
Rosetta

Simons, F. Alhena Gadotti, *>Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld< and the Sumerian Gilgamesh Cycle*. Berlin, 2014

Rosetta **16**: 66 – 71

<http://www.rosetta.bham.ac.uk/issue16/simons.pdf>

**Alhena Gadotti, >Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld<
and the Sumerian Gilgamesh Cycle. Berlin, De Gruyter,
Untersuchungen zur Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen
Archäologie 10. 2014. Pp. xv + 430 (inc. 71 b&w plates).
€229.95 hardback. ISBN 978-1-61451-708-5.**

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The work under review is a revised version of a Johns Hopkins' doctoral thesis comprising a new critical edition and a series of studies on the Sumerian story *Gilgamesh, Enkidu and the Netherworld* (GEN), also known to modern scholarship as *Bilgames and the Netherworld*¹ and *Gilgamesh and the Huluppu Tree*,² and, to its ancient authors, *u d ri . a u d sud . rá ri . a* (*In those days, in those distant days*). The second half of this tale (ll. 172-end), in an Akkadian translation, forms Tablet XII of the Standard Babylonian version of the Epic of Gilgamesh.

The author's central thesis is that four of the five surviving Sumerian Gilgamesh tales – GEN, *Gilgamesh and Huwawa* (Version A) (GH A), *Gilgamesh and the Bull of Heaven* (GBH), and *The Death of Gilgamesh* (DG) - form what she describes as the 'Sumerian Gilgamesh cycle,'³ and that GEN was the opening story in this cycle. The author defends this thesis, alongside several other ideas, in six convincing and insightful essays.

After a brief introductory chapter and a useful list detailing the most recent critical editions of texts discussed in the work,⁴ the second chapter deals with the prologue of the tale. The author makes a convincing case that far from being a brief general cosmology, as has been generally thought, the prologue to this text, and indeed every

¹ George 2003. For the re-naming of Bilgames to Gilgamesh see Rubio 2012.

² Kramer 1938.

³ The two versions of Gilgamesh and Huwawa are treated as one episode due to the fact that they narrate the same events. Gilgamesh and Akka is considered to belong to a separate cycle, which the author labels 'Matters of Uruk.' This is to be discussed in a future work by the author.

⁴ It should be noted that Izre'el's 2001 edition of *Adapa* is absent from this list.

Sumerian cosmological prologue, is in fact specifically tailored to the composition it fronts. In the present case, after an introductory section describing the creation and organisation of the universe, the prologue deals with the netherworld, first by mentioning Ereshkigal, and then by describing Enki's journey to the Netherworld. This foreshadows the main action of the story – Enkidu's journey to, return from, and description of the Netherworld. The opening section, the author argues, is important as it sets the deeds of Gilgamesh and Enkidu in the distant legendary past.

In the next chapter the author discusses the identity of the *ḫalub*-tree. This discussion resumes that previously published by the author and Naomi Miller.⁵ Through a comprehensive investigation of every occurrence of the term in Sumerian sources, and a summary of those in Akkadian, the author argues very persuasively that the *ḫalub* is not to be identified with the willow or oak, as has previously been thought, but is likely to be a member of the genus *Prunus*, possibly *Prunus mahaleb* L. – the Mahlab cherry. It should be noted here that, in addition to the seeds, branches and twigs being used in medical treatments, the leaves (*p a ḫuluppu*) are used in at least one anti-witchcraft recipe.⁶

The fourth chapter offers an analysis of the poetic and narrative structure of the composition. The author shows that GEN is not a disjointed selection of stories, as has been thought in the past, but rather shows a fairly high degree of structural unity. The prologue anticipates the focus on the netherworld, as discussed above. Further, Enki's journey by boat, in describing a storm over water, leads neatly to the description of Inanna's care for the *ḫalub*-tree. This is the source of Gilgamesh's ball and stick, the loss of which leads to Enkidu's descent into the netherworld. In addition to demonstrating the narrative unity of the composition, Gadotti discusses its poetic qualities. This discussion is necessarily limited by the present state of understanding concerning Sumerian poetics generally, but the author is able to point to several plausible examples of alliteration, assonance and rhyme.

The fifth chapter, entitled 'Enkidu *Redivivus*', addresses the major objection to the author's idea that GEN represents the first story in a cycle – the apparent death of Enkidu. Gadotti demonstrates conclusively that Enkidu does not in fact die. This

⁵ Miller and Gadotti 2009.

⁶ Abusch & Schwemer 2011: 29 line 29 & 33 line 29.

mistaken impression has been given by a misreading of the first sign of line 241, which, as Gadotti points out, should be read ŠAH (for ŠUBUR) meaning ‘servant’, not UDUG meaning ‘demon’ or ‘ghost’. In addition, SI.SI.IG (Akk. *zāqīqu*) in line 243 cannot be translated ‘ghost’, as the Sumerian word lacks this nuance. It should instead be understood to mean ‘gust of wind’, referring to the way in which Utu rescues Enkidu from the netherworld – Enkidu is blown out of the Netherworld by a gust of wind sent by the sun god, never having died, and is therefore free to continue his adventures with Gilgamesh.

In chapter six, the author presents a compelling case for understanding the Sumerian Gilgamesh stories as elements of an epic cycle, and for seeing GEN as the first story of this cycle. In the first place, the author notes that one of the two extant Meturan tablets of GEN finishes with the catchline

e.n.e.kur.l[ú.t]i.l.la.šè.ġe.štug.ga`. [n]i`n.a.a.n`.gub translated as ‘The Lord set his mind on the land of the living.’ This is the first line of GH A, indicating that the two were, at least in Meturan, conceived as being to some degree sequential. This is mirrored in the action of GEN, in which Gilgamesh’s despair at the prospect of the land of the dead inspires him to perform great deeds in the land of the living. This interpretation is supported by the list of Gilgamesh’s great deeds, recorded in DG, which indicates that there was, at least to some extent, a tradition of grouping his feats together.

That GEN was the first story in the cycle is based on the Meturan catchline and on the prologue. GEN is the only one of the Sumerian Gilgamesh stories to feature a prologue. This, as stated above, serves to introduce the action of the story, but also to set the deeds of Gilgamesh and Enkidu in the remote past. This setting is equally relevant to every Gilgamesh story, and therefore the absence of a similar prologue from the others is noteworthy. If GEN is considered the first story in a cycle, the problem disappears – the opening section of the prologue sets the scene for all Gilgamesh stories.

The last of the studies focusses on the meaning and intent behind Enkidu’s description of the fates of the dead. The author demonstrates that the text itself served a useful role in higher education, owing to the richness and complexity of the language it employs. She also suggests that, in explaining the rules of the netherworld to

Gilgamesh, Enkidu is preparing him for the role he will later take up as a judge of the dead. In addition, she considers the catalogue to be an admonition to the audience concerning the importance of maintaining proper funerary cults. While this is perfectly reasonable, issue can perhaps be taken with the author's suggestion that Gilgamesh's actions in performing the funerary rites for his parents are motivated purely by his desire to appease their ghosts. It seems to the reviewer that, having been made aware of the dire conditions in which some of his loved ones are wallowing, Gilgamesh wishes to improve their lot. He is evidently concerned with the fates of his own family, as can be seen in his question about 'my small still-born who did not know their own names' (l. 303), and therefore his actions needn't be driven solely by personal gain.

The second half of the book is a new critical edition of GEN, updating Shaffer's 1963 PhD dissertation.⁷ Chapter eight, which, oddly, is not included in the section labelled 'Edition', gives a detailed account of the manuscript tradition. After a descriptive list of the manuscripts, including provenience and archaeological context, the author goes on to examine the textual variants both within and between the various traditions. This is followed by the edition proper, which opens with an English translation, an eclectic text and a 'textual matrix.' This, while perfectly adequate for the task at hand, is, in the reviewer's opinion, not as useful as a full partitur transliteration. Although it is not difficult to interpret the matrix, the use of symbols indicating the presence or absence of a sign, as opposed to simply writing the whole line for each preserved copy does not seem to have any benefits, and does serve to make the text less immediately clear. The textual matrix is followed by a very detailed line-by-line commentary, including both grammatical information and the author's interpretation of each line. Particularly interesting among the latter is the commentary to lines 140-144, in which the author posits that Gilgamesh's removal of the infestations from the *ḫalub*-tree are aetiological explanations. Thus, the theft of the plant of youth by a snake in the Gilgamesh Epic may be revenge for the hero having killed a snake in the roots of the tree, while the reason the Anzu-bird lives in the mountain cave in Lugalbanda II, and the succubus (Ardat-lilī) is often said to wander the wilderness is that they were driven to those places from the tree.

⁷ Shaffer 1963.

After the commentary, the author includes as an appendix a reconstruction of problematic manuscripts and a table of concordances. This is followed by the bibliography and an index of Akkadian and Sumerian terms. The volume closes with 71 black and white plates. These are very neatly arranged. Most plates contain both high quality photographs of the tablet and a copy if one has been made by an earlier scholar. The only tablets without photographs are those with Ni numbers, held in Istanbul, and the Isin tablet, which has an IB number and is presumably in Iraq.

The only weak point in this otherwise excellent book is the fact that it seems not to have been proof-read prior to publication. Two or three errors are found on almost every page. A few examples will suffice:

- ‘...the absolute necessity of keeping the ghosts appeased, so as to avoid they behave like evil spirit’ (p. 110)
- ‘...these schools understood these tales are belonging together into a coherent whole’ (p. 107)
- ‘Therefore, it is therefore likely...’ (p. 271, l.170-1)
- ‘Ak-kadian’ (p.18)
- The second N44 should read N42 (p. 86)
- DumD should read DDum (p.44)
- IšD should read IšDesc (p. 304, ll. 13-14)
- Alster 2004, cited in the list of abbreviations, is missing from the bibliography.⁸

These mistakes obviously do not undermine the quality of the arguments, but the frequency with which they occur is rather frustrating.

These quibbles aside, and ignoring the exorbitant price, this book is a fine example of rigorous and persuasive scholarship. The arguments are clear and convincing throughout, the plates are exemplary, and the commentary very thorough. It will rightly be required reading for every student of Sumerian literature, and the author is to be warmly congratulated on her work.

⁸ Presumably the work in question is Alster, B., 2004, ‘Gudam and the Bull of Heaven’ in J. G. Derckson (ed.) *Assyria and Beyond – Studies Presented to Mogens Trolle Larsen*. Leiden.

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