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How to Compose an Old Babylonian Lament Prayer

By

Jason D Moser

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in

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Committee in charge:

Professor Adam Benkato, Chair

Professor Tim Tangherlini

Professor Niek Veldhuis

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Abstract

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Jason D Moser

Doctor of Philosophy in Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures

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This dissertation examines the compositional nature of the Old Babylonian corpus of emesal laments. Building on multiple theories of textual composition, and the notion of *Versatzstücke* ("building blocks"), this dissertation takes an analytical approach to defining what these building blocks are, how they are structurally arranged, how they can be combined at different sizes and levels, and how different choices in this combinatory process produce variations of different kinds. Particular attention is paid to measuring the degree of variation between parallel text passages through algorithmic methods such as string-similarity computations, with the divine litanies in this corpus serving as test cases for these measurements.

This dissertation finds that the variation observed between parallel passages is not random, but follows recognizable regularities, such as expected orderings of content items, a passage's placement within a defined section, geographical setting of the lament, and adaptation to the divine addressee. This combination of regularity and variation situates this corpus at the intersection of several theoretical traditions of textual composition. The texts of this corpus are neither strictly fixed compositions, though they share certain features with such texts, nor freely variable in content and structure, though they share certain features with that model as well. The application of computational techniques can aid in how we define the style of textual composition, with the corpus of Old Babylonian emesal laments serving as a productive text case for such application.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

The Old Babylonian corpus of laments comprises roughly 600 tablets that contain the texts for actively performed rituals intended to assuage the anger of gods and prevent them from causing destruction to their cities and displacement for their people. These laments were composed in a special dialect of Sumerian known as Emesal, which was commonly associated with the speech of women and goddesses, as well as the gala-priests who performed these laments. Unlike many other Mesopotamian literary compositions, which survive in multiple exemplars belonging to a recognizable copyist scribal tradition, the manuscripts of the Old Babylonian lamentation corpus resist easy assignment to a singular, stable compositions. Despite this challenge, they nonetheless share a striking number of phrases, lines, and structural patterns with one another. The pervasiveness of this feature across the corpus has led to the notion that these texts were assembled from *Versatzstücke,* or building blocks, that could be drawn upon and recombined to produce distinct laments.[1]

How, then, are we to understand this situation from the perspective of the content of these laments and how they were composed? These so-called "building-blocks" were adjusted, re-ordered and re-contextualized to form a large part of any given lament. When we bring different theoretical traditions to bear on this problem, we find that the corpus sits at the convergence of several of them without conforming neatly to any single approach. For instance, textual criticism involving the production of stemmata presupposes an *Urtext* behind its variant witnesses, an assumption that the building-block phenomenon undermines from the outset. On the other hand, applying an intertextual approach would need refinement to work with the high degree of commonality between these manuscripts. This dissertation works out a methodology suited to understanding the compositional nature of this distinctive corpus and applies it to examples from the laments and the parallels they share.

1.1 The Corpus and its Setting

Lamentation as a Genre

In the broader study of historical lamentation, Margaret Alexiou's (1974) study *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition* provided much of the terminology on the subject, but from an historical Greek perspective. In her study, she traces the evolution of lamentation from ancient Greece to the modern world, mainly focusing on mourning dead individuals, whether humans, heroes or gods. There is little attention paid to the larger scope of historical or city laments, although her one chapter on this subject from this book is enough to help situate us in efforts to expand our inquiry to the wider field of lamentation, and particularly to the major Mesopotamian style of lament, which bears a higher communal scope.

The Biblical Book of Lamentations, meanwhile, drew considerable attention in the early twentieth century from scholars such as Hermann Gunkel and Hedwig Jahnow. Much of this early scholarship was form-critical and genre-focused, or sought the origins of the lament style in Mesopotamia — trends that persist in more recent studies such as Dobbs-Allsopp's *Weep, O Daughter of Zion* (1993). At the same time, some scholars pursued a more cross-cultural

[1] (Civil, 1976, p. 72) first characterized this kind of recurring material as a "textual block." Volk (1989) subsequently adopted and labeled this same phenomenon *Versatzstücke*

approach to death and lamentation. Jahnow's major work, *Das hebräische Leichenlied im Rahmen der Völkerdichtung* (1923), for example, examined Israelite death and mourning practices against the backdrop of comparable social customs in other cultures.

The "lamentation" genre in Mesopotamia combines two facets: grief over the death of individuals, and lamentation over larger, collective catastrophes such as the destruction of temples and cities. Written in the Sumerian dialect of Emesal, the Old Babylonian lamentation corpus deals mainly with the latter — communal disaster — although the mourning of the dying god Dumuzid constitutes a recurring strand within it. In the Mesopotamian theological worldview, the underlying cause of any such destructive event was understood to be the anger of a god, and their ensuant response of abandoning their temple, and by extension, the city under their purview. Laments, accordingly, served a purpose beyond the expression or processing of grief, i.e. to appease the gods and assuage their anger, so that they would return to their temples and not leave again (Delnero P. , 2020). This purpose is reflected in the term for one class of these compositions, *eršahunga*, which literally means "lament for appeasing the heart."

Mesopotamian deities feature in this lamentation liturgy in a variety of ways, ranging from the deity being mourned to the deity being addressed by the prayer. Among the recurring themes are the death of Dumuzid, Inana's subsequent mourning over that loss, and the destructive anger of Enlil. Gabbay identified 4 archetypes represented in this corpus involving the gods: 1) Enlil the manifest destroyer, 2) the lamenting goddess, 3) Dumuzid the slain son/spouse/shepherd, and 4) Ninurta the avenging warrior (2014, p. 36ff). Beyond these thematic patterns, some texts within this corpus contain subscripts that inform us of the specific gods toward which the laments were directed. A couple of examples illustrate what this evidence looks like in transliteration:[2]

BM 98396 (P274200), r 32: er$_2$-⌜šem$_3$⌝-ma ^{d}nin-ḫur-saŋ-ŋa$_2$ = "eršema of Ninhursaga"
BM 96933 (P345504), r ii 32': balaŋ ^{d}inana-kam = "balaŋ of Inana"

These two examples also illustrate the two principal types of Mesopotamian lament: *balaŋs* and *eršemas*. The main structural difference between these two is that *balags* are longer multi-sectional compositions marked by the section dividing term *ki-ru-gu$_2$,* whereas *eršema*s are shorter texts consisting of only a single section. Beyond these two main types, other kinds of lamentation writings include *eršahungas (*referred to earlier*)*, *šuʾilas*, *širnamšubs* and *širnamgalas*, the latter two only attested in the Old Babylonian period. All of these compositions fell within the purview of the gala-priest (Akkadian *kalû*) who performed these compositions in Emesal (Schretter, 1990).

Much of the scholarship on Mesopotamian laments has traditionally focused on material from the first millennium (Cohen M. E., 1988; Gabbay, 2014; Gabbay, 2015), and when laments from the Old Babylonian period were given treatment, they were often used to help fill in the gaps of their 1st millennium counterparts rather than operate as objects of study in their own right. This situation is increasingly evolving, however, thanks to studies by Löhnert (2009) and Delnero (2020) among others, which give value to this Old Babylonian corpus in its own terms. One of the main differences between laments of the 1st millennium and those of the OB period is

[2] I will make an effort to include the CDLI P#'s for each text discussed. See https://cdli.earth/ for the database of cuneiform tablets. In addition, while the main focus of this dissertation is the Old Babylonian corpus of laments, and not the later tablets from various periods within the 1st millennium, I still find it useful to invoke those texts when they are pertinent. Those texts will be marked with an asterisk (*) to mark their later date.

the higher level of standardization in the later corpus. This contrasts sharply with the earlier Old Babylonian corpus, whose lack of a single fixed form is precisely what gives rise to the building-block variability described above, and which this dissertation takes as its central object of study.[3]

1.2 Theoretical Backdrop

1.2.1 What is a Text?

We framed the issue earlier that much of Sumerian literature can be found in copies of the same compositions, but the lament corpus resists this kind of straightforward attribution. This raises the question of how we make such a determination when we have two texts in front us — should they be considered part of the same composition or two separate texts? In general, if a large percentage of a manuscript's lines are shared with another, we would ordinarily be inclined to treat the two as witnesses to the same composition, and a minor variation in a word or line here or there would not hinder that conclusion. But how much variation is needed to alter that conclusion? Is there an official barrier of difference, say in the percentage of lines shared, that if crossed, would alter our assessment from single to multiple compositions (or vice versa)? Are there other criteria for making such a decision? To take a more distant vantage, is this dichotomy of one vs. two compositions even applicable to every example we come across? The following discussion works through several areas of inquiry as an effort to untangle these problems.

1.2.2 Textual Criticism

The modern discipline of textual criticism is often traced to the controversies surrounding the *Textus Receptus*, the printed edition of the Greek New Testament from the early renaissance, which was first edited by Erasmus in 1516. Given the religious authority invested in this edition, early challenges to its accuracy were frequently met with condemnation, or simply ignored outright (Metzger & Ehrman, 2005). Over time, these challenges accumulated enough to erode the general confidence in the accuracy of the Textus Receptus. This erosion culminated in the nineteenth century with a new critical edition of the New Testament by Karl Lachmann (1831) — a scholar whose formative critical work had been in classical philology, and who brought the genealogical methods already developing in that field to bear on the biblical text. Lachmann's edition is widely credited with helping to establish text-critical method as a rigorous, transferable methodology — one capable of being applied not just to scripture, but to any text transmitted through a manuscript tradition.

From these origins, the efforts of textual criticism have mainly pursued two related goals: first, the establishment of a single, original version of a text (the *Urtext*) reconstructed from the multiple manuscripts that preserve a given composition; and second, the development of stemmata — genealogical structures mapping the groupings and lines of descent among those manuscripts. Both these goals can be neatly summarized in these quotes by a major founder of stemmatology, Paul Maas in his *Textkritik* (1927, p. 1 ff.):

[3] Even so, the composition of the laments of the 1st millennium still bears many “building block”-type features as seen in the Old Babylonian lamentation corpus.

"Aufgabe der Textkritik ist Herstellung eines dem Autograph (Original) möglichst nahekommenden Textes (constitutio textus)"[4]

and

"das Abhängigkeitsverhältnis aller erhaltenen Zeugen und die Zahl und Lage aller Zwischenspaltungen einwandfrei aufzeigen"[5]

Subsequent scholarship in this area has been devoted to elucidating and refining the proper methods to accomplish these two tasks.

Thus, in the Classical and Biblical traditions, the construction of the transmission history of the manuscripts through stemmata is predicated on the premise that we are dealing with the same underlying composition. The reconstruction of an original manuscript from which all others derive via a line of copying requires that the original and all the copies be conceived from the outset as belonging together as witnesses to one and the same composition. Under this model, differences between manuscripts are typically expected to be relatively minor, especially where the changes in question arise from unintentional scribal error. In practice, however, the differences between manuscripts belonging to the same tradition may be quite substantial. This was an issue even in the 4th century CE, when Origen was collecting manuscripts to write his Biblical editions. As he deplores the situation, writing in his *Commentary on Matthew* (15:14), *"the differences among the manuscripts [of the Gospels] have become great, either through the negligence of some copyists or through the perverse audacity of others; they either neglect to check over what they have transcribed, or, in the process of checking, they lengthen or shorten, as they please."* (Metzger & Ehrman, 2005, p. 200).

For the most part, this style of criticism has been avoided in the study of Sumerian literature, because the variation between manuscripts can be quite drastic, and not enough data exists to apply the stemmatic method (Delnero P. , 2012). There is also an issue that the criteria of finding *Bindefehler* — shared errors between manuscripts that imply a closer relationship between them — is not so easily determined (Cooper J. , 1978, p. 39). This is not to say that stemmata have not been attempted in the field. Notably, the eminent Sumerologist Thorkild Jacobsen argued for a single origin underlying the various exemplars of the Sumerian King List (Jacobsen, 1939), a conclusion met with critiques.[6] which Worthington critiques (Worthington, 2012, p. 80ff). The inapplicability of the stemmatic approach might appear as a hindrance to the study of Sumerian literature, but it also affords an opportunity to explore other avenues of textual study better suited to the corpus's actual character. For instance, Delnero (2012) approached the matter from a different perspective, examining the types of variations seen between Old Babylonian exemplars, rather than attempting to reconstruct any stemma diagrams.

The field of Sumerology tends to find a different solution to presenting textual material: composite texts and scores. It is important to recognize, however, that unlike the aims of stemma theory, the construction of a composite text is not intended as a claim on the original text of a composition or its transmission history; rather, it functions as a putative, modern scholarly

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[4] English translation: "The task of textual criticism is to establish a text that comes as close as possible to the autograph (original) (*constitutio textus*)."

[5] English translation: "to demonstrate clearly the dependent relationship between all the preserved witnesses and the number and location of the intermediate splits"

[6] Worthington (2012, p. 80 ff.) discusses this case and other more limited attempts to construct such diagrams, including Wilcke's work on five Lugalbanda manuscripts, Cooper's "intentionally simplified" stemma for *An.gim*, and Gragg's comments on the Ur versions of the Lamentation between Sumer and Ur.

schematic, which helps us to conceptualize the composition as a single entity, and acts as a guide to compare individual manuscripts against a common point of reference. The score, or *Partitur,* is a table marking where the individual tablets agree or diverge from the composite.

1.2.3 Versions and Recensions

For many compositions, even if we cannot determine the existence of a singular Urtext, there may still be enough similarity between exemplars that we hesitate to write them off as being entirely separate compositions. In such cases, it may be more useful to think in terms of distinct **versions** or **recensions** of that text — that is, to recognize an intermediate category between "copies of a single work" and "entirely separate compositions," one that acknowledges a shared textual core while still marking meaningful, patterned divergence between witnesses.

There are several examples from Old Babylonian literature where we can explore the possibilities of multiple versions/recensions in more concrete terms, along with the interpretive problems they raise for our understanding of a composition's structure and transmission in general. These problems may be compounded when the surviving manuscripts are themselves disparate and inconsistently preserved, which may preclude our efforts of even drawing a stemma for one version/recension. One example is Inanna's descent to the Netherworld, which is considered to exist in at least two versions, one from Ur, one from Nippur (Kramer, 1937; Ferrara, 2006). In addition, Tinney (1999) adeptly discussed the issues of versions/recensions in the composition Ur-Namma D, in which he identifies three versions. In this case, he is able to examine external evidence to determine which version preceded the other.

We might reasonably ask why we should speak of different "versions" of the same text at all, rather than simply treating each manuscript as evidence of a distinct composition in its own right. Ultimately, this is a matter of perception, and can range by individual scholar or by their subfield. There must be some perceived commonality between the "versions" in question, with accompanying rationale, that drives the placement of the versions under the label of the same composition. One such criterion commonly utilized in the cuneiform world is the comparison of incipits — the opening lines of a composition, which were themselves used as titles for that composition in the ancient catalogues. However, having the same incipit is not sufficient to assign manuscripts to the same underlying composition, due to the fact that some of these incipits are repeated in these catalogues. In addition, some tablets with the same surviving incipits clearly belong to different compositions. For example, the incipit *ud re-a "in those days,"* is a common beginning to Sumerian literary texts and functions as the title for multiple compositions, and not merely different versions/recensions of the same composition. This matter just enhances the problem. Where is the line between same recension, different recension, different version, different text to be drawn? (Cooper J. S., 1981, p. 230ff.)

We must also consider the temporal dimension of different versions of the same composition. Farber (1993) has drawn attention to how Assyriologists commonly use the term "forerunner" (*Vorläufer*) to describe earlier textual witnesses in a variety of genres, understood as antecedents to some later, more standardized form of the same composition. Whatever view one takes of the term's proper application, we can examine variations of text with respect to the four criteria he set out: (1) the notion of being a "forerunner" is not applicable at the time of composition — it is a retrospective classification imposed later; (2) the composer of the later version had full access to the earlier one; (3) the later version is judged, by some standard, to be

superior to the earlier one; and (4) the later version subsequently replaces the earlier one as the standard form of the text.

The related issue of orality is treated in its own section below, but it is worth noting here that separate, coexisting streams of tradition can also shape how later versions of a text come into being. Farber, for instance, discusses incantations that appear to have circulated in both oral and (still emerging) written form side by side during the Old Babylonian period; on his account, if later incantation composers were drawing on written exemplars that had themselves been shaped by this coexisting oral tradition, then the resulting compositions would be dominated by "the themes, motifs, and poetic forms of oral tradition" (Farber, 1993) — meaning that a later written version may owe as much, or more, to a living oral tradition as it does to any single specific earlier written "forerunner."

Black (1987) discusses the relationship between Old Babylonian and first-millennium *balaŋs* in terms that hedge even more cautiously than Farber's discussion of forerunners in the incantation literature just discussed. In assigning Old Babylonian sources to their later first-millennium counterparts, Black states explicitly: *"I hesitate even to use the term 'forerunner' since the Old Babylonian texts are after all literary works in their own right, and since the relation between the two groups is by no means exactly parallel to the history of Mesopotamian lexical works."* (p. 36). The relationship between an Old Babylonian source and its first-millennium counterpart is better understood not as an incomplete draft of a single text and its finished product, but as two independent assemblages of shared building blocks, related by descent from a common stock of material rather than by simple linear succession.

1.2.4 Mouvance

In the cases discussed so far, even where the variation between manuscripts is empirically substantial, the underlying composition itself is still treated as a stable entity — or as a finite set of stable entities, in cases where multiple discrete versions are recognized. This characterization, however, may not hold for all periods and genres of literature. In his work on medieval poetry, Paul Zumthor described a very different textual situation, one in which, in his own words, *"L'«œuvre» flotte"* — "the 'work' floats," or has no fixed, stable form at all (Zumthor, 1972) — a situation for which he coined the term ***mouvance***. Here, there is no single original work that can even be hypothesized as the shared progenitor of the known manuscript witnesses, because the text itself was never intended to be a stable, fixed, entity — rather, it was intended from the outset to be altered, even in dramatic ways. As Zumthor puts it, such texts have *"an incessant vibration and a fundamental instability"* (p. 507). In a way, each newly written manuscript becomes a new version of the same fluid composition. Bernard Cerquiglini dealt with this issue too in *Éloge de la variante* (1989), but as a critique of the style of philology taken by Lachmann and others in the world of textual criticism. He argued that medieval literature is ***variance***, and the alterations in the text are matters of study in their own right, not to be undone by the stemmatic style of textual reconstruction.

Michalowski has already flagged the potential usefulness of weighing the idea of mouvance for Mesopotamian material, and adapting it appropriately: *"I do not wish to argue that we must accept this concept of mouvance and adapt it without modification for the study of Mesopotamian literary texts. Nevertheless, I do think that this conceptualization of medieval writing has much to offer to Assyriology."* (Michalowski, 1989, p. 24).

With regard to the Old Babylonian lamentation corpus, the amount of variation between exemplars might lead us to think that we might be dealing with individual, yet mobile, compositions. Our further explorations will yield more insight into the matter. At the very least, Cerquiglini's position that variations are important to study in their own right will be crucial to my own methodology.[7]

1.2.5 Intertextuality

The concept of shared building blocks also bears directly on the study of intertextuality — a term that has, over the past several decades, become the standard reference point for scholarship on the ways in which one text draws upon, echoes, or is shaped by another. In its broadest and most theoretically ambitious sense, intertextuality describes not merely isolated instances of borrowing between individual texts, but a more fundamental claim about the nature of textual production itself: since Julia Kristeva's characterization of every text as a "mosaic of quotations" (Kristeva, 1967), absorbing and transforming other texts, and Roland Barthes's influential essay "The Death of the Author," (Barthes, 1968) the traditional assumption of the author as an isolated, creative genius has been substantially challenged. On this view, no text is ever fully self-contained or wholly original; it is always already woven from the threads of prior texts, whether consciously invoked or not.

Of course, with any new term introduced into a field, "intertextuality" has attracted its share of critiques (Baron, 2020, p. 1ff.). Some of the sharpest critiques of the term revolve around the looseness of its definition (Irwin, 2004). Is intertextuality meant to function as a theory of textuality in general — one that would have us view the entirety of human textual production as a single, entangled web that grows more twisted and complex over time? Or is it better understood as a convenient umbrella term for a set of narrower, already well-established concepts like allusion, quotation, parody, etc.?

One important consideration worth noting regarding the history of intertextuality is the social and political context in which the concept was inaugurated, thus taking away from its direct applicability to literature, in the narrower sense of that term. For Kristeva, "text" was never intended as a narrowly literary category, but as a site in which ideology itself is produced and contested. Thus, when we attempt to set this apart from its original Marxist and politically charged intellectual backdrop, and try to use the concept in a more focused literary way, we can see the irony incumbent in the term "intertextuality", itself having achieved a life outside of its original context and authorial intent. Yet, it is precisely this renewed life that we can take advantage of when discussing variation among the Old Babylonian lamentation texts.

1.2.6 The Impact of Orality

To jump right into this subject, a question: Once a text is written down, does it cease to be oral or is it henceforth literature? More recent contributions to the study of orality have moved past the question of a text's identity as either oral or literate. One way scholars have approached this issue is by shifting the thinking on orality from a dichotomy to a spectrum. Thus, Homeric texts are not considered as examples belonging cleanly to either "literature" or "orality" as separate categories, but rather as occupying some position between the two. This mode of thought allows us greater flexibility to ask different, and arguably more productive, kinds of

[7] see (Delnero P. , 2012)

questions — not "is this text oral or literate?" but rather "in what specific ways is it literate, and in what specific ways is it oral?" — since a single text can, in this view, meaningfully be both at once. As Reichl puts it, *"the very question of whether or not a particular work is oral has receded into the background. In contemporary medieval scholarship it is generally considered more interesting and rewarding to study the way orality and literacy interact: the question is not whether, but rather how a text is oral."* (Reichl, 2012, p. 54).

One of the reasons for the confusion surrounding the term is related to how we conceive the life of a text. Discussing orality with respect to a text in these broad, undifferentiated terms can be too abstract to be genuinely useful, since orality may apply to some aspects of a text's existence without applying to all of them. As John Lyon says/writes, *"It is possible to read aloud what is written and, conversely, to write down what is spoken. In so far as language is independent, in this sense, of the medium in which language-signals are realized, we will say that language has the property of medium-transferability. This is a most important property—one to which far too little attention has been paid in general discussions of the nature of language."* (Lyon, 1981, p. 11).

Attempting to solve this issue, Ruth Finnegan writes of three ways in which a text might be considered "oral": *"(1) its composition, (2) its mode of transmission, and (3) (related to (2)) its performance. Some oral poetry is oral in all these respects, some in only one or two."* (Finnegan, 1992, p. 27). This has interesting implications for the Old Babylonian lamentation corpus. For one, the performance of a lament in an oral context does not necessarily entail that the lament was composed in an oral fashion or transmitted through oral means. The question here is: Were they performed first and then written down, or written down in order to be performed?

As another aspect of orality, in the framework developed by Milman Parry and Albert Lord, a "formula" is defined as *"a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea"* (Parry, 1930, p. 80). This definition, however, requires expansion if it is to move beyond the rather restrictive terms in which Parry and Lord originally posited it — terms that placed a heavy emphasis on meter specifically as the organizing principle of formulaic language. This limitation became apparent almost as soon as the theory was extended beyond its original Homeric and South Slavic context to address the orality of Old English literature, most notably by Francis Magoun. The rhythm and structure of Old English verse do not rely on meter in the quantitative sense that organizes Greek epic or the South Slavic epic tradition Parry and Lord studied; instead, Old English poetry is structured around stress patterning and alliteration. These two features — stress and alliteration — can themselves serve as diagnostic markers of an earlier oral-formulaic tradition surviving as a kind of residue within a later written text, since oral-formulaic composition depends precisely on such ready-made rhythmic and sonic units to enable composition in performance.

The rhythm of Sumerian poetry likewise does not rely on meter, but arguments for a previous oral tradition and intention for performance have still been made. Such arguments rest on features attested within the texts themselves like repetition, parallelism, and fixed or formulaic expressions (Teffeteller, 2007; Alster, Interaction of Oral and Written Poetry in Early Mesopotamian Literature, 1992). These can serve a compositional and mnemonic function analogous to that served by metrical formulas in Parry and Lord's original model. Another way in

which the Parry-Lord theory needs expansion for Sumerian literature is the unlikelihood that much of it was improvised at the time of performance.[8]

John Foley takes a view that formulas evoke a wide range of culturally traditional associations acting akin to nodes within a network (Foley, 1991). On this account, a given sign within the composition — a word, phrase, or formula — functions as a kind of pathway into this network, one whose associative force depends on a body of traditional competence that performer and audience both bring to the performance and implicitly recognize in one another. The performance, in this sense, is not merely the immediate action of recitation itself, but also encompasses this deeper traditional "backlayer". A divine epithet, for example, might open up an entire network of associations related to that god or goddess, and could even prime the audience to anticipate specific developments later in the performance. As will be elaborated later, there are special features of this corpus that could evoke the appropriate network for the cultural performance, like the Emesal dialect, and the special litanies and epithets of gods that appear only in this corpus.

Applying these ideas to the genre of lamentation specifically yields some interesting results. Nancy Lee, drawing on anthropological research into lament traditions, notes that *"anthropological research documents ample evidence of... individuals composing lament songs, performed in ritual settings, but also anywhere an individual in a community might choose. Singers composed by drawing upon and modifying older stock lyrics and genres from a living oral tradition"* (Nancy Lee, 2008, p. 34). Crucially, Lee goes on to argue that this mode of composition undermines the very notion of a fixed, original text: *"because in traditional oral poetry there is no 'original' or first text. Every oral poet or singer comes in a line of tradition in which all have participated in employing the culture's or subculture's previous formulas and language, yet innovating for their context, sometimes in stunning ways"* (p. 38). This quote resonates with both Zumthor's account of *mouvance* and with intertextuality.

Orality has been explored for the Old Babylonian lament corpus. According to Alster, *"these texts seem to be composed by means of principles which are characteristic of oral poetry, in which motifs may easily be transferred from one group of texts to another in order to form a sequence of events, which is never bound by religious dogmatism, but by a narrative art which allows the poets a certain freedom in combining traditional patterns"* (1992, p. 13). In addition, Delnero (2020) adapts O'Brien O'Keeffe's (1990) concept of "residual orality," but notes the impact of Versatzstücke on the Old Babylonian lamentation corpus.

1.2.7 Comments on Performativity

Any spoken activity can be viewed in light of performativity — that is, understanding speech as "doing" something rather than merely "meaning" or "communicating" something. This turn in the study of language is commonly credited to J. L. Austin, who examined the "ordinary" aspects of language and noted that certain utterances actually effect change in the world at the moment of their speaking (Austin, 1962). He contrasted statements like "the cat is on the mat," which merely describes the world without altering it, with utterances like "I promise to mow the lawn," which creates an obligation on the speaker by the very act of its utterance.

Since Austin's lectures, a great deal has been written on this topic, both challenging his framework and building upon it. Searle (1969) systematized Austin's own looser distinctions into

[8] There may have been some genres that derive their roots from improvised material, like debate poetry (Alster, Interaction of Oral and Written Poetry in Early Mesopotamian Literature, 1992)

a fuller taxonomy of speech acts. Derrida (1977) argued that a performative draws its force precisely from its *iterability* — its citation of an already-recognizable, repeatable formula — rather than from any originality in the individual utterance, while Bourdieu (1991) insisted that performative power is never intrinsic to language at all, but borrowed from the speaker's institutionally authorized position.

How, then, might this framework be extended to the Old Babylonian lament corpus, and can it help inform our understanding of these texts' compositional nature? In many respects, the performance of a lament resembles any other ritual or religious service, combining elements of both speech and physical action. Certainly, the “felicity conditions” as further developed by Searle are important for rituals: a performative utterance succeeds only when spoken by the right person, under the right institutional circumstances, and following the correct procedures. Since the purpose of Old Babylonian lamentation prayers was to appease the heart of the gods (i.e. accomplish a goal), looking into ritual and performativity is a potentially fruitful angle.

1.2.8 Social Setting of Text Composition

So far, we’ve mainly considered textual composition in terms of the text itself and the forms it takes, and its basic conception in terms of formal categorization. However, it is still important to consider some of the social aspects surrounding the composition of textual materials, including how they were copied and re-composed. In this regard, there is already a scholarly background to such ideas, in both the textual world, but also in the broader world of any artistic creation.

Becker’s model of art worlds (Becker, 1982) might be useful here because it treats artistic production as a cooperative activity involving not only the named creator but also the support personnel, institutions, conventions, and material practices that make creation possible. Applied to the Old Babylonian lament corpus, this perspective shifts attention away from the isolated composer and toward the broader network of scribes, performers, teachers, musicians, ritual specialists, and institutions that enabled laments to be learned, written, adapted, and performed. The social influences on the author from institutions and norms might be considered rather abstract or distant from the author trying to create a composition. Thus, we also need to consider the effects of the immediate social environment: How were these compositions used in practice? Where were they performed? On what occasions?

The inclusion of music with text is also critical for understanding the composition of texts that are meant to be performed in a musical style or along with instruments. When discussing orality, some of the driving factors for certain features of composition (meter, formulae, rhyme) are to imbue it with a musical quality so that it can be performed. Musical instruments were employed in these lamentation performances, e.g. the balaŋ and šem-drum, which also feature in the names of the two main laments, i.e. *balaŋ* and *eršema*.[9]

If our laments combine Sumerian emesal text with singing and music playing, we seem to have a separation between how each of these components were studied. We know well that Sumerian education was the primary goal of the Eduba (Veldhuis, 1993), and so any lament composer must not only have succeeded in the Eduba, but learned the emesal mode there as well. One such pathway for learning emesal was perhaps through dialogues between women

[9] For more about musical instruments, see (Shehata, 2009); (Shehata, 2014)

(Matuszak, 2021). Another was through the city lamentations, but this was at an advanced stage (Löhnert, 2008, p. 436f.).

Michalowski (2010) has already noted that musical training was not part of the Eduba curriculum in the Old Babylonian period. Musical education may have taken place in the *ki-umun₂*, as suggested by Šulgi B and the dialogue text between Enkiheŋal and Enkitalu. Another relevant location, which may have related to musical composition, was the *e₂-GEŠTU₂.ᵈNISABA*, though little is known about it. Therefore, a composer of laments either attended multiple schools and was quite highly talented and educated, or a profitable collaboration took place between scribe and musician.

The audience would have an impact too. In the informal settings in which these styles developed, *"the audience . . . inevitably influences the performer's material"* (Brown 2003). In this regard, we must identify who the audience entails. From a theological standpoint, the audience is a god. Of course, we cannot discount everybody else in attendance and at the lamentation ceremonies. We may even want to consider those who heard about the performances second-hand or even just the fact that they occurred. The composition of a lament therefore had to account for both its divine addressee and the human members among its ritual setting.

The performance setting of the lamentations would affect the composition too. The performance was not simply a recitation of the lament. There were multiple singers, instruments, movements, all of which together create a flurry of sensations. According to Wendland, *"... to engage the full sensorium of listeners... evoking their visual imagination coupled with that of sound .... That is what good literature 'does' to people -- in addition to conveying a 'message' of some type"* (Wendland, 2008, p. v). As stated, our lament composers wanted their compositions to perform a function, not just be read. This means that every part of the performance context has a role in the composition: the balaŋ-instrument, the divine statue, different singers, etc. This perhaps also included tablets with the composition on them resting on the gala's forearm (Löhnert, 2011, p. 408). Also, the pupil may be in accompaniment of the teacher or lamenter.

1.3 Relation to the OB lament prayer corpus

As stated above, it is rare to find two manuscripts that can be considered to belong to the same composition, but they still share many phrases, lines and groups of lines between them. This observation has led to the notion that these texts were composed of *Versatzstücke* or *building blocks* (Volk, 1989). In the OB lament corpus, this feature is pervasive and is reflected in almost every lament (Delnero P. , 2020, p. 138).

Shared lines and patterns reflected in multiple compositions is a situation not unique to the corpus of OB laments. Regarding Gilgameš and Aga, Römer (1980) noted many word pairs and phrases present in other texts. In another example, Tinney (1999) was able to connect a line appearing in two texts to the god Nanna: *a-ra₂-bi ku₆-am₃ diri-bi mušen-am₃* in Nanna D and Ur-Namma D.

This style is not unique to lamentation within Mesopotamia, and there are other potentially comparative corpora outside that setting. One such is the folk song tradition in Modern Greece, which includes poems of lamentation. According to Alexiou:

> *"... their technique, thanks to which the same ideas, formulaic structures and phrases are re-used and adapted to suit the occasion, so that in the event of sudden calamity, the popular poet has to hand a ready-made stock of material." (Alexiou, 1974, p. 99).*

Herzfeld (1973) did a study on one of these laments from an earlier period, "The Siege of Rhodes," whose name is already misleading because variants have the island name "Rhodes" substituted with Cyprus and Crete, both of which underwent their own sieges, but at different times. This text seems to belong to a general tradition of phrasing and style that are seen in other historical laments and funeral dirges, and more generally in the Greek folk tradition at large. According to Herzfeld:

> *"… they are built up from a vocabulary of <<prefabricated>> phrases and expressions, syntactic schemata capable of being manipulated at the level of symbolic specification."*

These variations may comprise certain patterns. For instance, regional differences in style can be detected, e.g. between Cypriote songs and Cretan *rizitika*, or they may be explained by differences in the social context of their performance. In the OB lament corpus, a shift in the city where the lament is performed can motivate substitution in the lament itself (Kutscher, 1975, p. 5).

Some might find this method of composition to be either uninspired, dull or lacking creativity. However, this method of creating something new out of the old is essential to the process. According to Tydyanov, *"the whole point of a new construction may be in the new use to which old devices are put, in their new constructive significance"* (Tynyanov, 1924). Such sentiments are echoed by Goldsmith in his defense of "patchwork" writing (Goldsmith, 2011). There are two key components of the composition process demonstrated here, and as I paraphrase Angela Carter "the old wine and the new skin", the presence of the new skin means that there is plenty of room for creativity of the author. Not everything in a new text can be traced back to old texts, mental or written, and we see that plenty in this corpus.

Nevertheless, we must acknowledge that phrases and lines we see only once might have been part of the author's repertoire – we simply don't have any other instances at our disposal. Inversely, phrases, lines and groups which appear more than once may do so, not because they all originate from some common conceptual "line/phrase bank," but are actually composed with a creative flair in one text and copied in another. A methodological issue involves determining whether the shared phrases are present because of common usage in the language generally, or because they hold a special place within a sector of the culture's literature.

In summation, we've discussed different possibilities for the connection between the comparison of manuscripts and the conception of the compositions they comprise:

1. Mostly similar, slight variations + single composition, same version (stemma possibility)
2. Similar, Moderate variations + single composition, different versions
3. Similar, Moderate variations + fluid composition
4. Some similarities, + different compositions, but built on the same text-language (Versatzstücke)
5. Similarities here and there + different compositions, different text-languages (Intertextual connections)

My purpose in invoking these other traditions is of course not to claim an exact parallel between them and the Old Babylonian lamentation corpus. It is rather to draw attention to certain

facets within the scholarship of these correspondent fields that may aid our own inquiries, and to seek a *"potential heuristic window"* on our own texts (Lee, 2002, p. 8).[10] This broader framework also leads to more expansive questions that will guide the discussion to follow. Can the building-block style characteristic of the Old Babylonian Lamentation corpus be explained as a matter of compositions being adapted to suit the occasion? Does this process only involve altering the names of places or deities to fit a new context, but keeping the rest the same? Can this compositional style be expanded anywhere outside of the lamentation genre, and if so, in what way? Are there discernible differences in phrasing or style between texts addressed to different gods or ones referencing different cities?

[10] We can stop short of making inductive assertions that perhaps generalize the situations found in other cultures too far. Lee's female "Jerusalem's Singer" may be such an instance, applying the general tendency of lamenting by women to the Biblical context. Nevertheless, this general style of comparative analysis is still valid in my view. See also Boyadijian (2018, p. 10) for a similar viewpoint, also Cooper (1992, p. 121) – "Comparative studies are suggestive, but their primary value is often not to provide answers but to keep us aware and open-minded"

Chapter 2 – Methodology

To move further into our project, we will need to apply the considerations introduced in Chapter 1 to the analysis of parallel phrases and structures in the Old Babylonian corpus of lamentation literature. This chapter proceeds in three broad stages. The first involves gathering all of the data necessary for this analysis. This is not simply a matter of assembling textual editions, but tracking and discovering where the parallels between texts lie. This step draws on computational methods, which originated in studies of intertextuality for Greek and Latin literature, but need adaptation for use with cuneiform textual material.

Once parallel passages are discovered, we can note the important features that comprise them and develop a typology. This is a comparatively low-level, empirical task, concerned primarily with the formal and structural properties of the textual material itself — that is, describing *what* varies and *how*, without yet asking *why*.

The third step turns toward explanation, that is, how these parallel phrases and structures came to arise within the corpus in the first place, and what factors may have prompted the variation observed between individual instances. Because this task is explanatory rather than merely descriptive, a considerably wider range of potential factors comes into play. Some of these factors may be internal to the corpus itself, yielding purely formal or structural explanations for the observed patterns; but a fuller account will also need to draw on factors external to the texts themselves.

1.1 Discovering Parallel Passage

1.1.1 Computational Background

Much of the previous work on computational intertextuality has focused on Western Classical literature, particularly through the Tesserae project (Coffee, et al., 2012), which has built a high-quality interface allowing researchers to search across the corpora of Greek and Latin texts to find potentially meaningful intertextual results. Their project, and ensuing articles, have built a solid foundation for the study of the connections between ancient texts.

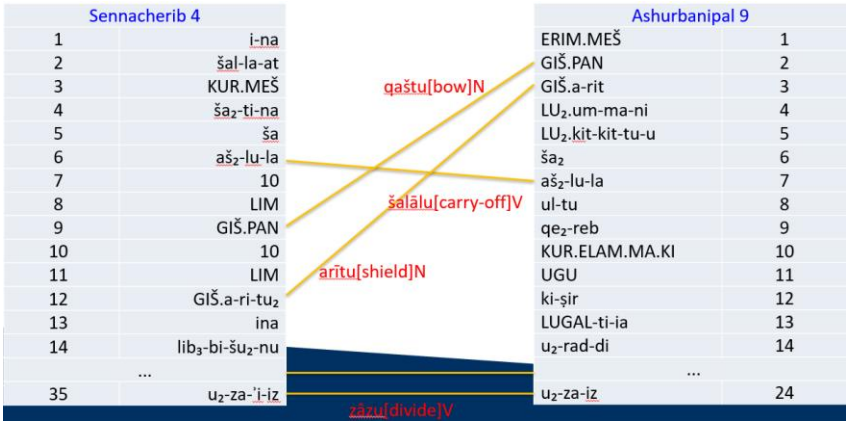
While Tesserae has proven highly effective for uncovering intertextual connections within Greek and Latin literature, comparable tools are needed for discovering and evaluating connections between texts written in Mesopotamian cuneiform languages, principally Sumerian and Akkadian. Such an adaptation is not simply a matter of pointing an existing tool at a new corpus, however, since cuneiform textual material poses a number of distinct challenges not present in the Western Classical tradition.

One such difference concerns the means by which texts are divided into discrete, comparable units. Much of Greek and Latin literature has been assigned clear structural divisions, whether inherent to the text itself — as with the verse line in poetry — or imposed by later editorial convention, as with the chapter and section divisions commonly used to segment prose works. Within this well-segmented textual tradition, methods for intertextual discovery and detection can take direct advantage of these pre-existing divisions: by comparing text in terms of **fixed windows** — that is, spans of a set number of words or lines compared systematically against equivalent spans elsewhere in the corpus — and by using **hashing** techniques, which convert these spans into compact numerical representations, to dramatically speed up the process of searching for matches across large bodies of text (Büchler, Franzini, Franzini, & Moritz, 2014).

While the cuneiform material does have natural text delimiters, namely the end of a line of text, this dividing point does not always correspond to the end of a clause, sentence, or other meaningful syntactic or structural unit. Compounding this issue, there is very little in the way of punctuation or other regular demarcations that would otherwise separate such units within a line or across lines. This problem is especially pronounced in prosaic genres such as royal inscriptions and letters, where a scribe's language frequently continues across a line break without pause, much as continuous prose does in any modern book or article. While it is certainly possible for cuneiform scholars to impose their own divisions onto such texts for editorial or analytical purposes, this is not done according to any standardized or prescribed method, and certainly is not applied with any regularity in the digitized material currently available. In fact, imposed subdivisions of this sort may even be impractical for discovering intertextual connections in certain genres such as sign and lexical lists.

We therefore need a method for discovering intertextual matches that does not depend on a fixed-window approach of the kind used for Greek and Latin material. To start, let us consider a different way of conceptualizing the two corpora between which we wish to discover connections. If we treat each of the two corpora — which we will call the *source* and the *target* — as consisting of a sequence of tokens that can be enumerated in order, we can then envision the connections between the two sides as follows:[11]

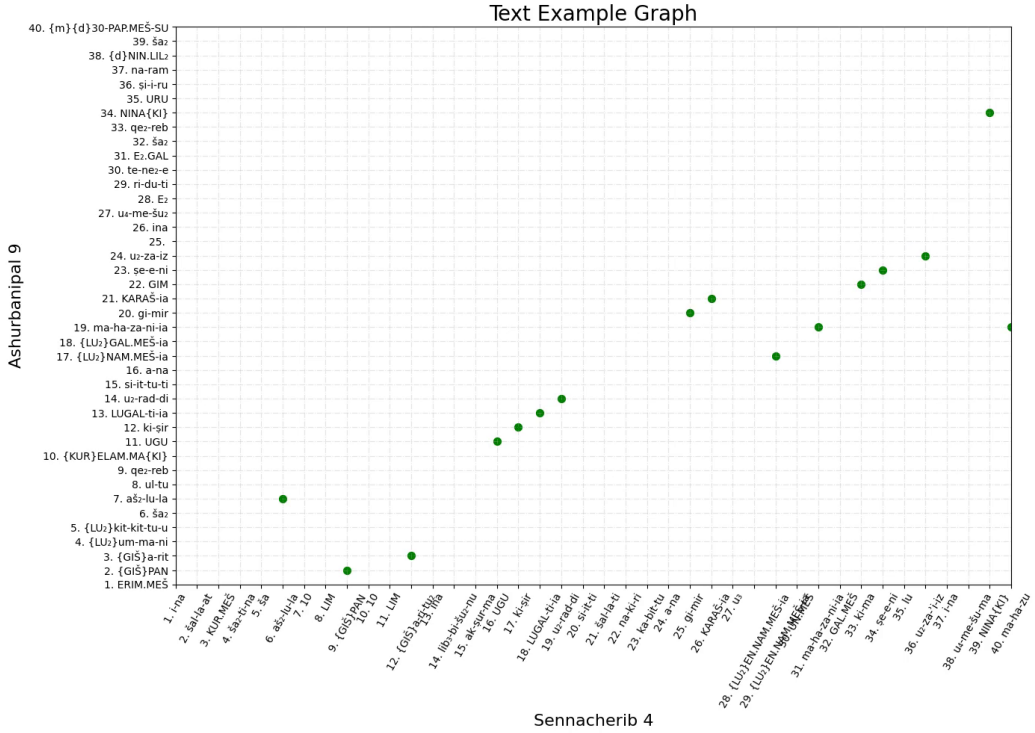
1. Source and target text running vertically, showing how single words connect in a parallel passage



If we further treat the source and target corpora as independent of one another — that is, as two separate, ordered sequences of tokens whose relationship to each other is not presupposed by any shared external structure, such as line or chapter divisions — we can represent the connections between them visually as a two-dimensional graph. On this graph, the tokens of one corpus are arranged along the x-axis, and the tokens of the other along the y-axis; each point where a token in the source matches a corresponding token in the target is then marked as a connection between the two axes. Such a graph would look like this:

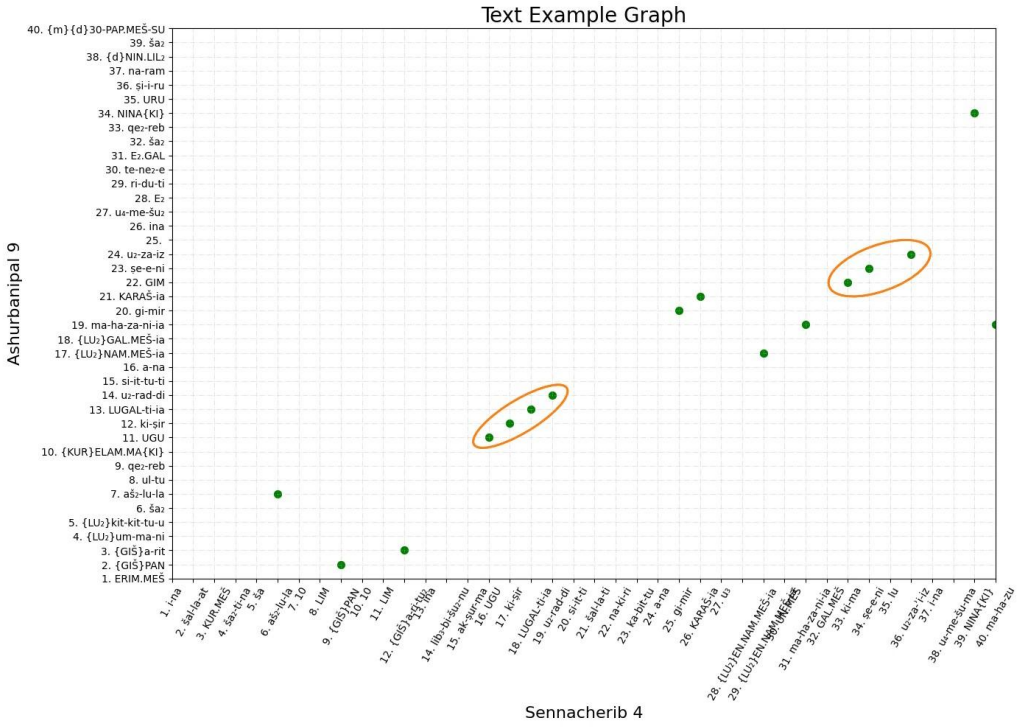
[11] This example is taken from Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions from an earlier project I worked on. It is meant to demonstrate the concepts and processes in our new intertext detection scheme. The same basic principles can be applied to the Old Babylonian lamentation corpus.

2. Graph of same source and target text with source on x-axis and target on y-axis. Green dots show where words connect

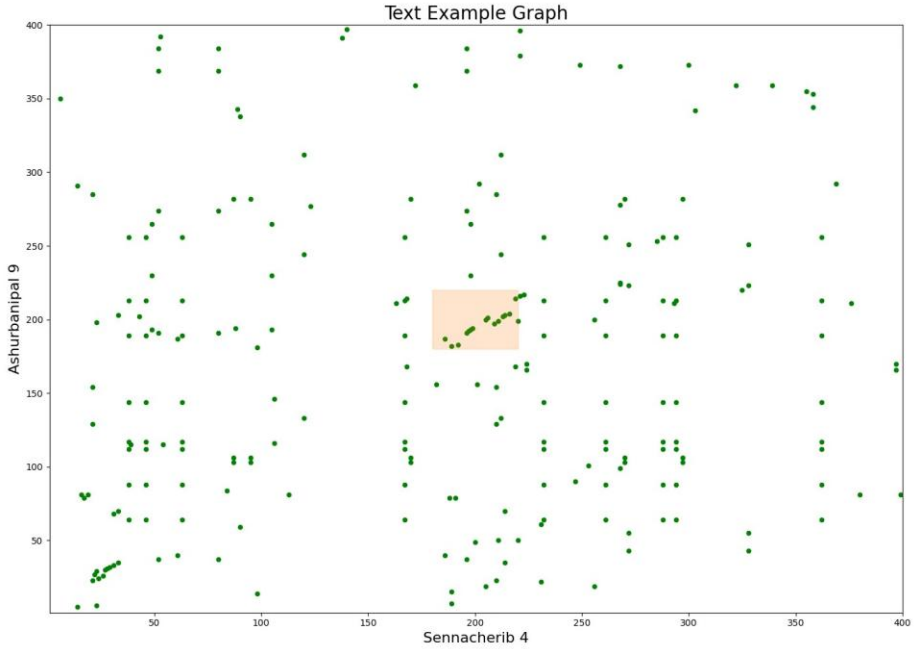


Because this initial representation only connects the source and target corpora on individual word matches, it does not inform us immediately of potentially interesting clusters of matching words that connect in close proximity. Such clusters are more likely to indicate more meaningful intertextual relationships between the source and target documents. Some examples of this kind of clustering can be identified visually on the graph below:

3. Same graph as previous, but with circles around the dots that are grouped together.



However, what we really want is to group every point together in the entire example. If we expand our viewport, this will appear more possible:



Rather than relying on visual inspection to identify clusters, we would prefer to apply a computational method: specifically, a density-based clustering algorithm. DBSCAN is a widely

used algorithm used for this purpose (Ester, Kriegel, Sander, & Xu, 1996), and it offers several distinct advantages for our present task. First of all, it is an unsupervised algorithm, meaning we don't need any initial input pairs to help train it. This is useful due to our lack of a well-curated set of such intertextual connections. This is merely one example of a general problem of the dearth of benchmark sets in studies on text reuse (Manjavacas, Long, & Kestemont, 2019). Second, unlike algorithms such as K-means, DBSCAN does not require the number of clusters to be specified in advance; this suits our goal well, since we are not attempting to assign every single point of lexical connection to some cluster (isolated connections, as noted, are not especially meaningful on their own), but rather to identify only those regions where connections cluster together in meaningful density. Third, the algorithm scales well computationally, allowing clusters to be computed between substantially large corpora within a reasonable amount of time. Finally, as a practical matter, DBSCAN is conveniently and robustly implemented in Python's scikit-learn library.

1.1.2 Applying the Method

This method treats each text as an ordered sequence of lemmatized tokens and searches for regions where matching tokens cluster across two texts. It proceeds in three stages: first, identifying individual word matches between a source corpus and a target corpus; second, clustering those matches with DBSCAN; and third, scoring the resulting clusters according to their likely significance for text reuse or shared compositional material. The goal is not simply to find identical words, but to distinguish potentially meaningful parallel passages from matches generated by common vocabulary or formulaic language.

1. Finding single word matches

Before identifying clusters of word matches, it is useful first to identify matches between individual words across both the source and target corpora. This is a relatively straightforward task provided the corpora are properly annotated — specifically, lemmatized, as is the case with material drawn from the Open Richly Annotated Cuneiform Corpus (ORACC).[12] Given lemmatized data, finding these matches is simply a matter of joining the table of source word-instances with the table of target word-instances on their shared lemma column. This produces a new table in which each record reflects a single instance where a lemma on one side matches the same lemma on the other.

One important consideration to note is that the number of resulting records will grow dramatically for high-frequency lemmas. For example, if a given lemma occurs 1,000 times in the source and 1,000 times in the target, this single lemma alone will generate 1,000,000 matched pairs in the resulting table. This is not merely a matter of computational efficiency (though it is certainly that), but such a volume of matches also risks burying any genuinely meaningful connections in an overwhelming amount of noise generated by vocabulary that is not conducive to discovering intertextual matches. Depending on how significant this effect proves to be for a given analysis, establishing a list of stopwords at the outset — that is, excluding especially frequent words from consideration — can substantially reduce the resulting number of

[12] For the Old Babylonian lamentation corpus specifically see: https://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/obel/

matches, easing both the computational burden and the analytical noise involved. This approach carries its own tradeoff, however: because our corpus is itself characterized by recurring formulaic building blocks, some of which may rely partly on common words, overly aggressive stopword filtering risks excluding genuinely meaningful repeated formulas along with the noise it is intended to remove.

2. Clustering the matches

The next step is to identify clusters among the individual word matches found in the previous step. This is where the DBSCAN algorithm is employed. The algorithm requires two parameters: the maximum distance between points to be considered neighbors, and the minimum number of points required to form a cluster. It is good for our purposes to set the minimum cluster size to 2. Setting the minimum to 2 also carries a computational benefit specific to this algorithm: with a minimum cluster size of 2, every neighboring point automatically qualifies as a "core point" in DBSCAN's terminology (a point with at least the minimum required number of neighbors within the specified distance), and so doesn't need to be differentiated with a "border point."

For the distance parameter, we want to identify matches that fall within a specified distance *d* of one another along *both* the source and target axes simultaneously — that is, a given point should be considered a neighbor of another only if it lies within *d* positions on the source side *and* within *d* positions on the target side. Visualized around a hypothetical point at the origin (0,0), the resulting neighborhood is a square region with corners at (*d*,*d*), (-*d*,*d*), (-*d*,-*d*), and (*d*,-*d*). This shape corresponds with the **Chebyshev distance** (also called the L∞ or "chessboard" distance), which is available as a built-in metric option in standard implementations such as scikit-learn's DBSCAN.

3. Scoring

The goal of scoring the matches is to highlight the clustered matches that are potentially more interesting as intertextual connections. Several variables are relevant for implementing a formula to produce this score:

1. Number of words per cluster – A larger number of individual matching words could be more indicative of a stronger connection between the source and target texts.
2. Distance of the cluster – We might be more interested in individual word matches that are closer together than spread out over a wider range in either source or target
3. Frequency of the words that compose the cluster – If the words that form the cluster appear in many clusters discovered, it may be more indicative of common phraseology of the corpus (which may be interesting in its own right) rather than a stronger connection between two specific texts within the corpus
4. Frequency of words or sets of words within the language at large – Intertextual connection relies on contextualized textual usage rather than common words and phrases used in the entire language.

In the formula below, n represents the number of matching words in the cluster, d represents the span or distance covered by those matches in each text, f′ represents a frequency-adjusted weight for the words in the cluster, and f'_g represents a broader corpus-level frequency

adjustment. These variables are provisional and can be modified as the method is tested, but defining them makes clear what the formula is intended to reward or penalize:

- $\sum(f'_x + f'_y) / (d_x - n_x + d_y - n_y) * (n_x + n_y) * (f'_{gx} + f'_{gy})$

1.2 Defining the Versatzstücke

At the most basic level, these texts are built from the Sumerian language in cuneiform writing. But the patterns I am interested in here lie above the purely linguistic or graphemic level. Patterns belonging to the grammar of the language — inflectional paradigms, semantic-fields, and the like — fall outside this discussion, since they can be treated independently of larger textual and literary structures, although it is important to note that grammatical and semantic *variation* between texts remain relevant to the broader project. Because the dimensions of internal literary analysis are difficult, perhaps impossible, to enumerate exhaustively, I focus here on two of the more salient kinds of patterns: content items and structural arrangements.

The importance of attending to the formal, structural features of Sumerian literary texts was treated by Wilcke (1975). Certain literary structures are applicable across all genres of Sumerian literature, like parallelism and refrain. Wilcke pointed to some of the important ways in which we can work with them. My efforts in this section will attempt to define the kinds of structural arrangements as well as the kinds of content items that can be filled into those arrangements. Some demonstrative examples will be presented in this chapter, and a larger list of types with examples will be presented in the following chapter.

1.2.1 Content items

Content items can be imagined as a discrete textual units that can be pointed to directly and are extractible as text. These are the actual textual material that recurs, in whole or in part, across different manuscripts or compositions. These content items can be sized at different levels. They can be words or sets of words, phrases or sets of phrases, lines or sets of lines, sections or sets of sections.

Word pairs are widely found throughout Sumerian. This is considered a type of content which is replicable, but can be combined within larger passages that are also replicable and found in parallels.

Example: word pair

In this example, dam “spouse” and du$_5$-mu “child” are connected words found in the same formation. Many pairs can be found in this type of consecutive line arrangement where the pattern outside of the word in the pair is the same:

CBS 11321+ (P266481):
r iii 11'. dam ni$_2$-ŋa$_2$ mu-ti-in am$_2$-gam-gam
r iii 12'. du$_5$-mu ni$_2$-ŋa$_2$ mu-ti-in am$_2$-gam-gam

r iii 11'. *My own spouse, men carried off*
r iii 12'. *My own child, men carried off*

Example: phrase

Short phrases like the following appear sporadically through the corpus. This particular phrase occurs unrepeated in its passage, but a phrasal refrain can also be seen as an example of this type of content item:

šag$_4$ sud-ra$_2$ e-ne-eŋ$_3$ zi-da

Whose heart is remote, whose word is true

Example: short passage

There are many small passages like the one presented here that occur in a variety of contexts. The different contexts can often be discerned both by differences in the preceding text, including the incipit of a section or a different litany, and the following text which diverges in one tablet vs. another tablet.

i-si-iš ab-ta-la$_2$-la$_2$ ša$_3$-bi-ta i-si-iš ab-ta-la$_2$-la$_2$
še-eb e$_2$-zi-da-ka ša$_3$-bi a-še-er im-ši-la$_2$-la$_2$
mu-lu hul$_2$-la-na nu-mu-ni-in-dib-be$_2$
mu-lu lib-ba-ni nu-mu-ni-in-dib-be$_2$

Sorrow hovers, Sorrow hovers in front of it
Lament spreads over the heart of the bricks of the Ezida
Nobody passes by, nobody passes by in happiness
Nobody passes by the bricks of the Ezida in prosperity

Finally, a section (or set of sections) can constitute a content item because some full sections can be found in different surrounding contexts. More discussion of particular sections of this type will be presented in the next chapter.

1.2.2 Structural arrangements

Structural arrangements, by contrast, are not textual units in their own right, but rather the scaffolding into which content blocks can be fitted — the modes by which content is connected, organized, or arranged, rather than any physical or textual substance of its own. Like content items, structural arrangements can likewise be examined at different levels. At the most basic level, a structure might describe the pattern by which content is arranged within a single line, or the way two or more lines are connected to one another.

Structural arrangements can be viewed *horizontally* or *vertically*. The horizontal style of structures involves the patterns observable on one line of text. Vertical structures cover multiple lines of text.

Example: Horizontal Structure

The parallelism presented here comprises a horizontal structure because it occurs on a single line of text:

CT 58, 39 (P274234)
ii 25. ša$_3$-bi lil$_2$-la$_2$-am$_3$ bar-bi lil$_2$-la$_2$-am$_3$
ii 25. Its interior is deserted, its exterior is deserted

Example: Vertical Structure

The structural arrangement presented here is a refrain list with a divine litany, a very common structure in the Old Babylonian lamentation corpus. Since the refrain takes up multiple lines, and content must be inserted on each of those lines outside the refrain, it is considered a vertical structure. In this example, the refrain is aligned for better visualization:

RA 8, 161 (P355691):

o i 1.	e-en gig-ga-bi	na-aŋ$_2$ dam-a-na
o i 2.	ga-ša-an-an-na-ke$_4$	na-aŋ$_2$ dam-a-na
o i 3.	ga-ša-an e$_2$-an-na-ke$_4$	na-aŋ$_2$ dam-a-na
o i 4.	ga-ša-an ki unug^{ki}-ga-ke$_4$	na-aŋ$_2$ dam-a-na
o i 5.	ga-ša-an ki zabalam^{ki}-ke$_4$	na-aŋ$_2$ dam-a-na
o i 1.	*It is so horrible,*	*the fate of her spouse!*
o i 2.	*Gašanana,*	*the fate of her spouse!*
o i 3.	*Lady of the Eanna,*	*the fate of her spouse!*
o i 4.	*Lady of the area of Uruk,*	*the fate of her spouse!*
o i 5.	*Lady of the area of Zabalam,*	*the fate of her spouse!*

Once the content items of smaller types are defined and explored with their associative structures, we can begin to see how a text is actually composed, step by step, from these constituent parts. Smaller sized content items can be combined with structures to form larger complexes, which themselves can function as larger content items. These larger content items can be subsequently placed into further structures, and so on, in a recursive manner until a complete composition emerges.

1.3 Describing Variation

Along the way of this compositional process, different choices can be made for different content and structural components. One content item might be substituted with a different content item but kept within the same structure. Some of these substitutions may not cause major changes in meaning, like writing the same word in a different orthography, while others may result in a considerably more significant difference in meaning or effect. This will be the focus of the study on variation with this corpus. What kinds of variation are seen, what the resulting differences become, how significant they are, and if available, why those different decisions on the composition were chosen.

The variation itself can then be explored and typologized. As with the structural types discussed above, this variation can likewise be divided into *horizontal* and *vertical* categories.

1.3.1 Horizontal Variation

Horizontal variations involve differences on the "same" line between the different examples. This can be further divided into subtypes:

Writing variation includes the differences in the spelling of words and formal differences in the paleography of the signs. The syllabic (or unorthographic) spelling of words in the corpus is a common and popularly dealt with feature among scholars, so I will not go into any detailed study on the subtypes of this category.[13] The issue of paleographic variation is also an important avenue for studying variation in these texts, but one that will not receive a large amount of attention in this study.[14]

Lexical variation involves one (dictionary) word being substituted for another within the same context. Two subcategories of this type are particularly pertinent to this corpus: *dialectal* variation and *true lexical* variation. The writing of the emesal dialectal form of a word versus the emegir dialectal form certainly constitutes a variation, but the type falls somewhere in between a true lexical variation (they are the same word – just dialectal variants) and a different orthographic writing. In fact, syllabic writings can intend to spell the emegir or emesal form of the word (Kutscher, 1975, p. 33).

Semantic variation involves a change in meaning between two parallels. This often naturally co-occurs with lexical variation, since altering the meaning of a phrase or line often involves changing the words.

Variations in these categories can be applied by themselves or in combinations of these types. Some combinations are not conceivable or impossible, e.g. it is difficult to find a variation that uses different dictionary words, but maintains both the same writing and meaning. For instance, if English "bat" for baseball were substituted for "bat" the animal, the lexical item is the difference, and the writing would be identical, but the meaning is different.

Example: horizontal variation

VS 2, 3 (P342811)	**CT 15, 26-27 (P345459)**
o i 9'. ⌜te-er⌝-te-re dara$_2$ ši-bar ḫu-mu-ra-u$_3$-du	o 17. i-lu-bi tir-tir-ra na-nam šeg$_9$ šeg$_9$-bar na-u$_3$-tu
o i 9'. May the forests bear forth wild goats and mountain goats for you	*o 17. This lament is of the forests. They do not bear forth wild sheep and wild goats.*

[13] For such studies, see (Delnero P. , 2020, p. 255 ff.), Delnero 2019, (Krecher, 1966), (Krecher, 1967)
[14] For ka-ša-an group discussions with paleographic concerns, see (Guerra, 2024)

This single line is representative of a much larger parallel connection, often referred to as the "topos of abundance" (Ferrara, 1995; Gabbay, Mirelman, & Reid, 2020), but it already illustrates several of the features of variation introduced above. What identifies these two lines as parallel in the first place is their shared theme: the forest and the animals expected to inhabit it. Beyond this shared theme, however, the two lines diverge in several instructive ways:

1. **Orthographic variation**: VS 2, 3 is written in syllabic (unorthographic) orthography, while CT 15, 26–27 is written in standard morpho-logographic Sumerian.[15]
2. **Lexical variation**: VS 2, 3 employs *dara₂* ("mountain goat"), an animal term that is atypical among other attestations of this topos, where the more usual pairing is *šeg₉* and *šeg₉-bar* ("wild sheep" and "wild goat") — as found in CT 15, 26–27 itself.
3. **Semantic variation**: the two lines have opposite illocutionary force — VS 2, 3 expresses a hope that the animals will once again come forth in the forests, while CT 15, 26–27 laments that they are not coming forth. Notably, this semantic reversal is achieved here not through lexical substitution, but through polarity: the main verb — a form of *u₃-du/u₃-tu*, "to bring forth" — is identical in both texts, appearing once in a precative/hopeful construction and once negated.

1.3.2 Vertical variation

Vertical variation emerges only when comparing multiple lines together, rather than a single line in isolation. The first concerns differences in **size** — that is, the number of lines — between two parallel passages: specifically, which lines appear to have been added in one variant, or omitted from the other, relative to their shared parallel material. The second concerns the **ordering** of lines: two passages can still reasonably be treated as parallel even when their constituent lines occur in a different sequence.

Difference in line count of the parallels can be seen as one example omitting lines that the other includes or adding lines that the other example omits. Establishing which of these two descriptions is more accurate is not always straightforward, but sometimes it can be reasonably inferred. For instance, abbreviations of litanies can be seen as the omission of the remainder of the litany due to the near standardization of that litany in general, and the inclusion of the full litany in a parallel passage.

Example: additions/omissions

For example, CT 58, 11 (P274206) and CT 15, 19 (P345454) both contain the eršema of Dumuzid (rubric in latter) with the title šeš-e dab₅-ba-na. While CT 58, 11 (P274206) has a 9-line long litany for Dumuzid, CT 15, 19 (P345454) only comprises a single line for Dumuzid.

CT 58, 11 (P274206)	**CT 15, 19 (P345454)**
o 1. šeš-a tab-a-na ⌜uru₂⌝ ir-ra na-nam	o 1. šeš-e dab₅-a-na uru₂ er₂-ra na-nam
o 2. a ŋuruš šeš-a tab-a-na uru₂ ir-ra na-nam	o 2. a ŋuruš šeš-e tab an-na
o 3. a ŋuruš ^{d}ama-ušumgal-an-na	
o 4. a ŋuruš ⌜su₈⌝-ba en ^{d}dumu-zi	o 3. a ŋuruš su₈-ba en ^{d}dumu-zi

[15] For VS 2, 3 as a member of the ka-ša-an group, see (Guerra, 2024)

o 5. a ŋuruš u$_3$-mu-un-e a-ra-li	
o 6. a ŋuruš u$_3$-mu-un-e du$_6$-su$_8$-ba	
o 7. a ŋuruš u$_3$-mu-un-e bad$_3$-tibira^{ki}	
o 8. a ŋuruš u$_3$-mu-un-e e$_2$-muš$_3$-a	
o 9. a ŋuruš mu-ud-na ga-˹ša˺-an-na-ka	
o 10. a ŋuruš šeš ama mu-˹tin˺-na	
o 11. i-bi$_2$ lum-lum ka-na-aŋ$_2$-ŋa$_2$ u$_3$-˹mu˺-un ki-ri ka-na-aŋ$_2$-ŋa$_2$	
o 12. dumu e$_2$-gal-a-ni nu-mu-un-su$_3$-ga-ŋu$_{10}$	o 4. dumu e$_2$-gal-a-ni nu-mu-un-su$_3$-ga-ŋu$_{10}$

Re-ordering of lines can be seen at different scales, ranging from the transposition of two adjacent lines, to the relocation of an entire passage or block of lines to a different position within the composition.

Example: litany substitutions

BM 96680 (P345778)	**RA 8, 161 (P355691)**
o ii 40. ˹mu˺-gi$_{17}$-ib ga-ša-an-an-na i-bi$_2$-zu mu-e-ši-ma-al	o i 2. ga-ša-an-an-na-ke$_4$ na-aŋ$_2$ dam-a-na
o ii 41. nin ga-ša-an e$_2$-an-na i-bi$_2$-zu nu-uš-ni-ma-al	o i 3. ga-ša-an e$_2$-an-na-ke$_4$ na-aŋ$_2$ dam-a-na
o ii 42. nin ga-ša-an ki unug^{ki}-ga i-bi$_2$-zu nu-uš-ni-ma-al	o i 4. ga-ša-an ki unug^{ki}-ga-ke$_4$ na-aŋ$_2$ dam-a-na
o ii 43. nin ga-ša-an ki zabalam^{ki} i-bi$_2$-zu nu-uš-ni-ma-al	o i 5. ga-ša-an ki zabalam^{ki}-ke$_4$ na-aŋ$_2$ dam-a-na
o ii 40. *Priestess Gašan-ana, your eyes are set on yourself* o ii 41. *Queen, lady of the Eanna, if only you looked at it* o ii 42. *Queen, lady of the land of Uruk, if only you looked at it* o ii 43. *Queen, lady of the land of Zabalam, if only you looked at it*	o i 2. *Gašana-ana, the fate of her spouse!* o i 3. *Lady of the Eanna, the fate of her spouse!* o i 4. *Lady of the land of Uruk, the fate of her spouse!* o i 5. *Lady of the land of Zabalam, the fate of her spouse!*

Sometimes multiline connections may have wording that is shared by only part of a line, but the lines still share the same rhythm. This may be exemplified by lists of divine epithets where the lines begin with an epithet and end with a refrain. The refrains themselves have their own line-by-line pattern within the individual texts. In this example, the refrain in RA 8, 161 is repeated in A/A/A/A style. Other refrains have an A/B/A/B pattern and others can have no repetitions, i.e. A/B/C/D. These patterns can be found within other genres of Sumerian literature (Ferrara, 1995).

Example: larger scale vertical variation

	YBC 9862 (P310399)		**VS 2, 28 (P342836)**
1	si gal ŋen si gal ŋen si kur-ra diri-ga ŋen	1	[si gal me-en si] ˹gal˺ me-en si kur-ra diri-ga me-en
2	si gal diŋir-re-e-ne ŋen si kur-ra diri-ga ŋen	2	[si gal] ˹diŋir˺-re-e-ne me-en
3	palil ^{d}a-nun-<na>-ke$_4$-ne ŋen si kur-ra diri-ga ŋen	3	[palil ^{d}a]-nun-na-ke$_4$-ne me-en
4	sun$_2$ zi ŋa$_2$-ŋa$_2$ a-a ^{d}en-lil$_2$-la$_2$ ŋen	4	[mu-tin] bara$_2$-bara$_2$-ke$_4$-ne me-en
5	sun$_2$ zi-da ^{d}mu-ul-lil$_2$-la$_2$ ŋen	5	alim kur-ra si gur$_3$-ru me-en
6	mu-tin še-er-zi bara$_2$-bara$_2$-ke$_4$-ne ŋen	6	sahar-ŋar id$_2$-da saŋ dar me-en
7	alim kur-ra si gur$_3$-ru ŋen	7	an-na u$_3$-mu-un-bi me-en ki-a ga-ša-an-bi me-en
8	sahar-ŋar id$_2$-da saŋ-saŋ dar ŋen	8	[me-e diŋir]-re-e-ne mu-un-na-diri-ge
9	an-na u$_3$-mu-un-bi ŋen ki-a ga-ša-an-bi ŋen	9	[^{d}a-nun]-˹na˺-ke$_4$-ne mu-un-na-diri-ge
10	me-e dim$_3$-me-er-e-ne ša-mu-un-na-diri-ge-en	10	[šu il$_2$]-˹la˺-ŋu$_{10}$ an-ne$_2$ ba-e-us$_2$
11	^{d}a-nun-na-ke$_4$-ne ša-mu-un-na-diri-ge-en	11	[me-ri] ˹il$_2$˺-la-ŋu$_{10}$ ki-e ba-e-us$_2$
12	i-bi$_2$-ŋu$_{10}$-[še$_3$] a-ba-am$_3$ bar-ŋu$_{10}$-še$_3$ a-ba-am$_3$	12	[ga-ša-an] me-en šu-ŋu$_{10}$-ta šu sa$_2$-a nu-ŋal$_2$
13	i-bi$_2$ ˹il$_2$˺-[la]-˹ŋu$_{10}$˺ a-ba-a ba-ra-e$_3$	13	[ga-ša-an] me-en me-ri-ŋu$_{10}$-ta me-ri sa$_2$(KI-)a nu-ŋal$_2$
14	a$_2$ bad-ra$_2$-a-ŋu$_{10}$ a-ba-a ba-ra-šub-bu	14	[i-bi$_2$-ŋu$_{10}$-še$_3$ a-ba]-˹am$_3$˺ bar-[ŋu$_{10}$-še$_3$ a-ba-am$_3$]
15	dumu mah-di {d}mu-ul-lil$_2$-la$_2$ ŋen	15	[i-bi$_2$] ˹il$_2$˺-la-ŋu$_{10}$ a-ba-a [ba-ra-e$_3$]
16	gal-di a-a-ŋu$_{10}$ {d}suen-na ŋen	16	[a$_2$ bad]-˹ra$_2$˺-a-ŋu$_{10}$ a-ba-a [ba-ra-šub-ba]
17	ga-ša-an ŋen šu dug$_4$-ga ^{d}nu-dim$_2$-mud-da ŋen	17	[dumu mah]-di {d}mu-˹ul˺-[lil$_2$-la$_2$ me-en]
18	en mu-un-il$_2$-en u$_3$-mu-un-il$_2$-en	18	[gal-di a]-a-ŋu$_{10}$ {d}suen-˹na˺ [me-en]
19	me A lugal-ra x mu-na-ab-il$_2$-en	19	[ga-ša-an me]-˹en˺ mi$_2$ dug$_4$-ga {d}nu-˹dim$_2$˺-[mud-da me-en]
20	sipa-ra mu-duru$_5$ mu-na-ab-ze$_2$-eŋ$_3$ ŋen	r 1.	[en mu-un-il$_2$]-˹en˺ u$_3$-mu-˹un˺-[il$_2$-en]
21	sipa-ra u$_2$-li-a mu-un-|DU&DU|-|DU&DU|-un	r 2.	[...]-˹ra˺ mu-un-na-[ab-il$_2$-en]
22	u$_3$-mu-un-e na-aŋ$_2$-u$_3$-mu-un-e mu-tag-ge-en	r 3.	[sipa]-ra mu-dur$_2$-ru-un mu-un-na-[ab-ze$_2$-ŋen]
23	u$_3$-mu-un hul$_2$-la me-e hul$_2$-la-de$_3$ ŋen	r 4.	[u$_3$-mu]-˹un˺-e nam-u$_3$-mu-un-e [...]
24	ga-ša-an-e na-aŋ$_2$-ga-ša-an-e mu-tag-ge-en	r 5.	[ga-ša]-an-e nam-ga-ša-an-e [...]

25	ga-ša-an ŋen ga-ša-an hul$_2$-la me-e hul$_2$-la-de$_3$ ŋen	...
26	šu il$_2$-la-ŋu$_{10}$ an-ne$_2$ bi$_2$-ib$_2$-us$_2$	
27	me-ri ⌜il$_2$⌝-la-ŋu$_{10}$ ki-a ba-ab-us$_2$	
	...	

This example helps us see what is involved in parallels with multiple lines of connection. This multi-line example is spread very widely across the two tablets, but notice the large gap in YBC 9862 5-27 (23 lines) that has no correspondence in VS 2, 28, and the shorter 2 line gap VS 2, 28 with no correspondence in YBC 9862. In addition, sections within this example are also written in opposing sequence from each other. We can also examine the single line features that are also present in parallels with multiple lines. Here, the individual connecting lines contain the same words, albeit in different orthographies. The potential reasons behind these variant occurrences are the major matter of inquiry in this project.

1.4 Assessing the Regularity of Variation

Among the parallels among the Old Babylonian lamentation corpus, some exhibit a higher degree of regularity than others — that is, some parallels are, in an informal sense, "closer" to one another than others are. To clarify, if two parallels share the same number of lines, preserve the same line order, and use identical wording throughout, we would naturally judge them to be closer to one another than a pair of parallels exhibiting reordering and lexical substitution. This matter is directly related to question posed earlier of what constitutes a single composition. We are more inclined to treat two witnesses as straightforward copies of one another if they sit at the "closest" end of this spectrum, whereas we might consider different types of textual connection if they exhibit "more" variation (see Chapter 1).

But is there a way to quantify the degree of regularity in the variation observed between text exemplars? To this end, we can employ computational techniques for measuring string similarity or distance. Applying this method to the full range of variation across the entire corpus would be a substantial undertaking, but it is possible to test the approach on a smaller, more tractable set of material first. Divine litanies make a good candidate for this initial test: they are relatively short, and therefore comparatively inexpensive to encode by hand, and litanies devoted to a wide range of deities are attested throughout the corpus with sufficient numbers of examples (Black J. A., 1987). Some of these litanies are quite consistent, both in order and in fullness, while others are less so. To start, let's introduce some of the metrics we can use and how to apply them.

These metrics are not meant to replace philological interpretation. They provide a way to describe the regularity of variation more systematically, but they cannot determine on their own whether two passages belong to the same composition, different versions, or distinct compositions drawing on the same repertoire. Their value lies in making patterns of overlap, omission, and reordering visible enough that they can be compared across examples.

1.4.1 Text Distance Metrics

The features of variation discussed above can be reflected through different quantitative measurements when we compare two parallel instances against each other. To do this, we convert

the lines of two texts into string sequences, first co-labeling any lines that match between the two texts with a shared symbol, so that identical content receives the same label regardless of its position in either text. Taking the two texts from the worked example above, there are eleven total matching lines; each receives its own letter, arranged in the order in which it occurs within each text (with **X** marking a gap where one text lacks content present in the other). The resulting string for YBC 9862 is: **abcdefghiXjk**. The string for VS 2, 28 is: **abcdefXjkghi**.[16]

Overlap Distance

This measurement reflects the total number of lines that connect between the two texts under comparison; any gaps or reordering of lines are deliberately disregarded, so that this measure captures only the raw quantity of shared material between the two exemplars, independent of how that material is arranged. For the worked example above, the overlap score is 11.

Hamming Distance

The Hamming distance measures the degree of positional **alignment** between two texts, assigning a smaller distance (indicating greater similarity) to text pairs whose matching lines occur at the same position in both sequences. Any feature that disrupts this positional alignment — including gaps present in only one text, or a difference in the relative ordering of lines — will therefore increase the resulting distance. For the worked example above, the Hamming distance is 6.

One of the limitations in using the Hamming distance is that it can only be used for strings of equal length.

Levenshtein Distance

The Levenshtein distance measures the minimum number of single-character insertions, deletions, or substitutions required to transform one string into the other. Unlike the Hamming distance, it does not require the two strings being compared to be the same length, and unlike the longest common subsequence, it assigns an explicit cost to every kind of discrepancy between the strings, not only to breaks in shared order. For the worked example above, however, Levenshtein distance turns out to equal the Hamming distance already calculated: 6. This is not a coincidence specific to this pair of strings, but reflects a real limitation of the measure for exactly the phenomenon under discussion here.

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[16] A sequence-alignment approach of the kind originally developed for comparing biological sequences (Needleman and Wunsch 1970) offers a way to address the gap-length problem flagged earlier — namely, that a single "X" placeholder cannot distinguish a 23-line gap from a 2-line one. Rather than treating a gap as a single, fixed-cost event, this approach assigns an explicit, tunable penalty for opening a gap and an additional, typically smaller, penalty for each unit by which that gap extends, alongside separate scores for matches and mismatches at aligned positions. This makes it possible to compute a single alignment score that reflects not only whether two texts share lines and preserve their order, but also how disproportionate any gaps between them are — treating a lopsided 23-versus-2-line disparity as more consequential than an evenly balanced one, in a way that none of the other measures discussed above are able to do. Because the resulting score depends on the specific match, mismatch, and gap-penalty parameters chosen, it cannot be computed as a single fixed value the way the measures above can be;

Longest Common Subsequence

This measurement can help to reflect the reordering of lines. If two phrases shared between two texts are flipped in one of them, the longest common subsequence is broken, and lines are thus lost from the count. The longest common subsequence is unaffected by the insertion or deletion of unrelated intervening material, since it can skip over non-matching elements freely so long as the relative order of the matched elements is preserved. (contrast longest common string). For the worked example above, the longest common subsequence has 9 elements — reflecting the six lines shared in identical order at the start of both texts, plus the three-line block ghi, which, despite being relocated in VS 2, 28, still appears in the same internal order relative to itself in both texts. Had the two texts been in perfect alignment, this value would equal the overlap score calculated above (11).

Jaccard Index

The Jaccard index provides a simple, normalized measure of overlap between two texts, defined as the size of the intersection of their content divided by the size of their union: the number of lines shared between the two texts, divided by the total number of distinct lines across both texts combined (shared and unshared alike). Unlike the raw overlap score discussed earlier, this value is always bounded between 0 and 1, making it directly comparable across text pairs of very different overall lengths — a 0.9 Jaccard score means the same thing whether the texts involved are 10 lines long or 200.

1.5 Explaining the Variation

1.5.1 Tradition/Knowledge-driven factors

a. Literature and Text Creation

In Chapter 1, we surveyed several distinct theoretical traditions, examining specifically how each one conceives of the act of producing a new text. If we treat every completed act of writing as constituting, in some sense, a "new text" — including the copying of an existing manuscript — we can distinguish several possible relationships between the empirical comparison of manuscripts and the way we conceive of the composition(s) they instantiate, synthesizing the discussion of Chapter 1 as follows:

1. Mostly similar, slight variations → single composition, same version (a candidate for stemmatic treatment)
2. Similar, moderate variations → single composition, but differing **versions or recensions**
3. Similar, with moderate variations, but lacking any stable underlying original → a single, fluid composition in the sense of ***mouvance***
4. Some similarities → different compositions, but built from a shared repertoire of reusable material (***Versatzstücke***)
5. Only scattered, incidental similarities → different compositions connected only through broader **intertextual** relationships

The diversity of compositional modes presented in the previous chapter allows us to situate the compositional mode of our own corpus among the categories established there. Examining the texts in this corpus with respect to the degree and character of their variation, and

the resulting question of compositional identity between them, allows us to determine which of these categories best fits the material at hand. For most of the texts in this corpus, we are dealing with a real but partial degree of similarity between witnesses that nonetheless reflect what must be considered separate compositions — that is, Category 4, the domain of *Versatzstücke*.

At the same time, an argument can also be made for situating at least some of these laments within Category 3. If we take incipits and catchlines as evidence of an internal, culturally recognized system of labeling compositions, there are indeed instances of laments sharing the same incipit (Delnero P. , 2020, p. 166 f.).

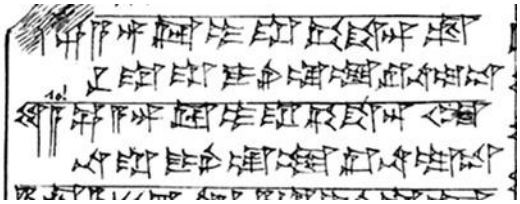
b. Sumerian Poetic Structure

A few words should be said to acclimate us to the structure of Sumerian literature at large and what particulars are featured in our corpus.

The unit of the "line" in Sumerian literary texts is typically defined by the physical line inscribed on the writing surface, usually clay. Horizontally, lines ordinarily begin at the left edge of the tablet and extend to the right. Already at this basic level, a distinction can be drawn between the lament corpus and Sumerian literature more generally: in numerous instances within this corpus, the right-hand portion of a line is left uninscribed. Where this occurs, the blank space typically corresponds to the position where a line's refrain would otherwise be expected, but the scribe likely didn't feel the need to repeat it in writing.

Very commonly, the text line coincides with the linguistic phrase, clause or full sentence. On the occasions when a text line does continue onto a new written line on the tablet, that extension is usually marked with an indentation. Since phrases are not separated line-to-line, words are also not broken up between lines. This tends to be true for indented lines as well, but this is another area the Old Babylonian lamentations corpus can diverge from other corpora, at least in relative quantity. One example is BM 96927 r ii 14' and 16', where the verb form ga-hul$_2$-hul$_2$-le-de$_3$-en (*let us rejoice*) is split up between lines (Kramer, A New Dumuzi Myth, 1990). In these examples, the ";" in the transliteration marks a new line on the tablet, but the writing of the word continues.

VS 2, 11 (P342819)



o i 6'. ⌜te⌝-e-am$_3$ ama-gan-ra ga-ša-an-uru$_2$;-bar-ra-ra dumu-ni ze$_2$-eŋ$_3$-ŋa$_2$ na-ze$_2$-ŋen[17]
o i 7'. te-a-e-am$_3$ ama-gan-ra ga-ša-an-sun$_2$;-na-ra dumu-ni ze$_2$-eŋ$_3$;-ŋa$_2$ na-ze$_2$-ŋen

o i 6'. What do you give to the mother, to Gašanurubara, who gave away her child?
o i 7'. What do you give to the mother, to Gašansumun, who gave away her child?

In this example, the indentation of the line is present, but the names for the goddess are broken up between the lines.

OECT 5, 10 (P345791)



o ii 2'. [...]-ba/⌜zu⌝-še$_3$ maš$_2$ šu mu-un-⌜gi⌝;-di
o ii 3'. [...] ⌜x⌝ DU-a-ba ⌜maš$_2$⌝ šu mu-un-gi;-di
o ii 4'. [...]-⌜NI⌝ AŠ DU-ba-ba maš$_2$ šu mu-un-gi;-di

o ii 2'. ... extend the hand to the goat for ...
o ii 3'. ... extend the hand to the goat
o ii 4'. ... extend the hand to the goat

Only one sign is needed to complete the line, but it still is broken up into two lines.

[17] In transliteration, the semi-colon ";" and forward slash "/" indicate the continuation of a textual line with an indented line on the tablet. The ";" marks this continuation in the middle of a word; the "/" marks that the continuation starts a new word.

We can view this phenomenon in several tablets from Girsu that seem to preserve a different tradition of narrower columns and non-indentation, e.g. AO 4327 (P315471):



o ii' 9'.	ama-lu$_2$ gi li;-bi-ra i-nu li-li mu-ku-e
o ii' 10'.	ama-lu$_2$ nin he$_2$;-du$_{10}$ i-nu ŋuruš li-li mu-ku-e
o ii' 9'.	*The amalug-priestess lies down among the old reeds ...*
o ii' 10'.	*The amalug-priestess, the suitable lady lies down ...?*

Cuneiform signs within a line can be physically distributed in different ways. One consistent pattern is that the end of the line is written to hug the right edge of the tablet, although occasionally, the line can overflow onto the edge, sometimes at an angle. If there are fewer signs than space available for the physical line, and the last word or phrase is pushed to the right edge, a blank space can be formed within the line. Other blank spaces may also be present on the line.

In many texts within the Old Babylonian lamentation corpus, groups of lines are structured in two parts, corresponding to what is generally termed the *hemistich* structure of the line, divided by a *caesura* (Black J. A., 1985). This bipartite structure is observable both linguistically or rhythmically within the line itself, and physically, in the form of a gap on the tablet separating the two halves. In such cases, the right-hand half of the line tends to begin at a consistent point on the tablet across the lines within a given group, except where the left-hand half overflows beyond that point. This written convention of marking the caesura, however, often does not hold consistently across an entire tablet, or across different manuscripts of the same composition. Black's own documentation of the manuscript tradition of *a-še-er ŋi$_6$-ta* illustrates this directly: some manuscripts mark the caesura consistently, while others do not mark it at all.

It is likely that much of Sumerian literature was, at some point in its history, intended for performance, although the specific circumstances of such performances are often difficult to reconstruct (Alster, Interaction of Oral and Written Poetry in Early Mesopotamian Literature, 1992). By the Old Babylonian period, when the bulk of Sumerian literature was being copied by scribes, the original performance context behind many of these compositions — particularly royal and literary hymns tied to specific historical occasions — appears to have already lapsed.

For the Old Babylonian lamentation corpus, the relationship between composition and performance is somewhat more complicated. Much of what we've discussed about the production of these texts relates to their variability around similar forms and structures.

However, what are we to make about the fact that many of these tablets are written syllabically instead of logographically? Delnero (2020) argues that the prevalence of this feature in this corpus indicates that these tablets were aids for correct pronunciation of the text during performance (building on Kutscher 1975). This would suggest that precision of utterance was an important concern in lamenting, consistent with similar concerns found in religious performance more broadly.

Some care should be taken to distinguish between information on a tablet that was itself performed, and material that instead functioned as an instruction to the performer or as a scribal note about the text (Black J. A., 1992). Indications of this kind do point to a text's role in performance, though many surviving examples come from the first millennium. Phrases such as *ana zamāri* ("for singing") are indicative of a text's intended performance, though comparable notes can also indicate other purposes, such as use in scribal education or as a dedication (Pearce, 1993).

Some directives of this kind are also attested in Akkadian within the Old Babylonian lament material itself: BE 30/1, 12 (P257924) o i 24, *ka-lu-šu-nu i-za-ma-ru* ("they all sing"); and RA 16, 208 (P290067) r iii 16′, *i-lu a-di ig-ga-am-ma-ru* ("the gods until they are completed"). This latter example refers to a litany of over one hundred lines of gods that recurs across multiple laments — the "long god litany" discussed above (cf. Gabbay 2014) — and rather than writing out the full list, the scribe simply recorded this instruction in its place (Cavigneaux A. , 2022).

A comparable directive may also be attested in Sumerian: CLAM 804 (= BM 96927, P355665) o i 2, *an-ne₂ nam-ma-gub šudu₃-de₃ nam-ma-ra-e / in-ŋa₂-e-re₇-de₃-en* ("standing under the sky, uttering a prayer, we go") which coincidently precedes the same long god litany. There is also the possibility that these lines function in both ways, i.e. as performed lines and as reflecting actions in the performance a dual role that is not uncommon in ritual literature more generally (Gill, 1977).[18]

1.5.2 Social-driven Factors

a. The Performance Setting

The occasions for the performance of these laments are known mostly from later periods, and thus are not directly applicable to the Old Babylonian period. (Cohen M. , 1981) identifies four such occasions on which the *gala* performed these texts, derived from 1st millennium sources: (1) recitation at funerals; (2) recitation to ward off demons in connection with certain events (e.g., the construction of a temple, or setting out on a journey); (3) recitation during the razing or renovation of temples, to appease the god; and (4) recitation on a recurring, cyclical basis throughout the year (daily, monthly, or annually).

For the Old Babylonian period specifically, these occasions can only be treated as possibilities, since there is very little direct evidence from within the corpus itself (Delnero P. , 2020). Some evidence from earlier periods exists, as Delnero follows Sallaberger's Ur III calendar book (1993) on ritual laments performed in that period. Löhnert too has a summary of the cultic function of laments at the end of the third millennium (Löhnert, 2011, pp. 413–14).

[18] See Gabbay, Mirelman and Reid (2011:282 n.19) on the formula šud₃-de₃ TN ki de₃-en-gi₄-gi₄-gi₄ (also later in this dissertation).

The spatial arena of a lament's performance is also an important consideration for its composition. Performances at different temples and in different cities could warrant alterations to a lament's lines, or the addition of entirely new lines to the text. As Kutscher notes, “the composition bewailing the destruction of a city could be adjusted for different cities and be employed in the worship of their respective patron deities” (Kutscher, 1975, p. 6). This possibility adds a further dimension to the competence required of the lament's composer or performer: beyond linguistic, dialectal, and structural knowledge, the composer must also draw on geographic and cultic knowledge, tailoring the text to the specific divine audience — and its associated city and cult — for which a given performance was intended. The following example is demonstrative:

Example: Variation motivated by setting/place

NCBT 688 (P302741)	**PRAK C 52 + (P344926)**
o 4. mu-gib$_3$ an-na ga-ša-an-an-na-ke$_4$	o i 2. ga-ša-an-an-na-ke$_4$ na-aŋ$_2$ dam-a-na
o 5. kur [gul]-gul ga-ša-an e$_2$-an-na-ke$_4$	o i 3. kur gul-ul ga-ša-an ŋur-saŋ-˹kalam˺-[ma]
o 6. an dub$_2$-ba ga-ša-an gi$_6$-par$_3$-ra-ke$_4$	o i 4. an tu-pa ama gal ama ki!-˹ša?˺ [...]
o 7. ^{d}lil$_2$-la$_2$-en-na ga-ša-an tur$_3$ amaš-ke$_4$	o i 5. e$_2$-lil$_2$ ga-ša-an tur$_3$ ˹ama?˺-sa? [...]
o 4. Priestess of heaven, Gašan-ana	*o i 2. Gašan-ana, the fate of her spouse!*
o 5. Destroyer of mountains, lady of the Eanna	*o i 3. Destroyer of mountains, lady of Hursaŋkalama*
o 6. Shaker of the heavens, lady of the Gipar	*o i 4. Shaker of the heavens, mother of Kiš*
o 7. Lilaʾena, lady of the cattlepen and sheepfold	*o i 5. Lilaʾena, lady of the cattlepen and sheepfold*

The version on the left may be considered the more standard form of this short litany to Inana. Its first line contains a common epithet for the goddess, attested elsewhere in parallel passages. Her two attributes as destroyer of mountains and shaker of the heavens likewise recur together elsewhere in Sumerian literature. The structures named in the second and third lines — the Eanna and the Ŋipar — are both closely associated with Inana's presence in her principal city, Uruk. The divine name Lilaʾena remains obscure.

Much of the litany on the right side is identical, with one telling exception: Inana's shrines in Uruk, the Eanna and the Ŋipar, are absent, replaced instead by two locations associated with Kiš — the tablet's own findspot. This substitution reflects the geographical flexibility with which lament composers adapted their compositions to the appropriate cultic setting. As (Delnero P. , 2020, p. 168) has likewise observed regarding this same pair of sources, the replacement of the Eanna with Ḫursaŋkalama “directly reflects the local traditions in which the two sources were produced,” associating Inana instead with a temple local to Kish. Bowen's broader study of the Kish lament corpus reaches a similar conclusion: “The consistent replacement of certain proper nouns... as well as the selection and reorganization of *Versatzstücke* in the manuscripts of Kiš laments, speak to a fluidity among the laments” (Bowen, 2017, p. 174f.).

b. The Audience of the Lamentation Performance

Features that identify a type of text in performance have the effect on the audience of tuning them into the performance through that focus. This can create a set of expectations that the audience awaits while engaged in the performance event, and they can judge it based on its fit within those expectations. This idea of "keying" was coined by Goffman in his discussion of frames in discourse (Goffman, 1974) and adapted for language performance purposes by Bauman (Bauman, 1978). Bauman's purpose was to highlight his view that language is multifunctional and not simply limited to common language vs. artistic language. He lists several types of linguistic and paralinguistic features that can have the effect of "keying" the audience into the interpretive frame of the performance to which they are attending.

One major question with this idea is the identity of the audience in the performance of the lamentation. From a theological standpoint, the audience is the god who is the addressee of the lament. Where observable in the tablets, this god is identified in a rubric after the category of song, e.g. *eršema Inanakam* (*an Eršema of Inana;* (Delnero P. , 2020)). Of course, we cannot discount everybody else in attendance at the lamentation ceremonies. We may even want to consider those who heard about the performances second-hand, even if it is just the fact that they occurred.

Two matters can be raised here. As Delnero writes, applying the ritual language studies of Tambiah, the language of the laments falls into Tambiah's 1st category of ritual language reception, namely the kind that is heard but not understood (Tambiah, 1968). His argument is based on the fact that Sumerian was no longer a living, spoken language, and thus most people would not have understood it upon hearing it. However, viewed in light of the main audience members being divine, their understanding of the lament would be essential for it to function, i.e. to assuage their anger. The supernatural quality of the listeners does not need to present an issue when we examine the (human) participants' conception of audience. According to Sam Gill, in his studies on the language of Navajo prayers, "The pragmatic effects of the prayer are directed toward the spiritual realm. But, as the prayer text shows, there is an expected attendant change in the physical world." (Gill, 1977, p. 153). This "change in the physical world" is necessarily done by the divinity who has such power, either through introducing a positive component in the human world, or by removing a malevolent one.

The question then is how the conception of this audience would have impacted the composition of the lament. In this regard, Emesal can be viewed as tool for keying this conceived audience into the appropriate interpretive frame. Some of parallel formulas under our investigation can also be viewed in this light. For example, the litanies that are common in this corpus are not common elsewhere.

Chapter 3 – Patterns of Content, Structure and Variation

This chapter applies the frameworks developed in the preceding chapters to a series of worked examples drawn from the corpus. Building on the developments from the previous chapter, the examples presented here offer a fuller and more concrete picture of the specific content items and structural arrangements attested across the corpus, the ways in which those items build upon one another to create larger units of text, the variations that manifests between parallel witnesses, and finally, the assessment of regularity between the litanies found in the corpus.

Since content, structure and variation are all connected, I will attempt to look at these categories first in analytically separate ways, but will need to point out connections with other categories to make clarifications. Some of these examples may be repeated under different categories, but this should be taken to indicate how intertwined and combinational these categories are. Not every possibility of content item or structural arrangement can be shown fully here, but hopefully, this presentation of examples will provide sufficient coverage. Some examples will have more discussion than others, a result of the time I spent on them. Further collection of content/structural types and examples will be attempted as a computational interface.

In the next chapter I will bring together some of the major observations and patterns of the combined phenomena that can be collected from the examples in this chapter.[19]

3.1 Content Items

3.1.1 Word Pairs

The urban setting[20]

e₂, uru₂ - “house”, “city”

NCBT 688 (P302741)

r 7. e₂ ŋar-ra-ba e₂-ŋu₁₀ ba-gul
r 8. uru₂ ŋar-ra-ba uru₂-ŋu₁₀ ba-gul

r 7. My house, when it was founded, was destroyed
r 8. My city, when it was laid down, was destroyed

The ordering of this pair varies, with *e₂/uru₂* having a slight edge over *uru₂/e₂.* In fact, this particular example has a parallel in another tablet with the reverse order:

[19] While the main focus of this dissertation is the Old Babylonian corpus of laments, and not the later tablets from various periods within the 1st millennium, I still find it useful to invoke those texts when they are pertinent. Those texts will be marked with an asterisk (*) to mark their later date.
[20] The divisions of the pairs into “settings” in this section is meant for convenience of reader consumption rather than a statement about any native categorizations or conceptions.

AO 4327 (P315471)[21]
r ii' 10. [u₂]-˹ru˺ ŋa₂-ra-ba u₂-ru-ŋu₉ ba-gul
r ii' 11. e ŋa₂-ra-a-ba a e;-ŋu₉ i-me

r ii' 10. When the city was founded, "My city is destroyed!"
r ii' 11. When the house was founded, "My house!", she says

dam, dumu - "spouse", "child"

This pair is found very frequently in the lamentation literature (perhaps the most frequent word pair in this list).

CBS 11321+ (P266481)
r iii 11'. dam ni₂-ŋa₂ mu-ti-in am₂-gam-gam
r iii 12'. du₅-mu ni₂-ŋa₂ mu-ti-in am₂-gam-gam

r iii 11'. My own spouse, men carried off
r iii 12'. My own child, men carried off

This pair occurs widely outside of the corpus as well. Note a proverb for example:

14.40[22]
dam nu-ŋar-ra tuku-a-ŋu₁₀-ne
dumu nu-ŋar-ra tud-da-ŋu₁₀-ne

When I gained a cruel spouse,
When I bore a cruel child

This pair also seen in shorter, more formulaic construction across a wide range of genres:

dam (nu-)tuku dumu (nu-)tuku
(not) having a spouse, (not) having a child[23]

The ordering of the pair as *dam/dumu* is kept very rigidly across all genres of Sumerian literature, with few counterexamples. One such counterexample is found in the city lament for Sumer and Ur (and thus not strictly in our corpus):

U 16900e (P346209)[24]
o 12. ama dumu-ni-ir ki nu-kiŋ₂-kiŋ₂-de₃
o 13. ad-da a dam-ŋu₁₀ nu-di-de₃

o 12. That a mother does not look after her child
o 13. That a father not say, "Oh, my wife!"

[21] This text is a syllabically written text from Girsu (Delnero P. , 2020, p. 525), a text with parallels to uru₂ am₃-ma-i-ra-bi, but not necessarily a copy.
[22] (Alster, p. 219)
[23] see GHB 53, 55; *Martu* 31; and passim
[24] See (Michalowski, 1989) for composite with translation and commentary.

The *ama/ad-da* (“mother/father”) pair occurring in the very same lines retains its own usual order throughout (see the discussion of *ama*, *a-a* below), and the lines immediately following this passage revert to the standard *dam/dumu* ordering. The apparent counterexample, in other words, has a structural explanation particular to this example.

ama$_5$, erim$_3$-ma - “chamber”, “storehouse”

PRAK C 47+ (P344921)[25]:

o 5. ama$_5$-ŋu$_{10}$ eš$_3$ e$_2$-an-˹na˺ [...]
o 6. erim$_3$-ŋu$_{10}$ še-eb ki ˹zabalam˺ [...]

o 5. *My chamber, the Eanna-shrine …*
o 6. My storehouse, the bricks of Zabalam …

ma-an-gur$_{11}$, gil-sa - “property”, “treasure”

H 2 (P355702)[26]:

KXXI.1 a ma-an-gur$_{11}$-ŋu$_{10}$ a gil-sa-a-ŋu$_{10}$
KXXI.2 ma-an-gur$_{11}$ kur$_2$-re ba-ab-i-ra-a-ŋu$_{10}$
KXXI.3 gil-sa kur$_2$-re ba-ab-gam-ma$_3$-a-ŋu$_{10}$

KXXI.1 *Oh my property! Oh my treasure!*
KXXI.2 *My property plundered by the outsider!*
KXXI.3 *My treasure carried off by the outsider!*

gul, hulu “to destroy”, “to ruin”

WML 56.05.01 (P405569)[27]

12. aŋ$_2$ e$_2$ zid-ŋu$_{10}$ ba-˹gul˺-la-re
13. aŋ$_2$ uru$_2$ zid-ŋu$_{10}$ ba-hulu-a-˹re˺

12. That thing which destroyed my fine house!
13. That thing which ruined by fine city!

[25] Parallels another text with the same incipit from Kish, PRAK B 48 (P343865). Another text with this incipit from Abu Habbah has a variant in these lines (BM 100111=P274228). Yet another text with the same incipit from Nippur is too broken at this spot (CBS 11151=P266312). See later discussion for variations based on the Kiš setting. cf. Bowen 2017:187

[26] See parallels in VS 2, 32 (P342840) r ii 1. A later text also contains a parallel (BM 38593 = P414363). VS 2, 90 (P342898) likely begins with these lines, but it is very broken. Cf. also BM 96680 (P345778) o i 40-42 for perhaps a borrowing of these lines in a different Inana balaŋ. A text that closely follows for multiple sections, TLB 2, 1 (P389155), diverges for these lines.

[27] See Wilcke 1973 15f. See also parallels in BM 29615 (P345446) 10-11, VS 2, 25 (P342833) r viii 32'-33’), (Krecher, Sumerische Kultlyrik, 1966, p. 212), VAT 1544 (P342869) o 4’-5’. The NA text K 2786* (P394672) seems to copy <gul> on both lines. VS 2, 19 (P342827) has the same text but is broken at these lines. The same can perhaps be said about K 19311 (P404186*).

The pastoral setting

tur₃, amaš – "cowpen", "sheepfold"

CT 58, 39 (P274234)[28]
i 17. ud tur₃ gul-e ud amaš bur₁₂-re
i 17. The cowpen-destroying storm, the sheepfold-uprooting storm

As an epithet of Inana (passim):

lil₂-la₂-en-na ga-ša-an tur₃ amaš-a
Lilaʾena, lady of the cowpen and sheepfold

This ordering is very common, the reverse order *amaš/tur₃* is rarely found, although these counterexamples occur, but are in a broken context:

PRAK C 63 (P344937)[29]
o i 4'. lu₂ amaš [...]
o i 5'. lu₂ tur₃ [...]

BM 23666 (P274211)
o 26. [...] ⌜x x⌝ amaš tur₃-še₃ GAM ⌜A x⌝ [...]

Outside of emesal literature, the order *tur₃/amaš* is likewise maintained. In the *Debate between Grain and Sheep*, *amaš* is instead paired with *ab-sin₂* ("furrow"), fitting naturally with that composition's agricultural subject matter:

UET 6, 33 (P346118)[30]
r 13-14. ^{d}lahar-e amaš-a gub-ba-ni-ta / sipad amaš-a hi-li duh-duh-a-ta
r 15-16. ^{d}ašnan ab-sin₂-na gub-ba-ni-ta / ki-sikil sag₁₂-ga hi-li gur₃-ru-am₃

r 13-14. *When Ewe stands in her sheepfold, the shepherd spreads beauty in the sheepfold*
r 15-16. *When Grain stands in the furrow, the young woman carries beauty among the greenery*

gud, e-ze₂ - "bull/ox", "sheep"

CBS 11330 (P266487)[31]
r iv 10′. gud tur₃-ra pel₂-la lu-lu-ŋa₂ <(a₂-aŋ₂-ŋa₂-gin₇ ba-e-gub)>
r iv 11′. e-ze₂ amaš-a pel₂-la₂ lu-lu-ŋa₂ a₂-aŋ₂-ŋa₂-gin₇ ba-e-gub

r iv 10′. A bull debased in the cowpen, I stood in my woes as if commanded
r iv 11′. A sheep debased in the sheepfold, I stood in my woes as if commanded

[28] There are many parallels of this line in both OB and later sources. A text from Abu Habbah adds *gana₂* = "field" before this pair (BM 23111 = P274216). This text otherwise includes farming with animal tending, and is perhaps a ritual related to *eden-na u₂-saŋ-ŋa₂-ke₄* (Fritz, 2003, p. 189 f.)
[29] See (Bowen, 2017, p. 396 (PSK 599))
[30] For composite text, see (Alster & Vanstiphout, 1-43)
[31] Text from Nippur, parallels PRAK C 118 (P344991) r i 12'-13' (Bowen, 2017, p. 397 (PSK 603))

One text adds an extra animal:

MS 3406 (P252347)[32]
o 18. gud tur-bi-a me-ge-e <(lu$_2$ mu-ba-ra me-ge)>
o 19. e-ze$_2$ a-ma-aš$_2$-bi-a me-ge <(lu$_2$ mu-ba-ra me-ge)>
o 20. anše kur-ra si$_2$-si$_2$ me-ge <(lu$_2$ mu-ba-ra me-ge)>

o 18. The bull in its stall, …?
o 19. The sheep in its fold, ..?
o 20. The mountain-equid, the sisi, …?

The pair *gud/udu* is well attested outside of emesal as well:

UET 6, 78+519 (= Šulgi A 52)[33]
o ii 19. gud ha-ba-ni-gaz udu ha-ba-ni-šar$_2$
o ii 19. I slaughtered oxen there, I offered sheep there

Occasionally, *ab$_2$* takes the place of *gud*:

BM 96933 (P345504)[34]
i 23. e$_2$-tur$_3$ mu-e-gul ab$_2$ sag$_2$ ba-e-⌜dug$_4$⌝
i 24. ki amaš mu-e-hulu e-ze$_2$ sag$_2$ ba-e-dug$_4$

i 23. You destroyed the stall, you scattered the cows
i 24. You wrecked the sheepfold, you scattered the sheep

The typical ordering of this pair naturally follows the ordering of *tur$_3$/amaš*, since they are the animals associated with those places, respectively.

munud, sipad – "herdsman", "shepherd"

HS 1484 + 2521 (P345662)
r iii' 18'. mu-nu$_{10}$-de$_3$ ⌜du$_9$-du$_9$ mu-ni⌝-ib-⌜be$_2$⌝
r iii' 19'. sipa-de$_3$ gi-⌜er$_2$-ra mu⌝-ni-ib-be$_2$

r iii' 18'. The herdsman does the churning there
r iii' 19'. The shepherd plays the flute there

The ordering naturally follows the order of *tur$_3$/amaš* (and *gud/e-ze$_2$*), but the reverse order occurs as well:

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[32] See (Delnero & Gabbay, 2023) for the whole text. They connect VS 2, 40 to the text, but the connection is hard to gauge. The transliteration *anše kur-ra si$_2$-si$_2$* could possibly be rendered as sisi$^{si_2\text{-}si_2}$. There is a parallel in PRAK D 61 from Kish (P345074). The Kish text PRAK C 54 (P344928) contains the introduction to this same overall composition, but stops before these lines. For the tablets mixed grouping as having ka-ša-an orthography, but not the correspondent ductus, see (Guerra, 2024)
[33] (Klein, 1981)
[34] Parallel in CTMMA 2, 1 (P412174) r 9'-10'. See (Kramer, By the Rivers of Babylon: a Balag-liturgy of Inanna, 1987) for edition of the text

CBS 2218+ (P259270)[35]
o i 14'. sipad-bi u$_8$ ⌜sila$_4$⌝-na mu-un-⌜šub⌝ mu-dur$_2$-ra im-ma-an-x
o i 15'. mu-nu$_{10}$-bi ^{ŋeš}tukul ub-ba i-ni-in-[gub] mu-⌜dur$_2$-ra⌝ ba-an-x

o i 14'. The shepherd abandoned the ewe and its lamb, ...
o i 15'. The herdsman stood the weapon up in the corner, ...

gul, bur$_{12}$ "to destroy, to uproot"

These are the typical verbs that go with *tur$_3$* and *amaš*, respectively:

CT 58, 39 (P274234)[36]
i 17. ud tur$_3$ gul-e ud amaš bur$_{12}$-re
i 17. The storm that destroys cattle stalls, the storm that uproots sheepfolds

On rare occasion, *gul* pairs with *hulu* for these locations:

BM 96933 (P345504)[37]
i 23. e$_2$-tur$_3$ mu-e-gul ab$_2$ sag$_2$ ba-e-⌜dug$_4$⌝
i 24. ki amaš mu-e-hulu e-ze$_2$ sag$_2$ ba-e-dug$_4$

i 23. You destroyed the stall, you scattered the cows
i 24. You wrecked the sheepfold, you scattered the sheep

However, in this example, also note the variation in the *gud/e-ze$_2$* pair with *ab$_2$* instead of *gud* (see *gud/e-ze$_2$* word pair).

u$_8$, ud$_5$ - "ewe", "nanny-goat"

This is the most common animal pair in the corpus. They are rarely found without their corresponding children, *sila$_4$* and *maš$_2$* ("lamb" and "kid"; see next pair), and so reflect a significant theme in this corpus of the separation between mother and offspring:

CT 58, 7 (P274202)[38]
o 20'. u$_8$ muš-a-ka-ŋa$_2$ muš e$_3$-ba-ra-ab he$_2$-me-en gu$_5$-li-ŋu$_{10}$
o 21'. ud$_5$ ga-na-⌜ka-ŋa$_2$ ga⌝-an e$_3$-ba-ra-ab he$_2$-me-en du$_{10}$-us$_2$-sa-ŋu$_{10}$

o 20'. Remove the snake from my ewe (afflicted by) a snake, and you shall be my friend!
o 21'. Remove the mange from my nanny (afflicted by) mange, and you shall be my companion!

Occasionally, *ama-gan* ("birth mother") is added to this pair of mothers:

[35] See Gabbay (2014: 12, n. 60) for remarks about this texts connections with the later balaŋ utu-gin$_7$ e$_3$-ta (ahû)
[36] Parallels in YBC 7096 (P308085) 94, VS 2, 20 (P342828) o 11', SBH 52* (P414317) r 22', BM 35021* (P414362) r 19'
[37] Parallel in P412174 r 9'-10'.
[38] Parallel in CT 58, 8 (P274203) r i 10'-11' with syllabic spelling. (see Cavigneaux 2025)

NCBT 688 (P302741)[39]
r 17. u$_8$ id$_2$-da bala-ŋa$_2$ sila$_4$ peš$_{10}$ bi$_2$-in-šub
r 18. ud$_5$ id$_2$-da bala-ŋa$_2$ maš$_2$ peš$_{10}$ bi$_2$-in-šub
r 19. ama-gan zi id$_2$-da bala-ŋa$_2$ dumu peš$_{10}$ bi$_2$-in-šub

r 17. When my ewes cross the river, the lambs are abandoned at the bank
r 18. When my nannies cross the river, the kids are abandoned on the bank
r 19. When my loyal mothers cross the river, the children are abandoned at the bank

The first in the pair, *u$_8$*, may also be followed by *ab$_2$*, although this is rare:

NMC 10099 (P355648)[40]
r 6′. u$_8$-e sila$_4$-bi!(DU) nu-un-šub [...]
r 7'. ab$_2$-e amar-bi nu-un-šub ⌜za⌝-[e ...]
r 8'. um-me-da dumu nu-un-šub za-e [...]

r 6′. The ewe did not abandon its lamb, ...
r 7′. The cow did not abandon its calf, you ...
r 8′. The nurse did not abandon the child, you ...

Notice also, here, the continuation of the pair with *um-me-da*, likely an alternative to *ama-gan* from the previous example.

Enki and the World Order has an interesting combination containing *u$_8$* and *ud$_5$*[41]:

52. a-a ^{d}en-ki uŋ$_3$ numun-a e$_3$-ni numun zid he$_2$-i-i
53. ^{d}nu-dim$_2$-mud u$_8$ zid ŊA$_2$ e$_3$-ni sila$_4$ zid he$_2$-u$_3$-tud
54. ab$_2$ numun e$_3$-ni amar zid he$_2$-u$_3$-tud
55. ud$_5$ zid ŊA$_2$ e$_3$-ni maš$_2$ zid he$_2$-u$_3$-tud

52. Father Enki, get the people breeding, and let them breed fine offspring!
53. Nudimmud, get the fine ewes reproducing[?], and let them bear fine lambs!
54. Get <fine> cows breeding, and let them bear fine calves!
55. Get fine nanny-goats reproducing[?], and let them bear fine kids!

The structure of these four lines is intertwined via the verbs *numun-e$_3$* and *GA$_2$-e$_3$*. Thus, one might see two pairs at work here, namely *uŋ$_3$/ab$_2$* and *u$_8$/ud$_5$*. As far as I know, *uŋ$_3$/ab$_2$* don't form a meaningful pair by themselves. However, *uŋ$_3$* and *u$_8$* can be seen in the common phrase *uŋ$_3$ saŋ-gig$_2$-ga u$_8$-gin$_7$ lu-a* "the black-headed people who are abundant like ewes"[42]

[39] This is most likely the case too in the parallels: UM 29-15-368 + UM 29-15-443 (P256178) r i 11'-13' and AO 10672 or PRAK C 52 (P344926) o ii 1"-3"
[40] The text with incipit *ŋa$_2$-e diŋir-ŋu$_{10}$* has multiple exemplars. See discussion below how this text straddles different genres.
[41] Translation follows (Cooper J. S., 2025). Commentary on p.117 points to Gudea B with the order *ab$_2$/u$_8$/ud$_5$*
[42] LSU 30, 103; LN 320; Šulgi A 47; passim

sila$_4$, maš$_2$ “lamb”, “kid-goat”

This pair appeared already in the examples of the previous section, but here is another one:

NCBT 688 (P302741)
r 13. u$_8$-ŋu$_{10}$ sila$_4$-bi-ta ba-⌜da⌝-de$_6$
r 14. ud$_5$-ŋu$_{10}$ maš$_2$-bi-ta ba-[da]-de$_6$

r 13. My ewes are carried away from their lambs
r 14. My goats are carried away from their kids

See examples from *u$_8$/ud$_5$* word pair where the continuation is in *ama-gan* or *em-me-da*. Both of these are joined with *dumu*, thus the *sila$_4$/maš$_2$* pair can be extended by *dumu*.

People

ama, a-a – “mother”, “father”

BM 86536 (P283774)
r iii 28. ama-ŋu$_{10}$ zid-da a-a-ŋu$_{10}$ zid-da ga-naŋ ga-naŋ
r iii 29. ama tu-da-zu ga-ša-an-an-na-ka ga-naŋ ga-naŋ
r iii 30. a-a tu-da-zu an lugal-la-kam ga-naŋ ga-naŋ

r iii 28. My mother is true, my father is true, I shall drink! I shall drink!
r iii 29. Your birth mother is Gašan-ana, I shall drink! I shall drink!
r iii 30. Your birth father is the god of the king, I shall drink! I shall drink!

The pair is regularly kept in this order. See below for this style of structural arrangement (AB/A/B).

ki-sikil, ama-gan – “Young woman”, “birth mother”

This pair has a more variant order:

BM 29623 (P345449)[43]
27. ki-sikil-e šeš-ŋu$_{10}$ mu-ni-ib-be$_2$
28. uru$_2$-ta ama-gan-e dumu-ŋu$_{10}$ mu-ni-ib-be$_2$

27. The young woman says, "My brother!"
28. In the city, the mother says, "My child!"

[43] See (Gabbay, 2015, pp. 21–34) for parallels in CBS 2218+ (P259270) r i 7'; 9', K 2003+* (P394133) r 44-45; K 2789+* (P394673) o 12'-13', K 3506+* (P395052) 10'-11'

But this next from Nippur has the reverse ordering of the same pair, UM 29-15-368 + UM 29-15-443 (P256178)[44]:

r vi' 7'. [ama]-gan zi-gin$_7$ du$_5$-mu šub-ba-a-⌜na⌝
r vi' 8'. [ki]-⌜sikil⌝-gin$_7$ mu-ud-na šub-⌜ba-a⌝-[na]

r vi' 7'. Like the birth mother who abandoned her child
r vi' 8'. Like the young woman who abandoned her spouse

The first paired lines are found in the section *dilmun niŋin-u$_3$* and each exemplar maintains this ordering. The second pair of lines can also be found in a larger context of lines (perhaps connected with *uru$_2$ am$_3$-ma-i-ra-bi*, but uncertain), each example maintaining that reverse order.

gi$_4$-in, labar (ama-a-tu) – "female servant", "male servant" ("maidservant")

NCBT 688 (P302741)[45]
r 63. [gi$_4$]-in-bi gub-ba gi$_4$-in-bi nu-gub
/ la-bar-bi gub-ba la-bar-bi [nu-gub]

r 63. Its women servants who served, those women do not serve
/ Its men servants who served, those men do not serve

Look at these two examples together. The first line pairs *gi$_4$-in* with *la-bar*; The second line pairs *gi$_4$-in* with *ama-a-tu*:

H 2 (P355702)[46]
KXVIII.12 e$_2$ gi$_4$-in šar$_2$-ra la-bar šar$_2$-ra-a-ŋu$_{10}$
KXVIII.13 e$_2$ zi gi$_4$-in šar$_2$-ra ama-a-tu šar$_2$-ra-a-ŋu$_{10}$

KXVIII.12 *My house of numerous female and male servants*
KXVIII.13 *My fine house of numerous female servants and nursemaids*

[44] Parallels another text from Nippur, CBS 8547+ (P263346) r i 4'-5'; Also parallels VAT 1157 (P343067) o i' 15'-16'
[45] VS 17, 48 (P343067) and Sb 12436 (P355669)
[46] parallel in VS 10, 102 (P342910) o ii' 20'

hul$_2$, lib – "to rejoice", "to exult"[47]

This pair appears in a few contexts:

NCBT 688[48]
o 34. uru$_2$ ki-sikil-bi nu-hul$_2$-le-de$_3$
o 35. uru$_2$ ŋuruš-bi nu-lib-be$_2$-de$_3$

o 34. That the city's young women do not rejoice
o 35. That the city's young men do not exult

VS 2, 5+ (P342813) and parallels
r i 47. nu-mu-ni-in-dib$_2$-be$_2$ lu$_2$ ŋul$_2$-la-ni nu-mu-ni-in-dib$_2$-be$_2$
r i 48. še-eb e$_2$-zi-da-ka lu$_2$ li-ba-ni nu-mu-ni-in-dib$_2$-be$_2$

r i 47. Letting nobody pass through, it lets nobody pass through there in joy
r i 48. Within the bricks of the fine house, it lets nobody pass through in delight

a-zu, šim-mu$_2$ - "doctor", "šimmu-priest"

VS 2, 11 (P342819)[49]
o iii 28'. e-ne-eŋ$_3$-ŋa$_2$-ni a-zu nu-tuku šim-mu$_2$ nu-˹tuku˺
o iii 28'. There is no doctor for his word, no šimmu-priest

ULCI 17 (X907115)[50]
ii 4'. [e-ne a-zu ga]-˹am$_3$˺-ma-ga a-zu-bi lul-la
ii 5'. [e]-˹ne šim˺-mu$_2$ ga-am$_3$-ma-ga šim-mu$_2$-bi lul-la

ii 4'. I shall bring the word to the azu-priest, but he is a fake
ii 5'. I shall bring the word to the šimmu-priest, but he is a fake

The divine

ŋuruš, ^{d}dumu-zid – "young man", "Dumuzid"

VAT 617 (P342810)[51]
ii 41. ŋuruš lu$_2$ me-e-de$_3$-˹kar˺-ra-na sa ab-ra-mu-ni-dug$_4$
ii 42. ^{d}dumu-zi lu$_2$ me-e-de$_3$-kar-ra-na sa ab-ra-mu-ni-dug$_4$

ii 41. "The young man who fled from you didn't arrive
ii 42. Dumuzid who fled from you didn't arrive"

[47] The meaning of *hul$_2$* "rejoice" is common. For *lib*, see (Attinger, 2021, p. 678) w/references. The meaning for *lib* "to be rich" is connected to the Akkadian similarity of the verbs *rašû* = "to acquire" and *riāšu* = "to rejoice" and derivations thereof. In this context, a closer synonym of "to rejoice" is more likely.
[48] (Cohen M. E., 1988, p. 588); (Delnero P. , 2020, p. 363); (Krecher, 1966, p. 93 ff.)
[49] There are many parallels
[50] The only other OB parallel seems to come in relatively broken section, VS 2, 24 (P342832) 5'-6'. Other parallels are from 1st millennium texts
[51] Parallels in RA 8, 161 (P355691) r i 28'-29'

šeš, ^{d}utu – “brother”, “Utu”

BM 54315+ (P345741)
o ii 26. šeš-ŋu$_{10}$-ra ka-ga na-ab-ga-ga he$_2$-naŋ-naŋ
o ii 27. ^{d}utu-ra ka-ga na-ab-ga-ga he$_2$-naŋ-naŋ

o ii 26. I brought it to my brother's mouth that he may drink
o ii 27. I brought it to Utu's mouth that he may drink

VAT 1323+ (P342881)
r 8'. šeš-ŋu$_{10}$ an mu-un-u$_3$-tu ab-še$_3$ gi-bi ⌜x⌝
r 9'. ^{d}utu-ŋu$_{10}$ an mu-un-u$_3$-tu ab-še$_3$ gi-bi

r 8'. My brother, An bore him, return to the sea
r 9'. My Utu, An bore him, return to the sea

in-nin$_9$, ^{d}inana – “lady”, “Inana”

BM 15794 (P283740)[52]
r 30. in-nin$_9$ ubur-zu gan$_2$-ne$_2$-zu he$_2$-a
r 31. ^{d}inana ubur-zu gan$_2$-ne$_2$-zu he$_2$-a

r 30. Innin, may your breasts be a field to you
r 31. Inana, may your breasts be a field to you

VAT 1432 (P342847)
r 7'. in-nin ša$_3$-ge-⌜ta⌝ [...]
r 8'. ^{d}inana ša$_3$-ge-ta ⌜x⌝ [...]

r 7'. Innin, the heart ...
r 8'. Inana, the heart ...

This pairing occurs outside of emesal texts as well:

Inana and Bilulu[53]
33. in-nin lu$_2$ ŋar-ra x ŋar-ra x
34. ki-sikil ^{d}inana lu$_2$ ŋar-ra X

Inana and An
Seg.D, 58. in-nin-e ki u$_3$-ma gub-bu-ba šu sa$_2$ dug$_4$-ga-am$_3$
Seg.D, 59. ^{d}inana-ke$_4$ ki u$_3$-ma gub-bu-ba šu sa$_2$ dug$_4$-ga-am$_3$

Seg.D, 58. Innin reached the place of standing in victory
Seg.D, 59. Inana reached the place of standing in victory

[52] The text on this tablet is designated as a šir$_3$-nam-šub to Inana (Black J. A., 1991)
[53] (Jacobsen & Kramer, 1953)

[d]utu, [d]nanna – "Utu", "Nanna"

CT 58, 7 (P274202)[54]
o 18'. ⌜uru₂⌝-a i-[d]utu [d]utu he₂-me-en gu₅-li-ŋu₁₀
o 19'. ⌜uru₂⌝-a i-[d]nanna [d]nanna he₂-me-en du₁₀-us₂-sa-ŋu₁₀

o 18'. In the city, i-Utu!, may you be my friend, Utu
o 19'. In the city, i-Nanna!, may you be my companion, Nanna

[d]an gu-la, [d]mu-ul-lil₂ – "Great An", "Mullil"

This pair combines with *e-ne-eŋ₃* "word", a metaphor for *ud* "storm", which is also a metaphor for any looming catastrophe. When found in this context, the sign sequence *<AN GU LA>* is to be transliterated as *an gu-la* and not *[d]gu-la*

VAT 1423 (P342827)[55]
o 9'. u₃-mu-un-na e-ne-eŋ₃-ŋa₂-ni ma-da-te mu-lu-da-ni ma-te
o 10'. e-ne-eŋ₃ an gu-la-ke₄ ma-da-te
o 11'. e-ne-eŋ₃ [d]mu-ul-lil₂-la₂-ke₄ ma-da-te

o 9'. The word of the lord approaches me, his messenger approaches me
o 10'. The word of Great An approaches me
o 11'. The word of Enlil approaches me

The body

šu, meri (ŋiri₃) – "hand", "foot"

BM 96936/CT 58, 20 (P274215)
r i 13'. šu tuku šu-na um-ma-ra-an-e₃
r i 14'. me-ri tuku me-ri-na um-ma-ra-an-e₃

r i 13'. When the one with hands comes out into his hands,
r i 14'. When the one with feet comes out into his feet

In another text with emesal, Inana and Enki[56], and repeated therein:
Seg.H, 33. a šu-zu nu-tag a me-ri-zu nu-tag
Seg.H, 33. Water did not touch your hands, water did not touch your feet

[54] Parallel in CT 58, 8 (P274203) r i 8'-9', see Cavigneaux 2025. See the refrain style under "xA/yB/…" in structural arrangements section.
[55] See BM 29615 (P345446) for parallel
[56] Farber 1973, (Farber, 1995)

Also in Dumuzid's Dream, and repeated therein:[57]

197. šu-ŋu$_{10}$ šu maš-da$_3$ u$_3$-mu-e-ni-sig$_{10}$
198. ŋiri$_3$-ŋu$_{10}$ ŋiri$_3$ maš-da$_3$ u$_3$-mu-e-ni-sig$_{10}$

197. Turn my hands into the hands of a gazelle
198. Turn my feet into the feet of a gazelle

The word *šu* is expected to precede *ŋiri$_3$*. A proof of this can be found in a scribal error:

BM 86536 (P283774)

r iii 31. ama-ŋu$_{10}$ me-ri-<ŋu$_{10}$>-ta me-ri sa$_2$ nu-ma-al ga-naŋ ga-naŋ
r iii 31a. ama-ŋu$_{10}$ šu-ŋu$_{10}$-ˈtaˈ [šu sa$_2$ nu-ma-al ga-naŋ ga-naŋ]

r iii 31. My mother does not have feet equal to my feet. I shall drink! I shall drink!
r iii 31a. My mother [does not have hands equal] to my hands. I shall drink! I shall drink!

Line 31a is found written vertically on the side of the tablet beginning at the level of line 31. Most likely, this line was initially forgotten but later written as an insertion to precede line 31.

zid, gab$_2$ - "right", "left"

This pair has many different significances inside and outside our corpus:

RIAA 189 (P227377)[58]

o 11. šu zi-da-ŋu$_{10}$ ki bala-e-de$_3$
o 12. gab$_2$-bu-ŋu$_{10}$ nam-sur di-di-de$_3$

o 11. That my right hand change place
o 12. That my left hand act youthfully

CT 58, 20 (P274215)[59]

r ii 4'. ˈuburˈ zi-ˈdaˈ-na du$_5$-mu-ŋu$_{10}$-ra mu-na-la$_2$-e
r ii 5'. ^{id_2}idigna ^{id_2}buranun-na id$_2$ a-gin$_7$
r ii 6'. ubur gab$_2$-bu-na du$_5$-mu-ŋu$_{10}$-ra mu-na-la$_2$-e
r ii 7'. uŋ$_3$ lah$_5$ kalam-ŋa$_2$ mu-un-lah$_5$

r ii 4'. She hangs her right breast down for her child
r ii 5'. The Tigris and the Euphrates, …
r ii 6'. She hangs her left breast down for her child
r ii 7'. Leading the people, she brings them to my land

[57] (Alster, 1972)
[58] Parallels in an Abu Habbah text, but with different incipit: CT 58, 20 (P274215) o i 11; also parallels in a Girsu text: ISET 1, 227 (P343588) o 10; VAT 3606 (P342975) also has the text, but is mostly broken for these lines
[59] Parallels in VS 2, 3 (P342811) o ii 9'-12'; Also paralled in a text from Kish, PRAK C 124 (P344997) r 3'-6'

As the incipit of an eršemma to Iškur:

BM 29631 (P345451)[60]
26. ki-bala-a zid-da-zu u$_3$-mu-e-gul gab$_2$-bu-zu u$_3$-mu-e-si$_3$
26. Destroy the rebel lands with your right hand. Level them with your left hand

Examples outside of emesal literature include:

Enki and the World Order
431. zag zid-da-bi zag gab$_2$-bu-bi šu bala he$_2$-ba-e-ni-in-ak
431. You can exchange their right side and their left side

And Enmerkar and Ensuhgirana
Seg.A, 95. ubur zid-da-ni ma-an-la$_2$ ubur gab$_2$-bu-ni ma-an-la$_2$
Seg.A, 95. Extended her right breast to me and extended her left breast to me.

gub, tuš – "to stand", "to sit"

This pair is common to all genres of Sumerian. In the OB lament corpus:

NCBT 688 (P302741):
r 3. a ba-gub-be$_2$-en ki-gub-ŋu$_{10}$ im-[me]
r 4. a ba-tuš-en ki-tuš-ŋu$_{10}$ im-me

r 3. She says, "Oh, I am standing! My standing place!"
r 4. She says, "Oh, I am sitting! My sitting place!"

An example outside of emesal literature:

Išme-Dagan A+V
291. ^{d}en-lil$_2$ lugal-ŋu$_{10}$-ra hu-mu-na-gub
292. nin-ŋu$_{10}$ ^{d}nin-lil$_2$-da ^{d}en-lil$_2$ hu-mu-un-da-tuš

291. Let Enlil stand for (support) my king
292. And with my lady Ninlil, may Enlil sit

zig$_3$, nu$_2$ - "to rise, to lie down"

This can be utilized as a pair akin to *gub* and *tuš*:

CTMMA 2, 1 (P412174)[61]
o 5. mu-lu zig$_3$-ga-ni mar-uru$_5$ ⌜zig$_3$⌝-[ga]
o 6. mu-lu nu$_2$-a-ni eme-sig ⌜nu$_2$⌝-[a]

o 5. One whose rising is a rising flood
o 6. One whose lying down is slander at rest

[60] See parallels in BM 65145 (P283764) 37; CLAM 804 (P355665) r ii' 40
[61] paralleled in OECT 5, 10 (P345791)

RIAA 189 (P227377)
r 13. ^{d}a-ru-ru er$_2$-ra-ni in-nud-e er$_2$-ra-ni in-zi-zi
r 13. Aruru lies down in tears. She rises in tears

Or it could be written as contrasting meanings, i.e. when something rises, it does not lie down (or vice versa). Or a plea for some who is lying down to get up.

H 2 (P355702)
KXXXI.11 in!-nin$_9$ ušum$^{?}$ ušumgal$^{?}$-am$_3$ i$_3$-nu$_2$ mu-lu nu-mu-um-zi-zi
KXXXI.12 ^{d}inana ušum ušumgal-am$_3^{?}$ i$_3$-nu$_2$ mu-lu nu-mu-um-zi-zi

KXXXI.11 *The lady is a serpent$^{?}$, a dragon$^{?}$. She lies down and nobody can rouse her*
KXXXI.12 *Inana is a serpent, a dragon. She lies down and nobody can rouse her*

VS 2, 2 (P342810)
ii 2. ⌜i⌝-lum mu-lu nu$_2$-a u$_3$ am$_3$-mi-ni-in-zi-zi
ii 3. ⌜dam⌝ ga-ša-an-an-ka mu-lu nu$_2$-a u$_3$ am$_3$-mi-ni-in-zi-zi

ii 2. Noble one who is lying down, she rouses him from sleep
ii 3. Spouse of Gašanana, she rouses him from sleep

And in a text outside of the lament corpus, Enki and Ninmah:[62]

CBS 2168+ (P259234)
o i 14. ki-nu$_2$-ni i$_3$-nu$_2$ u$_3$ ku nu-um-zi-zi
o i 14. He lies down in his bed, he does not wake from sleep

gu$_7$, naŋ – "to eat, to drink"

BM.23631 (P355673)[63]
o i 34. gu$_7$-a-zu-še$_3$ gu am$_3$-ši-ma-al še am$_3$-ši-ma-al
o i 35. naŋ-a-zu-še$_3$ id$_2$-da a-eštub^{ku_6} am$_3$-ši-ma-al

o i 34. As you eat, the flax is present, the barley is present
o i 35. As you drink, the carp are there in the river

Outside of the lament corpus:

Dumuzid's Dream ex. UET 6, 18 (P346103)
o ii' 2'. u$_2$ nu-gu$_7$ me-eš a nu-zu me-eš
o ii' 3'. zid$_2$ dub-dub nu-gu$_7$ me-eš
o ii' 4'. a bala-bala nu-naŋ me-eš

o ii' 2'. They are ones who eat no food, who drink no water
o ii' 3'. They are ones who do not eat heaped up flour
o ii' 4'. They are ones who do not drink libated water

[62] Benito 1969
[63] Paralleled in a text from Kish, PRAK C 130 (P345003) r 11-14

Išbi-Erra E ex. MS 3297 (P252238)
r 8'. u₂ ⌜dug₃⌝-ga ⌜gu₇⌝-a
r 9'. a dug₃-ga ⌜naŋ⌝-a

r 8'. Eating delicious food
r 9'. Drinking pleasant water

The verb *gu₇* typically precedes naŋ. A counterexample occurs when in combination with another pair (*id₂/a-šag₄*) that is in its proper order (and the order pervades the parallels):

BM 15793 (P283739)[64]
r i 5. ⌜id₂⌝ nu-⌜zu⌝-ŋa₂ a-bi ga-naŋ eden-še₃ <(ga-ba-e-da-ŋen)>
r i 6. a-ša₃ nu-zu-ŋa₂ še-bi ga-gu₇ eden-še₃ <(ga-ba-e-da-ŋen)>
r i 7. kaskal nu-zu-ŋa₂ ga-ŋen eden-še₃ ga-ba-⌜e⌝-da-ŋen

r i 5. I am to drink the water from a river I do not know
r i 6. I am to eat the barley from a field I do not know
r i 7. I am to go on a path I do not know

Other

mu, gi – "tree, reed" or "man, woman"

H 2 (P355702)
KXVIII.2 e₂ mu gal-ŋu₁₀ e₂ gi gal-ŋu₁₀
KXVIII.2 My house, a great tree! My house, a great reed!

BM 87518 (P283775)[65]
ii 19. e-ne-eŋ₃ an gu-la mu u₈ um-ma-ak
ii 20. e-ne-eŋ₃ ^{d}mu-ul-lil₂-la₂ gi u₈ um-ma-ak gi-bi še am₃-ša₄

ii 19. The word of great An makes men utter woes
ii 20. The word of Enlil makes women utter woes, those women utter moans

Some instances can be ambiguous, perhaps intentionally so:

CT 58, 39 (P274234)
i 16. ud mu til-e ud gi til-e
i 16. The storm that ends men/trees, the storm that ends women/reeds

[64] Parallels in BM 96684 (P345507) o ii' 11'-13', BM 85198 (P283771) r 4-6, VAT 1419 (P342902) r 20-22. See (Krecher, 1966)
[65] Parallel in VS 10, 195 (P343000) r 7

And in their eme-gir counterparts, as *ŋeš/gi:*

UET 6, 29+498 (P346114)[66]
r i 11'. ŋeš hu-mu-ri-in-šub ŋeš hu-˹mu˺-[...]
r i 12'. gi hu-mu-ri-in-šub ˹gi hu˺-[...]

r i 11'. Therefore, he felled trees for you, he felled trees for you
r i 12'. Therefore, he felled reeds for you, he felled reeds for you

ur-(gir$_{15}$), uga – "dog", "raven"

NCBT 688 (P302741)[67]
o 38. ur-bi adda-a i-im-da-nud
o 39. uga^{mušen}-bi ad$_6$ im-da-gu$_7$!(KA)-e

o 38. The dogs lie down among the corpses
o 39. The ravens eat at the corpses

BM 15821 (P345453)[68]
r 12. ˹tug$_2$˺aŋ$_2$-bara$_3$-ga-na ur ba-e-nu$_2$
r 13. mu-lu-ŋa$_2$ rig$_7$-ga-na uga^{mušen} ba-e-tuš

r 12. *You had the dog lie on his blanket*
r 13. You had the raven perch in my man's hut[69]

ub/da – "corner", "side"

UM 29-15-570 (P256324)[70]
r 25. ˹šudu$_3$˺ ub-a-ke$_4$ ub-e hu-mu-ri-in-ša$_4$
r 26. ˹šudu$_3$˺ da-a-ke$_4$ da-e hu-mu-ri-in-ša$_4$

r 25. The prayer of the corner resounds in the corner for you
r 26. The prayer of the siderooms(?) resounds in the siderooms

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[66] And UET 6, 30+499 (P346115)
[67] Parallel in PRAK C 52 (P344926), o i 33'. See (Delnero P. , 2020, pp. 179,212 and esp. 364f) correcting Cohen's reading of the line (Cohen M. E., 1988, p. 542) and short discussion on the connection between dogs/ravens and Dumuzid, also p.546 for PRAK C 52+ (there as the join PRAK C 121)
[68] Parallels CBS 145+ (P257710) r 6'-7'. See also CM 46, 37-49 (P550399) r ii with shared lines but lacking these two.
[69] On the meaning of rig$_7$ as a noun, see (Krecher, Sumerische Kultlyrik, 1966, p. 153 f.), (Gabbay, 2015, p. 175). Both quote lexical equations, the former with *qa!-ri-tum* = "Scheune", the latter with *ma!-ri-tu-um* = "pasture, pastureland"
[70] Cavigneaux 2022:38; Sjöberg 1977; See parallel in syllabic writing in VAT 613+ (P342812) r iii 7-8. For ka-ša-an group, see Guerra 2024

sig/nim – “lower”, “upper/high”

CBS 10885 (P266078)
o 2. a sig-ta di-da gi$_4$-in-bi ŋen gab-gaz [kur-ra ŋen]
o 3. ⌜a⌝ nim-ta di-da ku$_3$-ŋal$_2$-bi ŋen gab-gaz [kur]-⌜ra⌝ ŋen

o 2. The water coming from the lowlands, I am its worker(?). I, the crusher of the mountains
o 3. The water coming from the highlands, I am its inspector. I, the crusher of the mountains

CBS 10885 (P266078)[71]
o 6. sig-ta di sig-ta mu-gi-gi gab-gaz kur-ra ŋen
o 7. nim-ta di nim-ta mu-gi-gi har-ra-an kur-kur-ra ŋen

o 6. Coming from the lowlands, I return from the lowlands. I, the crusher of the mountains
o 7. Coming from the highlands, I return from the highlands. I, the road of all the lands

The order of this pair is variable:

Ni 2327 (P345092)
o i 7'. [mu]-⌜e⌝ ŋa$_2$ nim-ta ba-gul me-e mu-lu ge$_{16}$-le-eŋ$_3$-ŋa$_2$ ŋen
o i 8'. mu-e ŋa$_2$ sig-ta ba-gul me-e mu-lu gi$_{16}$-le-eŋ$_3$-ŋa$_2$ ŋen

o i 7'. ... from the highlands is destroyed. I am one who is forgotten
o i 8'. ... from the lowlands is destroyed. I am one who is forgotten.

ud/ŋi$_6$ - “day”, “night”

A common pair in all of Sumerian literature, especially significant at the beginning of compositions:

CT 58, 39 (P274234)
i 1. ud ri ud ri-gin$_7$ te ga-ga-zal
i 2. ŋi$_6$ ri ŋi$_6$ ri-gin$_7$ te ga-ga-zal

i 1. How can I live like the olden days?
i 2. How can I live like the olden nights?

[71] See Black 1985: 29, 39; Cohen 1988: 717, 724; Later parallels include CTMMA 2, 7* (P412180) r 14-17; SBH 54* (P414319) r 10-14. For ka-ša-an group, see Guerra 2024

Multiple compositions begin this way and add *mu* = "year, time" to the list:

Enki and Ninmah
1. ud re-a-ta ud an ki-bi-ta ba-an-dim$_2$-ma-ba
2. ŋi$_6$ re-a-ta ŋi$_6$ an ki-bi-ta ba-an-dim$_2$-ma-ba
3. mu re-a-ta mu nam ba-tar-ra-ba

1. In those, in the days of heaven and earth, ...
2. In those nights, in the nights that ... from heaven and earth
3. In those years, in years ...

Gilgamesh, Enkidu and the Netherworld[72]
Ver.1, 1. ud re-a ud su$_3$-ra$_2$ re-a
Ver.1, 2. ŋi$_6$ re-a ŋi$_6$ ba$_9$-ra$_2$ re-a
Ver.1, 3. mu re-a mu su$_3$-ra$_2$ re-a

Ver.1, 1. In those days, those distant days
Ver.1, 2. In those nights, those bygone nights
Ver.1, 3. In those years, many years ago

kug/za(-gin$_3$) – "metal", "stone" (sp. "lapis lazuli")

In general terms, *kug* means "metal" and *za* means "stone", but each can be specified in writing (e.g. *kug-babbar* = "silver", *kug-sig$_{17}$* = "gold", *za-gin$_3$* = "lapis lazuli"). In these examples, *kug* is never specified, but sometimes *za* is specified as *za-gin$_3$*.

BM 15793 (P283739)[73]
o ii 21. ku$_3$ šu-ŋu$_{10}$-gin$_7$ ma e-re-da im-<(ma-al i-bi$_2$-ni in-bar)>
o ii 22. za-gin$_3$ gu$_2$-ŋu$_{10}$-gin$_7$ ma e-re-da im-ma-al i-bi$_2$-⌜ni⌝ [in]-bar

o ii 21. It is with my servant like the metal on my hands, he looks out
o ii 22. It is with my servant like the lapis-stone on my neck, he looks out

BM 23584 (P345457)[74]
o 18. kug i$_3$-tuku-a kug-ŋu$_{10}$ ba-ti
o 19. za-gin$_3$ i$_3$-tuku-a za-ŋu$_{10}$ ba-ti

o 18. The one who has metal, my metal is near
o 19. The one who has lapis, my stones are near

[72] (Cavigneaux & Al-Rawi, 2000)
[73] See (Krecher, 1966); Paralleled in BM 85198 (P283771) o 45-r 1
[74] See (Delnero P. , 2020, p. 466); The eršema ul-e pa-pa-al-ta, seen in catalogues (Cohen M. , 1981, p. 12)

And outside of emesal:

Marriage of Martu[75]
81. kug-zu me-da tum$_3$ za-zu me-da tum$_3$
81. Where will your silver lead me? Where will your precious stones lead me?

dub, šu$_2$ - "to pile", "to cover over"

CT 58, 21 (P274216)[76]
r 11. dub-dub-ba-še$_3$ šu$_2$-šu$_2$-a-še$_3$
r 11. For heaping it up, for spreading it around

N 4124 (P278999)
6'. e$_2$ zi-da sahar ba-da-dub-dub ⌜sahar ba-da⌝-šu$_2$-⌜šu$_2$⌝
6'. In the fine house, dust is heaped up, dust covers everything

VS 2, 25 (P342833)[77]
ii 39. erim$_6$-ma-ŋu$_{10}$ sahar ba-da-dub-dub sahar ba-da-šu$_2$-šu$_2$
ii 39. My storerooms, dust piles up in it, dust covers it

ia$_2$, u – "5", "10"

CBS 11932 (P267066)[78]
r i 4. u$_4$-de$_3$ e$_2$ ia$_2$-ta ia$_2$-am$_3$ ⌜ba⌝-[ra-ab-e$_3$]
r i 5. u$_4$-de$_3$ e$_2$ u-ta u-am$_3$ ⌜ba⌝-ra-[ab-e$_3$]
r i 4. The storm takes away 5 from the house of 5
r i 5. The storm takes away 10 from the house of 10

WML 56.05.01 (P405569)
r 8'. ama dumu ia$_2$-ŋa$_2$ dumu ba-an-da-uš$_2$
r 9'. ama dumu u-ŋa$_2$ dili-ni ba-an-da-tuš
r 8'. The mother of my five children dies with her children
r 9'. The mother of my ten children sits alone

This number duo is also seen in the time formula:[79]

ud nu 5-am$_3$ ud nu 10-am$_3$
Not five days (had passed), not 10 days

[75] (Vanstiphout, 1998)
[76] For tablet, see (Fritz, 2003, pp. 189–190)
[77] cf. (Krecher, 1966)
[78] parallel in H 2 KXVI.31-2
[79] Gilgamesh and Aga 48

bir, suh$_3$ - “to confuse”, “to scatter”

These two synonyms are connected in Gilgamesh and Aga[80]:

GA 47/58. dim$_2$-ma-ni he$_2$-suh$_3$ ŋalga-a-ni he$_2$-bir-re
GA 47/58. *Let his mind be confused and his thoughts be scattered*

They are brought together in the city lament for Nippur[81]:

279. ŋarza suh$_3$-a bir-a-bi si bi$_2$-in-sa$_2$
279. He set in order the rituals that were scattered and confused

And in an emesal lament:

BM 85005 (P345456)[82]
o 8. iri-ŋu$_{10}$ gi$_{16}$-sa-bi ba-bir-bir-re
o 9. ŋir$_2$-su^{ki} za-gin$_3$ tur-tur ba-suh$_3$-suh$_3$-e

o 8. My city, its treasures were scattered
o 9. Girsu, small lapis beads were scrambled

giggig, babbar – “black”, “white”

Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta
471. tug$_2$ na-an-gig$_2$-ge tug$_2$ na-an-babbar-re
471. Whether the garment is black or the garment is white,

BM 15794 (P283740) (Inana G)
r 19. tug$_2$ gig$_2$-zu tug$_2$ babbar-zu
r 19. Your black garment, your white garment

MC 24, 35 (X907112)[83]
r 10. [niŋ$_2$-lam$_2$] gi$_6$-ga-ni ^{na4}za-gin$_3$-duru$_5$-am$_3$
r 11. [niŋ$_2$-lam$_2$] babbar-ra-ni mu-nu$_{11}$-gal zalag-zalag-ga-am$_3$

r 10. Her black garment is soft lapis-stone
r 11. Her white garment is shining alabaster

3.1.2 Common line level content items

Moving up one level from the word pairs examined above, we now turn to content items at the scale of the phrase or full line, which also form self-contained units, across different textual contexts. As with the word pairs already discussed, these larger content items can be found in various contexts: sometimes as part of an identifiable network of parallel passages

[80] (Katz, 1993)
[81] (Tinney, 1999)
[82] Parallel in VS 2, 2 (P342810)
[83] Parallel in BM 86535 (P355674) r iii 36-7

shared with other manuscripts, and sometimes attested only once, with no known duplicate elsewhere in the corpus.

Example (refrain)

1. … mu-lu ta-zu mu-un-zu
1. *… What do people know about you?*

This is a common refrain that features at the start a number of different compositions. It invokes one common theme throughout this corpus, namely the inscrutability of the god (Gabbay, 2014, p. 22). For a list of sources see (Oberhuber, 1990, p. 463) for list of sources with ta-zu mu-un-zu

For the incipit in *a-gal-gal buru₁₄*, see Fadhil and Hilgert 2008

For *gu₄-ud nim e₂-kur-ra*, see Cohen 1988: 440–456; Black 1987: 46, no. 26; Maul 2005: 107 n. 1; Maul 1997: 258

For *nir-ŋal₂ lu₂ e₃-de₃*, Gabbay (2014) notes that this line serves, remarkably, as the incipit of three distinct genres simultaneously: a balaŋ, a ritual eršema, and a šuʾilla

4. Tablet Distribution for the refrain above

Tablet	**CDLI P#**	**Lines**	**Section**
BM 96568	P274275	r 1 ff.	diŋir pa e₃-a hur-saŋ-e gub-[ba]
VAT 617	P342810	r i 23 ff.	en-zu sa-mar-mar
BM 29644	P345448	1 ff.	en-zu sa-mar-mar
K 9315*	P398037	1 ff.	nir-ŋal₂ lu₂ e₃-de₃
CTMMA 2, 15*	P412188	o 2 ff.	nir-ŋal₂ lu₂ e₃-de₃
K 4956+*	P414118	o 1 ff.	nir-ŋal₂ lu₂ e₃-de₃
BM 78239*	P345526	r 10 ff.	egi₂-re egi₂-re gu₃ am₃-me uru₂ in-ga-am₃-me u₃-li-li
SBH 21*	P414288	o 22' ff.	a gal-gal buru₁₄ su-su
SBH 18*	P414284	o 2 ff.	gud nim e₂-kur-ra
BL 131*	P398004	o 1 ff.	umun še-er-ma-al-la an ki-a
K 4618 + K 17646*	P395660		[ur-sag gal & šu-mah an-na] ?

Example (1 line)

1. ma-ma a-ba ud me-na-gin₇ ma-a-a di-di-in
1. *When ...? Where will I go?*

This recurring one-line formula appears across multiple balaŋs addressed to different deities, including the Ninisina balaŋ discussed above (VS 2, 25, v. 43′) and a balaŋ addressed to Enki (Gabbay 2024: no. 2, c+19; no. 3, b+6). Gabbay (2014) describes this as *"an enigmatic one-line section that occurs in several balaŋs,"* tentatively suggesting that it may allude to the rising of a new day, drawing a comparison with the "days of old" invoked by the phrase *u₄-me-na-gin₇* itself (cf. Maul 2005, p. 72). The line is independently attested in Gabbay's edition of the

Ritual Eršemas, and its variant spellings were already documented, in briefer form, by Krecher (1966), who records the opening word appearing variously as *ma*, *ma-a-a-bi/ba*, or *ma-ma-a-ba*, and the middle element as either *u₄-me-na-gin₇* or the shortened *me-na-gin₇*.[84]

5. Tablet Distribution for 1-line passage above

Tablet	CDLI P#	Lines	Section
BE 30/1, 1	P266534	r i 7	gi-er₂-ra eden-na na-mu-un-ma-al
VS 2, 25	P342833	v 43'	
BM 85204	P283773	r 10'	
BM 54745*	P355664	r 30	abzu pe-el-la-am₃
SBH 2*	P414269	r 5'	u₅-a e-ne-eŋ₃-ŋa₂-ni
SBH 3*	P414270	r 6'	e-ne-eŋ₃-zu-še₃
SBH 7*	P414273	r 5	e-ne-eŋ₃-ŋa₂-ni ul₄-ul₄ ?
SBH 18*	P414284	r 15'	gu₄-ud nim kur-ra
1881-07-27, 0066*	P384952	r 22'	mu-lu ša₃-ba-ni mu-un-zu-a
Sm 370 + Sm 566*	P240262	r 10	
K 03315+*	P238269	o i 14'	
Sm 528*	P414416	r 5'	
K 69 + K 3007*	P237771	r 37	

Example (1 line)

1. šud₃-de₃ TN ki de₃-en-gi₄-gi₄-gi₄
1. *May this prayer restore the temple (TN).*

This formula occurs as a fixed closing line at the end of balaŋ compositions, positioned between the final kirugu-notation and the standard closing rubric *ki-šu₂-bi-im*, and is attested across a wide range of sources spanning both the Old Babylonian and first-millennium periods. Interpretations of this line diverge. Gabbay, working from the first-millennium form of the line *šud₃-de₃ še-eb TN(-ta) ki NE-en-gi₄-gi₄*, reads <NE> as *de₃-*, the emesal precative prefix (= *ḫe₂-*), and *ki* as "heart" rather than its more usual sense "place," yielding the translation "may the prayer cause the heart not to turn (away) from the brickwork of TN." On this reading, the line was, in the first millennium, not merely a scribal or liturgical annotation but an actual performed utterance, translated into Akkadian and recited or sung at the conclusion of the balaŋ. Delnero, however, argues that the grammar of the earlier Old Babylonian attestations resists this same analysis: in two of the four OB occurrences, *-ra* follows *gi₄-gi₄* and can only be read as the genuine dative element */ra/*. Delnero further notes that, since the line invariably stands alone between the kirugu-notation and the *ki-šu₂-bi-im* rubric — with no preceding or following material to which it could grammatically refer — the possessive/deictic *-bi* on *šud₃* ("its prayer") must refer to the lament as a whole, rather than to any specific antecedent in the composition's own text. On this basis, Delnero argues that in the Old Babylonian period the line functioned as a genuine scribal or liturgical note *about* the lament's recitation, rather than as a line of the lament itself.[85]

[84] See also (Römer W. H., 2001, p. 246)
[85] See also (Cavigneaux A. , 2022)

Example (3 lines)

1. mu-lu saŋ-zu-a tug$_2$ bi$_2$-dul-la
2. gu$_2$-zu ur$_2$-ra ba-e-ni-mar-ra
3. šag$_4$-zu gipisan-gin$_7$ aŋ$_2$ ba-e-šu$_2$-a

1. *Who covers your head in a cloth*
2. *Who places your neck in your lap*
3. *Who hides your heart as if it were a tablet box*

This three-line passage is attested across at least eight sources spanning the Old Babylonian and later periods. A fuller synoptic apparatus for lines 2–3 specifically is given by Delnero (2020). SBH I* preserves the fullest version of this couplet, together with its Akkadian translation. These lines act as the first halves of successive lines and appear with multiple refrains across the sources, thus an example of a mobile unit of first half portions.

6. Tablet Distribution for the 3-line passage above

Tablet	CDLI P#	Lines	Section	Composition
VS 2, 11	P342819	o iv 9'-11'	a-lu-lu-ŋu$_{10}$	e-lum gud-sumun$_2$
TCL 15, 2	P345346	o ii 8'-10'	a-lu-lu-ŋu$_{10}$	e-lum gud-sumun$_2$
CT 58, 39	P274234	r i 7-9	a-lu-lu-ŋu$_{10}$?	utu-gin$_7$ e$_3$-ta ?
PRAK C 9	P344884	o 2'-4'	a-lu-lu-ŋu$_{10}$?	
BM 132095	P283781	r 32-34	za-e mah me-en	a-ab-ba hu-luh-ha
SBH 39*	P414305	r 7'-9'		
SBH 40*	P414306	o 16-21	a-za-lu-lu	
SBH I*	P414346	o 26-28	am-e amaš-a-na	am-e amaš-a-na

Example (3 lines)

1. i-bi$_2$-zu u$_3$ di-de nu-kuš$_2$-u$_3$
2. gu$_2$-zu ki ma-al-e nu-gi-gi
3. šag$_4$-zu bal-bal en$_3$-še$_3$ i$_3$-kuš$_2$-u$_3$

1. *Your eyes not caring to admire*
2. *Your neck not turning downward*
3. *When will your heart care to turn around?*

Like the last example, these lines act as the first halves of lines with different refrains in the different examples. This distribution suggests that the three refrains are not randomly interchangeable but may correlate with distinct manuscript traditions or groupings — the *te ga-ga-zal* refrain clustering with the same tablet pair identified above as textually continuous, while the other two refrains each cluster with their own separate sets of witnesses. Taken together with the previous example, this passage reinforces the picture of the couplet-plus-refrain structure as a genuinely productive compositional unit: a stable core of content (here, the eyes/neck/heart triad) that could be, and apparently regularly was, recombined with more than one available structural frame.

7. Tablet Distribution of the 3-line passage above

Tablet	CDLI P#	Lines	Section
CT 58, 39	P274234	i 31-33	... te ga-ga-zal
VAT 17500	P347153	o 2-4	umun ^{d}di-kud-mah-am$_{3}$
CBS 10417	P265634	o iii 1'-3'	... uru$_{2}$ lil$_{2}$-la$_{2}$-am$_{3}$
K 2003+*	P394133	o 74'"-76'"	mu-lu u$_{6}$ di
SBH 46*	P414312	r 20-22	mu-lu u$_{6}$ di
SBH 26*	P414293	r 20'-22'	mu-lu u$_{6}$ di
K 2786*	P394672	o 42'-44'	e-ne-eŋ$_{3}$-zu-še$_{3}$
SBH 39*	P414305	o i 1'-3'	

Example (4 lines)

1. i-si-iš ab-ta-la$_{2}$-la$_{2}$ ša$_{3}$-bi-ta i-si-iš ab-ta-la$_{2}$-la$_{2}$
2. še-eb e$_{2}$-zi-da-ka ša$_{3}$-bi a-še-er im-ši-la$_{2}$-la$_{2}$
3. mu-lu hul$_{2}$-la-na nu-mu-ni-in-dib-be$_{2}$
4. mu-lu lib-ba-ni nu-mu-ni-in-dib-be$_{2}$

1. *Sorrow hovers, Sorrow hovers in front of it*
2. *Lament spreads over the heart of the bricks of the Ezida*
3. *Nobody passes by, nobody passes by in happiness*
4. *Nobody passes by the bricks of the Ezida in prosperity*

This four-line passage comprises full lines of laments found within different contexts. In certain texts, they follow immediately after the initial deity litany. Notice also, the *hul$_{2}$/lib* word pair as seen in the list of the previous section.

8. Tablet Distribution for the 4-line passage above

Tablet	CDLI P#	Lines	Section
VS 2, 5	P342813	r i 448	er$_{2}$-ra mu-ni-in-zal
VS 2, 7	P342815	o 10-13	er$_{2}$-ra mu-ni-in-zal
VS 2, 25	P342833	i 18-21	e$_{2}$ še am$_{3}$-ša$_{4}$
PRAK C 23	P344898	o 8'-11'	e$_{2}$ še am$_{3}$-ša$_{4}$
MS 3071	P252080	r 3-6	e$_{2}$ še am$_{3}$-ša$_{4}$
VS 2, 17	P342825	r ii 1-4	gi dili du$_{3}$-a-gin$_{7}$
VS 17, 47	P343066	o 9-12	
CBS 11326	P266483	o ii 8'-11'	
KAR 375*	P369342	r 9-10	a še-eb e$_{2}$-kur-ra
K 15190 + 1879-07-08, 0028*	P401222	o 23'-24'	a še-eb e$_{2}$-kur-ra
SBH 17*	P414283	o 14-17	e-tur$_{3}$-gin$_{7}$ niŋin-na-am$_{3}$
SBH 36*	P414302	o 7'-10'	e-tur$_{3}$-gin$_{7}$ niŋin-na-am$_{3}$

Example (4 lines)

1. aŋ$_2$ bi$_2$-dug$_4$-ga-za bi$_2$-dirig-dirig
2. ki nam ku$_5$-da-za bi$_2$-de$_3$-til
3. sipad nu-ku$_5$-ru-ma e-ze$_2$-a me-e-gub
4. su$_8$-ba u$_3$ nu-ku en-nu-uŋ$_3$-ŋa$_2$ ba-e-tuš

1. *Everything you have said you surpass*
2. *The place you have cursed is put to an end*
3. *You stood the unbending shepherd over the sheep*
4. *You sat the unsleeping shepherd at guard*

This four-line passage is attested across many witnesses spanning the Old Babylonian and first-millennium periods. Löhnert (2009) also points to similar lines in Inana and Bilulu and Išme-Dagan C.

9. Tablet Distribution for the 4 line passage above

Tablet	CDLI P#	Lines	Section
VS 2, 25	P342833	viii 19'-22'	[...] x ⌜dub hul⌝-bi mu-un-⌜sar⌝
CT 58, 39	P274234	iii 30-33	unken saŋ-ŋa$_2$ [...]
NBC 11433	P289914	o 4'-7'	
KAR 375*	P369342	o ii 26-29	
K 4613*	P395658	r 24'a-27'b	[unken saŋ-ŋa$_2$ ...?]
CTMMA 2, 3*	P412176	r 1'-5'	[unken saŋ-ŋa$_2$ ...?]
BL 81*	P395820	o 15'-18'	umun-bi a genna-ŋu$_{10}$
BM 132095	P283781	o 34-37	umun-bi a genna-ŋu$_{10}$
SBH 14*	P414280	r 2"-5"	
BM 113931*	P429579	r 2-5	

Example (5 lines)

1. gudug-bi asila nu-mu-na-ab-be$_2$
2. gala-e a šag$_4$ nu-mu-ni-ib-be$_2$
3. gudug-bi hi-li-ta ba-ra-e$_3$
4. en-bi ŋi$_6$-par$_3$-ta ba-ra-e$_3$
5. gala-e a-še-er-ta ba-ra-e$_3$

1. *The gudug-priest does not perform in joy*
2. *The gala-priest does not say, "Oh heart!"*
3. *The gudug-priest has left the attractive (place)*
4. *The en-priest has left the cloister*
5. *The gala-priest has left the lament*

This five-line passage explicitly names the personnel who are given trouble by the catastrophe. It gives us some information about the places and functions of these roles.

10. Tablet Distribution for the 5 line passage above

Tablet	CDLI P#	Lines	Section
CT 58, 39	P274234	ii 16-19	dam-ga-ra ba-da-kur$_2$
HS 1484 + HS 2521	P345662	r iii' 20'-23'	[dam-ga-ra ba-da-kur$_2$?]
LB 691	P389155	r i 3'-5'	[a še-eb e$_2$-kur-ra ?]
BM 88288	P283778	i 23-26	[am gal] u$_3$-na gub-ba
K 4613*	P395658	o 20a-24b	dam-gar$_3$-ra ba-da-kur$_2$
SBH 33*	P414300	o 5'-14'	[dam-gar$_3$-ra ba-da-kur$_2$]
KAR 375*	P369342	r i 41-48	a še-eb e$_2$-kur-ra
Sm 1403*	P414422	3'-5'	[a še-eb e$_2$-kur-ra ?]
K 15190 + 1879-07-08, 0028*	P401222	r 26-28	a še-eb e$_2$-kur-ra

Example (6 lines)

1. a im-ma-an-tu$_5$ kuš im-ma-an-sub
2. a šen-dili$_2$ kug-ga im-ma-an-tu$_5$
3. naga bur babbar-ra im-ma-an-su-ub
4. u$_5$ ze$_2$-ba bur-ra im-ma-an-šeš$_2$
5. tug$_2$ dan$_2$-na-ni im-ma-an-mur$_{10}$
6. tug$_2$pala$_3$-a naŋ-gašan-an-na u$_3$-um-ma-an-mur$_{10}$

1. *She bathed herself, she rubbed her body*
2. *She washed herself with water of the holy šendili-vessel*
3. *She rubbed herself with soap from the white bowl*
4. *She anointed herself with the good oil of the bowl*
5. *She dressed herself in a laundered garment*
6. *She dressed herself in the pala-garment of ladyship*

This five (or six) line sequence describes a goddess's ritual beautification routine along with the items she uses. The final line is sometimes omitted, and different orderings also occur

11. Tablet Distribution for the 6-line passage above.

Tablet	CDLI P#	Lines	Section
BM 55290	P274214	o 1'-4'	e$_2$ eden-na
VAT 1339	P342837	16-r 4	e$_2$ eden-na
CBS 11932	P267066	r ii 8-13	im-ma-al gu$_3$ de$_2$-de$_2$?
N 4305	P275012	r ii 3-8	
BM 38593*	P414363	r ii 96-107	e$_2$ eden-na
K 5188 + K 8481*	P238376	r 10a-17b	e$_2$ eden-na

Example (6 lines)

1. uš$_{11}$ muš-šag$_4$-tur mu-lu-ra ze$_2$-eŋ$_3$-ŋa$_2$
2. uš$_{11}$ piriŋ-ŋa$_2$ mu-lu-ra e$_3$-de$_3$
3. a hulu ŋi$_6$-u$_3$-na-ka e$_3$-de$_3$
4. hulu sar zag {ŋeš}tir-ra-ke$_4$ du$_3$-a
5. sa-par a-ab-ba-ke$_4$ la$_2$-a
6. i-bi$_2$-te-en-bi-ta ku$_6$ nu-e$_3$-de$_3$

1. *The venom of a snake placed out of the man*
2. *The venom of the piriŋ-beast taken out of the man*
3. *Bad fluids that come out during the night*
4. *A ? planted at the edge of the forest*
5. *A net cast out into the sea*
6. *The fish not escaping its mesh*

12. Tablet Distribution of the 6-line passage above

Tablet	CDLI P#	Lines	Section
BM 86535	P355674	o iii 40-41	e-ne-eŋ$_3$-ŋa$_2$-ni a-ŋi$_6$
BM 88288	P283778	ii 29 ff.	e-ne-eŋ$_3$-ŋa$_2$-ni u$_{18}$-lu u$_{18}$-lu
BM 96568	P274275	o 11-15	
CBS 1689 +	P259021	o? i 1'-7'	
K 5017*	P395837	o 1a-6b	[e-ne-eŋ$_3$-ŋa$_2$-ni ul$_4$-ul$_4$]
SBH 6*	P414272	o 19-26	e-ne-eŋ$_3$-ŋa$_2$-ni ul$_4$-ul$_4$ e$_2$-kur-ra
SBH 7*	P414273	o 3'-10'	[e-ne-eŋ$_3$-ŋa$_2$-ni ul$_4$-ul$_4$]
Sm 498*	P414111	1'-2'	[e-ne-eŋ$_3$-ŋa$_2$-ni ul$_4$-ul$_4$]

Example (7 lines)

1. ama-gan ŋen ud-da ga-ba-da-zah$_2$ mu-lu na-mu-pad$_3$-de$_3$
2. eneŋ an-gula ga-ba-da-zah$_2$ <(mu-lu na-mu-pad$_3$-de$_3$)>
3. eneŋ mullil ga-ba-da-zah$_2$ <()>
4. ud-da e$_2$ kug-ga ga-ba-da-zah$_2$ <()>
5. e$_2$ kug-ga e$_2$ šen-na ga-ba-da-zah$_2$ <()>
6. mulu-ne ki-ŋa$_2$ de$_3$-kiŋ$_2$-kiŋ$_2$-e-ne <()>
7. e$_2$-ri-a de$_3$-kiŋ$_2$-kiŋ$_2$-e-ne <()>

1. *I, the mother, shall flee from the storm. Nobody will find me*
2. *I shall flee the word of Great An. <(Nobody will find me)>*
3. *I shall flee the word of great Mullil. <()>*
4. *I shall flee the storm in the holy temple. <()>*
5. *I shall flee into the holy temple, the pure temple. <()>*
6. *People will seek out my location. <()>*
7. *They will seek in the wilderness. <()>*

13. Tablet Distribution for the 7-line passage above

Tablet	CDLI P#	Lines	Section
VS 2, 19	P342827	r 3-7	amagi-bi ma-te
BM 29615	P345446	r 2-8	amagi-bi ma-te
K 2004*	P238139	r 24-31	an e-lum-e de$_3$-mu-un-zal
MBI 5	P267066	r i 29-33	an e-lum-e de$_3$-mu-un-zal
SBH 58*	P414323	r 1828	

Example (14 lines)

1. en-ne-eŋ$_3$ an-še$_3$ an al-dub$_2$-ba-a-ni
2. eneŋ ki-še$_3$ ki al-sag$_3$-ga-a-ni
3. eneŋ da-nun-na in-gel-le-eŋ$_3$-ŋeš-a-ni
4. a-zu nu-tuku šim-mu$_2$ nu-tuku
5. a-ma-ru zig$_3$-ga gaba-šu-ŋar nu-tuku
6. an al-dub$_2$-dub$_2$-be$_2$ ki al-sag$_3$-sag$_3$-ge
7. gi|KID.MAH|-am$_3$ ama dumu-bi & šu-ba mi-ni-ib$_2$-gur-re
8. gien$_3$-bar pu$_2$-ba-am$_3$ mi-ni-ib-gur$_2$-gur$_2$
9. buru$_{14}$ išin-ba & mu-ni-ib$_2$-su$_3$-su$_3$
10. a zig$_3$-ga-am$_3$ kiri$_3$ al-ur-re
11. a mah-am$_3$ kar al-ša$_5$-ša$_5$
12. mes gal-gal-la gu$_2$-uru$_5$-uš am$_3$-me
13. ud-de$_3$ du$_6$-du$_6$-da šu-še$_3$ al-ma-ma
14. e-ne-eŋ$_3$-ŋa$_2$-zu bu$_5$-bu$_5$-am$_3$ i-bi$_2$ nu-bar-bar-re

1. *His word that shakes heaven above*
2. *His word that strikes the earth below*
3. *His word that makes the Anuna-gods forget*
4. *There is no doctor (for his word), no šimu-priest*
5. *It is a rising flood, that has no rival*
6. *It makes the heavens convulse, the earth tremble*
7. *It rolls up the mother and child as if in a reed mat*
8. *It bends over the reeds in their ponds*
9. *It empties the harvest of its stalks*
10. *It hurries the rising waters at the tip*
11. *It makes the great waters shock the harbor*
12. *It makes the largest mes-trees into trimmings*
13. *The storm places everything at its hand*
14. *Your word howls about, but does not see*

This longer passage appears in multiple contexts. For the section beginning with the *a-ma-ru na-nam*, Maul (2005) and Gabbay (2015) disagree on whether it reflects a performance note.

14. Tablet Distribution for the 14-line passage above

Tablet	CDLI P#	Lines	Section
VS 2, 11	P342819	o iii 25'-29'	a-ma-ru na-nam
VS 10, 102	P342910	o ii' 4'-12'	
Ni 4357	P355667	r 4'-11'	
PRAK C 34	X000113	o 4-12	
SBH 1*	P414268	o 13-41	ud-dam ki am$_3$-us$_2$
SBH 3*	P414270	o 16-r 6'	e-ne-eŋ$_3$-zu-še$_3$
SBH 7*	P414273	r 13-26	e$_2$-tur$_3$-ra gig bi$_2$-ak
SBH 8*	P414274	o 10-26	e$_2$-tur$_3$-ra gig bi$_2$-ak
SBH 9*	P414275	o 11-38	e$_2$-tur$_3$-ra gig bi$_2$-ak
SBH 10*	P414276	o 10-37	e$_2$-tur$_3$-ra gig bi$_2$-ak
BM 55474*	P414365	o 1-6	[e$_2$-tur$_3$-ra gig bi$_2$-ak]
SBH 14*	P414280	o 45-58	uŋ$_3$-ŋa$_2$ mar-ma-an-ze$_2$-en
BRM 4, 11*	P363409	o 4'-r 6	
Sm 528*	P414416	r 1'-4'	
VAT 3425	P342912(?)		
BL 24*	P414104	1-7	
Sm 116*	P414105	1'-10'	
BM 85204	P283773	r 1'	

3.2 Structural Arrangements

The division between horizontal and vertical structural patterns can be somewhat loose and arbitrary, given how the lines are divided. For instance, a structure that helps to compose a single line may be viewed more naturally as double line structure if the line is particularly long. As a small guide to reading this section, capital letters (A,B,C,D) indicate fixed elements within the structure; lowercase letters (x,y) indicate variable elements within the structure. The variable letters indicate where different content items can be introduced within the structural arrangement.

3.2.1 Horizontal Patterns

AA

This single line arrangement comprises a single word or short phrase repeated in the line. It occurs mainly in the introduction to sections.

UM.29-15-570 (P256324)[86]
r 3. in-ŋa$_2$-e-re$_7$-en-de$_3$-en in-ŋa$_2$-e-re$_7$-en-de$_3$-en
r 3. We are going, we are going

[86] A text from Nippur; Paralleled as the incipit of the section in VAT 613+ (P342812) r ii 41. See Michalowski for this word used in a similar processional context in the *Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur*: *e-bur-saŋ e$_2$ lugal-la-[...] in-ga-e-re$_7$-en-de-en, e-nam-ti-la nun šulgi-še$_3$ in-ga-e-re$_7$-en-de-en*, "To the Ebursag, the house of the king, we go! To the Enamtila of prince Šulgi we go!" (Michalowski 1989:81)

BM 88318 (P274208)[87]
24. ba-ni-in-ku$_4$-re-en ba-ni-in-ku$_4$-re-en
24. He let me in! He let me in!

AAB

This structure is a natural extension of the AA pattern: the first word or phrase (A) is still repeated, but is now followed by an additional element (B) that completes the line. Like AA, this structure occurs mainly in the introduction to sections. In a number of title lines, the initial word is repeated in this way, possibly to fill out an otherwise incomplete invocation, or to preserve the same initial-plus-refrain shape found in the material that follows the section's opening.

BM 23658 (P345459)[88]
o 23. id$_2$-da id$_2$-da e$_2$ sag$_3$-ge-da
o 23. In the river! He is to be struck in the river

CBS 11344 (P266495)[89]
r iii 9'. gi$_4$-in-e gi$_4$-in-e uru$_2$ am$_3$-ni$_{10}$-ni$_{10}$
r iii 9'. The slave woman, the slave woman meanders around the city.

ABB

Like the AAB structure also involves repeating a phrase within a single line, but the repetition is at the end of the line. It is often present in the refrain:

BM 86536 (P283774)
r iii 25. ur-saŋ ^{d}inana-ka me-en ga-naŋ ga-naŋ
ff.

r iii 25.I am the hero of Inana, I shall drink! I shall drink!
ff.

AAA

A less common variant of the same basic principle: rather than a single repetition (AA) or a repetition followed by a distinct continuation (AAB), the entire phrase is repeated a full three times within a single line, with no additional element appended.

TCL 15, 8 (P345352)
r i 183. am ^{d}da-mu ⌜am⌝ ^{d}da-mu ⌜am⌝ ^{d}⌜da⌝-[mu]
r i 183. Wild bull, Damu! Wild bull, Damu! Wild bull, Damu!

---

[87] A text from Abu Habbah, labeled as a šir$_3$-nam-šub to Inana, cf. Dumuzid-Inana D 10 (Fritz 2003:79 f.)
[88] Parallels follow this same structure. BM 88384 (P345461) o 3'; N 1373+ (P277466) o 6' is broken at the start of the line, so the structure cannot be confirmed here, although it is likely; The variant text in TCL 15, 8 (P345352) has multiple sections which begin id$_2$-ta id$_2$-ta e$_3$ hul$_2$-le-de$_3$. Despite the difference in final verb choice, the AAB structure is maintained.
[89] see Volk 1989:26

AxAy (or xAyA)

This structure is closely related to AA, but introduces a small substitution partway through the repeated phrase: rather than the same word or phrase recurring identically, a shared frame (A) recurs twice while a single element within it (x, then y) is swapped out. A fixed word pair (of the kind catalogued in the previous section) fits naturally into the position of variation.

CT 58, 39 (P274234)[90]
ii 20. u_3-mu-un-bi nu-mu-un-ti ga-ša-bi nu-mu-un-ti
ii 20. Its lord does not dwell there, its lady does not dwell there

CT 58, 39 (P274234)[91]
ii 25. $ša_3$-bi lil_2-la_2-am_3 bar-bi lil_2-la_2-am_3
ii 25. Its interior is deserted, its exterior is deserted

UM.29-15-570 (P256324)[92]
r 21. $šudu_3$ al-mu_2-mu_2 $šudu_3$ al-sag_9-ge
r 21. The prayers grow, the prayers improve

Vocative pairs can also be considered to have this structure:
H 2 (P355702)
KXX.1. a ur_5-ra-a-ni a $ša_3$-ba-a-ni
KXX.1. Oh her mind! Oh her heart!

AxAyA

This structure combines the two preceding patterns: like AAB, it appends a stable final element (A) after the repeated material; and like AxAy, the repeated material itself varies internally through the substitution of a paired term (x, y). The result is a three-part line in which a shared frame recurs twice with an internal substitution, followed by a return to the frame a third time.

MS 3071 (P252080)
o 2. $še_3$ an-$ša_3$ e_2-e $še_3$ an-$ša_3$ $ŋe_6$ $še_3$ an-$ša_3$
o 2. It groans, the house groans, the night groans (or I groan)

---

[90] This line has parallels in the first millennium that confirm this structure: SBH 33* (P414300) o 15'; K 4613* (P395658) o 25a (and following line in Akkadian translation); An OB text from Kish, PRAK B 298 (P344114) o 4'-5', appears to spread this line out over two lines
[91] The same 1st millennium parallels contain this line as well, but K 4613* is broken where [bar] should be.
[92] Sjöberg 1977: 10; See the syllabic spelling in the parallel VAT 613+ (P342812) r iii 13 - šu-du al-mu-mu šu-du al-si-ga

ABBA

This structure mirrors the phrase within the same line:

CBS 475 (P257924)[93]
o i 1. kuš$_2$-ša an-ga-am$_3$ an-ga-am$_3$ kuš$_2$-u$_3$
o i 1. *Worn out yet again, and again worn out*

3.2.2 Vertical Patterns

A/xA

This is a common feature at the beginning of sections in Sumerian literary composition generally, both within and outside this corpus.[94] Unlike the horizontal patterns discussed above, this structure operates across two lines rather than within a single one. This is an addition of a phrase rather than a substitution, so it changes the formal length of the line, perhaps changing the musical/performance metric. The curly brackets used in the examples that follow are included purely for the reader's convenience, to flag the added element at a glance; they carry no implication about spacing or alignment on the tablet itself.

PBS 10/2, 3 (P257600)
o 1. diŋir gu-ul-gu-ul eden-na eden-na ba-zig$_3$-ga
o 2. {diŋir eden-na} diŋir gu-ul-gu-ul eden-na eden-na ba-zig$_3$-ga

o 1. Destructive god of the wilderness, rising up in the wilderness
o 2. {God of the wilderness,} destructive god of the wilderness, rising in the wilderness

BM 29623 (P345449)[95]
1. dilmun^{ki} niŋin$_2$-u$_3$ uru$_2$-zu u$_6$ ⌜de⌝ [de$_3$-dug$_4$]
2. {alim-ma} dilmun niŋin$_2$-u$_3$ uru$_2$-zu u$_6$ ⌜de$_3$⌝-[dug$_4$]

1. *Go around Dilmun, admire your city!*
2. {Bison,} go around Dilmun, admire your city!

xA/Ay (Anadiplosis)

A further vertical pattern occurs when the end of one line is echoed by the beginning of the next — a device more generally known as anadiplosis:

[93] This line specifically is separated from the rest of the text. See also BE 30/1, 12 (P257924; Šumunda Grass). Gabbay (2014, 235) suggests that this feature may be the title of the composition. Black (1985, p.71) transliterates but does not translate.
[94] See Krecher 1966, p. 77 for examples in laments and as used to reconstruct the first line of VS 2, 25
[95] The parallels that preserve the beginnings of these lines maintain the same structure: CBS 2218+ (P259270) o ii a+5-6; K 2003+* (P394133) r 5-6; BM 85204 (P283773) r 12 ' only preserves the first line as a catchline, as does SM 528* (P414416).

BM 23658 (P345459)[96]
r 5. e-me-da zag-si-ŋu$_{10}$ ^{ŋeš}eren duru$_5$-am$_3$
r 6. ^{ŋeš}eren duru$_5$-am$_3$ ha-šu-ur$_2$-ra-ka

r 5. Nursemaid, my limbs are soft cedar
r 6. They are soft cedar, those of the Hašur-mountains

BM 86536 (P283774)
r iii 34. $^{\lceil ŋeš \rceil}$u$_3$-suh$_5$(TUG$_2$) u$_3$-bi$_2$-du$_3$ ^{ŋeš}kiri$_6$ mes-a-ke$_4$
r iii 35. [^{ŋeš}]kiri$_6$ mes-a-ke$_4$ ga-su$_3$ ga-su$_3$-su$_3$

r iii 34.Plant the pines(?), in the orchard of mes-trees
r iii 35.In the orchard of mes-trees I shall expand it and expand it more

This device is not always confined to a single pair of lines: in some cases, it continues across a longer chain, with each line's final phrase becoming the next line's opening phrase in turn, producing an extended sequence

H 2 (P355702)[97]

KXXXIII.3	dim-gal kul-ab$_4^{ki}$	ma-la-ŋu$_{10}$ na-nam
KXXXIII.4	ma-la-ŋu$_{10}$ na-nam	ma$_x$(|E$_2$×SAL|)ŋu$_{10}$ na-nam
KXXXIII.5	ama$_x$(|E$_2$×SAL|)ŋu$_{10}$ na-nam	kaš mu-un-naŋ-a-ta
KXXXIII.6	kaš mu-un-naŋ-a-ta	ul mu-un-ti-a-ta
KXXXIII.3	*Great pillar of Kulaba,*	*my girlfriend for sure*
KXXXIII.4	*My girlfriend for sure,*	*my chamber indeed*
KXXXIII.5	*My chamber indeed,*	*once she drinks the beer*
KXXXIII.6	*Once she drinks the beer,*	*once she makes revelry*

In still other instances, it is a recurring refrain, rather than freely varying content, that serves as the shared link between one line and the next.

Dumuzid and his sisters (Q000345)
83. mu-tin-e NAM MUG ŋar-ra a al-ur$_4$-ur$_4$-re
84. a KA-KA-a a šeš-ra X-a a al-ur$_4$-ur$_4$-re
85. a al-ur$_4$-ur$_4$-re id$_2$-da bi$_2$-i-gi-gi

Ax/Āx (Expansion)

A line can also expand upon a phrase in the previous line either adding an adjective or engaging in reduplication:

[96] Some parallels preserve this structure: BM 88384 (P345461) o 9' -10'; N 1373 (P277466) o 12'-13'; TCL 15, 8 (P345352) r i 140-141 reverses these lines, and so the device is lost.
[97] One parallel text preserves the same continuing structure: AO 9070 (P345439) r 6-9; A text from Nippur, N 3164 (P278218), skips a line in this passage, but perhaps corrects the error on the left edge

H 2 (P355702)[98]
KXXV.6 ŋeštug$_2$-ka-a-ni a-na la$_2$-a ta
KXXV.7 ŋeštug$_2$ kug-ga-a-ni ta am$_3$-ga-mu-ri-a ta

KXXV.6 *What does her attention linger on?*
KXXV.7 *What has affixed to her holy ear?*

BM 23631 (P355673)[99]
o i 46. e$_2$ mu-lu zi-de$_3$ šu ⌜e$_3$-ba⌝-še$_3$
o i 47. mu-lu zi-zi-da-ke$_4$ šu ⌜e$_3$-ba-še$_3$⌝

o i 46. *For the house blessed by to loyal man*
o i 47. *For (the house) blessed by the most loyal man*

In some cases, a line can intervene between the expansion:

CT 58, 39 (P274234)[100]
i 17. ud tur$_3$ gul-e ud amaš bur$_{12}$-re
i 18. (balaŋ-di ud ša$_3$-ba nu-pad$_3$-de$_3$-da-re)
i 19. tur$_3$ al-gul-gul-e amaš bur$_{12}$-bur$_{12}$-re

i 17. The cowpen-destroying storm, the sheepfold-uprooting storm
i 18. (Balaŋ-player, that storm is not to be desired)
i 19. The cowpen-demolishing storm, the sheepfold-extirpating storm

An example outside of the emesal corpus:

Inana and Enki ex: CBS 13571 + (P268601)
o i 21. [...] en-tum mul-la-ŋu$_{10}$-ne
o i 22. [...] en-tum mul-mul-la-ŋu$_{10}$-ne

o i 21. When I spread out …
o i 22. When I radiate all around …

AB/A/B

A further vertical pattern of a somewhat different kind occurs across three lines rather than two: a first line introduces a pair of terms or elements together (AB), and the two following lines then each take up one of these two elements in turn, elaborating on it individually (A, then

[98] likely parallel in VS 2, 36 (P342844) and 1st mill parallels K 5188 + K 8481* (P238376); BM 38593 (P414363) r ii 25. VS 2, 25 (P342833) r viii 5' and parallel texts CBS 2218 + (P259270) r ii 5 and likely CT 58, 39 (P274234) iii 10) have *ša$_3$-ba-na* instead of *ŋeštug* for the first line, but a 1st millennium tablet with the same section has both a *ša$_3$-ab* and a *ŋeštug* line as above.
[99] and parallels VS 2, 8 (P342816) ii 19', PRAK C 130 (P345003) o 14'; VS 2, 29 (P342837) has the first line but not the second. A similar expansion lies in the parallel BM 23631 (P355673) o i 37
[100] The parallel VS 2, 20 (P342828) has this structure too, but in another parallel, YBC 7096 (P308085) 94-95, there is no interceding line. The later parallel in SBH 52* (P414317) expands the line in a different way. Instead of duplicating the verbs, the text employs the verbal prefix *in-ga-*.

B). This structure allows a poet to first present two related ideas as a unit before treating each separately in fuller detail.

NCBT 688 (P302741)[101]
o 9. di$_4$-di$_4$-la$_2$-bi gal-gal-la$_2$-bi
o 10. *(u) di$_4$-di$_4$-bi šu-ta dug$_4$-ga-bi[102]
o 11. gal-gal-bi me-ri-ta laḫ$_6$-a-bi

o 9. The younger ones, the older ones
o 10. The younger ones who are set upon by hands
o 11. The older ones who are carried off by feet

H 2 (P355702)
KXXI.1. a ma-an-gur$_{11}$-ŋu$_{10}$ a gil-sa-a-ŋu$_{10}$
KXXI.2. ma-an-gur$_{11}$ kur$_2$-re ba-ab-i-ra-a-ŋu$_{10}$
KXXI.3. gil-sa kur$_2$-re ba-ab-gam-ma$_3$-a-ŋu$_{10}$

KXXI.1. Oh, my property! Oh, my treasure!
KXXI.2. My property that was plundered by the enemy
KXXI.3. My treasure that was carried off by the enemy

Examples outside of the corpus:

Dumuzid's Dream ex: UET 6, 18 (P346103)
o ii' 2'. u$_2$ nu-gu$_7$ me-eš a nu-zu me-eš
o ii' 3'. zid$_2$ dub-dub nu-gu$_7$ me-eš
o ii' 4'. a bala-bala nu-naŋ me-eš

o ii' 2'. *They are ones who eat no food, they are ones who drink no water*
o ii' 3'. *They are ones who eat no heaped-up flour*
o ii' 4'. *They are ones who drink no libated water*

Q000781 A drinking song, VAT 6705 (P342964)
r 12. ^{gi}gakkul-e ^{dug}lam-sa$_2$-ri
r 13. ^{gi}gakkul-e niŋ$_2$ ur$_5$ sa$_6$-sa$_6$-ge
r 14. ^{dug}lam-sa$_2$-ri niŋ$_2$ ša$_3$ hul$_2$-hul$_2$-e

r 12. The mash-tub, the brewing vat
r 13. The mash-tub, which improves the mood
r 14. The brewing vat, which gladdens the heart

The reverse ordering of this same pattern — in which the two elements are first treated individually (A, then B), before being drawn back together in a final combined line (AB)

[101] Parallels in AO 10672 (P344926) o i 6-8; MS 2921 (P252007) o 8-10; U 16861 (P346225) o 3-5
[102] The meaning of dug$_4$ in this context is unclear. I think it is likely dug$_4$ being used in its semantically loose sense, i.e. “to act (upon)”.

VAT 5448 (P343003)[103]
o 21. [in]-˹tu˺-ud in-tu-ud dumu-gi$_7$ in-tu-ud ta in-tu-ud-da-[ŋu$_{10}$]
o 22. [in]-peš$_{13}$ in-peš$_{13}$ dumu-gi$_7$ in-peš$_{13}$ ta in-peš$_{13}$-a-ŋu$_{10}$
o 23. [ama]-˹gan˺ tu-ud-da peš$_{13}$-a-ŋu$_{10}$ ta šu ba-ni-ti

o 21. I gave birth, I gave birth, to the native son I gave birth. What did giving birth get me?
o 22. I conceived, I conceived, I conceived the native son. What did conceiving get me?
o 23. Mother, my birthing and conceiving, what did I receive?

BM 29631 (P345451)[104]
23. ^{na4}im tur-tur-e šu um-me-ti a-ba za-e-gin$_7$ te-ba
24. na$_4$ gal-gal-e šu um-me-ti a-ba za-e-gin$_7$ te-ba
25. na$_4$ tur-tur-zu na$_4$ gal-gal-zu ugu-ba u$_3$-me-šeŋ$_3$

23. Take the small clay stones, who is like you when approaching?
24. Take the large stones, who is like you when approaching?
25. Rain the small stones and large stones on their heads

xA/yA/zA/…

One of the main features of this corpus is the refrain that occurs in the second part of the line, typically after each item of a god or temple litany. Examples are abundant.

Ax/Ay/Az/…

Some repeated phrases occur at the beginnings of consecutive lines. They can also appear sporadically in the corpus.

Some examples:

a ŋuruš … - "Oh youth …"
This initial invocation occurs in the litany for Dumuzid and for Damu

CT 58, 11 (P274206) o 2-10 (Dumuzid)
VS 2, 34 (P342842) o 2-11 (Dumuzid)
PRAK C 8+ (P345055) ii 8'-10' and ii 30'-32' (beginning of Damu epithets)
BM 15795 (P345455) o 4-9 (Damu)[105]

PBS 1/1, 5 (P260028)
o 25 a ŋuruš šu-si me-˹ri-a-zu˺ [a?]-˹bala˺-ŋa$_2$ na-nam

PRAK C 118 (P344991)
r ii 11' ˹a˺ ŋuruš sipad-bi? amaš-a-na ba-ra-ab-e$_3$-a-re

[103] Jacobsen 1973, p. 283 gives a translation for these lines, but no transliteration.
[104] See parallel in VAT 1415 (P342859) in a syllabic writing;
[105] see Delnero 2020:69 for this example

e₂ zi-de₃ … - "Fine house …"
VS 2, 5 (P342813) r i 37-44
VS 2, 7 (P342815) o 2-5(ff. ?)
CT 44, 12 (P345521) o 3-6

a-lu-lu … - "Alulu! …"
BM 96639 (P274229) o 2-5

ama šud₃-de₃ … - "Mother praying …"
BM 86536 (P283774) r ii 44-51
K 3315+* (P238269) o ii 6'
And more…

šag₄-ŋu₁₀ ^{d}bau-ŋu₁₀ - "My heart, may Bau! …"
This occurs naturally from a text from Girsu:

NFT p. 204-206 (P315472) r iii' 2-95

These are typically short phrases that have a vocative or expressive function.

xA/yB/…

Less commonly, but still significant, there can be a second half of the line that alternates:

CT 58, 11 (P274206)[106]
o 12. dumu e₂-gal-a-ni nu-mu-un-su₃-ga-ŋu₁₀
o 13. ku₃ ^{d}inana-ke₄ e₂-an-na mu-un-šub
o 14. lu₂ eden-na-ke₄ nu-mu-un-su₃-ga-ŋu₁₀
o 15. ⌜ku₃⌝ ^{d}inana-ke₄ umma^{ki} mu-un-šub

o 12. My child whose palace is not filled,
o 13. Holy Inana abandoned the Eʾana
o 14. My one of the steppe who is not filled,
o 15. Holy Inana abandoned Umma

YBC 9862 (P310399)[107]
22. u₃-mu-un-e na-aŋ₂-u₃-mu-un-e mu-tag-ge-en
23. u₃-mu-un ḫul₂-la me-e ḫul₂-la-de₃ ŋen
24. ga-ša-an-e na-aŋ₂-ga-ša-an-e mu-tag-ge-en
25. ga-ša-an ŋen ga-ša-an ḫul₂-la me-e ḫul₂-la-de₃ ŋen

22. Lord, you are touched by lordship
23. When the lord is happy, I will be happy
24. Lady, you are touched by ladyship
25. When you, the lady, are happy, I will be happy

[106] Parallel in BM 29628 (P345454) o 4-7
[107] The parallel in VS 2, 28 (P342836) lacks the lines with hul₂. The parallel from Nippur, N 2684 (P277752), suggests that those lines may really be a short refrain

3.3 Recombination

Now that the basic content items and structural patterns of this corpus have been catalogued individually, we turn to the process by which they are assembled into larger compositional units. As outlined in Chapter 1, content and structure are not independent of one another in the final composition: a content block, once combined with a given structural pattern, itself becomes available to function as a content unit at a higher level, capable of being incorporated in turn into still larger structural arrangements.

3.3.1 Repetition

Word pairs

BM 23117 (P345458)[108]

r 17. me-e e$_2$-ŋu$_{10}$-da mušen-gin$_7$ im-ma-ra-dal-en
r 18. *(U) ga-ša-an ŋen uru$_2$-ŋu$_{10}$-da mušen-gin$_7$ im-ma-ra-dal-en
r 19. egir-ŋu$_{10}$-a e$_2$-ŋu$_{10}$ egir-ŋu$_{10}$-a gu$_3$ mu-un-de$_2$-de$_2$-e
r 20. egi$_2$ ŋen uru$_2$-ŋu$_{10}$ egir-ŋu$_{10}$-a gu$_3$ mu-un-de$_2$-de$_2$-e

r 17. I flew from my house like a bird
r 18. I, the lady, flew away from my city like a bird
r 19. My house behind me, it calls out behind me
r 20. I, the princess, my city calls out behind me

Multiple Lines

Compare these two sets of successive three lines:

r 42. ga-˹ša˺-an-gal-e ˹ama˺-ŋu$_{10}$ ga-ša-an-gal-e
r 43. am-e ^{d}dumu-zi-de$_3$ ga-ša-an-gal-e
r 44. ama-ŋu$_{10}$ ga-ša-an-gal-e am-e gal-gal-la-kam

vs.

r 45. ^{d}ze$_2$-er-tur-re ama-ŋu$_{10}$ ^{d}ze$_2$-er-tur-re
r 46. am-e ^{d}dumu-zi-de$_3$ ^{d}ze$_2$-er-tur-re
r 47. ama-ŋu$_{10}$ ^{d}ze$_2$-er-tur-re am gal-gal-la-kam

They are exact replicates of each other except that ga-ša-an-gal-e is replaced with ^{d}ze$_2$-er-tur-re.

[108] cf. Delnero 2020:199

CT 58, 21 (P274216)
The passage viewed in this manner:
o 1'. [...] ⌜x⌝ [...]
o 2'. [...] lugal kisal-la$_2$ ⌜x⌝ [...]
o 3'. [ur]-⌜saŋ⌝-e kisal-la$_2$ pa nam-ga-mu-⌜ni⌝-[in-e$_3$]
o 4'. [...]-UD kisal-la$_2$ ki ⌜us$_2$⌝-[sa]
o 5'. ⌜lugal⌝ unken-na šud$_3$-bi-⌜a⌝

vs.

o 6'. [^{d}]nin-urta e$_2$-a-kam bara$_2$ an-na-ke$_4$
o 7'. ⌜a-x⌝ lugal {ŋeš}mes ki-en-gi-ra-še$_3$
o 8'. e dumu lugal kisal-la$_2$ pa bi$_2$-in-e$_3$
o 9'. ur-saŋ-e kisal-la$_2$ pa nam-ga-mu-ni-in-e$_3$
o 10'. maš-tab-ba kisal-la$_2$ ki us$_2$-sa
o 11'. lugal unken-na šud$_3$-bi-a

While there is more damage at the beginning of the tablet, it is very likely that at least o 8'-11' mostly duplicates o 2'-5'. The latter halves o 4' and o 5' line up vertically with o 10' and o 11', although the second half of o 3' (beginning *pa nam-ga-..*) beginnings one sign to the left of where the second half of o 9' begins. Hence, there may be an extra sign or two at the end of o 3', but likely not enough to indicate a refrain. If there are differences in these lines, they would come at their beginnings. This can be seen in the next lines of the text:

o 12'. il$_2$-la-ab il$_2$-la-ab a$_2$-zu an-še$_3$
o 13'. ŋiri$_3$-zu ki daŋal a$_2$-bi ŋal$_2$-la
o 14'. ensi$_2$ ^{d}en-lil$_2$-la$_2$ še ku$_3$-ku$_3$-ga-ne-a

vs.

o 15'. lugal-ŋu$_{10}$ il$_2$-la-ab a$_2$-zu an-še$_3$
o 16'. ŋiri$_3$-zu ki daŋal-la-bi ŋal$_2$-la
o 17'. ensi$_2$ ^{d}en-lil$_2$-la$_2$ še ku$_3$-ku$_3$-ga-ne-a

Here, the main difference is the substitution of the first il$_2$-la-ab in o 12' for lugal-ŋu$_{10}$ in o 15'.[109] Such a difference might be the case in the previous set of lines given

[109] The writing of daŋal a$_2$-bi and daŋal-la-bi

Some sections of this sort can be quite long. Example: VS 2, 25 (P342833) contains a long composition with Ninisina as the focus. Within in, there is a long section (beginning a-ra-li gu$_2$-bar ur$_3$-ra-re) that is repeated three times.

1.	arali gu$_2$-bar ur$_3$-ra-re	*The Arali, where the enemy is drag along*
2.	ŋa$_2$ balaŋ-ŋa$_2$ sa-ŋar nun-na-re	*The bala-house, the counselor of the prince*
3.	ŋa$_2$-gi$_4$-a e$_2$-saŋ tur-ra-re	*The cloister, with small storage*
4.	rig$_7$ TUR-TUR-na & ub nun-na-re	*The small[?] animal pen with noble corners*
5.	ma mu-ni-in-bar & tur-tur-ra-re	*The building of small date-palms*
6.	arali bar-re ama lul-la am$_3$-nu$_2$-a-re	*The outer Arali where the false mother rests*
7.	arali egir na-aŋ$_2$-bi kur-e al-gi-gi-a-re	*The Arali whose fateful back turns to the mountains*
8.	egir arali ama nu$_2$-a-re a-a nu$_2$-a-re	*The back of the Arali where the mother rests, where the father rests*
9.	arali ki-sikil nu$_2$-a-re ŋuruš nu$_2$-a-re	*The Arali where the young woman rests, where the young man rests*
10.	arali dumu nin$_9$ nu$_2$-a-re & dumu šeš nu$_2$-a-re	*The Arali where the sister's child rests, where the brother's child rests*
11.	meš$_3$ meš$_3$-e an-ta am$_3$-nu$_2$	*Heroes lie on top of heroes*
12.	an-eden-na uri$_3$ & uri$_3$-na an-ta na-mu-un-du	*Blood flows on top of blood in the high steppe*
13.	uri$_3$ mu-lu lul-la & mu-lu zi-ra an-ta na-mu-un-du	*The blood of the criminal flows on top of the (blood of) the righteous man*
14.	uri$_3$-na e ba-an-BU-ra & KA šu am$_3$-ši-niŋin	*Blood ... all around*
15.	an-eden-na x mu x (x) x x (x) x NE ma-al	*... in the high steppe*
16.	za-gin$_3$-gin$_7$ x URUDU bar-ra x	*... copper ... like lapis lazuli*
17.	URUDU za-gin$_3$-gin$_7$ & sahar-ra am$_3$-DU	*It stands in the dirt like copper and lapis lazuli*
18.	ar$_2$-mu-ra sahar-ra & am$_3$-dul	*The ruins are covered in dust*

If we schematize the text, using the rulings as guides for section divisions, we can notice a section that is repeated three times, which can be reconstructed as follows:

Line Label	Incipit	Section Content
o i 1.	e$_2$ še$_3$ am$_3$-ša$_4$ me-e še am$_3$-da-an-ša$_4$[110]	
o ii 6.	u$_3$-a erim$_3$-ma-ŋu$_{10}$	
o ii 44.	**eden-e i-lu-a ud mi-ni-ib-zal-e**	**w/a-ra-li gu$_2$-bar ur$_3$-ra-re (1-7;11-18)[111]**
o iii 33.	e$_2$ ši ma-al-la-ŋu$_{10}$ er$_2$-re [...]	
o iv 45.	**nu-ŋar-ra-<mu>-de$_3$ a-gin$_7$ in-da-mar-re**	**w/a-ra-li gu$_2$-bar ur$_3$-ra-re (1-6 + broken)[112]**
o v 19'.	[... KA mu-na-ab-su$_8$]-ge-de$_3$-en	
o v 44'.	**[…]**	**w/a-ra-li gu$_2$-bar ur$_3$-ra-re (1-18)**
r ii 47.	[...] dub hulu-bi mu-un-sar	

PRAK D 45 and PRAK B 322+PRAK C 25 both contain this section, but each seems to contain the text as one section. PRAK D 45 clearly begins a-ra-li er$_2$-ra ša$_3$-bi a-še-ra-am$_3$, and PRAK B 322 likely does as well.[113] This incipit is not found in VS 2, 25 (although note there is a broken incipit for the third copy of the passage). Two other texts, CBS 13393 and PRAK C 100 pick up this section toward the end and follow it beyond to match the section in VS 2, 25 from iii 9-23 after the first copy of the passage there. The two texts become broken at that point, so continued following of the parallel cannot be determined.

Sections

Sections, either marked by line rulings or as explicit ki-ru-gu$_2$'s, can be repeated within the same text. Unlike the last example, both the incipit of the section and the body of the section are the same.

Balaŋ to Mullil

The two OB texts with shortened versions of ayabba huluhha (YBC 4659 P355670; NMC 10051 P355642) have an interesting structural formation. They both have fully repeated sections with same incipit and content. YBC 4659 has the ^{gud}sumun section placed every other kirugu for three repetitions before leaving off. NMC 10051 has the *me-na-še$_3$* section splitting the sections.[114]

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[110] Reconstruction follows Krecher's note (1966, p. 77) that the second line of the text copies this first line. The manuscript MS 3071 (P252080) contains the same introduction as this text. See also PRAK C 23+32 (Nicolet and Lecompte 2024), which covers much of the beginning of this text, but does not preserve the introductory lines. Other texts have similar sections, but diverge at different points: OECT 5, 43; VS 2, 7 o 1-15; SBH 36* o 7'-18'

[111] It is difficult to ascertain if the broken lines contained the reconstructed lines, but see PRAK D 45 for another example with continual lines from 1-c14 of my reconstruction.

[112] Krecher 1966:148 remarks that it is impossible to determine if the entire passage is repeated here due to the break, but there are enough lines present here to assert that there was some conscious repetition here.

[113] o 1. [... ša$_3$]-ˈbi¹ a-še-ra-am$_3$

[114] See HES 1 188f

15. YBC 4659 (P355670)

Line Label	Incipit
o 1.	i-lu a-e i-lu a-e a-še-er [nu]-uš-gul-e
o 9.	**^{gud}˹sumun$_2$˺ e-lum ^{gud}sumun$_2$ mu-zu kur-kur-[še$_3$]**
o 17.	[ši]-mah-en ši-mah-en
o 28.	**^{gud}sumun$_2$ e-lum ^{gud}sumun$_2$ mu-zu kur-kur-še$_3$**
o 36.	me-na-še$_3$ me-na-še$_3$
r 1.	**^{gud}sumun$_2$ e-lum ^{gud}sumun$_2$ mu-zu kur-kur-še$_3$**
r 9.	ša$_3$-ab gi$_4$-u$_3$ [ša$_3$-ab] gi$_4$-u$_3$
r 16.	am al-na$_2$ te mu-un-zi-zi
r 23.	am nu$_2$-de$_3$ de$_3$-en-zi-zi
r 31.	am zig$_3$-ga u$_6$-di am$_3$-dug$_4$
r 37.	am zig$_3$-ga-ni an-ne$_2$ [nam]-us$_2$

Delnero (2020:123) posits the likelihood that these sections were eršemas that were recited along with the balag. The connection between balaŋ and eršema as part of a unit is known in the first millennium, and ki-ru-gu$_2$'s of balags are not known to be repeated. However, the next example text schematized here has a different section of the balag that is repeated:

16. NMC 10051 (P355642)

Line Label	Incipit
i 1.	**[mi-na]-ši mu-le-el mi-na-ši**
i 6.	i$_3$-lu a-e i$_3$-lu a-e a-ši-ir ni-iš-ku-le
ii 1.	**mi-na-še mi-na-še**
ii 11.	ša ki-u$_2$ ša ki-u$_2$
[...]	[…]
r i 5'.	i-ni-ma$_3$-ni-lu i-lu
r i 6'.	x-du-e ga-am-du

The general shortness of the sections in these two tablets should be noted, including their abbreviated litanies to Mullil (see discussion later on Mullil's litany). These texts are clearly outside of the normal textual tradition for these laments.

Balaŋ to Ninurta

A balaŋ to Ninurta also has indications of a fully repeated section. The text CT 58, 38 (P274233) also enumerates kirugus.

Line Label	Incipit	Kirugu #	Line Count
...	…	1	26
o 18'.	e lugal-ŋu$_{10}$ gud ^{gi}en$_3$-bar gu$_7$-a	2	6
r 1.	**ur-saŋ gud-da si-ni šen-na**	**3**	**7**
r 8.	e dumu lugal-ra kur he$_2$-en-na-du$_7$-du$_7$-dam	4	12
r 20.	ur-saŋ ki-bala-še$_3$ kaš$_4$-a bi$_2$-in-dug$_4$	5	5
r 26.	**ur-saŋ gud-da si-ni [šen-na]**	**6**	**(> 4)**

The same balaŋ in another manuscript VS 2, 3 (P342811) seems to have the same sequence of sections, including the repeat. Broken places make it difficult to determine all of the division beginnings in the text, but some can be determined and the lines in the section can be counted:

Line Label	Incipit	Kirugu #	Line Count
...	…		
o ii 1.	... -e niŋin ^{d}mu-ul-lil$_2$		
o ii 13'.	na-mu ma-ha-ši ... / ^{d}mu-ul-lil$_2$		
...?			
r i 16.	**ur-saŋ gud-dam ...**	**= 3**	**6**
r i 22.	e dumu lugal-mu SAL.X ...	= 4	11
r i 33.	... ki-bala-a-še$_3$ ka-sa mi-in-du	= 5	6
r i 39.	**... x si-ni še-na**	**= 6**	**>= 6**
...?			
r ii 19.	...-ak ki-in-ki-in mu-ŋu$_{10}$ na-nam		

The section that is repeated can roughly be reconstructed as follows[115]:

ur-saŋ gud-dam si-ni šen-na	*The hero, the bull - his horns are holy*
^{d}nin-urta gud-da si-ni šen-na	*Ninurta, the bull - his horns are holy*
^{d}pa-bil$_2$-saŋ gud-da si-ni šen-na	*Pabilsaŋ, the bull - his horns are holy*
dnin-ŋir$_2$-su gud-da si-ni šen-na	*Ninŋirsu, the bull - his horns are holy*
a$_2$-ur$_2$-ra-ni muš$_3$-a-ni a$_2$-ni mu-su$_3$-ud-dam	*His limbs, his countenance, his arms, are long extending*
si dili-ni ku$_3$-sig$_{17}$-ga si 2-kam-ma-ni ku$_3$-babbar-am$_3$	*One of his horns is gold; The other is silver*

[115] BM 78983 (P345767) also contains this composition, but not enough is present to confirm the repeated section. Delnero's remarks (2020:415) about this text's connections to PRAK C 124 and VAT 604 implicating its identity as an Inana balag. However, I feel that designation is hard to make with certainty given its connections to the Ninurta balags here (as he notes there too); The lines r i 3'-8' can be used to aid in the section's reconstruction.

TCL 15, 8 (P345352)

TCL 15, 8 is a large tablet with 3 columns on each of the obverse and reverse for 6 columns total. Veldhuis (2024) characterizes it as mortuary ceremony, but with parallels to laments in our corpus. It is divided by clear ki-ru-gu$_2$ labels as the chart below indicates:

Line Label	**Incipit**	**Kirugu #**	**Line Count**
i 1.	[u$_3$]-˹mu˺-un-˹e dumu˺ nun gal an-ki-še$_3$ mah-am$_3$	1	16
i 21.	[... ha]-˹ma˺-sed$_4$-de$_3$; [a-ra-zu de$_3$]-ra-ab-be$_2$	2	[13]
...	...	[3]	[9]
ii 45.	e-ne-eŋ$_3$-ŋa$_2$-ni i-lu i-lu	4	18
ii 64.	ki bi-da-ke$_4$ i-lu nam-mir-ra	5	12
ii 77.	emeda^{da} gur$_5$-ru-ŋu$_{10}$ me-e za-ra dumu i-ri-in-tuš	6	40
iii 118.	**id$_2$-ta id$_2$-ta ˹e$_3$ hul$_2$˺-le-de$_3$**	**7**	**27**
r i 146.	nir-ŋal$_2$ nir-ŋal$_2$ u$_3$-mu-un-bi nir-ŋal$_2$	8	36
r i 183.	am ^{d}da-mu ˹am˺ ^{d}da-mu ˹am˺ ^{d}˹da˺-[mu]	9	7
r ii 191.	[i]-˹im˺-de$_3$-ŋen-na mu-e-hul$_2$-le-na	10	23
r ii 216.	u$_3$-mu-un gu-la ˹i-lim˺ me-˹lam$_2$-ma˺ ; nu-uš-mu-e-ši-sa$_2$-sa$_2$	11	15
r iii 232.	**id$_2$-ta id$_2$-ta e$_3$ hul$_2$-˹le˺-de$_3$**	**12**	**13**
r iii 246.	[...] ur$_2$-zu mu-e-en-da;-kar$_2$ mu-kar$_2$	13	17

The sections with the repeated incipits here contain much in common with each other in the tablet, and are paralleled in other tablets: BM 88384 (P345461), BM 23658 (P345459), N 1373 + (P277466). These other tablets seem to have a different incipit, although it may also be a vocalization. BM 23658 ends the section with a different spelling of the same line:

BM 23658 (P345459)	o 22. a-u$_3$-a i$_3$-al-la$_2$ re$_7$-da / r 25. a-u$_3$-a i-lu a-re-da
N 1373 + (P277466)	o 5'. [x x (x)] i$_3$-˹al-la x u$_3$˺-a u$_3$-a
BM 88384 (P345461)	o 2’. a ˹u$_3$˺-[...] x u$_3$-a u$_3$-a

BM 23658 follows the same order of two ki-ru-gu$_2$’s from TCL 15, 8. Kirugu 5 and 6 in TCL 15, 8 correspond to the order in BM 23658. The difference in the former kirugu is the length of the section containing the topos of plentitude. TCL 15, 8 includes only an abbreviated version, while BM 23658 includes the entire list (see under variation about abbreviations of this sort). Also, BM 88384 has the same kirugu number (6) as that in TCL 15, 8.

3.3.2 Attraction/Magnetism

There is a certain can be observed across how different content items can be combined. For instance, structures are combined with their inhabitants, e.g. spouses and children occupy houses and cities; property and treasure occupy chambers and storerooms; cattle inhabit the stall, sheep the fold; a boat belongs on the river; a chariot on the road. In each case, the combination is not arbitrary, but reflects a real-world or conceptual relationship between the structure and what it properly contains.

Some of these places also tend to be linked with specific terms involving their destruction or defilement, although this is by no means a hard rule. e$_2$ - hulu, uru$_2$ - gul, tur$_3$ - gul, amaš - bur$_{12}$, ama$_5$ - pe-el-la$_2$, and items: ma-an-gur$_{11}$ - ir, gil-sa – ga. These associations are not a fixed rule, but they recur often enough to be worth noting as a tendency.

Taken together, these patterns suggest something like a **magnetism** operating between certain building blocks: some pairs of items are drawn toward one another with notably greater frequency than others, whether because they share a structural role (container and contents), a conventional collocation (a structure and its characteristic verb), or other syntagmatic association.

Here are some charts:

Cattle focus	**Sheep focus**
tur$_3$ “animal stall”	amaš “sheepfold”
sipad “shepherd”	munud “herdsman”
gul “to destroy”	bur$_{12}$ “to uproot”
gud “bull/ox”	e-ze$_2$ “sheep”

Sometimes word pair content items follow in a common sequence:

e$_2$	uru$_2$
dam	dumu
ama$_5$	erim$_3$-ma
ma-an-gur$_{11}$	gil-sa

Word pairs

BM 96680 (P345778) w/dam and dumu
o ii 58. a-še-er e$_2$-⌜ŋa$_2$⌝-ke$_4$ mu-kuš$_2$-u$_3$
o ii 59. a-še-er uru$_2$-⌜ŋa$_2$⌝-ke$_4$ mu-kuš$_2$-u$_3$
o ii 60. a-še-er dam-ŋa$_2$-ke$_4$ mu-kuš$_2$-u$_3$
o ii 61. a-še-er du$_5$-mu-ŋa$_2$-ke$_4$ mu-kuš$_2$-u$_3$

o ii 58. I am worn out by the lament over my house
o ii 59. I am worn out by the lament over my city
o ii 60. I am worn out by the lament over my spouse
o ii 61. I am worn out by the lament over my child

NCBT 688 (P302741)
r 36. uru$_2$-na na-nam e$_2$-na na-nam dam-na na-nam dumu-na na-nam
r 36. It (the cry) is surely of her city, surely of her house, surely of her spouse, surely of her child

CBS 11321+ (P266481)
r i 7'. e$_2$ gul-la-re e$_2$-me an-ga-am$_3$
r i 8'. ⌜uru$_2$⌝ ḫul-a-re uru$_2$-me an-ga-am$_3$

r i 9'. ⌜ama₅⌝ pe-el-la₂-re ama₅-me an-ga-am₃
r i 10'. ⌜erim₃⌝ si₃-ga-re erim₃-me an-ga-am₃
r i 11'. tur₃ gul-la-re tur₃-me an-ga-am₃
r i 12'. amaš bu-ra-re amaš-me an-ga-am₃

r i 7'. That destroyed house is our house too.
r i 8'. That ruined city is our city too.
r i 9'. That defiled chamber is our chamber too.
r i 10'. That emptied storehouse is our storehouse too.
r i 11'. That destroyed stall is our stall too.
r i 12'. That uprooted sheepfold is our sheepfold too.

r 55. me-e-li-ia a uru₂-ŋu₁₀ ga-am₃-dug₄ me-e-li-ia a e₂-ŋu₁₀ ga-am₃-dug₄
r 56. e₂-ŋu₁₀ ga-am₃-dug₄ uru₂-ŋu₁₀ ga-am₃-dug₄ dam-ŋu₁₀ ga-am₃-dug₄ dumu-ŋu₁₀ [ga-am₃-dug₄]
r 57. ama₅-ŋu₁₀ erim₆-ma-ŋu₁₀ ga-am₃-dug₄ mu-un-gar gi₁₆-sa-bi e₂-[ŋu₁₀ ga-am₃-dug₄]
r 58. ama-a-tu-ŋu₁₀ pel-la₂-bi ga-am₃-dug₄ a gi₄-in tur-ŋu₁₀ gig-[bi ga-am₃-dug₄]

r 55. Therefore I say, "Alas, my city!" Therefore I say, "Alas, my house!"
r 56. I say, "my house!" I say, "my city!" I say, "My spouse!" I say, "My child!"
r 57. I say, "My chamber! My storeroom!" [I say,] "Its valuables and treasure!"
r 58. I say, "My maidservants! Their defilement!" I say, "My young maids, their trauma!"

Sections

The same magnetism observed between individual content items in the previous discussion can also operate at a larger scale, between entire sections. Just as certain words or structures tend to co-occur with predictable partners, certain sections — whether defined by ruled lines or explicit *kirugu*-notation — show a comparable tendency to recur together, whether through consistent thematic proximity, shared structural templates, or reliable co-occurrence across multiple manuscripts. This attraction can manifest in more than one way, as the examples below illustrate.

BM 96927 (P355665)

The tablet BM 96927 comprises a collection of eršemas to different deities, but the three final eršemas on the tablet are specifically to Iškur.[116] They are:

Line Label	Incipit	Line Count
r i' 38'.	gu₄ mah pa e₃-a	31
r ii' 18.	u₃-mu-un-e du₆-du₆-dam a naŋ im-ma-ra	22
r ii' 40.	ki-bala a₂ zi-da-ŋu₁₀ mu-un-gul gub₃-bu-bi mu-un-sig₁₀	29

Read in sequence, these three Eršemas trace a single narrative arc centered on Iškur's conflict with a hostile land: the first establishes his standard epithets and destructive power; in the second, Mullil (Enlil) commands Iškur to harness the storm winds to himself; and in the

[116] Schwemer (2001: 175–88) includes an edition

third, Iškur marches out against the rebellious land and lays it waste. Structurally, what is of particular interest here is that these three Eršemas — eighty-two lines together — can be, and evidently were, condensed into a single, considerably shorter Eršema of only thirty lines, preserved on BM 29631. This shortened version, which Cohen (1981: 52–54) and Falkenstein (1953: 81–83) have also edited and translated, follows the same underlying plotline as the three-part sequence on BM 96927, but omits most of the material dealing with grain and plant growth. Schwemer (2001: 175–88) offers a further edition specifically addressing the version of *gu₄ maḫ pa e₃-a* preserved on BM 96927 itself, and is worth consulting directly for the fuller textual history of this material. Even further, returning to BM 96927 as a compilation tablet, a comparable summation of the three Iškur Eršemas appears there as well, positioned before the full versions themselves — suggesting that the impulse toward condensation observed in BM 29631 was not confined to that source alone, but may have been a broader compositional habit already at work within BM 96927's own compilation.

VAT 617 (P342810)

VAT 617 contains a compilation of three eršemmas, each of which are represented in copies from other tablets

Incipit	**# of lines in VAT 617**	**Other tablet w/line count**
en gig-ga-bi na-aŋ₂ dam-ma-na[117]	113	RA 8, 161 (P355691) 107
en zu sa mar-[mar] lu₂ ta-zu mu-un-zu	37	BM 29644 (P345448) 38
uru₂ a gi₁₆-sa bar-ŋa₂ ba-e-ga	35	BM 85005 (P345456) 30

Long passages from *en-zu sa mar-mar* recur in other compositions as well. One especially interesting feature of this Eršema's transmission is that at least one alternative version is explicitly marked as dedicated to a different deity: the compilation tablet CBS 15089 appears to begin with this same Eršema — based on the ends of the lines preserved on its obverse, column 1 — but its subscript identifies it there as an Eršema to Ninurta rather than to Enlil (Gabbay 2014: 152 n. 39; independently confirmed by Delnero 2020, who likewise catalogues CBS 15089's version as “Enlil, identified as an Eršemma of Ninurta”). The Neo-Assyrian text P238374 possibly preserves this same Ninurta-associated version, and includes the rubric [er₂-šem₃]-ma ^{d}nin-urta-kam alongside other rubrics referring to different sections of that same tablet.[118] Rm 373 + 1879-07-08, 239* (P236905) likewise preserves many of the same lines and similarly identifies Ninurta as the composition's principal deity.

[117] P345422 also contains this text, but gets cut off after 13 lines. P278132 seems to have a section from the middle of this composition.

[118] see Gabbay 2015: 129, no. 28, Eršema *u₃-ma gul-gul-e* 1; cf. also Gabbay 2014: 236 n. 33 on the confusion surrounding the labels in this text; Delnero 2020: 116

BM 15793 (P283739)

BM 15793 is a collective tablet containing two Eršemas: the first, dedicated to Ninisina — written as ^{d}Gula in its rubric — runs to 109 lines; the second, addressed to Martu, runs to 28 lines. The Ninisina Eršema, with incipit *a-ra-li me-en*, is confirmed by Delnero (2020) as closely duplicated in A 6742 (P392068), with further parallels to UM 29-15-368, and an extended passage paralleled in an Inana lament attested in BM 78173, VAT 1367, VAT 1419, and BM 85198 (P283771) — the latter three of which are not yet incorporated into the synoptic comparison below and may be worth adding.

A 6742 begins in the same way as BM 15793 and tracks it closely, with only minor variation, until reaching what appears to be a thick ruling on the reverse — possibly marking the end of the Eršema — beyond which only scattered traces survive (A 6742, o. 1–r. 14 ≈ BM 15793, o. i 1–31). BM 15793 itself, however, continues the same Eršema for a further seventy-eight lines beyond this point.

BM 85198 is broken for roughly the first ten lines and appears to begin differently from the *a-ra-li me-en* tradition, but converges with it more or less faithfully for twenty-five lines (o. 21–r. 1). BM 15793 then diverges from BM 85198 for fourteen lines, before the two sources converge again — this time more loosely, and with six additional lines present in BM 15793 — for a further thirty-four lines.

BM 96684 (P345507) preserves a separate composition, structured with its own kirugu divisions, that incorporates a number of lines drawn from this same Eršema complex.
One notable point of divergence among these witnesses concerns the line *naŋtar zag-da ba-da-an-gub*: BM 15793 includes it, while three of the other witnesses appear to omit it; the remaining two sources break off before reaching this point in the text, so their treatment of the line cannot be determined.

These differing beginnings among the witnesses are also reflected in their rubrics (Delnero 2020: 74). BM 85198 — which aligns more closely with the group of texts sharing the alternative incipit *u₃ ga-am₃-dug₄* — identifies its composition in its rubric as an Eršema to Inana. By contrast, the first composition on BM 15793 itself, despite sharing much of its content, carries the incipit *a-ra-li me-en* and a rubric identifying it instead as an Eršema to Gula (Ninisina). This distinction in deity attribution corresponds to a further textual difference between the two traditions: the Ninisina litany present in the *a-ra-li me-en* version is entirely absent from the *u₃ ga-am₃-dug₄* version.

	BM 15793 P283739	**BM 85198 P283771**	**CT 44, 15 P345524**	**VAT 1419 P342902**	**VS 2, 95 P342903**	**A 6742 P392068**
a-ra-li me-en (A) / u₃ ga-am₃-dug₄ (G)	A	[G]	G	G	G	A
… a-gin₇ im-da-an-ku₄-re-en	+	+	+	+	+	+

BM 29615 (P345446)

BM 29615 preserves an Eršema to Mullil (Enlil) of seventy-three lines, whose incipit can be reconstructed, on the basis of the parallel manuscript discussed below, roughly as *tumu kur-ra igi-ŋa₂ / u₄ amagi₂-bi ma-te*, "The wind that storms in the mountain, its frost approaches me." The beginning and end of this Eršema can be aligned with the text of WML 56.05.01 (P405569), a connection already noted by Wilcke (1973) in his editions of the Manchester and Liverpool texts. Gabbay (2015:148 no. 36) independently confirms this same pairing filed there under the incipit: *IM kur-ra šeŋ₃-ŋa₂*, "Rain falling on the mountain."

CBS 11151 (P266312)

CBS 11151 (= BE 30/1, 9) preserves a composition beginning at o. ii 18 that continues for over forty-five lines, with the incipit *er₂ na-mu-un-ma-al me-e na-mu-un-til₃-le.* This composition is confirmed to be an eršema to Inana by BM 100111 (P274228) which is present for at least 30 lines.

Two further copies from Kish also attest this Eršema: PRAK C 47+ (P344921) and PRAK B 48 (P343865). The Kish copies of this Eršema notably add *ḫur-saŋ-kalam-ma*, consistent with the broader toponym-adaptation practice already established for this manuscript network.

BM 120100 (P345781)

BM 120100, at r. ii 1, begins where BM 29617 (P283757) begins —*ama-bi aš-tar-ra-na dumu-ni me-ta ba-an-gurum*, "Her mother, in her distress, was cut off from her son" — and continues to follow it thereafter. The text confirms the composition as an eršema, which must be to Ninisina given the litany. There is a twelve line section after the litany that is also paralleled in VAT 5448 (P343003).

ŋa₂-e diŋir-ŋu₁₀

This complex of texts, sharing the incipit ŋa₂-e diŋir-ŋu₁₀ forms a distinct group within the broader tradition of personal-piety laments. Several members of this corpus are treated by Jacques (2015: 34ff.), which extends Lambert's earlier work on the *diŋir-ša₃-dab₅-ba* corpus and further identifies Hittite parallels that descend from the Sumerian tradition. The texts in this corpus that are given rubrics clearly designate them as er₂-ša₃-huŋ-ŋa texts, although the connection between diŋir ša₃-dib-ba assignment cannot be ignored. Later texts which include bilingual versions have a clear connection to the older monolingual Sumerian texts. Jacques encounters a methodological challenge closely paralleling our own: these texts exhibit significant variation from one witness to another, while nonetheless preserving an underlying compositional connection.

Tablet	# in Jacques 2015
H 152+ (P355727)	1
BM 96574 (P274235)	2
IM 43413 (P223438)	3
BM 78198 (P345523)	4
NMC 10099 (P355648)	5
VAT 1320 (P342855)	6

uru₂ am₃-ma-i-ra-bi

The balaŋ *uru₂ am₃-ma-i-ra-bi* is perhaps the clearest illustration of section-level recombination available in this corpus. Below is a chart of manuscripts with clearly identifiable kirugu-divisions attributable to this larger composition. Columns to the left of the thick vertical line are Old Babylonian manuscripts; those to the right are first-millennium. Kirugu numbers are given in parentheses where explicitly recorded on the tablet, or where they can be reliably inferred.

	NCBT 688 P302741	**PRAK C 52 P344926**	**U 16861 P346225**	**TCL 16, 68 P345412**	**Sb 12436 P355669**	**K 2759+* P394657**
uru₂ am₃-i-ra-bi	+ (1)	+	+			
a uru₂ e₂	+ (2)	+	?	+ (2)		
e₂-dim₂-ba-ba-re	+ (3)			+ (3)		
gu₃ im-me-a-ri	+ (4)	+	+	+ (4)		+
me-e e₂ zi-ŋa₂ gu₃ ga-am₃-de₂	+ (5)			? (5)	+ (5)	
me-e ur-re-ŋen	+ (catch)			+	+ (catch)	+

Volk (1989) independently confirms this same kirugu structure for two of these witnesses: NCBT 688 is explicitly attested as covering kirugus 1–5, with the catch-line *me-e ur-re-men me-e girš-men* — matching the final row of the chart above precisely — and Sb 12436 likewise preserves kirugu 5 with the same catch-line. This independent confirmation from the composition's standard edition lends considerable additional weight to the manuscript alignment presented here.

Remarkably, even the kirugu numbering itself is consistent across witnesses. The one apparent deviation — at kirugu 5 in TCL 16, 68 — is likely more apparent than real: this kirugu is very short across all exemplars, and the section immediately following continues, in TCL 16, 68 as elsewhere, in clear alignment with the other tablets.

Even longer sequences of sections can already be identified within the Old Babylonian period, as is seen in later sections of uru$_2$ am$_3$-ma-i-ra-bi:

	H 2 P355702	VAT 1462 P342844	TCL 16, 69 P345413	N 3164 P278218	AO 9070 P345439	BM 38593* P414363	DT 67* P414077
...	...					...	
subad ta an-ak?	+					+	+
ŋa$_2$-nu ga-i-re$_7$-en	+ (24)					+	+
a-ab-ba-ke$_4$ ta-am$_3$ me-a-bi	+	+				+	+
e$_2$ eden-na	+ (26)	+ (catch)				+	
ŋa$_2$-e nu-men	+ (27)					+	
diŋir an-usan	+ ([29])		+				
ka me$_3$-ka	+						
mugib pa e$_3$-a	+ (30)			+			
saŋ dili-ni	+ (32)				+ (30)		
ma-la-ŋu$_{10}$ na-nam	+ (33)		+ (32)	+	+ ([31])		

The bottom rows of this chart reveal that kirugu numbering may not remain consistent across manuscripts once the count grows sufficiently high, but this is not an unusual phenomenon generally when the numbers get high.

e-lum gud-sumun$_2$

This balaŋ to Mullil also has connective sections already in the Old Babylonian period.

	VS 2, 11 P342819	NBC 1315 P290067	AO 3924 P345346	SBH 21* P414288
e-lum gud-sumun$_2$	+	+		+
a gal-gal buru$_{14}$	+			+
ki an dur$_2$-ru-na-še$_3$	+			+
...	...		...	
a-ma-ru na-nam	+			
a-lu-lu-ŋu$_{10}$	+		+	
e-lum di-da-ra	+		+?	
Enki Ninki (or e$_2$-e šud$_3$-da)	+	+ (10)		

a-ab-ba hu-luh-ha

Sometimes the beginning of a balaŋ known from the first millennium is absent from the Old Babylonian record, yet later sections of the same composition nonetheless follow a consistent, recognizable sequence. This is the case for *a-ab-ba ḫu-luḫ-ḫa*, the standard edition of which is Kutscher (1975).

	YBC 4659 P355670	**NMC 10051 P355642**	**BL 81* (P395820)**	**BM 132095 (P283781)**	**U 6321 P346288**
a-ab-ba huluh-ha				+	
umun-bi a genna-ŋu$_{10}$			...	+	
i-lu a-e	+ (4)	+	+	+	+
e-lum gud-sumun$_2$	+ (5)			+	+
za-e mah	+ (6)		+	+	
me-na-še$_3$	+ (8)	+		+	
ša$_3$-ab gi$_4$-u$_3$	+ (10)	+			

Even where individual lines show variation between witnesses, as seen earlier in the discussion on section repetitions, the sections as a whole appear to preserve a consistent internal cohesion and a stable overall sequence across manuscripts.

3.4 Variation Features

This section takes up these observations systematically, applying and refining the typology of horizontal and vertical variation developed in Chapter 2 to concrete examples, with the aim of identifying and elucidating which kinds of variation recur most consistently, and under what conditions.

3.4.1 Horizontal Variation

1. Orthographic Variation

This combination involves the only difference being in the writing of the line. The words and meaning are the same. Much of this variation involves the syllabic (phonetic) writings in an otherwise morpho-logographic script. Such lists have been compiled in multiple places (Delnero 2020, 527ff., Bowen 2017, 270ff).

Orthographic variation of this kind can even occur within a single tablet, between two lines using the same words:

BM 23658 (P345459)
o 23. id$_2$-da **id$_2$-da** e$_2$ sag$_3$-ge-da
r 1. me-e dumu **e$_2$-da** e$_2$ sag$_3$-ge-dam

r 18. ^{ŋeš}asal$_2$ i-ni-nu$_2$ wu-wu **mu-ši-ib-za**
r 19. ^{ŋeš}šinig i-ni-nu$_2$ u$_3$-a **mu-un-ši-ib$_2$-zal**

r 18. She laid him down among the poplars. He goes off making wu-sounds
r 19. She laid him down among the tamarisks. He goes off making wa-sounds

Orthographic variation can also take the form of abbreviation. Compare the writings of the divine names in the Damu litanies in TCL 15, 8 (P345352):

ii 66. ^{d}u$_3$-mu-un-mu-zi-da

vs.

iii 123. ^{d}u$_3$-mu-un-mu[119]

2. Lexical Variation

One recurring type of lexical variation is the substitution of Emesal (ES) and Emegir (EG, main-dialect) forms of the same word — a case that, as discussed in Chapter 2, sits somewhere between orthographic and properly lexical variation:

VS 2, 3 (P342811) r i 5. **me-ri**-zu ki **da-ma-al**-la a-bi **ma-al**-la

vs.

CT 58, 38 (P274233) o 13'. **ŋiri$_3$**-zu ki **daŋal** a$_2$-bi **ŋal$_2$**-la

Having your feet upon the wide earth

This example includes three such Emesal/Emegir pairs: ES. me-ri vs. EG. ŋiri$_3$ "foot", ES. da-ma-al vs. EG. daŋal "wide", ES. ma-al-la vs. EG. ŋal$_2$-la "being".

This kind of dialectal variation can also occur within a single text, even within the same litany:

BM 100111 (P274228)
o 13. [e$_2$]-⌜an⌝-na-ŋu$_{10}$ ir$_2$ **⌜ma⌝-al-la**-⌜še$_3$⌝ ša$_3$-ŋu$_{10}$ a-⌜še⌝-[er ...]
o 14. [e$_2$] zabalam$^{⌜ki}$ ir$_2$⌝ **ŋal$_2$-la**-še$_3$ ša$_3$-ŋu$_{10}$ ⌜a⌝-[še-er ...]

o 13. Because there are tears in my Eanna, my heart is in lament
o 14. Because there are tears in my Zabalam temple, my heart is in lament

Other lexical substitutions produce far more significant shifts in meaning than a mere dialectal alternation:

[119] noted in Veldhuis 2024

TCL 15, 8 (P345352) r iii 233. me-e dumu id$_2$-ta e$_3$ **hul$_2$-le**-de$_3$
I, to gladden the child coming out of the river

vs.

BM 88384 (P345461) o 5'. ^{d}da-mu-ŋu$_{10}$ i$_3$-da i$_3$-**sag$_3$-ge**-da
To strike my Damu in the river

The different meanings of the verbs change the meaning of this section dramatically (see Veldhuis 2025), a divergence further compounded by differing interpretations of the signs for e$_3$, e$_2$, i$_3$.

Different places can be employed within the same parallel context:
VS 2, 25 (P342833)
ii 36. **ma erim$_6$-ma-ŋu$_{10}$** ur im-ta-e$_3$ ur nu-KU-ŋu$_{10}$
ii 37. **ma erim$_6$-ma-ŋu$_{10}$** mi-ri im-ta-e$_3$ mi-ri nu-KU-ŋu$_{10}$
ii 38. **ma erim$_6$-ma-ŋu$_{10}$** mu-lu im-ta-e$_3$ mu-lu nu-KU-ŋu$_{10}$
ii 39. **erim$_6$-ma-ŋu$_{10}$** sahar ba-da-dub-dub sahar ba-da-šu$_2$-šu$_2$
ii 40. **erim$_6$-ma-ŋu$_{10}$** sahar-ŋar id$_2$-da-ke$_4$ šu am$_3$-ši-niŋin

vs.

L 1492 (P343583)
r 14. **[e$_2$]-an-na**-ta ur ⌜im⌝-[ta]-e$_3$ ur nu-zu-⌜am$_3$⌝
r 15. **[e$_2$]-an-na**-ta mi-ir im-ta-⌜e$_3$ mi-ir⌝ nu-⌜zu-am$_3$⌝
r 16. **⌜e$_2$⌝-an-na**-ta mu-lu im-ta-⌜e$_3$⌝ [mu]-⌜lu⌝ nu-⌜zu⌝-[am$_3$]
r 17. **e$_2$-an-na** sahar ba-da-dub-dub [sahar ba-da]-šu$_2$-šu$_2$
r 18. **e$_2$-an-na** sahar-ŋar id$_2$-da-ke$_4$ [šu am$_3$-ši]-⌜niŋin⌝

*Dogs leave **my storeroom/Eanna**, dogs I do not ...?*
*Scorpions leave **my storeroom/Eanna**, scorpions I do not ...?*
*People leave **my storeroom/Eanna**, people I do not ...?*
*Dust is heaped all over **my storeroom/Eanna**, dust covers it.*
*River silt is all over **my storeroom/Eanna**.*

Here, (ma) erim$_6$-ma varies with e$_2$-an-na. L 1492 is from Girsu.

3. Re-interpretations

Sometimes, the same sounds strung together can be interpreted as different phrases:

VS 10, 198 (P343003) o 6 [x] en? **imin ug$_5$-ga**-ŋu$_{10}$
My ... killed seven

vs.

BM 29617 (P283757) o 10 *(U) ama AM? **imin nu-gu$_7$-a**-ŋu$_{10}$
My mother who did not eat the seven (bulls?)

These same two texts have another example:

VS 10, 198 (P343003) o 11 [x] ⌜ur?⌝-saŋ-e ⌜**ge$_{16}$**⌝**-le**-eŋ$_3$-ŋu$_{10}$
My … forsaken by the hero

vs.

BM 29617 (P283757) o 15 ⌜x⌝ ur-saŋ-e a$_2$ **gig la$_2$-a**-ŋu$_{10}$
My … bound tightly by the hero

In performance, these two readings would have sounded very similar, and it is often difficult to determine which, if either, represents the "primary" or intended sense. The syllabic character of much of this writing can obscure which words were actually meant — whether because the scribes themselves misunderstood or reinterpreted an inherited phrase, or because the intended meaning simply escapes modern scholarship.

This kind of productive ambiguity also characterizes certain recurring phrases across the corpus more generally, which appear to exploit — perhaps deliberately — the phonetic overlap between two distinct readings:

- *u$_8$ lu-lu* ("pasturing ewes") vs. *u$_3$ lul-la* ("a false sleep")
- *gu mu-ni-in-la$_2$* ("hangs down the neck") vs. ("stretches out a net")
- *a lu-lu* ("being woeful") vs. *a lu$_3$-lu$_3$* ("stirring up the waters")

3.4.2 Vertical Variation

1. Additions/Omissions

OECT 5, 10 (P345791)
r i 6. diŋir mah dam-zu nin mah-am$_3$
r i 7. e$_2$-gal keš$_3^{ki}$-a eš$_3$ dili mu-ra-ab-du$_7$

r i 6. *Great god, your spouse is a great lady!*
r i 7. He built for you the palace of Keš, a singular shrine!

vs.

PRAK B 471 (P344288)
r ii 6'. dam-zu u$_3$-mu-un maḫ ⌜šu⌝ [mu-ra-ab-du$_7$]
r ii 7' dumu-zu u$_3$-mu-un ⌜maḫ⌝ [x]
r ii 8' e$_2$-gal keš$_3^{ki!}$ ⌜a-gin$_7$?⌝ [...]

r ii 6'. *Your spouse, a great lord …*
r ii 7'. *Your child, a great lord …*
r ii 8'. *… palace of Keš*

In this instance, the line beginning *dumu-zu* is the added element — most likely inserted to complete the common word pair *dam*/*dumu* already discussed above

A whole set of lines can likewise be added as a block, rather than a single line at a time:

VS 2, 8 (P342816)
r i 39. a igi bar-re-˹ŋu₁₀˺ [x x mu]-un-ša-ra-ge
r i 40. a ka bar-re-ŋu₁₀ x [x x]-˹NE˺ mu-un-ša-ra-ge
. 1 line ruling

VS 2, 25 (P342833)
v 37'. a igi bar-ra-ŋu₁₀ u₄ zal mu-˹ša-ra˺-ge
v 38'. a ka bar-ra-ŋu₁₀ u₄ zal mu-˹ša-ra˺-ge
v 39'. x ur₂ ša₃-ba ra na ur₂-ra NI na-nam
v 40'. x (x) [...] x nam x-x ur₂-ra NI na-nam
v 41'. ur₂-ra NI na-nam egir mu-un-da-˹gi₄˺-[gi₄]
v 42'. ˹egir˺ mu-un-da-gi₄-gi₄ gaba mu-un-˹na˺-[...]
. 1 line ruling

Oh, my looking eyes dry the passing day
Oh, my open mouth dries the passing day
...

Here, four additional lines (v. 39′–42′) appear in VS 2, 25 before the ruled line marking the section's end, with no counterpart in VS 2, 8. These four lines form what appears to be a short anadiplosis chain of their own (compare the *xA/Ay* structural pattern above)

In this next example, an entire set of epithets for Mullil (Enlil) is added:

YBC 9838 (P310385)
4. [^{d}mu-ul-lil₂] ša₃ su₃-ra₂ e-ne-eŋ₃ zid-da-ke₄
5. [a]-a ^{d}mu-ul-lil₂ uru₂-zu nibru^{ki}-zu

vs.

VS 2, 8 (P342816)[120]
i 4. [^{d}]˹mu˺-ul-lil₂ ša₃ su₃-ra ˹inim˺ [zi-da-ke₄]
i 5. e-lum am ki ŋar-ŋar [am₂-di-di]
i 6. am na₂-a gu₄-˹de₃˺ [sag₂ nu]-di
i 7. ^{d}mu-ul-lil₂ dam-˹gar₃˺ ki-˹ur₃˺-ra
i 8. u₃-mu-un urin-na-[ni] saŋ ma-˹al˺-la
i 9. u₃-mu-un ˹na₄˺-[a]-ni ka-ra ˹am₃˺-da-ma-la
i 10. u₃-mu-un ki-tuš-a-ni uru₂ ir₂-ir
i 11. [ki]-na₂-a-ni a₂-aŋ₂-ŋa₂ gal zu
i 12. [a]-a ^{d}mu-ul-lil₂ uru₂-ta nibru^{ki}-ta

i 4. Mullil, one of remote heart and of true words,
i 5. Important one, wild bull going around the settled places
i 6. The wild bull who lies down, not scattering the oxen
i 7. Mullil, merchant of the Ki'ur
i 8. Lord whose weighing scales are elite[?]

[120] Parallel in VS 2, 9 (P342817) o 4-12

i 9. Lord whose stones are suspended on pegs[?]
i 10. Lord who carries off cities in his sitting place
i 11. And informs great commands in his resting place
i 12. Father Mullil, from the city, from Nippur,

Here, 7 lines are added with a distinct epithet sequence describing Mullil specifically in his capacity as a merchant, a role found in other contexts as well.[121]

Sometimes more (or different) items appear in lists

Item	***Gloss***	**VAT 1412 (P342840)**	**H 2 (P355702)**	**NFT p. 204-206 (P315472)**
za di$_4$-di$_4$	*Small stones*	r ii 5	KXXI.4	r iii' 1'
za gal-gal	*Large stones*	r ii 6	KXXI.5	r iii' 2'
tu-di-tu	*Toggle-pin*	r ii 7	KXXI.6	r iii' 5'
aš-te	*Throne*	r ii 8	KXXI.7	
^{kuš}e-sir$_2$	*Sandals*	r ii 9	KXXI.8	r iii' 3'
sila-ŋar-ra	*Silaŋara-vessel*	r ii 10		r iii' 4'
balaŋ ban$_3$-da	*Small balaŋ-drum*	r ii 11	KXXI.9	
balaŋ kug	*Pure balaŋ-drum*	r ii 12	KXXI.10	
ša$_3$-na-lu$_2$ za-ba-bar	*Bronze šenalu-axe*			r iii' 6'
ˈdiˈ-li-im-da	*Tilimda-vessel*			r iii' 7'

Sometimes the litany is simply abbreviated and one must assume that the entire litany was nonetheless performanced. This can be inferred from textual parallels where one has the full litany but the other shortens it. This can be inferred from cases where one manuscript preserves the full litany while a parallel witness shortens it considerably. CT 58, 11 (P274206) and CT 15, pl. 19 (= BM 29628, P345454) both preserve the Eršema of Dumuzid bearing the incipit šeš-e dab$_5$-ba-na. While CT 58, 11 preserves a nine-line litany for Dumuzid, CT 15, pl. 19 reduces the same litany to a single line.

Abbreviated litanies can also occur within a single tablet, particularly where that tablet contains multiple sections addressed to the same deity. VS 2, 25 (P342833), the long Ninisina-focused composition already discussed above, illustrates this clearly. A full, eight-line litany to Ninisina is given in its complete form the first time it appears on the tablet (ii. 8–15). Every subsequent occurrence of the same litany elsewhere on the tablet (ii. 46–7; iv. 47–8; v. 7′–8′; v. 20′–22′; vi. 1′–2′; vi. 30′–31′; vii. 23–24; ix. 6′–7′) is instead given in sharply abbreviated form: seven of these eight recurrences preserve only two lines, and one preserves three. It is reasonable

[121] This is the example where Civil discussed textual blocks (1976 :72); For further discussion of the epithets of Enlil and their distribution among the sources, see Kutscher (1975: 44–51); for a detailed edition, translation, and commentary on this specific passage, see Löhnert (2009: 154, 178–80 [transliteration, with parallel sources], and 203–205 [commentary]).

to assume that the full litany was nonetheless recited in its entirety at each of these points in performance, with the written abbreviation serving simply as a scribal shorthand once the full form had already been recorded once on the tablet.

Other long lists could be shortened to only a few lines. The extended divine litany (> 100 lines) is not written out completely in all examples, but there can be metatextual note.[122] NBC 1315 (P290067) r iii 16' breaks the Sumerian text with a note in Akkadian: i-lu a-di ig-ga-am-ma-ru = "The gods, until they are completed". This kind of notation makes clear that the long litany was understood as a relatively fixed, stable component of the prayer — well enough established that a scribe could simply gesture toward its completion rather than copy it out.

Sources from later periods employ a more formalized version of this same practice, marking the number of lines skipped with the standard notation: *n* MU.MEŠ GU$_4$.UD.MEŠ, "*n* skipped lines." SBH 48* (P414314), o. 7', marks ten skipped lines in precisely this litany — notably, only after the litany's initial line has been written out. Gabbay (2014) discusses this notation directly, arguing that it confirms that the *kalû* knew the litanies by heart, since a scribe would have no reason to omit material the performer could not be relied upon to supply independently.

In some cases, it can be difficult to determine whether a list is meant to continue when no explicit marking indicates as much — the continuation may be implied, or perhaps genuinely optional. A case can be made for such an implied continuation on the basis of parallel witnesses, as in this example limiting the litany to *uru$_2$* and Nippur:

CBS 10417 (P265634)
o ii 5'. e$_2$ zi-˹da˺ uri$_3$ ˹gul˺-la-˹bi˺ uru$_2$ lil$_2$-˹la$_2$-am$_3$˺ uru$_2$ lil$_2$-la$_2$-am$_3$
o ii 6'. lil$_2$-la$_2$-am$_3$ ˹lil$_2$-la$_2$-am$_3$˺
o ii 7'. uru$_2$-ŋu$_{10}$ ˹nibru^{ki}˺ lil$_2$-la$_2$-˹am$_3$ lil$_2$-la$_2$-am$_3$˺

o ii 5'. The destroyed standard of the fine house, the city is haunted, the city is haunted
o ii 6'. It is haunted, it is haunted
o ii 7'. My city, Nippur, is haunted, it is haunted

Its parallel witness, CBS 2218+ (P259270) instead preserves multiple full lines of *lil$_2$-la$_2$-am$_3$* (o. 1′–8′). This raises a genuine interpretive question: the single, doubled entry *lil$_2$-la$_2$-am$_3$ lil$_2$-la$_2$-am$_3$* in CBS 10417, o. ii 6′, may stand in place of a longer sequence of repeated lines, abbreviating what CBS 2218+ preserves in full — or it may represent a genuinely shorter, complete version of the passage in its own right, rather than an abbreviation of anything.

Multiple entries may be listed on a single line in order to serve as shorthand for what was, in performance, a fuller sequence of lines sharing the same refrain:

r 12'. uru$_2$ hul$_2$-a-za ki-bi de$_3$-ra-ab-gi$_4$-gi$_4$
r 13'. nibru^{ki} e$_2$-kur ˹ki˺-ur$_3$ hul$_2$-a-za ki-bi de$_3$-ra-ab-˹gi$_4$-gi$_4$˺
r 14'. ŋir$_2$-su^{ki} ki ˹lagaš˺^{ki} i$_3$-si-in^{ki} uri$_5^{ki}$ larsa^{ki} hul$_2$-a-za ki-bi de$_3$-ra-ab-˹gi$_4$-gi$_4$˺

r 12'. May your city that rejoiced be restored for you

[122] See Cavigneaux 2022

r 13′. May your Nippur, Ekur and Kiˀur that rejoiced be restored for you.
r 14′. May Girsu, the place of Lagaš, Isin, Ur and Larsa that (once) rejoiced be restored for you

The last of these lines is very likely an abbreviation standing in for what would otherwise have been several separate lines, each naming one city under the same recurring refrain. This is confirmed directly by the parallel witness BM 120100 (P345781) where, at o. ii 3′–7′, Isin, Ur, and Larsa are each given their own individual line rather than being compressed together as in the example above.

The full extent of a list can also sometimes be indicated by giving only its first few lines followed directly by its final line, omitting the intervening material. This may be the case in the following two witnesses with the topos of plentitude.

BM 23666 (P274211)
o 22. [...] ⌜ra⌝-ni id$_2$-da a-eštub mu-un-⌜na-ab⌝ [...]
o 23. [...]-⌜ni⌝ a-ša$_3$-ga še gu-nu mu-un-⌜na-ab⌝ [...]
o 24. [... e$_2$-gal]-⌜la-ka⌝ zi su$_3$-ud ŋal$_2$-a mu-un-⌜na-ŋa$_2$ x⌝

vs.

VAT 1378 (P342854)
r 3'. ⌜i⌝-da e$_2$-a-aš-tu-⌜ub⌝ mu-[na-ab-...]
r 4'. ⌜a⌝-ša$_3$-ga ši gu-nu mu-na-⌜ab⌝-[...]
r 5'. ⌜e$_2$⌝-gal lu$_2$-gal-e zi su-⌜ud⌝-[ŋal$_2$ ...]

A comparable pattern is likely present in the Damu litany as well:

PRAK D 41 (P345055) (multiple examples in this tablet)
i 2. a ŋuruš ŋuruš ^{d}da-mu-[ŋu$_{10}$]
i 3. a ŋuruš du$_5$-mu mu-zi-[da]
i 4. a ŋuruš ^{d}ištaran i-bi$_2$ [šuba$_2$]

Here ištaran i-bi$_2$ šuba$_2$ is the last element in the Damu litany

2. Re-ordering

Sometimes a reordering is as simple as two lines appearing in reverse sequence between witnesses:

Sm 323* (P414115)
9'. [ur]u$_2$ ^{d}mu-ul-lil$_2$-la$_2$ & ba-ul$_4$-[la-bi]
10'. [ur]u$_2$ umun-na en$_3$ li-bi$_2$-in-[tar-ra-bi]

vs.

NCBT 688 (P302741)
o 21. uru$_2$ u$_3$-mu-un-e en$_3$ li-bi$_2$-in-tar-ra-bi
o 22. uru$_2$ ^{d}mu-ul-lil$_2$-le ba-e-ul$_4$-la-bi

o 21. That city whose lord did not look after it
o 22. That city into which Mullil charges

A different ordering of a word pair naturally yields a different overall ordering of the text built around it (compare the word-pair discussion above):

NCBT 688 (P302741)
r 7. e₂ ŋar-ra-ba e₂-ŋu₁₀ ba-gul
r 8. uru₂ ŋar-ra-ba uru₂-ŋu₁₀ ba-gul

vs.

AO 4327 (P315471)
r ii' 10. [u₂]-˹ru˺ ŋa₂-ra-ba u₂-ru-ŋu₉ ba-gul
r ii' 11. e ŋa₂-ra-a-ba a e;-ŋu₉ i-me

My house was destroyed in its founding
My city was destroyed in its founding

Two further witnesses follow AO 4327's reversed ordering rather than NCBT 688's: MS 2289 (P251529), o. 12–13, and a text from Kish, AO 10672 (P344926; = PRAK C 52), o. ii 14′–15′. This distribution is worth noting explicitly: rather than representing an isolated exception to the otherwise consistent *e₂*-before-*uru₂* ordering established in the word-pair discussion above, the reversed *uru₂*-before-*e₂* ordering recurs across at least three independent witnesses — AO 4327 (Girsu), MS 2289, and AO 10672 (Kish) — suggesting a patterned alternative tradition rather than simple free variation.

At other times, no consistent pairing convention exists at all:

BM 109167 (P274206)
o 16. [lu₂] eden-na-ke₄ a-na-am₃ šu ba-ab-du
o 17. [ᵈ]˹ŋeštin˺-an-na-ke₄ ᵈᵘᵍšakir₃ mu-un-šub

vs.

BM 29628 (P345454)[123]
o 13. ᵈŋeštin-an-na-ke₄ ᵈᵘᵍšakir₃ mu-un-šub
o 14. lu₂ eden-na-ke₄ a-na-am₃ šu ba-ab-du₇

What did the man of the steppe see to completion?
Geštin-ana abandoned the butter churn

Multiple lines can be moved around as well:
MS 2921 (P252007)
r 8. uru₂ ki-sikil-bi ˹nu-hul₂˺-le-bi
r 9. uru₂ ŋuruš-bi nu-[lib]-be₂-bi
r 10. uru₂ mu-bi dur₅-˹ru˺ [gi-bi] dur₅-ru-a-˹bi˺

[123] The ordering in BM 29628 seems to be at issue, given the reverse order of the final verbs later in the text o 17-18

vs.

NCBT 688 (P302741)
o 33. uru$_2$ mu-bi dur$_5$-ru gi-bi dur$_5$-ru-bi
o 34. uru$_2$ ki-sikil-bi nu-hul$_2$-le-de$_3$
o 35. uru$_2$ ŋuruš-bi nu-lib-be$_2$-de$_3$

That city whose men are sick, whose women are sick
that the young women of the city do not rejoice
that the young men of the city do not prosper

The same three lines occur in both witnesses, but in reversed block order: MS 2921 places the *mu-bi dur$_5$-ru* ("sick men/women") line last, while NCBT 688 places it first. The final two lines of the NCBT 688 sequence appear to open a new section, on the basis of their nominal suffix (*-de$_3$*, rather than the *-bi* found throughout the preceding material). MS 2921, by contrast, ends with these same two lines still bearing *-bi*, and does not go on to begin a new section at all; the block of three lines here simply closes out the composition (or this portion of it) in that witness.

3. Substitution

Sometimes an entire line within a parallel passage cannot be reckoned as "equaling" the corresponding line in another witness through any of the horizontal variation types discussed above — the two lines instead diverge as wholesale substitutions.

BM 85005 (P345456)
o 10. iri ša$_3$-bi-ta u$_4$ in-ga-am$_3$-dug$_4$
o 11. ŋir$_2$-su^{ki} bar-bi-ta ^{d}lamma ki ku$_3$-ga-ŋu$_{10}$

o 10. From inside the city, the storm continues
o 11. Outside of Girsu is my lamma-deity of the holy place

vs.

VAT 617 (P342810)
r ii 22 '. uru$_2$-ŋu$_{10}$ an-zu-ta an-zu gi$_6$-ga
r ii 23 '. ŋir$_2$-su^{ki} an-zu-ta an-zu babbar-ra

r ii 22 '. *My city, on your skyline, a black Anzu-bird*
r ii 23 '. *Girsu, on your skyline, a white Anzu-bird*

A second such pair occurs in the same two texts:

BM 85005 (P345456)
o 16. ga-ša-an <iri>-bi-ta nam-ba-ra-e$_3$
o 17. ga-ša-an gu-la e$_2$-bi-⌜ta⌝ ba-ra-⌜e$_3$⌝
o 16. The lady has gone out from their city
o 17. The great lady left their house

vs.

VAT 617 (P342810)
r ii 28'. gu$_4$-de$_3$ tur$_3$-ra šu i$_3$-zu-zu
r ii 29'. ŋir$_2$-su gu$_4$-da-gin$_7$ šu nu-mu-un-da-zu-zu

r ii 28'. *The ox of the cattle stall recognizes the hand*
r ii 29'. (But) Girsu is not able to recognize the hand like the oxen

In both cases, the lines immediately preceding and following these pairs follow the same sequence in both witnesses, which is precisely what makes the divergence in these particular lines stand out: rather than a shared image rendered in different words, each witness substitutes an entirely different line — storm/*lamma*-deity versus black/white Anzu-birds; a departing goddess versus an ox recognizing (or failing to recognize) a hand — within what is otherwise a stable, shared structural sequence.

Some texts shine a focus on different divine names:
RIAA 189 (P227377)
o 17. ama-ŋu$_{10}$ e$_4$ ma-du da-a-a dam ma-tum$_2$ da-a-a
o 18. egi$_2$ mah ^{d}a-ru-ru e$_4$ ma-du da-a-a dam ma-⌜tum$_2$ da⌝-a-a
o 19. mu-gib$_3$ ŋen e$_2$-ŋu$_{10}$ mu-du$_3$-in teš$_2$-ba x [...]

o 17. My mother built a house for me. For what? She brought me a spouse. For what?
o 18. The great princess Aruru built a house for me. *For what? She brought me a spouse. For what?*
o 19. You, the mugib-priestess, built my house. ... together

vs.

VAT 3606 (P342975)
o 4'. ama-ŋu$_{10}$ e$_2$ ma-an-⌜tu te⌝-a-am$_3$ [...]
o 5'. ga-ša-an-niŋar^{ŋar}-ra ⌜e$_2$ ma⌝-[an-tu ...]
o 6'. ⌜mu⌝-gib$_3$ ŋen e$_2$-⌜bi x x⌝ [...]

o 4'. My mother built a house for me. What …?
o 5'. Gašan-niŋara built a house for me. …
o 6'. You, the mugib-priestess, that house …

3.4.3 Non-Parallel Passages

This section involves lines and passages that are not strictly parallel, but have similarities that may not have an easy categorization, but are nevertheless meaningful to compare.

mu-zu X-še$_3$

This short phrase is best known from two kirugus that begin with gud-sumun. One is the 1st kirugu in the balaŋ e-lum gud-sumun. The other is a kirugu in the balaŋ a-ab-ba hu-luh-ha. Both of these compositions are focused on Mullil.

The same template is reshaped around Iškur in an Eršema titled gud mah pa e$_3$-a mu-zu an-zag-še$_3$. Its first half is itself a variation on *e-lum gud-sumun$_2$*: where Mullil is described as a *sumun$_2$* (“aged/venerable”) bull, Iškur instead becomes a *maḫ pa e$_3$-a* bull, "an excellent, resplendent bull."

The second half of the formula, meanwhile, varies to reflect the geographic scope of each god's renown: Mullil's name reaches *kur-kur*, "all the lands," while Iškur's reaches *an-zag*, "heaven's edge."

Alternatively, gud mah pa e₃-a can be seen as a variation on *mu-gi₁₇-ib pa e₃-a*, the incipit of a ki-ru-gu₂ in *uru₂ am₃-ma-i-ra-bi* to Inana.

Related openings

Similar phrasing recurs elsewhere in the corpus: *diŋir an-usan an-na gub-ba-ŋu₁₀-ne*, also known from *uru₂ am₃-ma-i-ra-bi* to Inana; and *an-ne₂ su-a-ne₂ i-ra ba-ši-še₃*, the incipit of what is likely an Eršema to Inana, attested in MS 3406 (Delnero and Gabbay 2023).

Two Eršemas to Dumuzid open with comparably structured invocations: *ŋuruš dab₅-ba e-en [gig-ga-bi]* and *šeš-e dab₅-a-na uru₂ er₂-ra na-nam*.

3.5 Regularity of Variation

Having catalogued the range of variation types observed across this corpus, we now return to the question of quantifying that variation directly, applying the computational methods for measuring textual similarity and distance developed in Chapter 2 — overlap, Hamming distance, longest common subsequence, and related measures — to the litany sequences associated with several different gods.

Amanki

Unlike the litanies laid out previously, the list associated with Amanki (Enki) does not consist of a sequence of epithets applied to a single deity, but instead names a series of distinct gods centered around Eridu, each paired with a location or role:

a.	^{d}am-an-ki am uru₂-ze₂-ba	*Amanki, wild bull of Uruzeb*
b.	^{d}dam-gal-nun-na ama e₂-mah	*Damgalnuna, mother of the Emah*
c.	^{d}asar-lu₂-hi umun tin-tirki	*Asarluhi, lord of Tintir*
d.	mu-ud-na ki-aŋ₂ ^{d}pa₅-nun-an-ki	*His beloved wife, Panunanki*
e.	^{d}namma ama uru₂-ze₂-ba	*Namma, mother of Uruzeb*
f.	^{d}a-ra-u gašan abzu	*Arau, lady of the Abzu*
g.	egir dnin-mar-ki	*Princess Ninmarki*
h.	sukkal zid	*Loyal minister, Muzebasaʾa*
i.	egir dumu-saŋ	*Bride, foremost child of Uraš*

Asarluḫi carries two distinct epithets across the manuscripts: *umun* Tintir and *dumu* Uruzeba. Manuscripts using Tintir tend to be later; *dumu* Uruzeba, by contrast, is found in two Old Babylonian witnesses, BM 87518 (= CT 42:15, P283775) and VS 2, 11 (P342819). *Umun* Tintir occurs in later Eršaḫunga texts as part of their *arazu*/*siskur* section, and is mostly confined to the first millennium — but CT 58, 39 (P274234), iii 23, an older text, already contains this same epithet.[124] This variation, then, is not simply a matter of chronology.

The variations in the Panunanki line involve having the ki-aŋ or not.

[124] The preceding line in this same text reads "*ama* Emaḫ Damgalnuna," which likewise points to an earlier date for this witness.

VS 2, 11 confirms Arau as *gašan* Abzu, though Abzu is here spelled *ab-su*^{ki}. She is later equated with Usmu — also the Akkadian name of Enki's minister Isimud, from which "Usmu" is etymologically derived — in P355664, A 11. The name Muzebasaʾa (the emesal form of Ŋešdugasaʾa) should be considered alongside this identification as well, given the epithet *sukkal zid* ("loyal minister"), which properly belongs to Isimud in his role as Enki's vizier; the name Isimud itself, however, is nowhere directly attested in this list or elsewhere in this corpus. Muzebasaʾa, meaning "called a pleasant name," is likely itself an epithet for Isimud, comparable to the way Enki addresses him in *Inana and Enki* (Farber 1973, 1995) and in *Heron and Turtle* (Gragg 1973) line 108: *mu dug₃ an-na-ŋu₁₀*, "my pleasant name of heaven." The *gašan*-prefixed form would suggest a female deity, though Isimud is elsewhere written as male; the attested spelling variants are *A-EDIN-E*, *ŠA-E*, and *A-DU-RU-E*.

Uraš appears only in 1st millennium texts. Perhaps to be dumu-saŋ-Uraš as the god's name (i.e. not Uraš herself). Given the structure of the epithets, the god's name here might be Egia and she is the foremost child of Uraš.[125]

17. Apparatus and Tablet Distribution for the Amanki Litany

Siglum	Tablet	CDLI P#	Lines	Order String	Section
A	BM 87518	P283775	r i 11'-16'	abcefg	
B	BM 88288	P283778	i 4-9	abcdef	[am gal] u₃-na gub-ba
C	NBC 1315	P290067	i 22-26	abcef	e-lum gud-sumun₂
D	VS 2, 11	P342819	o ii 2'-8'	abcdefh	a gal-gal buru₁₄ su-su
E	CT 58, 39	P274234	iii 21-25	abcdh	unken saŋ-ŋa₂ [...]

18. Levenshtein Distances - Amanki Litany

	A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*
A		2	1	2	3
B			1	1	2
C				2	2
D					2
E					

[125] The inclusion or exclusion of text lines for this text of similarities is not a definitive set. Only known Old Babylonian exemplars are included. Lists know to be abbreviations are excluded. Other examples could go either way like BM 86535 (P355674) o ii 33-39 and o ii 41-47, which list the gods of the Amanki litany list, but not their descriptions, but they are not included here. Also, text versions that are too damaged to reconstruct the entries

19. Longest Common Subsequences - Amanki Litany

	A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*
A		2	1	3	5
B			1	1	3
C				2	4
D					2
E					

20. Jaccard Indexes - Amanki Litany

	A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*
A		0.57	0.2	0.62	0.71
B			0.5	0.17	0.5
C				0.57	0.67
D					0.57
E					

Damu

a.	ŋa$_2$-e dumu-ŋu$_{10}$	*My own child*
b.	^{d}da-mu-ŋu$_{10}$	*My Damu*
c.	dumu ^{d}u$_3$-mu-un-mu-zid-da	*Child of Umunmuzida*
d.	gudug	*Gudug-priest*
e.	^{d}ištaran	*Ištaran*
f.	diŋir ibi šuba	*Sparkling-eyed god*
g.	^{d}al-la u$_3$-mu-un sa-par$_3$	*Alla, lord of the net*
h.	li-bi-ir u$_3$-mu-un-šud$_3$-de$_3$	*Herald, Umunšude*
i.	mu-lu-sir$_2$-an-na	*Mulusirana*

These mostly short epithets belong to Damu and are uttered by his mother Ninisina. Not every instance has the first line

Umunmuzida is the emesal for Ninŋeszida[126], who is feature in this corpus through his son Damu and wife Azimua. Elsewhere, Damu is the son of Enki, so this must reflect a different tradition. In syllabic texts (P345055), deletions take place phonologically to make a repeated chant-like sequence (dumu-umunmuzida => *mu-mu-mu*-zi-da). TCL 15, 8 has u$_3$-mu-un ^{d}u$_3$-mu-un-mu-zi-da, thus avoiding the familial connection. It is tempting to think that this variant is referencing different gods as opposed to only epithets of Damu. Then we might consider Ištaran as not referring to Damu in the other variants.

[126] u$_3$-mu-un for EG. nin is known elsewhere…

Ištaran is known elsewhere as the main deity of Der. His connection to Damu in this corpus seems to be contained only here. The -na ending for Ištaran in TCL 15, 8 (Veldhuis 2025, Fritz. It may be useful to note that the -na endings only appears when the epithet diŋir ibi šuba follows on a separate line. When Ištaran and diŋir ibi šuba are on the same line, there is no -na. In the same text, two kings are written ^{d}iš-me-^{d}da-gan-na and ^{d}i-din-^{d}da-gan-na, where grammatically the -na is superfluous. It may also be on analogy to other king names listed like ^{d}amar-^{d}suen-na and ^{d}šu-suen-na

One text, TCL 15 8 (P345352), begins the litany with the enigmatic name Ububu, known in other places as a netherworld god (see Krebernik RlA Ububu, Veldhuis 2025 2).

21. Apparatus and Tablet Distribution for the Damu Litany

Siglum	Tablet	CDLI P#	Lines	Order String	Section
A	TCL 15, 8	P345352	i 6-9	cbefx	nun gal an-ki-še$_3$ mah-am$_3$
B	BM 15795	P345455	o 4-9	bcefghi	ŋuruš dab$_5$-ba-na
C	CT 58, 9	P274204	o i 11-15	bcefgh	i-lu dug$_4$-dug$_4$-ge
D	PRAK D 41	P345055	i 2-4	bcef	ŋuruš lu$_2$ er$_2$-e
E	VAT 1360 +	P342848	o 3-7	bcefgh	u$_3$-mu]-⌜un⌝ zig$_3$-ge ⌜ša⌝-[...]
F	BM 88384	P345461	o 4'-7'	abde	id$_2$-da i$_3$-sag$_3$-ge-da
G	BM 23658	P345459	r 1-3	abd	id$_2$-da i$_3$-sag$_3$-ge-da

22. Levenshtein Distances - Damu Litany

	A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*	*G*
A		5	4	3	4	4	4
B			1	3	1	6	7
C				2	0	5	6
D					2	3	4
E						5	6
F							1
G							

23. Longest Common Subsequences - Damu Litany

	A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*	*G*
A		6	5	3	5	5	6
B			1	3	1	7	8
C				2	0	6	7
D					2	4	5
E						6	7
F							1
G							

24. Jaccard Indexes - Damu Litany

	A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*	*G*
A		0.89	0.88	0.83	0.88	1.0	1.0
B			0.17	0.5	0.17	1.0	1.0
C				0.4	0.0	1.0	1.0
D					0.4	1.0	1.0
E						1.0	1.0
F							0.33
G							

Dumuzid

a.	mu-ud-na-ŋu$_{10}$	*My spouse*
b.	su$_3$-bad en ^{d}dumu-zid	*Shepherd lord? Dumuzid*
c.	ama-ušum-gal-an-na	*Ama'ušumgalana*
d.	u$_3$-mu-un a-ra-li	*Lord of Arali*
e.	u$_3$-mu-un du$_6$-su$_3$-bad	*Lord of Shepherd's Hill*
f.	u$_3$-mu-un bad$_3$-tibira^{ki}	*Lord of Bad-tibira*
g.	u$_3$-mu-un e$_2$-muš$_2$	*Lord of the Emuš*
h.	mu-ud-na ^{d}ga-ša-an-an-na	*Spouse of Gašanana*
i.	šeš ama mu-tin-an-na	*Brother of mother Mutinana*
j.	i-bi$_2$ lum-lum ka-naŋ-ŋa$_2$	*Lumlum-eyed on of the land*
k.	u$_3$-mu-un ir$_9$ ka-naŋ-ŋa$_2$	*Mighty lord of the land*

From its opening line, this litany is voiced from the perspective of Dumuzid's spouse, Inana. However, the line "mudna gašananaka" may suggest that the litany has, by this point, reverted to the voice of the performing singer rather than remaining consistently in Inana's own first-person voice. *Arali* came, over time, to denote the netherworld generally, but in this particular context it appears to refer to an actual, specific location (Krecher 1966 150f). Mutinana is the Emesal form of Geštinana, attested in various contexts; note the parallel construction between *ama-ušumgal-ana* and *ama-mutin-ana*.

25. Apparatus and Tablet Distribution for the Dumuzid Litany

Siglum	Tablet	CDLI P#	Lines	Order String	Section
A	BM 15821	P345453	o 4-15	cbdefghijk	am mu ra nu-un-ti
B	CBS 11330	P266487	o i 3-10	cdbehfig	gi-er$_2$-ra su$_3$-ga-am$_3$
C	CBS 11326	P266483	r ii 5-11	acdbehfi	nu-ti-il nu-ti-il
D	VS 2, 34	P342842	o 2-10	cbdefghijk	ŋuruš dab$_5$-ba
E	BM 109167	P274206	o 3-10	cbdefghijk	šeš-e dab$_5$-ba-na

26. Levenshtein Distances - Dumuzid Litany

	A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*
A		7	8	0	0
B			2	7	7
C				8	8
D					0
E					

27. Longest Common Sequences - Dumuzid Litany

	A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*
A		8	8	0	0
B			2	8	8
C				8	8
D					0
E					

28. Jaccard Indexes - Dumuzid Litany

	A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*
A		1.0	1.0	0.0	0.0
B			0.25	1.0	1.0
C				1.0	1.0
D					0.0
E					

Gašanana

Delnero (2020: 62f.) identifies three sets of epithets for Inana attested across this corpus. The two main lists are quite consistent in their first four lines, though other elements can be inserted into them.

Inana List 1:

a.	mu-gib ana ^{d}ga-ša-an-an-na	*Mugib-priestess of heaven, Gašanana*
b.	kur gul-gul ga-ša-an e$_{2}$-an-na^{ki}	*Mountain-destroying, lady of the Eanna*
c.	an dub$_{2}$-be ga-ša-an ŋi$_{6}$-par$_{3}$	*Heaven-shaking, lady of the cloister*
d.	lil$_{2}$-la$_{2}$-en-na ga-ša-an amaš tur$_{3}$	*Lilaʾena, lady of sheepfold and cattle pen*
e.	ama e$_{2}$-e da-da munus sa$_{6}$-ga	*Mother of the house, Dada, the beautiful woman*
f.	^{d}na-na-a du$_{5}$-mu sa$_{6}$ e$_{2}$-e	*Nanaya, beautiful child of the house*

Occasionally, two further lines are added for Dada and Nanaya, though this occurs primarily in first-millennium lament texts.[127] The epithet *ki sig₃-ga*, "who strikes the earth," can also be inserted, but this, too, is confined to later witnesses.

A second list of Inana's epithets centers on her principal cult locations. The main variant of this litany is the Kish version, which replaces Eanna with Hursaŋkalama, and Ɔipar with Kiš.

29. Apparatus and Tablet Distribution for the Inana₁ Litany

Siglum	Tablet	CDLI P#	Lines	Order String	Section
A	NCBT 688	P302741	o 4-8	abcdx	uru₂ am₃-ma-i-ra-bi
B	MS 2921	P252007	o 4-7	abcd	uru₂ am₃-ma-i-ra-bi
C	PRAK C 52	P344926	o i 2-5	abcd	uru₂ am₃-ma-i-ra-bi
D	PRAK D 61	P345074	i 3-8	axbcde	an-ne₂ an-usan
E	MS 3406	P252347	o 3-7	abcde	an-ne₂ an-usan
F	PRAK C 54	P344928	o 3-6	abcd	an-ne₂ an-usan
G	PRAK B 48	P343865	o 2-5	abcd	er₂ na-mu-un-ma-al
H	CBS 11151	P266312	o ii 19-22	abcd	er₂ na-mu-un-ma-al
I	PRAK C 74	P344948	2-5	abcd	a-še-er ŋi₆-[ta ...]
J	CBS 6890	P264319	o i 2-7	abcdef	ab₂-gin₇ gu₃ de₂-de₂
K	PRAK C 92	P344965	o 10'-13'	abcd	er₂-ra um-mu-ni-li-x
L	BM 96679	P355680	6-9	abcd	me-me im-ma-an-mar
M	Ni 2273	P345093	o 2-5	abcd	na-aŋ₂ dam-a-na gig-ga-am₃
N	BM 16385	P283743	o 2-5	abcd	ŋa₂-e im-ma-al-e

30. Levenshtein Distances - Inana₁ Litany

	A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*	*G*	*H*	*I*	*J*	*K*	*L*	*M*	*N*
A		1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1
B			0	2	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
C				2	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
D					1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
E						1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
F							0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
G								0	0	2	0	0	0	0
H									0	2	0	0	0	0
I										2	0	0	0	0
J											2	2	2	2
K												0	0	0
L													0	0
M														0
N														

[127] Two of the three OB witnesses that preserve Dada alone, without the accompanying Nanaya line, are MS 3406 (P252347) and, very likely, PRAK D 61 (P345074), both witnesses of the Eršema an-ne₂ an-usan-e. A further witness to this same incipit, PRAK C 54 (P344928) preserves the other epithets but lacks the Dada line entirely. The one OB witness attesting both Dada and Nanaya together is CBS 6890 (P264319).

31. Longest Common Subsequences - Inana$_1$ Litany

	A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*	*G*	*H*	*I*	*J*	*K*	*L*	*M*	*N*
A		1	1	3	2	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	1
B			0	2	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
C				2	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
D					1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
E						1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
F							0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
G								0	0	2	0	0	0	0
H									0	2	0	0	0	0
I										2	0	0	0	0
J											2	2	2	2
K												0	0	0
L													0	0
M														0
N														

32. Jaccard Indexes - Inana$_1$ Litany

	A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*	*G*	*H*	*I*	*J*	*K*	*L*	*M*	*N*
A		0.25	0.25	0.71	0.4	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.5	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25
B			0.0	0.67	0.25	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
C				0.67	0.25	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
D					0.5	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.57	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67
E						0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.2	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25
F							0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
G								0.0	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
H									0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
I										0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
J											0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4
K												0.0	0.0	0.0
L													0.0	0.0
M														0.0
N														

Inana List 2:

a.	mu-gib an-na ^{d}ga-ša-an-an-na	*Mugib-priestess of heaven, Gašanana*
b.	gašan e$_2$-an-na^{ki}	*Lady of the Eanna*
c.	gašan ki unug^{ki}-ga	*Lady of the area of Uruk*
d.	gašan ki zabalam	*Lady of the area of Zabalam*
e.	gašan ^{d}ibi-zid-bar-ra	*Lady Igizidbara*
f.	gašan diŋir ir$_9$ mah	*Lady, great and powerful god*
g	gašan me ur$_4$-ur$_4$	*Lady collecting the me's*

BM 29616 (P355695) includes ŋi$_{6}$-par$_{4}$ and kul-aba$_{4}$ before ki unug, continuing with further elements after Zabalam. A balaŋ to Inana, BM 96680 (P345778), contains two additional lines gašan diŋir igi zid bar-ra / gašan diŋir ir$_{9}$ mah-a. A text with the incipit e-gi tur$_{3}$ u$_{3}$-di ga-nam nu-un-ba, IM 51253 (P223457), likewise adds two extra lines. The first is diŋir igi zid bar-ra again, but the second is gašan me ur$_{4}$-ur$_{4}$. This text is one of two sources from Tell Harmal/Šaduppum, and is difficult to parallel with other known texts (Delnero 2020, p. 437). A section in H 2 (P355702) beginning *a ur$_{5}$-ra-ni a šag$_{4}$-ga-ni* includes those same two lines but they are preceded by yet two other lines *Nanaya nin dumu-saŋ e$_{2}$-e / sukkal zid nin gašan ^{d}egi$_{2}$-ra*.

33. Apparatus and Tablet Distribution for the Inana$_{2}$ Litany

Siglum	Tablet	CDLI P#	Lines	Order String	Section
A	BM 96680	P345778	o ii 40-45	abcdef	aŋ$_{2}$ ni$_{2}$-zu a-gin$_{7}$ bi$_{2}$-ak
B	RA 8, 161	P355691	o i 2-5	abcd	e-en gig-ga-bi
C	BM 23696	X130500	o 2-5	abcd	ša$_{3}$-zu a-gin$_{7}$ du$_{3}$
D	BM 29616	P355695	3-8	abxycd	ša$_{3}$-zu ta am$_{3}$-ir
E	CT 58, 16	P274211	r 5-8	abcd	til$_{4}$ di me-en
F	TIM 9, 31	P223457	o 2-7	abcdeg	u$_{3}$ di-te ga-na-am nu-un-ba

34. Levenshtein Distances - Inana$_{2}$ Litany

	A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*
A		2	2	4	2	1
B			0	2	0	2
C				2	0	2
D					2	4
E						2
F						

35. Longest Common Subsequences - Inana$_{2}$ Litany

	A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*
A		2	2	4	2	2
B			0	2	0	2
C				2	0	2
D					2	4
E						2
F						

36. Jaccard Indexes - Inana₂ Litany

	A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*
A		0.4	0.4	0.75	0.4	0.33
B			0.0	0.67	0.0	0.4
C				0.67	0.0	0.4
D					0.67	0.75
E						0.4
F						

The third list of Inana's epithets is perhaps the most variable of the three:

a.	ki-sikil dinana	*Young Inana*
b.	unu₂-la₂ šuba la₂	*Who wears the unu-jewel and the šuba-stone*
c.	nin dili dutu	*Singular sister of Utu*
d.	an-dul₃ lugal-la	*Shade of the king*
e.	an-dul₃ ama-ušumgal-an-na	*Shade of Amaʾušumgalana*
f.	an-ne dub-ba ŋen	*You are the one who shakes[?] heaven*[128]

37. Apparatus and Tablet Distribution for the Inana₃ Litany

Siglum	Tablet	CDLI P#	Lines	Order String	Section
A	CT 58, 36	P274231	o 3-6	abcd	i-lu ama mu-gi₁₇-ib ˹x˺-[...]
B	VS 10, 117	P342925	o i 3-6	abdf	el-lu ama mu-gi-ib₂ di-li-[ne e-re-ša]
C	BM 100059	P345779	o i 12'-14'	abc	egi₂-ŋu₁₀ e₃-ma-ra
D	VS 2, 39	P342847	r 2'-4'	abc	egi₂?#-ŋu₁₀?# [...]
E	VS 2, 31	P342839	o i 13'-18'	abcdef	u₃-li-a ˹šu˺ du nu-ku₁₀-ku₁₀-ga
F	VS 2, 3	P342811	o i 19'-25'	abcdexy	[...] ˹nin˺-a-ŋu₁₀ egi₂ re-a
G	PRAK C 124	P344997	o 2-4	abc	a ud [...] nin-am₃
H	CBS 11371 +	P266518	r i 8'-10'	abc	
I	H 2	P355702	KXXXII.16-20	abcd	saŋ-dili-ni saŋ i-im-du

[128] The locative -e suffix on /an/ makes this translation difficult.

38. Levenshtein Distances - Inana₃ Litany

	A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*	*G*	*H*	*I*
A		2	1	1	2	3	1	1	0
B			2	2	2	4	2	2	2
C				0	3	4	0	0	1
D					3	4	0	0	1
E						2	3	3	2
F							4	4	3
G								0	1
H									1
I									

39. Longest Common Subsequences - Inana₃ Litany

	A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*	*G*	*H*	*I*
A		2	1	1	2	3	1	1	0
B			3	3	2	5	3	3	2
C				0	3	4	0	0	1
D					3	4	0	0	1
E						3	3	3	2
F							4	4	3
G								0	1
H									1
I									

40. Jaccard Indexes - Inana₃ Litany

	A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*	*G*	*H*	*I*
A		0.8	0.33	0.33	0.4	0.5	0.33	0.33	0.0
B			0.75	0.75	0.86	0.88	0.75	0.75	0.8
C				0.0	0.6	0.67	0.0	0.0	0.33
D					0.6	0.67	0.0	0.0	0.33
E						0.43	0.6	0.6	0.4
F							0.67	0.67	0.5
G								0.0	0.33
H									0.33
I									

Mullil

Perhaps the most regular example is the main litany for Mullil (Enlil). This litany consists of seven elements in its full version, occurring mainly in the following sequence[129]:

a.	u₃-mu-un kur-kur-ra	*Lord of all the lands*
b.	u₃-mu-un dug₄-ga zi-da	*Lord of the just command*
c.	a-a ka-na-aŋ₂-ŋa₂	*Father of Sumer*
d.	su-bad saŋ-gig-ga	*Shepherd of the black-headed ones*
e.	i-bi₂ du₈ ni₂-te-ni	*Looking after his own*[130]
f.	am erin₂-na di-di	*Bull always moving among the people*[131]
g.	u₃ lul-la ku-ku	*Sleeping a false sleep*

The most notable variation in this sequence occurs in witnesses that lack line c, *a-a ka-na-aŋ₂-ŋa₂*. As with many other variations discussed in this chapter, this omission correlates with other repeated sections elsewhere in the tradition. In this case, a passage carrying the refrain *za₃ dib-ba NE-ra* (MLC 382 = P295182; K 3506+ = P395052) — a section titled [*dutu-gin₇ e₃*]-*ta uru₂-zu e₃-NE* [...] (KAR 9; possibly VS 2, 5) — shows this same pattern. VS 2, 5 (P342813) itself ends in *e₃-NE*, which may connect to the later occurrence of this sign sequence and to the variation in the Mullil litany discussed here. CBS 11359 (P266508) likewise begins this way, as do two catalogue entries (BM 85564 = P355677; MH 143860 = P355701). Each of these three texts continues in connection with *zibu zibu*.

A second, related variation substitutes ši kanaŋa = “life of the land” in place of aya kanaŋa “father of the land”. This substitution occurs three times within a single tablet, BM 100059 (P345779).

traces three developmental stages of Mullil's epithets, the latest of which consists of the seven standard epithets given above, alongside a later, expanded twelve-epithet version. His terminology distinguishes “attributes” (lists of three or fewer names) from “epithets” proper (the standardized lists of seven or twelve). His earliest textual stage does not feature full lists; YBC

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[129] Kutscher (1975) labels these epithets "heroic," though I am not convinced this term reflects the character of the list well. The first two epithets center on Mullil's authority over all things, while the remainder concern his care and oversight of his people.

[130] This line has proven difficult to interpret. It is tempting to read *ni₂-te-ni* as “himself,” taking it as the object of Enlil's looking; but the possessive suffix in Sumerian can be construed more broadly, here as “of himself.” Compare *Lamentation over Sumer and Ur* 34 (Michalowski 1989): *sipad-bi e₂-gal-la ni₂-te-na lu₂-erim₂-e dab₅-be₂-de₃*, where *ni₂-te* is attributive to *e₂-gal* rather than functioning as the head of the phrase. Enlil, accordingly, is looking around at what is “of himself,” or “his own” — a reading that pairs well with the preceding line, in which he is described as shepherd of the black-headed people; looking after one's own is, after all, the role of the shepherd.

[131] These two epithets are likewise difficult to translate precisely. Rendering *lul* simply as “false” limits our understanding of the line — what, after all, is a “false sleep?” I prefer to read the final two lines as a couplet: epithet (f) describes a bull constantly moving among the people, and epithet (g) one who never truly sleeps, or perhaps cannot sleep, out of concern for them. The later Akkadian translation, *mudil ummānišu* (from *dâlu*, “to roam,” CAD D 58, carrying a sense of despair or aimlessness), may reflect the iterative force of the reduplicated Sumerian *di-di* via the Akkadian D-stem; the locative ending on *erin₂-na* rules out a transitive reading of the verb. The connection between not sleeping and guarding can be found in CT 58, 39 (P274234) iii 33. su₈-ba u₃ nu-ku en-nu-uŋ₃-[ŋa₂] ba-e-[tuš] and parallels.

4659 (P355670; his text A), however, already preserves sipa saŋ-gig-ga independently in three separate sections[132].

41. Apparatus and Tablet Distribution for the Mullil Litany

Siglum	Tablet	CDLI P#	Lines	Order String	Section
A	CBS 11321+	P266481	r iii 2'-8'	abcdefg	
B	NBC 1315	P290067	i 2-8	abcdefg	e-lum gud-sumun$_2$
C	VS 2, 5	P342813	o i 3-8	abdefg	zi-bu-u$_3$ zi-bu-u$_3$
D	BM 13963	P345447	o 3-8	abdefg	še-er-ma-al ni$_2$-te-na
E	BM 29623	P345449	3-9	abcdefg	dilmun^{ki} niŋin$_2$-u$_3$
F	BM 100059	P345779	o ii 29'-r i 1'	acdefg	u$_3$-mu-un-da u$_3$-mu-un-da

42. Levenshtein Distances - Mullil Litany

	A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*
A		0	1	1	0	1
B			1	1	0	1
C				0	1	1
D					1	1
E						1
F						

43. Longest Common Subsequences - Mullil Litany

	A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*
A		0	1	1	0	1
B			1	1	0	1
C				0	1	2
D					1	2
E						1
F						

[132] Kutscher distinguishes “attributes” from “epithets” in divine characterizations, applying “attributes” to his first two developmental phases and “epithets” only to the final, standardized phase. The lines containing *sipa saŋ-gig-ga* are preceded by other Mullil references, including *kur gal a-a Mullil* and *Mullil kur-kur-ra*. I take *e-lum gud-sumun$_2$* as a special title for Mullil belonging specifically to these sections, rather than a phrase carrying over into other sections; indeed, it is separable into *e-lum* and *gud-sumun$_2$* within the refrain structure indicated in NBC 1315 (P290067), i 2–8.

44. Jaccard Indexes - Mullil Litany

	A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*
A		0.0	0.43	0.43	0.0	0.43
B			0.43	0.43	0.0	0.43
C				0.0	0.43	0.57
D					0.43	0.57
E						0.43
F						

Ninisina

The litany to Ninisina consists of eight main elements. Krecher (1966: 119ff.) assigns letters to the various exemplars preserving this litany, including first-millennium tablets, and discusses the individual epithets in detail.[133] Some variation exists among the witnesses, but the sequence generally follows this pattern:

a.	sa$_{12}$-du$_5$ an-na dga-ša-an-i$_3$-si-inki-na	*Recorder of heaven, Gašanisina*
b.	ama uru$_2$-saŋ ga-ša-an-tin-lu-ba	*Mother of Urusaŋ, Gašantinluba*
c.	TUM-DIB-kug ama e$_2$-ša$_3$-ba	*TUMDIB-kug, mother of the Ešaba*
d.	dumu e$_2$-e ga-ša-an gu-nu-ru	*Child of the house, lady Gunuru*
e.	^{d}en-a$_2$-nun ama kur-ku	*Enanun, mother of the flooding*
f.	ga-ša-an-nimar-ra ki kug	*Lady of the cella, the holy place*[134]
g.	ga-ša-an-aš-te ga-ša-an larakki	*Gašanašte, lady of Larak*
h.	dezina$_2$-ku$_3$-su$_3$ ama e$_2$-e	*Ezina-kusu, mother of the house*

One recurring variation is the addition of one or two temple names — *e$_2$-gal-maḫ* (Ninisina's temple in Isin) and *e$_2$-rab-de$_5$-de$_5$* (attested only in later manuscripts). The first two elements of the litany most often follow the order Gašanisina, then Gašantinluba, but this order is occasionally reversed.

[133] For further discussion on each of Ninisina's epithets, see Krecher's commentary here.

[134] The phrase *ki kug* suggests an attribute of a place, and so must describe the *niŋar*-shrine rather than Ninisina herself.. The name can be rendered without the attribute as only Gašan-nimara. It is only in later texts where an additional /gašan/ is written, i.e. gašan e$_2$-ni$_9$-mar-ra gašan ki kug-ga-ke$_4$, e.g. SBH 49 r 12', SBH 51 o 11, SBH 52* (P414317) o 10', W 20030,9 o 11. This later insertion brings the structure of this line into closer alignment with the other lines of Ninisina's epithets, each of which begins with *gašan*.

45. Apparatus and Tablet Distribution for the Ninisina Litany

Siglum	Tablet	CDLI P#	Lines	Order String	Section
A	A 6742	P392068	o 3-10	abdhcefg	a-ra-li me-en
B	BM 15793	P283739	o i 3-6	abdh	a-ra-li me-en
C	BM 29617	P283757	o 2-9	abdhcefg	ama-bi aš tar-ra-na
D	CBS 3656	P260028	r 3-10	badcefgh	ša$_3$-ab er$_2$-re kuš$_2$-u$_3$-a-ŋu$_{10}$
E	CBS 2281	P259314	r 4-9	badcfg	[a ša$_3$-ga]-⌜ni⌝ a bar-ra-[ni]
F	BM 96684	P345507	r i 2-7	abdhcg	i-di-gin$_7$ a-bi šag$_4$-zu nu-kuš$_2$-u$_3$
G	BM 16901	P283745	o 2-8	badcefg	me-e ba-⌜ge⌝-le-ŋen
H	VS 2, 25	P342833	ii 8-15	abdcefgh	u$_3$-a erim$_6$-ma-ŋu$_{10}$
I	BM 96940	P345506	o 2'-8'	abcghdf	[...]

46. Levenshtein Distances - Ninisina Litany

	A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*	*G*	*H*	*I*
A		4	0	4	4	2	3	2	5
B			4	6	5	2	6	4	4
C				4	4	2	3	2	5
D					2	6	1	2	6
E						4	1	4	6
F							5	4	4
G								3	6
H									5
I									

47. Longest Common Subsequences - Ninisina Litany

	A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*	*G*	*H*	*I*
A		4	0	4	4	2	3	2	7
B			4	6	6	2	7	4	5
C				4	4	2	3	2	7
D					2	6	1	2	7
E						4	1	4	7
F							5	4	5
G								3	8
H									5
I									

48. Jaccard Indexes - Ninisina Litany

	A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*	*G*	*H*	*I*
A		0.57	0.0	0.73	0.91	0.5	0.7	0.44	0.92
B			0.57	1.0	1.0	0.4	1.0	0.75	0.88
C				0.73	0.91	0.5	0.7	0.44	0.92
D					0.5	1.0	0.14	0.44	0.92
E						1.0	0.43	0.8	1.0
F							1.0	0.8	0.78
G								0.56	1.0
H									0.82
I									

49. Averages of the Metrics per Litany

	Levenshtein Distance	**Longest Common Subsequence**	**Jaccard Index**
Mullil	0.73	0.87	0.33
Inana$_1$	0.76	0.79	0.2
Inana$_2$	1.8	1.87	0.42
Inana$_3$	1.83	2.0	0.45
Amanki	1.8	2.4	0.51
Ninisina	3.72	4.06	0.72
Damu	3.62	4.29	0.74
Dumuzid	4.7	5.0	0.62

Generally speaking, the degree of regularity within the divine litanies follows the order of rows in the table above. The Levenshtein distance and lowest common subsequence measures follow closely together. Mullil's litany and the Inana$_1$ litany are the most regular according to these measurements; Dumuzid's litany is the most irregular. The regularity of the Ninisina and Damu litanies are quite similar, an interesting outcome especially given their familial connection.

Chapter 4 – Results and Conclusions

4.1 Broader Observations

4.1.1 Ordered pairs/sets

Word pairs. Most of the word pairs catalogued in this dissertation maintain a rigid, essentially exceptionless order: *dam* before *dumu*, *tur₃* before *amaš* (with *sipad/munud* and *gud/e-ze₂* both following this same established order), *u₈* before *ud₅* (with *sila₄/maš* likewise following). The clearest counter-example is *e₂/uru₂*: while the *e₂*-before-*uru₂* order predominates, at least three independent witnesses — AO 4327 (from Girsu), MS 2289, and AO 10672/PRAK C 52 (from Kish) — consistently reverse this order, suggesting not free variation but a patterned alternating tradition, plausibly correlated with findspot or scribal lineage. A more genuinely mixed case is *ki-sikil/ama-gan*, where two orderings are attested, but each is maintained rigidly and independently across its own respective set of exemplars — that is, the variation is not scribal inconsistency, but two distinct, internally consistent traditions coexisting side by side.

Litany phrases. The same tendency holds at the level of the litany, though with meaningfully different degrees of rigidity across different deities. Mullil's main litany is perhaps the most regular example examined in this dissertation: its seven elements occur overwhelmingly in a single fixed sequence, and even its documented variation — the omission of the *a-a kanaŋa* line, or the substitution of *ši kanaŋa* for it — leaves the surrounding order of elements intact. Ninisina's litany, by contrast, shows a comparable overall stability but a more permeable ordering at its edges: while the sequence of its eight elements is generally maintained, the first two elements are occasionally reversed, particularly — and counterintuitively — in later manuscripts, where one might otherwise expect greater standardization rather than less. Gašanana's litanies fall between these two poles: the first four lines of both major lists are highly consistent, while additional elements can be inserted at various points without disturbing this stable core.

Common passages. This same tendency toward order preservation, and the informativeness of its exceptions, recurs at the level of multi-line passages shared across witnesses. Where reordering does occur, it is rarely arbitrary: in the *xA/Ay* (anadiplosis) structural pattern, for instance, one witness (TCL 15, 8) reverses the order of two lines relative to its parallel, and in doing so, visibly loses the anadiplosis device that the "correct" order was constructed to produce — a case where reordering is not neutral but actively disrupts the passage's own internal poetic logic. Larger blocks can be reordered as well: the vertical-variation example comparing YBC 9862 and VS 2, 28 shows two multi-line blocks swapped wholesale between witnesses, and the three-line block shared between MS 2921 and NCBT 688 is similarly reversed, in that case correlating with a genuine section boundary (marked by a shift in nominal suffix) in one witness but not the other. Even a pair of adjacent lines can simply appear in reverse order between two otherwise closely related witnesses, as in the Sm 323/NCBT 688 comparison.

Sections. Finally, the same basic tendency extends to the level of the section or kirugu itself. The threefold repetition of the *arali* passage within VS 2, 25 preserves a consistent internal sequence across all three occurrences, a pattern Krecher (1966) himself had already traced by column and line number. Across the manuscript network of *Uruamairabi*, kirugu numbering itself remains

strikingly consistent across witnesses spanning both the Old Babylonian and first-millennium periods — though, notably, this consistency begins to break down once kirugu counts climb into the high twenties and thirties, where numbering across manuscripts of *e-lum gud-sumun₂* and related material becomes visibly less reliable, mirroring a pattern also documented in later "standard" canonical series once section counts grow sufficiently large.

Taken together, these observations suggest that order is not merely one variable among many in this corpus, but one of its most conserved features — more resistant to variation, at every scale examined, than wording, presence, or even (in some cases) content itself. Where order does vary, that variation is rarely random: it correlates with findspot, with genre or deity, with structural or poetic function, or with the sheer scale of the sequence being ordered. This suggests that the ordering of building blocks — whether words, litany elements, passages, or entire sections — was itself a meaningful compositional and mnemonic resource for scribes and performers, one whose disruption, when it occurs, is worth attending to as closely as the disruption of wording itself.

4.1.2 Variants Follow the Larger Section

When we encounter variation between witnesses, it is useful to ask whether that variation is idiosyncratic to a single tablet, or whether it is instead a stable feature of a *larger* section or composition to which the passage belongs — that is, whether the variant is tied not to the individual line, but to the broader textual context in which that line is embedded.

We saw this with the *ki-sikil/ama-gan* pair: the ordering *ki-sikil-e šeš-ŋu₁₀ mu-ni-ib-be₂ / uru₂-ta ama-gan-e dumu-ŋu₁₀ mu-ni-ib-be₂*, attested in BM 29623 and its parallels (CBS 2218+, K 2003+, K 2789+, K 3506+), is consistently maintained across every exemplar of the Eršema *dilmun niŋin-u₃*, in which this couplet occurs. The reverse ordering — *ama-gan zi-gin₇ dumu šub-ba-a-na / ki-sikil-gin₇ mu-ud-na šub-ba-a-na* — is likewise found consistently across its own set of exemplars (UM 29-15-368+ and CBS 8547+), which instead belong to a different, larger textual context (perhaps *uru₂ am₃-ma-i-ra-bi*, though this remains uncertain). In neither case does the ordering vary freely from witness to witness within its own tradition; rather, each ordering is fixed *relative to the section it belongs to*, such that the variant one finds in any given exemplar is fully predictable once the identity of the larger composition is known.

This same principle recurs throughout the material examined in this dissertation. The Enlil-versus-Ninurta variant of *en zu sa mar-mar* is not scattered unpredictably across witnesses, but tracks a specific manuscript, CBS 15089, and its associated first-millennium descendants, distinguishing it cleanly from the Enlil (or Enlil/Lulal) tradition attested elsewhere. The toponym substitutions traced repeatedly across this chapter — Ḫursaŋkalama replacing Eanna, Zabalam replacing other cult centers, Ekišnugal replacing Ekur or Ezida — likewise correlate not with individual tablets in isolation, but with the broader provenance of the manuscript tradition to which each tablet belongs (Kish, Late Babylonian Ur, and so on). Even the *ma-an-gur₁₁/gil-sa* versus *mu-un-ga/gil-sa* question, and the choice between *e₂/uru₂* and its reversed counterpart, both appear to correlate with findspot-linked manuscript traditions rather than varying at random tablet by tablet.

The methodological upshot is this: apparent "noise" at the level of an individual line or pair is frequently not noise at all, but a reliable signal of which larger textual tradition, recension, or provenance a given witness belongs to. Rather than asking only "does this line vary?", it is

often more productive to ask “does this variant track the section, tablet-group, or manuscript tradition as a whole?”.

4.1.3 Reasons for variation

Having catalogued the range of variation types attested in this corpus, and having shown that the ordering of building blocks is itself a remarkably conserved feature, we turn now to the question of causation: why does variation occur where it does, and what can the pattern of its occurrence tell us about the forces shaping this tradition?

Variation according to divinity

One clear and recurring cause of variation is simple adaptation to a different addressee. An example we presented was the refrain *mu-zu kur-kur-še₃*, “your name to all the lands,” attached to Mullil in *e-lum gud-sumun₂*, becomes *mu-zu an-zag-še₃*, “your name to heaven's edge,” when the same underlying template (*gud maḫ pa e₃-a*) is reshaped around Iškur. This is a targeted substitution calibrated to each deity's particular sphere of renown — Mullil's authority is properly cosmic and territorial (“all the lands”), while Iškur's is meteorological and cosmic in a narrower sense (“heaven's edge,” fitting his identity as storm-god). The variation here is doing real semantic work: it is precisely because the underlying frame is shared that the substituted element becomes theologically meaningful, signaling which deity's particular domain the formula has been recalibrated to express.

A related, and in some ways more systematic, instance of this phenomenon is the shared template underlying the Eršema *gu₄ maḫ pa e₃-a*, discussed earlier in this dissertation. Delnero (2020) notes that this same compositional template — standard divine epithets followed by praise of the deity's destructive power — was independently redeployed for at least three distinct destructive male deities: Iškur, in the Eršema from which it takes its name; Šulpae, in BM 96568 (incipit *diŋir pa e₃-a*); and Nergal, in BM 22741. This was a template redeployed with only the minimal substitutions necessary — divine name, epithets, and narrative particulars — required to adapt it to each individual god.

Variation according to place

Another cause of variation is adaptation to a specific cultic or geographic setting. The alteration of Inana's standard litany in the Kish exemplars is a clear instance of this: where the Nippur-associated tradition (NCBT 688) invokes Inana as lady of the Eanna and the Ŋipar, the Kish witnesses (PRAK C 52+, and related sources) substitute Ḫursaŋkalama for these Uruk-associated sites, fitting the goddess's epithets to the specific local setting in which the lament was actually performed. The same phenomenon recurs with the *er₂ na-mu-un-ma-al* Eršema: the Kish exemplars (PRAK C 47+, and, in reconstruction, PRAK B 48) include Ḫursaŋkalama where the non-Kish witness (BM 100111) instead has Ŋipar. In both cases, the substitution is not arbitrary but systematically local — it is always the *same* Kish site being inserted in place of the *same* non-Kish site, across independent compositions.

As Delnero writes about Kish and Girsu, “the content of the laments also varies very little, but in which, in some instances, a slightly greater emphasis on local deities and temples is observable” (2020:93f) and connected the relatively less variation in tablets from Nippur to the commonality of Enlil as essential to the lament genre.

Foley's account of traditional referentiality — the idea that a given formula or phrase carries meaning not simply through its surface semantics, but through its embeddedness in a

broader, culturally shared network of associations available to a specific audience — is directly relevant here. What resonates as meaningful within one community's semiotic network need not resonate equally, or in the same way, for another. Read in this light, the substitution of Ḫursaŋkalama for Eanna or Ḏipar is not a scribal error, nor even simply a factual correction, but a deliberate act of cultural translation: invoking Inana through her Uruk-associated epithets would carry a certain traditional resonance for an audience assembled at a performance connected to Uruk, but that same invocation would land differently, or not at all, for an audience gathered in Kish. Allowing the litany to vary in this way is precisely what allows a shared compositional template to remain locally meaningful — to integrate the text, its performer, and its specific audience into a single coherent frame of reference — even as it moves between distinct performative and geographic contexts.

Variation with structural results/causes

A third category of variation concerns cases where a structural difference and a textual variant co-occur, without it being clear which is cause and which is effect. The material examined above is the *-bi* versus *-de₃* alternation in NCBT 688's *uru₂ ki-sikil-bi/uru₂ ŋuruš-bi* couplet: in NCBT 688, these two lines carry the suffix *-de₃*, distinguishing them from the surrounding *-bi*-suffixed material and apparently marking the beginning of a new structural section, while in the parallel witness MS 2921, the same two lines instead carry *-bi* throughout and the composition simply ends there, without beginning a new section at all. It is not obvious, in a case like this, whether the grammatical variant is the *cause* of the structural difference — that is, whether a scribe's (or tradition's) choice of suffix is what determines whether a new section begins — or whether it is instead the *result* of an independent structural decision, with the suffix simply following along mechanically once the surrounding material had already been reorganized. This same difficulty recurs in the discussion of ordered pairs and sets above: where reordering disrupts an anadiplosis chain, for instance, it remains genuinely unclear whether the reordering was motivated by some structural or compositional goal, or whether the loss of the anadiplosis device is simply an incidental byproduct of a reordering that occurred for entirely unrelated reasons.

A further possibility, distinct from both of the above, is that an apparent “variant” is not really a variant at all in the sense assumed throughout most of this dissertation — that is, it may not represent two different renderings of what is fundamentally “the same” passage, but rather a marker that two witnesses are, at that specific point, no longer instances of the same composition or section at all. On this reading, what looks like reordering, substitution, or structural divergence may sometimes be better understood as the boundary at which one composition's material gives way to another's — a question that returns us directly to the “same text” problem raised at the very outset of this dissertation, and for which no single answer is likely to hold uniformly across every case examined here.

4.2 Conclusions

Variations at smaller scopes do not impact the definition of a singular text nearly as much as variations at a larger scale. The substitution of a line here and there, or the reordering of lines within a single section, does not threaten the overall textual cohesion of a composition in the way that the substitution or reordering of entire sections does.

We have seen numerous examples of well-maintained sequences of sections already within the Old Babylonian period itself: the threefold repetition of the *arali* passage in VS 2, 25, independently tracked by Krecher (1966) by column and line; the consistent kirugu numbering across the multi-tablet witnesses to *Uruamairabi* (NCBT 688, PRAK C 52, U 16861, TCL 16, 68, Sb 12436, K 2759+); and the closely parallel section sequences documented for both *e-lum gud-sumun₂* and *a-ab-ba ḫu-luḫ-ḫa*. In some cases, enough of these sections survive, together with their identifying incipits, that we can posit the existence of an entire composition transmitted more or less regularly across multiple witnesses — not merely a shared repertoire of interchangeable blocks, but a genuinely stable large-scale structure recognized and reproduced by scribes working independently of one another.

While centuries separate the Old Babylonian editions of these laments from their first-millennium counterparts, I believe the later textual tradition can still be used to corroborate this section-level sequencing in the earlier period. It is genuinely remarkable how well the transmission of certain laments was maintained across this span: the *Enlil the Merchant* passage, for instance — the very passage from which Civil (1976) first derived the concept of the "textual block" underlying this entire dissertation's theoretical framework — recurs in closely comparable form across *Uruamairabi*, *^{d}utu-gin₇ e₃-ta*, and *zi-bu-u₃ zi-bu-u₃*, spanning both periods; and the Nippur/Isin/Ur/Larsa city-litany sequence documented in *a-ab-ba ḫu-luḫ-ḫa* shows an Old Babylonian core (Nippur, Isin, Ur, Larsa) that the later Neo-Assyrian recension expands, rather than restructures, by the orderly addition of Sippar, Babylon, and Borsippa.

At the same time, the previous chapter also documented genuine examples of variation at this larger, section-defining level — cases that call the cohesion of a singular text into real question, rather than merely into apparent question. In some instances, this cannot be determined with confidence, given the fragmentary preservation of key lines and the ordinary, expected background level of smaller-scale variation already documented throughout this dissertation. In other cases, however, it is difficult to deny that we are dealing with entirely different sections between two or more otherwise closely parallel tablets.

Returning, finally, to the question of using first-millennium texts to inform our understanding of this earlier corpus: it is worth noting explicitly that the issue of section connectivity is not confined to the Old Babylonian period, but recurs within the first-millennium tradition as well. The colophons naming individual balaŋs give us direct, certain evidence that large blocks of text — including entire sequences of sections — were shared across multiple, formally distinct balaŋs. Gabbay's (2015: 331) discussion of the Eršema *dilmun niŋin-u₃* is instructive here: this single composition appears appended to different balaŋs across different exemplars (as in K.3315+, where it follows an otherwise unrelated balaŋ text on the same tablet), demonstrating that the same modular logic of recombination this dissertation has traced throughout the Old Babylonian material — content and structural blocks recombined into larger units, which themselves function as content blocks at a still higher level — continued to operate, in a directly attested and unambiguous form, well into the first millennium as well.

Revisiting Textuality

The variation of text according to divinity or place, documented throughout this chapter, has a particular bearing on how we should understand the style and status of this literature. Far from indicating carelessness or corruption, this variation reveals a fluidity of composition that is nonetheless purposeful, tied to specific, recoverable reasons and functions — the recalibration of

a shared formula to a new deity's sphere of influence, or the substitution of a local cult site for the anticipated but geographically inappropriate one. One can reasonably argue, on this basis, that many of these lament compositions were *living* texts, actively maintained and adapted for use, rather than static relics preserved by scribal tradition for its own sake.

This life did not end with the Old Babylonian period. It continued directly into the first millennium, visible in the ongoing addition of temple names and place references to existing compositions, and in the emergence of entirely new compositions addressed to gods who held a comparatively minor place in the earlier tradition — Nabu, for instance, whose absorption into the Enlil/Marduk theological circle is accompanied by the appearance of dedicated balaŋs in his own name, such as *unken-ta eš-bar til-la* . This pattern of theological and compositional growth stands as clear evidence that the tradition was not simply copied forward across the centuries, but continued to develop in response to changing religious and institutional priorities.

At the other end of this same process, however, some Old Babylonian compositions appear to have simply died out, leaving no clear first-millennium descendant at all — a reminder that "life," in this sense, was not guaranteed uniformly across the whole corpus, and that the tradition's vitality operated selectively rather than universally.

Even so, the preservation of a great many of these texts into the first millennium — with, in several cases, remarkably faithful transmission across the intervening centuries points to a genuine, sustained cultural investment in preserving antiquity as such, independent of the pressures toward local and theological adaptation traced throughout this chapter. And yet other texts, examined at equal length above, show far greater change over time, their content and even their divine addressee shifting as they were absorbed into new theological configurations.

The reality of what should count as "the text" for these laments, then, lies somewhere between these two poles — neither a fixed, unchanging monument successfully transmitted across a millennium and a half, nor an infinitely malleable set of interchangeable parts with no stable identity at all, but a tradition capable of sustaining both remarkable continuity and meaningful, functionally motivated change, often within the very same composition.

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