and Euphrates flow beneath the sea and then surface in Bahrain and Failake, bringing their water to islands which are famed for their miraculous supply of sweet water.

Another problem in the story concerns the location of the mountain on which the ark eventually came to rest. No mountain is named in the Sumerian version; in spite of gaps in the text, it looks as if the sun comes out and dries up the water and the ark does not come to rest on anything but the emerging flat land. The Akkadian version names Mount Nimush, the Greek source of Berossus names Armenia, and Genesis names Mount Ararat. Now, Mount Nimush is elsewhere attested in the annals of the Assyrian king Assurnasirpal II in the tenth century BC, in a region that could just be described as southern Armenia, but definitely not as far north as Mount Ararat. The version with Mount Nimush may be no earlier than the date of the seventh-century text in which alone it is attested, or it could have been inspired by Assurnasirpal's famous campaign, or it could be earlier still. In any case, the two mountains which are named, Ararat in Genesis and Nimush in Akkadian *Gilgamesh*, are definitely different places.

6. *The Descent of Inanna/Ishtar to the Underworld* is known independently in Sumerian and as a shorter version in Akkadian; a translation of the latter is given in this volume. The story continued to exist independently after some of its opening lines were incorporated into *Gilgamesh*, VII. In addition, the lines in *Gilgamesh*, XII which describe Gilgamesh's attempts to persuade the great gods to help in releasing Enkidu from the Underworld closely resemble the similar episode in the Sumerian *Descent of Inanna*, where the petitioner is the goddess' vizier. The Sumerian story may originally have belonged to a group of tales about the god Dumuzi. It has no original connection either with Uruk or with the hero Gilgamesh.

7. *Gilgamesh and Agga* is a Sumerian tale of confrontation between the hero and his contemporary Agga, who was king of Kish, to the north of Uruk. It was not used in any way in the Akkadian epic.

DIFFERENT VERSIONS OF THE EPIC

It is evident from the wealth of background stories, to which the different versions of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* may be added, that in many ways the Gilgamesh literature provides ideal material for studying the formation of the epic. However, the difficulties are still enormous because the material is so fragmentary. Seldom indeed do extant fragments of different versions cover the same episodes. Some tablets were written by schoolboys whose muddles and omissions reveal their immaturity and, perhaps, the speed of dictation, rather than true textual variation. Some important episodes are still missing from all versions, and some chapters of the standard version contain a number of fragments which cannot be placed in the correct sequence with any confidence.

The Sumerian stories are now thought to be separate entities rather than forming a single epic, although it is possible that they were sometimes narrated as one series of tales. They were popular in the early second millennium but are almost certainly earlier.

The Old Babylonian tablets written in Akkadian, which date to the early second millennium, in some passages diverge fairly widely from the standard version, although there are other passages which are virtually identical. They may have formed a single, integrated epic, but this is uncertain; they definitely lacked the prologue and may have lacked the Flood story. They were found at Ur in southern Iraq; at Sippar on the Euphrates above Babylon, and at Ishchali in the kingdom of Eshnunna, east of the Tigris.

The widest geographical spread of tablets occurs in the mid- to late second millennium, but all the evidence is extremely fragmentary: an Akkadian tablet from Megiddo in Palestine, one from Emar on the Middle Euphrates (south of Carchemish), and versions in the Akkadian, Hittite, and Hurrian languages found at Hattusas, the Hittite capital in northern Anatolia. There are also some temple library tablets from the late second millennium found at Assur. These fragments do not reveal whether substantially different versions were current in written

form nor whether the prologue or the Flood story had yet been incorporated.

The standard version is the best known, mainly from tablets found at Nineveh which include more than one copy of the work (each with different arrangements of tablets and columns). The palace library at Nineveh was begun by Sennacherib and completed by Assurbanipal in the first half of the seventh century BC, but there was also a library in the temple of Nabu the god of writing, and some tablets from Nimrud may have been incorporated into the Nineveh collection, since the excavator, Sir Henry Austin Layard, thought that Nimrud was a part of Nineveh. One tablet has more recently come to light from the temple of Nabu at Nimrud. Some school exercise tablets come from the site of Sultantepe near Harran, dating to the late eighth or seventh century BC.

The standard version uses and adapts some known Sumerian stories as well as others for which written forerunners are not known, such as Enkidu's seduction by Shamhat, and the aetiological story which tells why snakes shed their old skins. But it also contains other material, particularly in the first part of the epic, which may never have existed independently. With considerable skill a single work is created out of diverse elements. The methods used to stitch the pieces together are several. First, the hero Gilgamesh is present almost the entire time, although sometimes as the silent audience to another man's tale. Second, the theme of searching for fame early in the story develops into a quest for immortality in the latter part. Third, the main eleven tablets are introduced by a prologue which is repeated as an epilogue at the end. Fourth, the three dreams of Gilgamesh in Tablet IV and of Enkidu in Tablet VII are probably used to heighten tension, perhaps using wilful misinterpretation that would have been recognized as such by an audience that foresaw the approach of disaster and death. Set phrases, in particular the formulaic introduction to direct speech, also give a certain cohesion, although they are not quite standardized throughout the epic and help to betray its composite nature.

A small amount of a late version from Uruk, possibly as late as the Seleucid period, mainly covers an episode which is not yet extant in the standard version, so it is uncertain to what extent the Akkadian epic remained unchanged in its written form after

the fall of Nineveh in 612 BC. Cuneiform tablets found at Ugarit and at Hattusas show that the training of scribes in cities outside the control of Babylon or of Assyria was by no means a standard one. Each court may have used local, existing written or oral material for its own purposes, adapting it to its needs. This is quite distinct from principles of scholarly scribal tradition within one particular kingdom or empire, which demanded that temple tablets be copied with scrupulous accuracy for a new library, as one of the prerogatives of conquest.

AUTHORSHIP AND COMPOSITION

Mesopotamian tradition ascribed the authorship of the seventh-century version found at Nineveh to one Sin-leqe-unnini, a master scribe and incantation-priest of the Kassite period, and it seems on the whole acceptable to treat this tradition without undue suspicion. But we shall probably never know to what extent he took a ready-formed oral narrative and just divided the text up into eleven tablets. It is recognized increasingly that a surge of literary invention, collection, and recording in Mesopotamia took place under the Kassite kings of the mid-second millennium, and that libraries were collected together in subsequent periods by copying from originals dating to that time and largely preserved in the temple libraries of Ur, Uruk, Sippar (the sun god's temple recently excavated with its library intact by Iraqi archaeologists), Nippur, and Babylon. Tablet XII, which describes Enkidu's visit to the Underworld, was appended after the prologue and epilogue had been added, perhaps during the seventh or late eighth centuries, for reasons which are still not clear. The *Odyssey* of Homer includes as a late addition a story about a man's direct contact with the Underworld, and it is possible that the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the *Iliad*, and the *Odyssey* shared in part a common background.

This suggestion arises partly from the fact that echoes of stories from both the Greek and the Akkadian compositions are found in the *Arabian Nights*. The *Tale of Buluqiya* bears resemblances to the *Epic of Gilgamesh* which are too close to be dismissed as coincidental. The story takes place at a time when Greek was written, in other words, in pre-Islamic times. The

young king Buluqiya (whose name may be a hypocoristic form of Sumerian or Hurrian Bilgamesh) sets out with a bosom friend to search for immortality, to obtain Solomon's ring (which replaces the Humbaba episode). His friend dies an untimely death at the moment when success is within their reach. Buluqiya's subsequent travels lead him through a subterranean passage (cf. *Gilgamesh*, IX. v.), reaching a kingdom where the trees have emerald leaves and ruby fruit (cf. IX. v.), and meeting a far-distant king Sakhr who has obtained immortality in a way that is impossible now for Buluqiya, by drinking from the Fountain of Life which is guarded by Al-Khidr (the Islamic sage for whom Atrahasis has long been recognized as forerunner). King Sakhr expounds to Buluqiya the early history of the world (cf. XI. 10-197), and then Buluqiya is spirited straight back home. The story is used to foretell the coming of Mohammed.

The story of Odysseus and Calypso in *Odyssey*, V is recognized to have some close resemblances to the episode of Gilgamesh and Siduri: the lone female plies the inconsolable hero-wanderer with drink and sends him off to a place beyond the sea reserved for a special class of honoured people. To prepare for the voyage he has to cut down and trim timbers. Atrahasis at the mouth of the rivers is replaced by Alkinoos and the blessed isle of the Phaeacians, kinsmen of the gods.

Two of the stories of Sinbad the Sailor bear close resemblances to tales in the *Odyssey*. The third voyage of Sinbad is in essence that of the Cyclops, a giant who lives on an island and eats captive sailors one by one until Sinbad blinds him with a red-hot iron, whereupon the remnant escapes as the blinded giant gropes around enraged. He hurls a rock into the sea and drowns all but two of the sailors. The fourth voyage of Sinbad can be compared with the Circe story: the sailors, captured on an island, are tempted into gluttony by magic food and driven out to the meadows like cattle by a herdsman. Only Sinbad, like Odysseus, resists temptation.

These points of contact between stories of Gilgamesh, of Odysseus, and of Sinbad and Buluqiya in the *Arabian Nights* show clearly that traditional tales were reused and adapted for different ethnic and geographical settings by ancient and medieval story-tellers, by Semites and by Greeks.

It is traditional in the Near East for desert people who travel

with trading caravans to nurture the skills of the musician-poet, and we know that such people travelled with trading caravans from at least the Middle Bronze Age up until modern times. It is also traditional for ships' captains to acquire and treasure the services of musician-poets for the long voyage from Basra to India, Ceylon, and Indonesia. Under such conditions of transmission, it is no surprise to find that different versions of a favourite story contain a variety of details that cannot and should not be reconciled on the theory of a single ancestry. Instead, we may interpret different versions as displaying an endless variety due to the inventive imagination and embroidery of three or four millennia's worth of travelling raconteurs who were highly prized professionals. So extensive in duration and distance were those journeys in both ancient and medieval times, that a long story in which old folk-tales were given a new and compelling setting, skilfully recombined to create a coherent whole, was wonderful entertainment.

GILGAMESH AND KINGSHIP

Kingship was the only form of government in ancient Mesopotamia, ordained by the gods for the guidance and prosperity of people and cities, to maintain order and to protect the weak in society. Among the king's duties were military leadership, priestly functions, law-giving, and city-building. Whenever kingship broke down, so did law and order, with terrible consequences. Gilgamesh as a young king behaved badly, but this was no reason to depose him, and eventually he became wise, thanks to the gods' help through Enkidu. For the ancient Mesopotamians, *The Epic of Gilgamesh* showed that kingship must be supported even though individual kings are imperfect.

GILGAMESH

TABLET I

SBV i [Of him who] found out all things, I [shall te]ll the
land¹,
[Of him who] experienced everything, [I shall tea]ch
the whole.
He searched (?) lands (?) everywhere.
He who experienced the whole gained complete
wisdom.
He found out what was secret and uncovered what
was hidden,
He brought back a tale of times before the Flood.²
He had journeyed far and wide, weary and at last
resigned.
He engraved all toils on a memorial monument of
stone.
He had the wall of Uruk built, the sheepfold
Of holiest Eanna, the pure treasury.
See its wall, which is like a copper band,
Survey its battlements, which nobody else can
match,
Take the threshold, which is from time immemorial,
Approach Eanna, the home of Ishtar,
Which no future king nor any man will ever match!
Go up on to the wall of Uruk and walk around!
Inspect the foundation platform and scrutinize the
brickwork!
Testify that its bricks are baked bricks,
And that the Seven Counsellors must have laid its
foundations!³
One square mile is city, one square mile is orchards,
one square mile is claypits, as well as the open
ground of Ishtar's temple.
Three square miles and the open ground comprise
Uruk.

Look for the copper tablet-box,
 Undo its bronze lock,
 Open the door to its secret,
 Lift out the lapis lazuli tablet and read it,
 The story of that man, Gilgamesh, who went
 through all kinds of sufferings.
 He was superior to other kings, a warrior lord of
 great stature,⁴

A hero born of Uruk, a goring wild bull.
 He marches at the front as leader,
 He goes behind, the support of his brothers,
 A strong net, the protection of his men,
 The raging flood-wave, which can destroy even a
 stone wall.

Son of Lugalbanda, Gilgamesh, perfect in strength,
 Son of the lofty cow, the wild cow Ninsun.
 He is Gilgamesh, perfect in splendour,⁵
 Who opened up passes in the mountains,
 Who could dig pits even in the mountainside,
 Who crossed the ocean, the broad seas, as far as the
 sunrise.

Who inspected the edges of the world, kept
 searching for eternal life,
 Who reached Ut-napishtim the far-distant, by force.
 Who restored to their rightful place cult centres (?)
 which the Flood had ruined.⁶

There is nobody among the kings of teeming
 humanity

Who can compare with him,
 Who can say 'I am king' beside Gilgamesh.
 Gilgamesh (was) named from birth for fame.

ii Two-thirds of him was divine, and one-third mortal.

Belet-ili designed the shape of his body,⁷

Made his form perfect, []

[] was proud []

[]

[]

In Uruk the Sheepfold he would walk about,
 Show himself superior, his head held high like a
 wild bull.

He had no rival, and at his *pukku*⁸
 His weapons would rise up, his comrades have to
 rise up.
 The young men of Uruk became dejected in their
 private [quarters (?)].
 Gilgamesh would not leave any son alone for his
 father.
 Day and night his [behaviour (?)] was overbearing.
 He was the shepherd (?) []
 He was their shepherd (?) yet []
 Powerful, superb, [knowledgeable and expert],
 Gilgamesh would not leave [young girls alone],
 The daughters of warriors, the brides of young
 men.
 The gods often heard their complaints.
 The gods of heaven [] the lord of Uruk.
 'Did [Aruru (?)] create such a rampant wild bull?
 Is there no rival? At the *pukku*
 His weapons rise up, his comrades have to rise
 up.
 Gilgamesh will not leave any son alone for his
 father.
 Day and night his [behaviour (?)] is overbearing.
 He is the shepherd of Uruk the Sheepfold,
 He is their shepherd, yet []
 Powerful, superb, knowledgeable [and expert],
 Gilgamesh will not leave young girls [alone],
 The daughters of warriors, the brides of young
 men.
 Anu often hears their complaints.'
 They called upon great Aruru:
 'You, Aruru, you created [mankind (?)]!
 Now create someone for him, to match (?) the
 ardour (?) of his energies!⁹
 Let them be regular rivals, and let Uruk be
 allowed peace!'
 When Aruru heard this, she created inside herself
 the word (?) of Anu.¹⁰
 Aruru washed her hands, pinched off a piece of clay,
 cast it out into open country.

- She created a [primitive man], Enkidu the warrior:
 offspring of silence (?), sky-bolt of Ninurta.¹⁰
 His whole body was shaggy with hair, he was
 furnished with tresses like a woman,
 His locks of hair grew luxuriant like grain.
 He knew neither people nor country; he was
 dressed as cattle are.
 With gazelles he eats vegetation,
 With cattle he quenches his thirst at the watering
 place.
 With wild beasts he presses forward for water.
 A hunter, a brigand,¹¹
 Came face to face with him beside the watering
 place.
 He saw him on three successive days beside the
 watering place.
 The hunter looked at him, and was dumbstruck to
 see him.
 In perplexity (?) he went back into his house
 And was afraid, stayed mute, was silent,
 And was ill at ease, his face worried.
 [] the grief in his innermost being.
 His face was like that of a long-distance traveller.¹²
 iii The hunter made his voice heard and spoke, he said
 to his father;
 'Father, there was a young man who came [from
 the mountain (?)],
 [On the land] he was strong, he was powerful.
 His strength was very hard, like a sky-bolt of
 Anu.¹³
 He walks about on the mountain all the time,
 All the time he eats vegetation with cattle,
 All the time he puts his feet in (the water) at the
 watering place.
 I am too frightened to approach him.
 He kept filling in the pits that I dug [],
 He kept pulling out the traps that I laid.
 He kept helping cattle, wild beasts of open
 country, to escape my grasp.
 He will not allow me to work [in open country].'

His father spoke to him, to the hunter,
 '[] Uruk, Gilgamesh.
 [] his open country.
 [His strength is very hard, like a sky-bolt of Anu]
 [Go, set] your face [towards Uruk].
 [] the strength of a man,
 [] lead (her) forth, and
 [] the strong man.
 When he approaches the cattle at the watering
 place,
 She must take off her clothes and reveal her
 attractions.
 He will see her and go close to her.
 Then his cattle, who have grown up in open
 country with him, will become alien to him.'
 [He listened] to the advice of his father [].
 The hunter went off [to see Gilgamesh (?)].
 He took the road, set [his face] towards Uruk,
 Entered the presence (?) of Gilgamesh []:
 'There was a young man who [came from the
 mountain (?)],
 On the land he was strong, he was powerful.
 His strength is very hard, like a sky-bolt of Anu.
 He walks about on the mountain all the time,
 All the time he eats vegetation with cattle,
 All the time he puts his feet in (the water) at the
 watering place.
 I am too frightened to approach him.
 He kept filling in the pits that I dug,
 He kept pulling out the traps that I laid.
 He kept helping cattle, wild beasts of open
 country, to escape my grasp.
 He did not allow me to work in the open
 country.'
 Gilgamesh spoke to him, to the hunter,
 'Go, hunter, lead forth the harlot Shamhat,¹⁴
 And when he approaches the cattle at the
 watering place,
 She must take off her clothes and reveal her
 attractions.

- He will see her and go close to her.
 Then his cattle, who have grown up in open
 country with him, will become alien to him.'
 The hunter went; he led forth the harlot Shamhat
 with him,
 And they took the road, they made the journey.
 In three days they reached the appointed place.
 Hunter and harlot sat down in their hiding
 place (?).
 For one day, then a second, they sat at the watering
 place.
 Then cattle arrived at the watering place; they drank.
 iv Then wild beasts arrived at the water; they satisfied
 their need.
 And he, Enkidu, whose origin is the mountain,
 (Who) eats vegetation with gazelles,
 Drinks (at) the watering place with cattle,
 Satisfied his need for water with wild beasts.
 Shamhat looked at the primitive man,
 The murderous youth from the depths of open
 country.
 'Here he is, Shamhat, bare your bosom,
 Open your legs and let him take in your
 attractions!
 Do not pull away, take wind of him!
 He will see you and come close to you.
 Spread open your garments, and let him lie upon
 you,
 Do for him, the primitive man, as women do.
 Then his cattle, who have grown up in open
 country with him, will become alien to him.
 His love-making he will lavish upon you!'
 Shamhat loosened her undergarments, opened her
 legs and he took in her attractions.
 She did not pull away. She took wind of him,
 Spread open her garments, and he lay upon her.¹⁵
 She did for him, the primitive man, as women do.
 His love-making he lavished upon her.
 For six days and seven nights Enkidu was aroused
 and poured himself into Shamhat.

When he was sated with her charms,
He set his face towards the open country of his
cattle.

The gazelles saw Enkidu and scattered,
The cattle of open country kept away from his
body.

For Enkidu had stripped (?); his body was too clean.
His legs, which used to keep pace with (?) his cattle,
were at a standstill.

Enkidu had been diminished, he could not run as
before.

Yet he had acquired judgement (?), had become
wiser.

He turned back (?), he sat at the harlot's feet.

The harlot was looking at his expression,
And he listened attentively to what the harlot said.
The harlot spoke to him, to Enkidu,

'You have become [profound] Enkidu, you have
become like a god.

Why should you roam open country with wild
beasts?

Come, let me take you into Uruk the Sheepfold,
To the pure house, the dwelling of Anu and
Ishtar,

Where Gilgamesh is perfect in strength,
And is like a wild bull, more powerful than (any
of) the people.'

She spoke to him, and her speech was acceptable.

Knowing his own mind (now), he would seek for a
friend.

Enkidu spoke to her, to the harlot,

'Come, Shamhat; invite me

To the pure house, the holy dwelling of Anu and
Ishtar,

Where Gilgamesh is perfect in strength,
And is like a wild bull, more powerful than (any
of) the people.

Let me challenge him, and []

v (By saying:) "In Uruk I shall be the strongest!"
I shall go in and alter destiny:

One who was born in open country has
 [superior(?)] strength!
 Shamhat answered,
 'Come on, let us go forth, and let me please you!
 [] there are, I know.
 Go, Enkidu, into Uruk the Sheepfold
 Where young men are girded with sashes
 And every day is a feast day,
 Where the drums are beaten
 And girls (?) [show off] (their) figures,
 Adorned with joy and full of happiness.
 In bed at night great men []
 O Enkidu! You who [know nothing (?)] of life!
 Let me show you Gilgamesh, a man of joy and
 woe!
 Look at him, observe his face,
 He is beautiful in manhood, dignified,
 His whole body is charged with seductive charm.
 He is more powerful in strength of arms than
 you!
 He does not sleep by day or night.
 O Enkidu, change your plan for punishing him!
 Shamash loves Gilgamesh,
 And Anu, Ellil, and Ea made him wise!
 Before you came from the mountains,
 Gilgamesh was dreaming about you in Uruk.
 Gilgamesh arose and described a dream, he told it
 to his mother,¹⁶
 "Mother, I saw a dream in the night.
 There were stars in the sky for me.
 And (something) like a sky-bolt of Anu kept
 falling upon me!
 I tried to lift it up, but it was too heavy for me.
 I tried to turn it over, but I couldn't budge it.
 The country(men) of Uruk were standing over
 [it].¹⁷
 [The countrymen had gathered (?)] over it,
 The men crowded over it,
 The young men massed over it,
 They kissed its feet like very young children.

- I loved it as a wife, doted on it,
 [I carried it], laid it at your feet,
 You treated it as equal to me."
 [The wise mother of Gilgamesh], all-knowing,
 understood,
 She spoke to her lord.
 [The wise wild cow Ninsun] all-knowing,
 understood,
 She spoke to Gilgamesh,
 "[When there were] stars in the sky for you,
 And something like a sky-bolt of Anu kept falling
 upon you,
 You tried to lift it up, but it was too heavy for you,
 You tried to turn it over, but you couldn't budge
 it,
 [You carried it], laid it at my feet,
 I treated it as equal to you,
 And you loved it as a wife, and doted on it:
 vi (It means) a strong partner shall come to you,
 one who can save the life of a friend,
 He will be the most powerful in strength of arms
 in the land.
 His strength will be as great as that of a sky-bolt
 of Anu.
 You will love him as a wife, you will dote upon
 him.
 [And he will always] keep you safe (?).
 [That is the meaning] of your dream."¹⁸
 Gilgamesh spoke to her, to his mother.
 "Mother, I have had a second dream.
 An axe was thrown down in the street (?) of
 Uruk the Sheepfold and they gathered over it,
 The country(men) of Uruk stood over it.
 The land gathered together over it,
 The men massed over it.
 [I carried it], laid it at your feet.
 I loved it as a wife, doted upon it.
 And you treated it as equal to me."
 The wise mother of Gilgamesh, all-knowing,
 understood, she spoke to her son.

The wise wild cow Ninsun, all-knowing,
 understood, she spoke to Gilgamesh,
 "The copper axe which you saw is a man.
 You will love it as a wife, you will dote upon it,
 And I shall treat it as equal to you.
 A strong partner will come to you, one who can
 save the life of a comrade.
 He will be the most powerful in strength of arms
 in the land.
 His strength will be as great as that of a sky-bolt
 of Anu."
 Gilgamesh spoke to his mother,
 "Let it fall, then, according to the word of Ellil
 the great counsellor.
 I shall gain a friend to advise me."
 Ninsun retold his dreams.'
 Thus Shamhat heard the dreams of Gilgamesh and
 told them to Enkidu.
 '[The dreams mean that you will lo]ve one
 another.

TABLET II

(II. i not extant; gap of about 45 lines)

- ii Enkidu was seated before her in Tirannu
 [] tears
 [] trusted Mulliltu

(gap of a few lines)

Why [	]
They were consulting together by	
themselves [	]
At his decision [	]
Who understood in his heart [	]
Which Shamhat [	]
One garment [	]
And a second garment which [	]
She held him (by the hand (?)) and like	
gods [	]

To the shepherds' hut []
 The shepherds were gathered around him
 Of their own accord, and by themselves—
 'The young man—how like Gilgamesh in build,
 Mature in build, as sturdy (?) as battlements.
 Why was he born in the mountains?
 He is just as powerful in strength of arms as a
 sky-bolt of Anu!
 They put food in front of him; []
 They put drink in front of him; []
 Enkidu would not eat the food; he narrowed his
 eyes and stared.

(gap of a few lines)

[		]	[	]
He slew wolves and [				]
[		]	the herdsmen [	]
Enkidu[		]	a herdsman [	]
[		]	you stayed at home [	]
[		]	Uruk the Sheepfold [	]

(gap)

[He stood] in the street of Uruk [the Sheepfold]
 [] the strong []
 He barred the way [of Gilgamesh]
 The country of Uruk was standing around him,
 The country gathered together over him,
 The men massed (?) over him,
 The young men crowded over him,
 Kissed his feet like very young children.
 When the young man []
 The bed was laid at night for Ishhara
 And for godlike Gilgamesh an equal match was
 found.
 Enkidu blocked his access at the door of the father-
 in-law's house,
 He would not allow Gilgamesh to enter.
 They grappled at the door of the father-in-law's house,
 Wrestled in the street, in the public square.¹⁹
 Doorframes shook, walls quaked.

iii (about 37 lines missing)

'He was the most powerful in strength of arms in
the land,

His strength was as great as that of a sky-bolt of
Anu,

A build as sturdy as battlements [].'

The [wise] mother of Gilgamesh, [all-knowing (?)],
Spoke [to her son].

The wild cow Ninsun [spoke to Gilgamesh],

'My son, []

Bitterly []

iv []

Seized []

He brought up to his door []

Bitterly he was weeping []

'Enkidu had no []

His hair is allowed to hang loose []

He was born in open country, and who can
prevail over him?"

Enkidu stood, listened to him speaking,

Pondered, and then sat down, began to cry.

His eyes grew dim with tears.

His arms slackened, his strength [()]

(Then) they grasped one another,

And embraced and held (?) hands.

[Gilgamesh made his voice heard and spoke],

He said [to] Enkidu,

'[Why are your eyes] filled [with tears]?

(about 29 lines missing)

v 'Ellil has destined him to keep the Pine Forest
safe,²⁰

To be the terror of people.

Humbaba, whose shout is the flood-weapon,

whose utterance is Fire, and whose breath is

Death,

Can hear for a distance of sixty leagues

through (?) the . . . of the forest, so who can
penetrate his forest?²¹

Ellil has destined him to keep the Pine Forest
safe, to be the terror of people:
Debility would seize anyone who penetrated his
forest.'

Gilgamesh spoke to him, to Enkidu,
'Are you saying that []?'

(gap of about 34 lines)

vi []
Gilgamesh [made his] voice heard [and spoke to
Enkidu],

'My friend, are there not []²²
Are there no children (?) []?'

Enkidu made his voice heard and [spoke to
Gilgamesh],

'My friend, were we to go to him, []
Humbaba []'

Gilgamesh made his voice heard [and spoke to
Enkidu],

'My friend, we really should []

(gap of a few lines)

They sat and pondered on []

'We made a *haššinnu*-axe []

A *pāšū*-axe with a whole talent of [bronze for
each half (?)]

Their swords weighed a whole talent
each; []

Their belts weighed a whole talent each; their
belts []

(new break) . . . (new break) . . . []²³

Listen to me, young men

Young men of Uruk who know []

I am adamant: I shall take the road [to Humbaba].

I shall face unknown opposition, [I shall ride
along an unknown] road.

Give me your blessing, since I [have decided (?)]
on the course,

That I may enter the city-gate of Uruk [again in
future (?)]

And [celebrate] the New Year Festival once again
 in [future] years (?),²⁴
 And take part in the New Year Festival in years
 [to come] (?).
 Let the New Year Festival be performed, let joy
 [resound],
 Let *illuru*-cries ring out in [].²⁵
 Enkidu gave advice to the elders,
 The young men of Uruk []
 'Tell him not to go to the [Pine] Forest,
 That journey is not to be undertaken! A
 man []
 The guardian of the Pine [Forest]
 (*gap of a few lines*)

The great counsellors of Uruk rose up
 And gave an opinion to [Gilgamesh]:
 'You are [still young (?), Gilgamesh, you are
 impetuous to [],
 But you do not know what you will
 find []
 Humbaba, whose shout is the flood-weapon,
 Whose utterance is Fire and whose breath is Death,
 Can hear for up to sixty leagues the sounds
 of his forest.
 Whoever goes down to his forest
 [] or two.
 Who, even among the Igigi, can face him?
 Ellil destined him to keep the Pine Forest safe, to
 be the terror of people.'
 Gilgamesh listened to the speech of the great
 counsellors.
 (*gap of a few lines*)

TABLET III

i []
 Do not trust entirely, Gilgamesh, in your own
 strength.

When you have looked long enough, trust to
 your first blow.
 He who leads the way will save his comrade.
 He who knows the paths, he will (?) guard his
 friend.
 Let Enkidu go in front of you,
 He knows the way of the Pine Forest.
 He can look at the fight and instruct in the battle.
 Let Enkidu guard the friend, keep the comrade
 safe,
 Bring him back safe in person for brides,²⁶
 So that we in our assembly may rely on you as
 king,
 And that you in turn as king may rely on us
 again.'

Gilgamesh made his voice heard and spoke,
 He said to Enkidu,
 'Come, my friend, let us go to the great palace,
 To Ninsun, the great queen.
 Ninsun is wise, all-knowing, she understands,
 She will set the steps of good advice at our feet.'
 They grasped each other by the hand,
 And Gilgamesh and Enkidu went to the great palace,
 To Ninsun the great queen.
 Gilgamesh rose up and entered into [].
 'Ninsun, I am adamant. [I shall take]
 The distant path to where [Humbaba lives].
 [I shall face] unknown [opposition],
 [I shall ride along] an unknown [road]²⁷
 Until the day when, having travelled far and
 wide,
 I finally reach the Pine Forest,
 Until I slay ferocious Humbaba,
 And exterminate from the land Something Evil,
 which Shamash hates.²⁸

(about 5 lines missing)

[] into your presence.'
 [Ninsun] paid attention [to all the words]
 Of Gilgamesh, her son.

ii Ninsun entered her chamber.

[] soap-plant.

[She put on a garment (?)], adornment of her body,

[Put on toggle-pins (?),] adornment of her breast,

[], wore her crown on her head.

[] ...

[] she went up on to the roof.

She came before Shamash, made a smoke-offering,

Made a *surqinnu*-offering before Shamash and

raised her arms:

‘Why did you single out my son Gilgamesh (and)
impose a restless spirit on him?

Now you have affected him and he will take²⁹

The distant path to where Humbaba lives.

He faces an unknown struggle,

He will ride along an unknown road

Until the day when, having travelled far and
wide,

He finally reaches the Pine Forest,

Until he slays ferocious Humbaba,

And exterminates from the land Something Evil
which you hate.

On the day when you [] at the side
of [],

May Aya, the daughter-in-law, not be too fearful
of you to commend him to you.

Entrust him (?) to the night watchmen,

[] whip []

(gap of about 13 lines)

(column iii fragmentary

See Supplement 2, p. 340)

iv (gap of about 13 lines)

[] Gilgamesh []

She extinguished the smoke-offering

and [].

She called Enkidu to her and gave her decision.

‘Enkidu, you are a strong man, though not from
my womb.

Now, your offspring [shall be dedicated to
 Shamash (?) with the oblates of Gilgamesh:³⁰
 Priestesses, devotees, and votaresses.]
 She placed symbols around Enkidu's neck, (saying)
 'Priestesses have accepted the orphan,
 The daughters of gods have adopted a foundling.
 I hereby take Enkidu to be my son.
 Gilgamesh shall accept Enkidu [as his brother].'

(3 lines fragmentary)

[] to the Pine Forest
 Whether a month (?) [or]
 Whether a year (?) [or].'

(gap of about 4 lines)³¹

(A damaged fragment indicates that Gilgamesh and Enkidu make offerings of juniper and incense at a shrine. A door of pine is mentioned, perhaps promised to Ellil in return for success against Humbaba)

v (this gap and the next gap represent about
 27 lines)

'[Let Enkidu] guard the friend, [keep the comrade
 safe.]
 [Let him bring him back safe in person] for brides,
 So that we in our assembly may rely on you as
 king,
 And that you in turn as king may rely on us
 again.'

Enkidu made his voice heard and spoke,
 He said to [Gilgamesh],
 'My friend, turn back []
 A journey that is not []

(gap)

vi (See Supplement 3, p. 341)

TABLET IV

i (gap of about 5 lines?)

At twenty leagues they ate their ration.³²
 At thirty leagues they stopped for the night.
 Fifty leagues they travelled during the day.
 The distance (took from) the new moon to the full
 moon, then three days more: they came to
 Lebanon.

(There) they dug a pit in front of Shamash.

They [refilled their waterskins (?)].

Gilgamesh went up on to the mountain,

And made his flour-offering to []:³³

'O mountain, bring me a dream, a favourable
 one!'

Enkidu arranged it (?) for him, for Gilgamesh.

A dust-devil passed by, and he/it

fixed (?) []

He made him lie down inside the circle

and []

[] like wild barley []

blood (?) [].³⁴

Gilgamesh sat with his chin on his knees.

Sleep, which spills out over people, overcame him.

In the middle watch he finished his sleep.

He rose up and said to his friend,

'My friend, didn't you call me? Then why am I
 awake?

Didn't you touch me? Why am I so upset?

Didn't a god pass by? Then why is my flesh so
 feeble?

My friend, [I had a dream (?)]

And the dream that I had was extremely
 upsetting.

At the foot of the mountain []

[] fell/hit [].

We were like flies (?) [].'

[He who] was born in open country, and []

Enkidu explained the dream to his friend.

Humbaba like []
 Until light flared up (?) []
 We shall place on top of him (?) []
 We were furious [at (?)] Humbaba [(]]
 [] we stood over him.
 And in the morning the word of Shamash was
 favourable.'

- At twenty leagues they ate their ration.
 At thirty leagues they stopped for the night.
 Fifty leagues they travelled during the day.
 (There) they dug a pit in front of Shamash.
 They refilled (?) [their waterskins (?)],
 Gilgamesh went up on to [the mountain],
 And made his flour-offering to []:
 iii 'O mountain, bring me a dream, a favourable
 one!'
 Enkidu arranged it for him, for Gilgamesh.
 A dust-devil passed by, and he/it fixed []
 He made him lie down inside the circle
 and []
 [] like wild barley []
 Gilgamesh sat with his chin on his knees.
 Sleep, which spills out over people, overcame him.
 In the middle watch he finished his sleep.
 He rose up and said to his friend,
 'My friend, didn't you call me? Then why am I
 awake?
 Didn't you touch me? Why am I so upset?
 Didn't a god pass by? Then why is my flesh so
 feeble?
 My friend, I had a third dream,³⁶
 And the dream that I had was extremely
 upsetting.
 Heaven cried out, earth groaned.
 Day grew silent, darkness emerged,
 Lightning flashed, fire broke out.
 [Flames] crackled, death rained down.³⁷
 (Then) sparks were dimmed, and the fire was
 extinguished.
 [The coals which] kept falling turned to embers.

[Let us go back] down to open country where we
can get advice.'

Enkidu listened, and made him accept his dream; he
spoke to Gilgamesh,

(*interpretation of third dream missing*)³⁸

(*gap of about 23 lines*)

iv? (*About 6 lines of 45 partly preserved*)

'[One alone cannot (?)]³⁹

[They are strangers (?)]

It is a slippery path, and [one] does

not [] But two []

Two . . . []

A three-stranded cord [is hardest to break (?)]

A strong lion [cannot prevail over (?) two of its
own cubs.]

(*Column v not extant; gap of about 45 lines*)

vi (*gap of about 15 lines*)

Enkidu made his voice heard and spoke; he said to
Gilgamesh,

'[How (?)] can I go down into [the Pine Forest?]

Or open up the path, when my arms are

paralysed (?) ?'

Gilgamesh made his voice heard and spoke; he said
to Enkidu,

'Why, my friend, do we [talk (?)] like cowards?

We can cross all the mountains []

[] to our face, before (?) we have

cut down [pines (?)]

My friend, experienced in conflict, who

has [] battle,

You have rubbed yourself with plants so you

need not fear death.

You shall have a double mantle of radiance

like . . .

Your shout shall be as loud as a kettledrum.

Paralysis shall leave your arms, and impotence

shall leave your loins.

Hold my hand, my friend, let us set off!
 Your heart shall soon burn (?) for conflict; forget
 death and [think only of] life (?).
 Man is strong, prepared to fight, responsible.
 He who goes in front (and) guards his (friend's)
 body, shall keep the comrade safe.
 They shall have established fame for their
 [future (?)].
 [] they arrived together.
 [] of their words, they stood.
 (Catchline)
 They stood and admired (?) the forest.

TABLET V

- SBV i They stood at the edge of the forest,
 Gazed and gazed at the height of the pines,
 Gazed and gazed at the entrance to the pines,
 Where Humbaba made tracks as he went to and fro.
 The paths were well trodden and the road was
 excellent.
 They beheld the Pine Mountain, dwelling-place of
 gods, shrine of Irnini.
 The pines held up their luxuriance even on the face
 of the mountain.
 Their shade was good, filling one with happiness.
 Undergrowth burgeoned, entangling the forest.

(8 fragmentary lines, then gap)

*(They entered the forest and found
 Humbaba)⁴⁰*

- LV Humbaba made his voice heard and spoke; he said
 to Gilgamesh,
 'The fool Gilgamesh (and (?)) the brutish man
 ought to ask themselves, why have you come
 to see me?⁴¹
 Your [friend] Enkidu is small fry who does not
 know his own father!

You are so very small that I regard you as I do a turtle or a tortoise

Which does not suck its mother's milk, so I do not approach you.

[Even if I] were to kill (?) you, would I satisfy my stomach?

[Why, _____], Gilgamesh, have you let (him)
reach me,

$$[\dots] \dots$$

So I shall bite [through your/his] windpipe and
neck, Gilgamesh,

And leave [your/his body] for birds of the forest,
roaring (lions), birds of prey and scavengers.'

Gilgamesh made his voice heard and spoke; he said
to Enkidu,

'My friend, Humbaba has changed his mood

And . . . has come upon him []⁴²

And my heart [trembles lest he
suddenly!'

Enkidu made his voice heard and spoke; he said to
Gilgamesh,

'My friend, why do you talk like a coward?

And your speech was feeble (?), and you tried to
hide (?).

Now, my friend, he has drawn you out (?)

With the (blow)pipe of the coppersmith for heating (?)

To count back each league swollen (?) with the heat (?), each league of cold,

To dispatch the flood-weapon, to lash with the whip!

Don't retrace your footsteps! Don't turn back!

[] Make your blows harder!

(gap of a few lines (?))

SBV His (Gilgamesh's) tears flowed before
Shamash [()]⁴³

'Remember what you said in Uruk!

Stand there (?) and listen to me! (?)'

[Shamash] heard the words

Of Gilgamesh, scion of Uruk, [and said],
 'As soon as a loud voice from the sky calls down
 to him,⁴⁴
 Rush, stand up to him, let him not [enter the
 forest (?)],
 Let him not go down to the wood,
 nor [].
 [Humbaba] will [not] be clothed in seven cloaks,⁴⁵
 He will be wearing [only one]; six are taken
 off (?).
 Like a charging wild bull which
 pierces []
 He shouts only once, but fills one with terror.
 The guardian of the forests will shout []
 []
 Humbaba like [] will shout.

(gap of uncertain length)

- ii As soon as the swords []
 [] from the sheaths []
 Streaked with verdigris (?) []⁴⁶
 Dagger, sword []
 One []
 They wore []
 Humbaba [made his voice heard and spoke (?)]
 'He will not go (?) []
 He will not go (?) []

(7 lines illegible)

May Ellil [].'
 Enkidu [made] his voice heard [and spoke],
 [He addressed his speech (?)] to Humbaba,
 'One alone (?) [cannot]
 They are strangers (?) []
 It is a slippery path, and [one] does not
 [but two]
 Two . . . []
 A three-stranded cord [is hardest to break (?)]
 A strong lion [cannot prevail over (?)] two of its
 own cubs.

(3 broken lines, then gap of uncertain length,
then 2 broken lines)

- LV He struck (?) (his) head (?), and matched
him []
They stirred up the ground with the heels of their
feet,⁴⁷
Sirara and Lebanon were split apart at their
gyrations,
White clouds grew black,
Death dropped down over them like a fog.
Shamash summoned up great tempests against
Humbaba,
South Wind, North Wind, East Wind, West Wind,
Moaning Wind,
Gale, *šaparziqqu*-Wind, *imhullu*-Wind, . . .-Wind
Asakku, Wintry Wind, Tempest, Whirlwind,
Thirteen winds rose up at him and Humbaba's face
grew dark.⁴⁸
He could not charge forwards, he could not run
backwards.
Thus the weapons of Gilgamesh succeeded against
Humbaba.
Humbaba gasped for breath, he addressed
Gilgamesh,
'You are young, Gilgamesh; your mother gave
birth to you,
And you are the offspring of []
You rose (?) at the command of Shamash, Lord of
the Mountain
And you are the scion of Uruk, king Gilgamesh.
[] Gilgamesh []
[]
Gilgamesh []
I shall make (them) grow luxuriantly for you
in []
As many trees as you []
I shall keep for you myrtle wood, []
Timbers to be the pride [of your palace (?)].'
Enkidu made his voice heard and spoke; he said to
Gilgamesh,

'[My friend], don't listen to [the words] of Humbaba.

(3 broken lines, gap of about 15 lines)

iii 'You have found out the nature of my forest, the nature [of my dwelling]

And (now) you know all their . . . -s.

I should have taken you (and) slain you at the entrance to my forest's growth,

I should have given your flesh to be eaten by the birds of the forest, roaring (lions), birds of prey, and scavengers.

But now, Enkidu, it is in your power (?) to . . . ,
So tell Gilgamesh to spare my life (?)!'

Enkidu made his voice heard and spoke; he said to Gilgamesh,

'My friend, finish him off, slay him, grind him up, that [I may survive]

Humbaba the guardian of the [Pine] Forest!

Finish him off, slay him, grind him up that [I may survive]

Humbaba, the guardian of the forest.

(Do it) before the leader Ellil hears, [()]

[Lest (?)] the gods (?) be filled with fury at us [()]

Ellil in Nippur, Shamash in [Sippar].

Set up an eternal [memorial]

To [tell] how Gilgamesh [slew] Humbaba!'

Humbaba listened, and []

(gap of about 20 lines)

iv (gap of about 24 lines)

'You sit like a shepherd []

And just like . . . []

Now, Enkidu, thus settle (?) your own release (?)⁴⁹

And tell Gilgamesh that he may save his life.'

Enkidu made his voice heard and spoke; he said [to Gilgamesh],

'My friend, [finish off] Humbaba, the guardian of

the Pine Forest, [finish him off], slay him [and
grind him up, that I may survive].
(Do it) before the leader Ellil
hears, []
Lest (?) the gods (?) be filled with fury at
us [].
Ellil in Nippur, Shamash in Sippar. [Set up an
eternal memorial]
To tell how Gilgamesh [slew (?)] Humbaba.'
Humbaba listened and []

v (gap of about 13 lines)

'Neither one of them shall outlive
His friend! Gilgamesh and Enkidu shall never
become (?) old men (?).'⁵⁰
Enkidu made his voice heard and spoke; he said to
Gilgamesh,
'My friend, I talk to you but you don't listen to
me!

(2 broken lines)

[	]	of his friend.
[	]	at his side.
[	]	
[	]	until he pulled out the entrails.
[	]	he/it springs away.
[	]	sharpens (?) teeth
[	]	abundance (?) fell on to the mountain.
[	]	abundance (?) fell on to the mountain.

(8 lines missing to end of column)

vi (gap of about 22 lines)

[] their dark patch (?) of verdigris.
Gilgamesh was cutting down the trees; Enkidu kept
tugging at the stumps.
Enkidu made his voice heard and spoke; he said to
Gilgamesh,
'My friend, I have had a fully mature pine cut
down,

- The verdure (?) of mountain and country shall
 bring you produce,⁵⁴
 Your goats shall bear triplets, your ewes twins,
 Your loaded donkey shall outpace the mule.
 Your horses shall run proud at the chariot,
 [Your ox] shall be unrivalled at the yoke.'
- Gilgamesh made his voice heard and spoke,
 He said to Ishtar the princess,
 'What could I give you if I possessed you?
 I would give you body oil and garments,
 I would give you food and sustenance.
 Could I provide you with bread fit for gods?
 Could I provide you with ale fit for kings?
 []
 Could I heap up []
 [] a robe?
 [] if I possess you?
 [You would be] ice,
 A draughty door that can't keep out winds and
 gusts,
 A palace that [rejects (?)] its own warriors (),
 An elephant which [] its covering
 Bitumen which [stains (?)] its carrier,
 A waterskin which [soaks (?)] its carrier,
 A juggernaut (?) which [smashes (?)] a stone
 wall,⁵⁵
 A battering ram which destroys [] of
 war,
 A shoe which bites into [the foot] of its wearer.
 Which of your lovers [lasted] forever?
 Which of your masterful paramours went to
 heaven?
 Come, let me [describe (?)] your lovers to you!
 He of the sheep (?) [.]
 knew him:
 For Dumuzi the lover of your youth
 You decreed that he should keep weeping year
 after year.
 You loved the colourful *allallu*-bird,⁵⁶
 But you hit him and broke his wing.
- ii

He stays in the woods crying "My wing!"
 You loved the lion, whose strength is complete,⁵⁷
 But you dug seven and seven pits for him.⁵⁸
 You loved the horse, so trustworthy in battle,
 But you decreed the whip, goad, and lash for him,
 You decreed that he should gallop seven leagues
 (non-stop),
 You decreed that he should be overwrought and
 thirsty,
 You decreed endless weeping for his mother
 Sililu.
 You loved the shepherd, herdsman, and chief
 shepherd
 Who was always heaping up the glowing ashes
 for you,
 And cooked ewe-lambs for you every day.⁵⁹
 But you hit him and turned him into a wolf,
 His own herd-boys hunt him down
 And his dogs tear at his haunches.⁶⁰
 You loved Ishullanu, your father's gardener,
 Who was always bringing you baskets of dates.
 They brightened your table every day;
 You lifted your eyes to him and went to him
 "My own Ishullanu, let us enjoy your strength,
 So put out your hand and touch our vulva!"
 iii But Ishullanu said to you,
 "Me? What do you want of me?
 Did my mother not bake for me, and did I not
 eat?
 What I eat (with you) would be loaves of
 dishonour and disgrace,
 Rushes would be my only covering against the
 cold."
 You listened as he said this,
 And you hit him, turned him into a frog (?),
 Left him to stay amid the fruits of his labours.
 But the pole (?) goes up no more, [his] bucket
 goes down no more.⁶¹
 And how about me? You will love me and then
 [treat me] just like them!"

When Ishtar heard this,
Ishtar was furious, and [went up] to heaven.
Ishtar went up and wept before her father Anu,
Her tears flowed before her mother Antu.
‘Father, Gilgamesh has shamed me again and
again!
Gilgamesh spelt out to me my dishonour,
My dishonour and my disgrace.’
Anu made his voice heard and spoke,
He said to the princess Ishtar,
‘Why (?) didn’t you accuse Gilgamesh the king
for yourself,
Since Gilgamesh spelt out your dishonour,
Your dishonour and your disgrace?’
Ishtar made her voice heard and spoke,
She said to her father Anu,
‘Father, please give me the Bull of Heaven, and
let me strike Gilgamesh down!
Let me . . . Gilgamesh in his dwelling!
If you don’t give me the Bull of Heaven,
I shall strike (?) []
I shall set my face towards the infernal regions,
I shall raise up the dead, and they will eat the
living,⁶²
I shall make the dead outnumber the living!’
Anu made his voice heard and spoke,
He said to the princess Ishtar,
‘On no account should you request the Bull of
Heaven from me!
There would be seven years of chaff in the land
of Uruk,
You would gather chalk (?) [instead of gems (?)],
You would raise (?) grass (?) [instead of . . . (?)].’
Ishtar made her voice heard and spoke,
She said to her father Anu,
‘I have heaped up a store [of grain in Uruk (?)],
I have ensured the production of [],
[] years of chaff.
[] has been gathered.
[] grass.

[] for him.

(gap of one or more lines)

- iv [] of the Bull of Heaven []'.
- Anu listened to Ishtar speaking,
 And he put the Bull of Heaven's reins in her hands.
 Ishtar [took hold] and directed it.
 When it arrived in the land of Uruk
 It []
 It went down to the river, and seven []
 river [].
- At the snorting of the Bull of Heaven a chasm
 opened up, and one hundred young men of
 Uruk fell into it,
 Two hundred young men, three hundred young
 men.
- At its second snorting another chasm opened up,
 and another hundred young men of Uruk fell
 into it,
 Two hundred young men, three hundred young
 men fell into it.
- At its third snorting a chasm opened up,
 And Enkidu fell into it.
 But Enkidu leapt out. He seized the Bull of Heaven
 by the horns.
- The Bull of Heaven blew spittle into his face,
 With its thick tail it whipped up its dung.
 Enkidu made his voice heard and spoke,
 He said to Gilgamesh,
 'My friend, we were too arrogant [when we killed
 Humbaba].
- How can we give recompense [for our action]?
 My friend, I have seen []
 And my strength []
 Let me pull out []
 []
 Let me seize []
 Let me []
 In []
 And plunge your sword []

In between the base of the horns and the neck
tendons.'

Enkidu spun round [to] the Bull of Heaven,
And seized it by its thick tail,

And []

v Then Gilgamesh, like a but[cher (?)] heroic
and []

Plunged his sword in between the base of the horns
and the neck tendons.

When they had struck down the Bull of Heaven
they pulled out its innards,

Set them before Shamash,

Backed away and prostrated themselves before
Shamash.

Then the two brothers sat down.

Ishtar went up on to the wall of Uruk the Sheepfold.

She was contorted with rage, she hurled down
curses,

'That man Gilgamesh who reviled me has killed
the Bull of Heaven!'

Enkidu listened to Ishtar saying this,

And he pulled out the Bull of Heaven's shoulder
and slapped it into her face:

'If I could only get at you as that does,

I would do the same to you myself,

I would hang its intestines on your arms!'⁶³

Ishtar gathered the crimped courtesans,

Prostitutes and harlots.⁶⁴

She arranged for weeping over the Bull of Heaven's
shoulder.

Gilgamesh called craftsmen, all the armourers,

And the craftsmen admired the thickness of its
horns.

Thirty minas of lapis lazuli was (needed for) each of
their pouring ends,⁶⁵

Two minas of gold (?) (was needed for) each of their
sheathings.⁶⁶

Six kor of oil was the capacity of both.⁶⁷

He dedicated (them) for anointing his god
Lugalbanda,⁶⁸

Took them in and hung them on his bed (where he
slept) as head of the family.⁶⁹

In the Euphrates they washed their hands

And held hands and came

Riding through the main street of Uruk.

The people of Uruk gathered and gazed at them.

vi Gilgamesh addressed a word to [his] retainers,

'Who is finest among the young men?

Who is proudest among the males?'

'Gilgamesh is finest among the young men!

Gilgamesh is proudest among the males!

[] we knew in our anger

There is nobody like him who can please

her [].

[]'

Gilgamesh made merry in his palace.

Then they lay down, the young men were lying in
bed for the night,

And Enkidu lay down and had a dream.

Enkidu got up and described the dream,

He said to his friend,

(*Catchline*)

'My friend, why are the great gods consulting
together?

TABLET VII

i 'My friend, why are the great gods consulting
together?

*(gap of about 20 lines, which may partly be
filled in essence from a Hittite version,
which is given here)⁷⁰*

Then daylight came. [And] Enkidu said to

Gilgamesh,

'O my brother, what a dream [I saw] last night!

Anu, Ellil, Ea, and heavenly Shamash [were in
the assembly].

And Anu said to Ellil, "As they have slain the
Bull of Heaven,

So too they have slain Huwawa, who [guarded]
the mountains pla[n]ted with pines."

And Anu said, "One of them [must die]."

Ellil replied: "Let Enkidu die, but let Gilgamesh
not die."

Then heavenly Shamash said to valiant Ellil,
"Was it not according to your word that they
slew the Bull of Heaven and Huwawa? Should
now innocent Enkidu die?"

But Ellil turned in anger to heavenly Shamash,
saying,

"(The fact is), you accompanied them daily, like
one of their comrades."

Enkidu lay down before Gilgamesh, his tears
flowing like streams.

'O my brother, my brother is so dear to me.

But they are taking me from my brother.'

And: 'I shall sit among the dead, I shall []
the threshold of the dead;

Never again [shall I see] my dear brother with
my own eyes.'

(end of Hittite insertion)

Enkidu made his [voice heard and spoke],

He said to [his friend Gilgamesh],

'Come, []

In []

The door []

Because []

(3 broken lines)

ii? Enkidu lifted up []

He discussed [] with the door.

'Door, don't [you] remember the words?

Are not []?

I selected the timber for you over twenty leagues,

Until I had found a fully mature pine.

There is no other wood like yours!

Your height is six poles, your width two poles,⁷¹

Your doorpost, your lower and upper hinge (?)
are made [from a single tree.]
I made you, I carried you to Nippur []
Be aware, door, that this was a favour to you,
And this was a good deed done for you []
I myself raised the axe, I cut you down,
Loaded you myself on to the raft, []
I myself [] temple of Shamash
[]
I myself set (you) up in his gate []
[]
I myself []
And in Uruk []

(2 broken lines)

Now, door, it was I who made you,
I who carried you to Nippur.
But the king who shall arise after me shall go
through you,
Gilgamesh shall [go through] your portals
And change (?) my name, and put on his own
name!⁷²

He tore out (?) [the door (?) and]
hurled (?) [].
He kept listening to his words, [] straight
away.⁷³

Gilgamesh kept listening to the words of his friend Enkidu, and his tears flowed.

Gilgamesh made his voice heard and spoke; he said
to Enkidu [],

'You, who used to be reasonable, [now speak] otherwise!

Why, my friend, did your heart speak otherwise (?).

The dream was very precious, and the warning
awful; your lips buzzed like flies (!)!

The warning was awful, the dream was precious.

They have left a legacy of grieving for next year.

The dream has left a legacy of grief for next year.

[I shall go] and offer prayers to the great gods,

- I shall search out [your goddess (?)], look for
your god,
[] the father of the gods.
To Ellil the counsellor, father of the
gods [].
I shall make a statue of you with countless
gold []⁷⁴
- [The words] he spoke were not like [],
[What] he said did not go back, did not [alter (?)]
[The] that he cast (?) did not go back, he did not
erase. []
[] to the people []. At the first light
of morning
Enkidu [raised] his head, wept before Shamash,
His tears flowed before the rays of the Sun.
'I hereby beseech you, Shamash, because my fate
is different (?),
[Because] the hunter, the brigand,
Did not let me attain as much as my friend,
iii Let the hunter never attain as much as his
friend!
Make his advantage vanish, make his strength
less!
[] his share from your presence,
Let [] not enter, let it go out through the
window!'
When he had cursed the hunter as much as he
wanted,
He decided to curse the harlot too.
'Come, Shamhat, I shall fix a fate for you!
[Curses (?)] shall not cease for ever and ever.
I shall curse you with a great curse!⁷⁵
Straight away my curses shall rise up against
you!
You shall never make your house voluptuous
again,
You shall not release [] of your
young bulls,
You shall not let them into the girls' rooms.
Filth shall impregnate your lovely lap (?),

The drunkard shall soak your party dress with
vomit,
[] fingers (?),
[Your cosmetic paint (?) shall be] the potter's
lump of clay (?),
You shall never obtain the best cosmetic [oil (?),]
Bright silver, people's affluence, shall not
accumulate in your house,
The [] of your [] shall
be your porch,
The crossroads (?) shall be your only sitting place,
Waste ground your only lying place, the shade of
a city wall your only sitting place.⁷⁶
Thorns and spikes shall skin your feet,
The drunkard and the thirsty shall slap your
cheek,⁷⁶
[] shall shout out against you.
The builder shall never plaster the [walls (?) of
your house,]⁷⁷
Owls will nest [in your roof beams (?),]
Feasting shall never take place in your house,
(about 4 broken lines)

Because you defiled me when I was pure,
Because you seduced me in the open country when
I was pure.'

Shamash heard the utterance of his mouth.
Immediately a loud voice called down to him from
the sky:

'Enkidu, why are you cursing my harlot Shamhat,
Who fed you on food fit for gods,
Gave you ale to drink, fit for kings,
Clothed you with a great robe,
Then provided you with Gilgamesh for a fine partner?
And now Gilgamesh, the friend who is a brother
to you
Will lay you to rest on a great bed
And lay you to rest on a bed of loving care,
And let you stay in a restful dwelling, the
dwelling on the left.'⁷⁸

Princes of the earth will kiss your feet.
 He will make the people of Uruk weep for you,
 mourn for you,
 Will fill the proud people with woe,
 And he himself will neglect his appearance after
 you(r death).
 Clothed only in a lionskin, he will roam the open
 country.'
 Enkidu listened to the speech of Shamash the
 warrior.
 [His anger abated (?)]; his heart became quiet.

(about 2 lines missing)

- iv 'Come, Shamhat, I shall change your fate!
 My utterance, which cursed you, shall bless you
 instead.
 Governors and princes shall love you,
 The single-league man shall smite his thigh (for
 you),
 The double-league man shall shake out his locks
 (for you).
 The herdsman shall not hold back for you, he
 shall undo his belt for you.
 He shall give you ivory, lapis lazuli, and gold,
 Rings (and) brooches (?) shall be presents for you.
 Rain shall pour down for him (?), his storage jars
 shall be heaped full.
 The diviner shall lead you into the palace (?) of
 the gods.
 Because of you, the mother of seven, the
 honoured wife, shall be deserted.'⁷⁹
 Then Enkidu [wept (?)], for he was sick at heart.
 [] he lay down alone.
 He spoke what was in his mind to his friend.
 'Listen again, my friend! I had a dream in the
 night.
 The sky called out, the earth replied,
 I was standing in between them.
 There was a young man, whose face was
 obscured.

His face was like that of an Anzu-bird.
 He had the paws of a lion, he had the claws of an eagle.
 He seized me by my locks, using great force against me.
 I hit him, and he jumped like a *keppū*-toy,⁸⁰
 He hit me and forced me down like an [onager (?)],
 Like a wild bull he trampled on me,
 He squeezed my whole body.
 (I cried out:) "Save me, my friend, don't desert me!"
 But you were afraid, and did not [help me (?)],
 You [].

(3 broken lines)

[He hit me and] turned me into a dove.
 [] my arms, like a bird.
 He seized me, drove me down to the dark house,
 dwelling of Erkalla's god,⁸¹
 To the house which those who enter cannot leave,
 On the road where travelling is one way only,
 To the house where those who stay are deprived of light,
 Where dust is their food, and clay their bread.
 They are clothed, like birds, with feathers,
 And they see no light, and they dwell in darkness.
 Over the door [and the bolt, dust has settled.]
 I looked at the house that I had entered,
 And crowns were heaped up.
 I [] those with crowns who had ruled the land from time immemorial,
 [Priests (?) of] Anu and Ellil regularly set out cooked meats,
 Set out baked (bread), set out cold water from waterskins.
 In the house of dust that I had entered
 Dwelt the *enu* and *lagaru*-priests,
 Dwelt the *isippu* and *lumahhu*-priests,

Dwelt the *gudapsû*-priests of the great gods,
 Dwelt Etana, dwelt Shakkan⁸²
 Dwelt Ereshkigal, the Queen of Earth.
 Belet-šeri, the scribe of Earth, was kneeling before
 her.

She was holding [a tablet] and kept reading aloud
 to her.

She raised her head and looked at me:

"[Who (?)] brought this man?"

(gap of about 50 lines for column v)

vi (gap of about 2 lines)

[] experienced all kinds of troubles,
 Remember me, my friend, and do not forget what
 I went through.

My friend saw an in[describable] dream.'

From the day he saw the dream, his [strength] was
 finished.

Enkidu lay there the first day, then [a second day.]

[The illness] of Enkidu, as he lay in bed, [grew
 worse, his flesh weaker.]

A third day and a fourth day, the [illness] of
 [Enkidu grew worse, his flesh weaker (?),]

A fifth, sixth and seventh day, eighth, ninth [and
 tenth.]

The illness of Enkidu [grew worse, his flesh
 weaker (?)].

An eleventh and twelfth day [his illness grew worse,
 his flesh weaker.]

Enkidu, as he lay in bed, []

Gilgamesh cried out and []

'My friend is cursing me, []

Because in the midst of []⁸³

I was afraid of the fight []

My friend, who [was so strong (?)] in the fight,
 [cursed me (?)]

I, in []

(gap of up to 30 lines)