

The Performance of a Sumerian Wedding Song (CT 58, 12)

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A close examination of the Old Babylonian Sumerian song CT 58, 12, in terms of its graphic arrangement and its literary patterns, leads to a better understanding of its performance: male and female singers participate, soloists and choir alternate, and vocables feature prominently besides the Sumerian text. The song can be situated within the marriage ceremony.

Introduction

The Old Babylonian Sumerian text CT 58, 12 (BM 85206) is remarkable, firstly for the extensive use of ‘unintelligibles’ or ‘vocables’, secondly for its graphic arrangement and thirdly for the repeated indication $\eta e\check{s}ge-\eta a_2$. As the alternation between phrases in Emesal and the main dialect of Sumerian makes clear, we are dealing with a dialogue between male and female partners. The divine names locate the text in the context of the Inana-Dumuzi corpus of Sumerian literature.

The tablet BM 85206 is part of the 99-4-15 collection at the British Museum, which was acquired from the Paris dealer I. Elias Gejou, and thus its provenance cannot be determined (Sigrist e.a. 1996, ix and 248). The upper part of the tablet (width ca. 10.5 cm, length ca. 11.5 cm) is preserved, with perhaps half of it missing. The format of the tablet is unusual, since it is wider than the standard Old Babylonian *imgida*. Furthermore, its surface is not covered by a fine slip and is not carefully smoothed, as it normally appears with Old Babylonian literary and school texts.¹ As Steve Tinney remarks (personal communication), this coarse finish may relate to the practical use of texts; furthermore, Tinney compares it to a Nippur group of hymns known in single exemplars, which may represent texts prepared for performance.

¹ We thank Steve Tinney for these observations on the format of CT 58, 12, which are based on his intimate knowledge of the typology of Old Babylonian tablets.

Edition of CT 58, 12

The text was copied by Alster, and some lines were transliterated in the preface (Alster/Geller 1990, 12). The greater part of the reverse was transliterated by Volk (1994, 189 note 71), who added some notes on the ‘vocables’. A short description of the text as “Wechselgesang über Inanna und Ama`ušumgal`anna” was given by Fritz (2003, 157f.), and Shehata (2009, 357–360) discusses the text in the context of music in the Old Babylonian period.

The transliteration is based on a set of photographs and repeated collations of the original. The values for Sumerian are based on Attinger *apud* Mittermayer (2006).

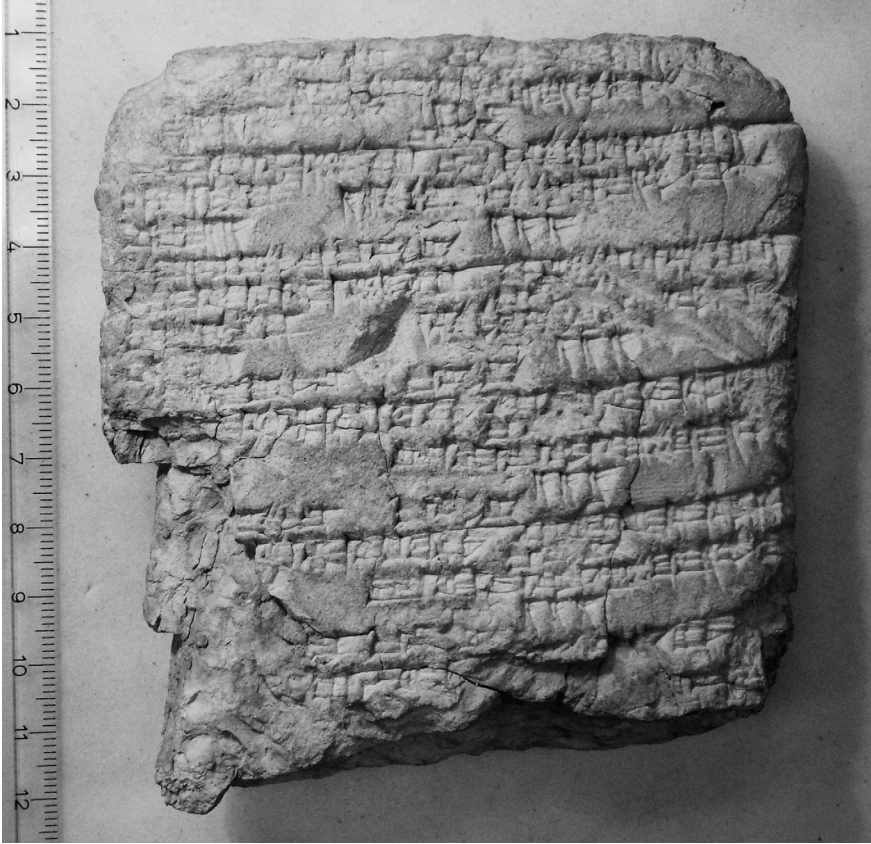
In the transliteration below, various kinds of text are distinguished as follows:

- main dialect Sumerian is in Roman Type (e.g. nam-nin)
- Emesal dialect Sumerian is in bold type (e.g. **mu-lu**)
- vocables (see below) in italics (e.g. *e-ia el-lu*)
- the performative instruction ηeš-ge-ηal₂ is underlined

Reading based on collations that deviate from the handcopy of B. Alster are indicated by asterisks (*).

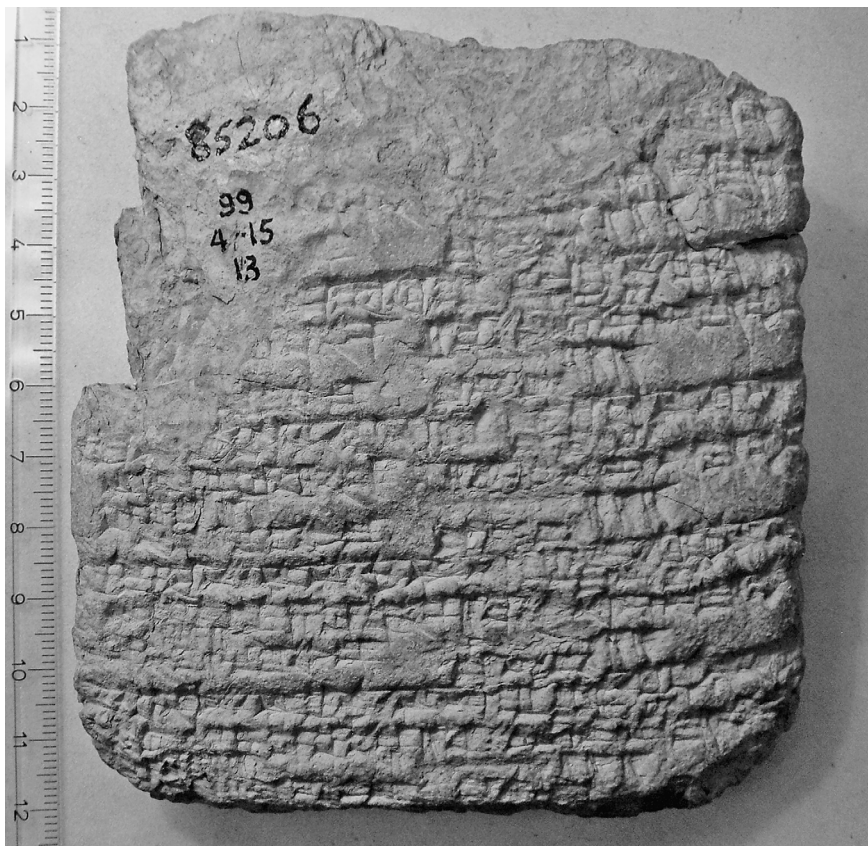
Obv.

A 1	[in]- ^r nin* ¹ -e* suku ₅ * nam-dub	u ₄ an- ^r ne ₂ * ¹ nam-nin a mu- ^r x(x) ¹
1a		<u>ηeš-ge-ηal₂</u>
2	<i>[e-ia el]-lu*</i>	a nam-nin °* nam-nin <i>e-ia-am-ma-mu</i>
2a		<u>ηeš*-ge*ηal₂*</u>
3	<i>[e-e]-ia*-a°{A}*</i>	<i>a-a-a</i>
3a	°{A}	<u>ηeš-ge-ηal₂</u>
<hr/>		
B 4	^r ku ₃ * ¹ dīnana-ke ₄ * suku ₅ * nam-dub	u ₄ nam-nin e nam-nin a
4a		<u>ηeš-ge-ηal₂</u>
5	<i>e-ia* el-lu</i>	
6	<i>e-e-ia-a</i>	a nam-nin °* nam-nin <i>e-ia-am-ma-mu</i>
7	mu-lu a-la-lu in-gur	° ... ° <i>a-a-a</i>
7a		<u>ηeš-ge-ηal₂</u>
<hr/>		
C 8	AN. ^r x* ¹ -ur-saη-e suku ₅ nam-dub	u ₄ nam-nin e nam-nin e
8a		<u>ηeš-ge-^rηal₂¹</u>
9	<i>e-ia el-lu</i>	
10	<i>e-[e]-ia*-a</i>	a nam-nin nam-nin ^r e-ia ¹ -am-ma-mu
11	mu-lu a-la-lu in-gur*	° ... °* <i>a-a-a</i>
11a		<u>ηeš-ge-ηal₂</u>
<hr/>		
D 12	[x x-η]a ₂ * ki suku ₅ * dub-ba-bi	u ₃ men* saη-ηa ₂ al- ^r u ₃ * ¹ -du ₂ *
12a		<u>ηeš-^rge¹ηal₂</u>



BM 85206, obv.

13	[.....]- <i>mu*</i>	men saŋ-ŋa ₂ al-u ₃ -du ₂ <i>ia-am-^rma*-mu*</i>
14	[.....]	
15	[mu-lu a-la]-lu in-gur	° ... °* <i>a-a-a</i>
15a		<u>ŋeš-ge-ŋal₂</u>
<hr/>		
E 16	[x x-ŋ]a ₂ * ki suku ₅ dub-ba-bi	u ₃ men saŋ-ŋa ₂ al- ^r u ₃ ¹ -du ₂
16a		<u>ŋeš-ge-ŋal₂</u>
17].....]- ^r <i>mu*</i>	men saŋ-ŋa ₂ al-u ₃ -du ₂ <i>ia-am-ma-mu</i>
18	[.....]	
19	[mu-lu a-la-lu in]-gur	° ... °* <i>a-a-a</i>
19a		<u>ŋeš-ge-ŋal₂</u>
<hr/>		
F 20	[.....] lil ₂ ?-la ₂ KA [x x] ^r GI* x x ¹ mi-ni-i[b?-...]-RI*-(o)	
21	[.....]-ri-i[a?- [...]	



BM 85206, rev.

Rev.

	[...]		
G'	[.....]-de ₂ ?* -e		
1a'	[.....] <u>neš-ge-ηa</u> l ₂ ?*		
<hr/>			
H' 2'	[nin?] 'za*-e* u ₄ *-de ₃ * a*-ba* in*-na* ¹ -ri*-ri* <i>ia-am-ma-mu</i>		
3'	[.....]		
4'	[mu-lu a-la-lu in]- 'gur ¹ ° °*a-a-a		
4a'		<u>neš-ge-ηa</u> l ₂	
<hr/>			
I' 5'	[.....]-x unu ^{ki} -ra ušbar(UR ₂ ×[NUN?])* -e mu-un-šum ₂ * [(...)]		
5a'		<u>neš*-ge*-ηa</u> l ₂ * ° °	
6'	[... za] -'e* ¹ u ₄ -de ₃ a-ba in-na-ri-ri <i>ia-am-ma-mu</i>		
7'	[.....]		
8'	[mu-lu a]-'la ¹ -lu in-gur ° ° a-a-a		
8a'		<u>neš-ge-ηa</u> l ₂	

J'	9'	ušbar (UR ₂ ×U ₂ ?)- ṛ ṇu ₁₀ ¹ ga-ša-an-sumun₂-na-ra	kaš*-še ₃ ga-an-na-sur
	9a'		<u>ṇeš-ge-ṇal₂</u>
	10'	^d inana za-e u ₄ -de ₃	a-ba in-na-ri-ri <i>ia-am-ma-mu</i>
	11'	<i>e-e-ia-a</i>	
	12'	mu-lu a-la-lu in-gur ^o	^o * <i>a-a-a</i>
	12a'		<u>ṇeš-ge-ṇal₂</u>
<hr/>			
K'	13'	e-rib-ba-ṇu₁₀ ^d mu-tin-an-na-ra	kuru ₁₃ *-še ₃ ga-an-na-du ₈
	13a'		<u>ṇeš-ge-ṇal₂</u>
	14'	^d nin-e ₂ -gal za-e u ₄ -de ₃	a-ba in-na-ri-ri <i>ia-am-ma-mu</i>
	15'	<i>e- e-ia-a</i>	
	16'	mu-lu a-la-lu in-gur	^o
	16a'		^o ṛ <i>a[?]*¹-a-a</i>
			<u>ṇeš-ge-ṇal₂</u>
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L'	17'	mu-ud-na-ṇu₁₀ ^d ušumgal-an-na-ra	amaš*-še ₃ ga-an-na-ir-ir
	17a'		<u>ṇeš-ge-ṇal₂</u>
	18'	in-nin za-e u ₄ -de ₃ _{de*}	a-ba in-na-ri-ri <i>ia-am-ma-mu</i>
	19'	<i>e- e-ia-a</i>	
	20'	mu-^ṛlu¹ a-la-lu in-gur	^o
	20a'		^o <i>a-a-a</i>
			<u>ṇeš-ge-ṛṇal₂¹</u>

lower edge

M' 21' [(x) ṛ] *a-am-ma* u₃-li-li-a [x(x)] ṛx-ta?¹ [...]

22' [.....] x x nin ṛe? ¹ A x [...]

23' [.....] x li* li* [...] x [...]

24' **mu*-lu* a-la*-lu in*-gur*** [...]

left edge

undeciphered traces

Translation

The translation indicates male and female voice, but does not note the term ṇeš-ge-ṇal₂ “Response” (see the discussion below).

A (m.) [Innin] has encircled (her head) with the diadem, u₄ ... ladyship
a ...

[*eya el*]lu (m.) a ladyship, ladyship *eyammamu*

[*e*]ya-a a-a-a

B (m.) Holy Inana has encircled (her head) with the diadem, u₄ ladyship
e ladyship a

eya ellu (m.) a ladyship, ladyship *eyammamu*

e-eya-a a-a-a

(f.) The man has returned the *alalu*-cheers!

C (m.) ‘Divine Heroic ...’ has encircled (her head) with the diadem, u₄
ladyship e ladyship a

eya ellu (m.) a ladyship, ladyship *eyammamu*

e-[e]ya-a a-a-a

- (f.) The man has returned the *alalu*-cheers!
- D (m.) [...], where the diadem encircled (her head), u_3 she was born with a crown on her head!
 [...] -*mu* (m.) She was born with a crown on her head! *yammamu*
 [...] *a-a-a*
 (f.) The man has returned the *alalu*-cheers!
- E (m.) [...], where the diadem encircled (her head), u_3 she was born with a crown on her head!
 [...] -*mu* (m.) She was born with a crown on her head! *yam-*
mamu
 [...] *a-a-a*
 (f.) The man has returned the *alalu*-cheers!
- F [...] ...
- G' [...] ...
- H' (m.) [*Lady*], you, today! Who will direct something to him? *yam-*
mamu
 [...] *a-a-a*
 (f.) [The man has] returned [the *alalu*-cheers!]
- I' (m.) To [the ...] of Uruk, the in-law has given it.
 (m.) [...], you, today! Who will direct something to her? *yammamu*
 [...] *a-a-a*
 (f.) [The man] has returned the *alalu*-cheers!
- J' (f.) For my mother-in-law Ninsumun? (m.) For beer, I will brew for her!
 (m.) Inana, you, today! Who (but I) will direct something to her? *yam-*
mamu
e-eya-a *a-a-a*
 (f.) The man has returned the *alalu*-cheers!
- K' (f.) For my sister-in-law Geštinana? (m.) For the granary, I will make heaps for her!
 (m.) Ninegal, you, today! Who (but I) will direct something to her?
yammamu
e-eya-a *a-a-a*
 (f.) The man has returned the *alalu*-cheers!
- L' (f.) For my husband Ušumgal-ana? (m.) For the sheepfold, I will bring him (sheep)!
 (m.) Innin, you, today! Who (but I) will direct something to him?
yammamu
e-eya-a *a-a-a*
 (f.) The man has returned the *alalu*-cheers!

M' [...] *yamma ulili* [...]

[...] lady [...]

[...] *lili* [...]

(f.) The man has returned the *alalu*-cheers!

Philological notes

1 ff.: Alster (1990, 12) reads $mu\check{s}_3$ (accepted by Fritz 2003, 158 n.636), but the sign is clearly $MU\check{s}_2$, read $suku_5$ (traditionally $su\check{h}$), a “diadem”; on this see recently Steinkeller (1998, 92–95), who describes it as “a type of band”, “an object of considerable importance and value, which was worn over the head.” The verb is dub/dab_6 “to encircle, surround”; the prefix chain $nam-$ instead of $na-an-$ (the ergatives require a transitive construction) was already discussed by Fritz (2003, 158 n.636). $suku_5$ dub “to encircle (the head) with a diadem” is an expression for the beautiful coiffure of the bride Inana; see in this regard the discussion by Sefati (1998, 143, on Inana-Dumuzi C, see below; 317), who translates the phrase more freely as “to comb” (Sefati reads $mu\check{s}_2$ instead of $suku_5/su\check{h}$).

1: The restoration $[in]-nin$ is inspired by sequences such as the beginning of Inana and Šukaletuda (p.c. Pascal Attinger).

7 etc.: $a-la-lu$ describes the joyful exclamations uttered by the men in response to the women; cf. PSD A/I, 100–101 (calling it a song or an exclamation). In CT 58, 15/16 the men coming to Inana sing the *alalu*.

8: $^dX^1-ur-sa\eta-e$ poses difficulties. The first signs look like AN TUR, but an epithet $dumu\ ur-sa\eta$ is not known as a divine name. As an epithet of Inana, $dumu\ ur-sa\eta$ appears in the OB version of Uru'amairabi (Volk 1989, 35 CT 42 48:3 and parallels; cf. CLAM p. 557f.) $dumu\ ur-sa\eta$ $^dmu-ul-lil_2-[la_2-men_3]$ “I am the heroic child of Mullil (Enlil)”; for the first millennium version see Volk 1989, 136 on Tablet XX 15.

11: gur is clear on the tablet, although Alster/Geller (1990, 12) claim that this line “has in-du, and this is the correct reading, although in rev. 4, 5, and 6 the sign looks like gur ”.

12: One could think of a restoration like $[x\ sa\eta-\eta]a_2$... “the X of the head(, which was encircled by the diadem)”. Here, the diadem is likened to the “crown” (men).

20: If the sign RI is correctly identified, this could point to a connection with the continuation of the text on the reverse.

Rev. 2', 6', 10', 14', and 18': The gloss *di* in rev. 18' points to a reading u_4-de_3 ("on the day", > "today"(?)) instead of the more frequently used u_4-ne ("this day" > "today").

Rev. 5' and 9': In 5', the inscribed NUN/Ú of *ušbar* is not visible because of the worn surface, in 9' one is inclined to see $UR_2 \times U_2 = ušbar_7$. On the variation of the writings for the Sumerian words for the parents-in-law see Wilcke (1985, 235–238).

Rev. 9', 13', 17': Whereas the first halves of these lines are clearly in Emesal, the cohortative prefix *ga-* indicates main dialect for the latter parts. This results in a strange combination with the (incorrectly used) Emesal verb *ir* in 17'. Together with the performative instruction $\eta e\check{s}-ge-\eta a_2$ (see below) we take the use of *ga-* and the verb $\check{s}um_2$ in the preceding section (line 5', instead of Emesal $ze_2-e\eta_3$) as markers of main dialect. It may be noted, however, that the cohortative prefix *ga-* may appear very rarely in Emesal context in Old Babylonian; see Lugale 383 (van Dijk 1983, I 99, II 109f.) OB *ga-an-ši-ηen* // SB *da-ši-in-ηen* (// *lullik*).

Rev. 13': *erib*, the Sumerian term for the sister of the husband, was treated by Wilcke (1987); this is the relationship of Geštinana, Dumuzi's sister, to Inana, his bride.

The Vocables

The song CT 58, 12 features an unparalleled wealth of 'unintelligibles' or 'vocables', i.e. sonic expressions without semantic meaning. These are marked as italics in the transliteration. They include simple vocals (*a*, *e*, u_4 , u_3), sequences of vowels (*a-a-a*) and syllable sequences (*eya*, *yammamu*, *ellu*, *ulili*). Such 'nonsense syllables' are sometimes called 'vocables' in musicological literature (see Nettle 1993, 114), a term that is adopted here. Vocables appear here and there in Sumerian literary texts (see below), but never to the extent of our song. However, we would not conclude that CT 58, 12 is a completely unique text in this regard. More probably, vocables were written out in this instance, whereas normally they may have been added only in performance.

The Old Babylonian vocables include vowels as well as syllable sequences, which differentiates them from Late Babylonian performative notations of vowels or vowel sequences (Mirelman 2010). Furthermore, the Late Babylonian vowels add information regarding the musical performance of the text, like a musical notation. In our Old Babylonian example, the vocables can be compared to the commonly attested usage

of exclamations of joy and lament, from *a-la-la* to u_3 - u_8 -*a*, in literary texts (see Edzard 2003, 167–170).

The scribe of CT 58, 12 has observed the following rules in the notation of the vocables: The glide /*ya*/ is indicated by the IA sign (note *e-ia*, *ia-am*...), so *a-a-a* should probably not be regarded as **ayaya* v.s. (thus Volk 1994, 189 n.69), but as a repeated vowel ($a^{\grave{a}}a^{\grave{a}}$) or as notation for an elongated single vowel (*aaah*). The reduplication of vowels is a relevant feature, since the text differentiates between *e-ia* and *e-e-ia-a* (1.5–6, 9–10), the latter standing for $e^{\grave{e}}ya^{\grave{a}}$ or *eeyaa*. It cannot be excluded, however, that our text uses the IA sign only between different vowels and that sequences of identical vowels were pronounced as *ayaya* (a-a-a) or *eye* (e-e), *e-e-ia-a* thus representing *eyeyaya*.

Furthermore, the doubling of consonants is indicated (*el-lu*, *ia-am-ma*... against u_3 -*li-li* and *-ma-mu*).

Finally, u_4 and u_3 are differentiated, which may point to two vowels, perhaps o and u, although the differentiation is between u_4 /u and u_2 in the lexical list Proto-Aa (Westenholz 1991) and both u_3 and u_4 seem to represent /o/ (Lieberman 1979, 25).

Simple vowels: *a*, *e*, u_4 , u_3

Simple vowels appear as exclamations within the text of main dialect Sumerian only on the obverse and only in the second half of the line or its repetition, exactly the sections marked as $\eta e\check{s}ge\eta al$ (see below). Regarding the vowels, it is interesting to compare the evidence of the Late Babylonian performative notations (see Mirelman 2010): The vowel /a/ is the most widely attested, probably representing the middle pitch-range and high amplitude, /e/ is second in popularity, suggesting a middle-upper pitch-range and relatively high amplitude; the rarely attested /u/ stands for the low pitch-range and low amplitude. /i/ is known from the LB texts but it does not appear in our text as simple vowel or in vowel(-glide) sequences.

The sequence *a-a-a* always appears at the same point in every stanza, namely at the very right of the penultimate line. It immediately precedes the female repetitive phrase *mu-lu a-la-lu in-gur* „The man has returned the *alalu*-cheers!” Should *alalu* thus refer to this *a-a-a* alone, or to the complete $\eta e\check{s}ge\eta al$ -response (e.g. line 2, 6, 10: *a nam-nin nam-nin e ia-am-ma-mu, a-a-a*)? As noted above, *a-a-a* can stand for a repeated or an elongated vowel a.

Vowel-glide sequences: *e-e-ia-a*, *e-ia*

The short *eya* is combined with *ellu* on the obverse, the long *e-eya-a* appears both on the obverse and the reverse.² On the obverse, the pair *eya ellu*, *e-eya-a* is opposed to the single *n a m - n i n - l i n e* in the main dialect, on the reverse *e-e-ia-a* is written very close to the Emesal phrase *mu-lu a-la-lu in-gur*; this suggests that *eya ellu* and *e-eya-a* belong to the female speech. We know of no other instances of the glide *e-ia* (*eya*) as an exclamation outside of this text. The alleged exclamation *ya* in *i₃-a lu m-lu m* (Gilgameš and *Ḫuwawa B 1* and parallels) has been interpreted as “oil-glistening one” by Marchesi (2000).

Multi-syllable vocables: *el-lu*, *u₃-li-li*, *ia-am-ma-mu*

For *ellu*, and other exclamations based on /l/, see Krecher (1966, 148 n. 433); Civil (1976, 90) specifically on *e-el-lu* as an exclamation to incite the ploughing oxen; Attinger (1993, 559); Römer (2001, 225 n. 184); and Edzard (2003, 167).

In our text, *eya ellu* obviously belongs to the female part (see above on *eya*). Similarly, *ellu ellu*-lines occur in Emesal context in CT 58 14, a song which is also related to the Dumuzi-Inana topic; and Inana repeatedly uses *ellu* in the “Manchester Tammuz” (lines 49, 55, 73, 75(?), and 189; Alster 1992).

The context for *ulili* is not well preserved (1, 21', 23'?), where it appears together with *yamma*. On *ulili* see Römer (2001, 225 n. 184) and note the equation *m u n u s - ù - l i - l i = z a m m i r t u* “female singer” (Lu III = MSL 12, 124 ii 16).

Exclamations around the consonant [l] are a world-wide phenomenon, and Edzard l.c. refers i.a. to Greek *alala*, Hebrew *hallelūjā*, and, most importantly, to the ululation of the Middle East, a high-pitched vocalisation produced with an oscillating tongue from the women (and sometimes men) at emotional high points, typically at marriage ceremonies (Jacobs 2007, 489f.).

In every stanza, *yammamu* is attached to the end of the speech in the main dialect, and is thus a ‘male’ exclamation in our text. For similar exclamations in Old Babylonian Sumerian lamentations cf. Kramer (1987, 82) line 344: *i-am₃-ma e-la-lu*, closing a lament addressed to Inana; Cohen (1988, 83) f+182: *i-a-am-ma* (context unclear); see also the similar excla-

² This distribution excludes the reading *e^e-ia^a* proposed by Volk (1994, 189), who based his interpretation on the distribution of the signs on the reverse.

mation in Kramer (1985, 120) lines 23, 24: *a-u₃-am₃-ma, al-li-li-am₃-ma* in a section praising Enlil.

Emesal and Main Dialect as Features of the Dialogue

The tablet is divided in various sections (here numbered A to F and G' to M'). The decisive clue for understanding the song's structure is provided by the sequence of phrases in Emesal (ES) and in the Main Dialect (MD) of Sumerian within each section. This clearly indicates that the text represents a dialogue between male and female participants.

The key words for the Main Dialect are: *nin* (instead of ES *ga-ša-an*), *nam* (vs. ES *na-a₂*), *inana* (ES *ga-ša-an-an-na*), *šum₂* (ES *ze₂-e₃*), cohortative *ga-* (ES *da-*, *de₃-*).

Emesal words are *mu-lu* (MD *lu₂*), *ga-ša-an* (MD *nin*), *mu-tin-an-na* (MD *ηešt_{in}-an-na*); *mu-ud-na* (MD *ηeš_{da}na*); for the problem of the verb *ir* (MD *tum₂/de₆*) see above on line 17'.

The use of pronouns underlines the distinction between male and female speech on the reverse. Inana and other goddesses are addressed in the second person (*za-e/ze₄-e*) (in Rev. 2', 6', 10', 14', and 18'). On the other hand, the goddess speaks of "my husband" in Rev. 17'.

Graphic arrangement

Previous commentators have already noted the exceptional graphic arrangement of this text. Here we list the most important features:

The first line of each section starts at the left margin of the tablet, thus marking clearly the division of the text. Within the sections, lines often do not proceed uniformly from left to right. In some cases on the obverse, half lines to the left correspond to a single half line to the right (see ll. 5–6, 9–10, etc.). The vocable *a-a-a* and the performative instruction *ηeš-ge-ηal₂* are placed in specific positions in the right half of each section. Collation of the tablet has revealed many erasures throughout the text, specifically above every instance of a section's last *ηeš-ge-ηal₂*. This implies that the graphic displacement of the text is significant. In section D one is inclined to see erased traces of a final *A*, so probably the vocable *a-a-a* was erased and later rewritten to the right of these erasures and of the *ηeš-ge-ηal₂* notation. The reason behind this correction becomes clear from section A. In this single instance, a third *ηeš-ge-ηal₂* is written directly underneath *a-a-a*.

Obv.

A [in]¹/nin¹-e suku₃ nam- dub ^{u₄ an-¹ne₂ nam- nin a mu-x(x)⁷}
 {e-ia e} -lu a nam-nin ° nam-nin e- ia- am-ma-mu
 [e-e]-ia- -a °{A} ηeš-ge-ηal₂ a- a- a
 °{A} ηeš-ge-ηal₂

B ^{ku₃ inana-ke₄ suku₃ nam- dub} ^{ηeš-ge-ηal₂} u₄ nam- nin e nam- nin a
 e- ia el- lu a nam-nin ° nam-nin e- ia- am-ma-mu
 e- e- ia- a ° ° a- a- a
 mu-lu a-la-lu in- gur ηeš-ge-ηal₂

C AN. ^{x⁷ ur- saḡ- e suku₃ nam- dub} ^{ηeš-ge-ηal₂} u₄ nam-nin e nam-nin e
 e- ia el- lu a nam-nin nam-nin e -ia⁷ -am- ma- mu
 e-[e]-ia- a ° ° a- a- a
 mu-lu a-la-lu in- gur ηeš-ge-ηal₂

D [x x -η]_{a₂} ki suku₃ dub- ba- bi ^{u₃ men saḡ- ηa₂ al- 'u₃-du₂}
 [.....]-mu men saḡ- ηa₂ al- u₃- du₂ ia- am-⁷ma-mu⁷
 [.....] ° ° a- a- a
 [mu-lu a-la]-lu in- gur ηeš-ge-ηal₂

E [x x -η]_{a₂} ki suku₃ dub- ba- bi ^{u₃ men saḡ- ηa₂ al- 'u₃-du₂}
 [.....]-mu men saḡ- ηa₂ al- u₃- du₂ ia- am-⁷ma-mu⁷
 [.....] ° ° a- a- a
 [mu-lu a-la-lu in]-gur ηeš-ge-ηal₂

F [.....] li₂?- la₂ KA [x x] GI ^{x x} mi- ni- i{b?-...}-RI-(o)
 [.....] [x⁷ ri-ī{a?-.....}]

BM 85206, obv., transliteration

Throughout the text, the performative indication ηeš-ge-ηal₂ is written exactly below the beginning of the half lines to the right: On the obverse below the second part of the first line and below the second half line to the right; on the reverse it is written below the second part of both phrases.

This arrangement, roughly indicated in the transliteration given above, can be estimated from the illustration on these page. This transliteration, indicating the exact spot of each sign on the tablet, was created with a photographic background image on the program Adobe Photoshop.

Rev.
 G'
 H'
 I'
 J'
 K'
 L'

[.....] -de₃? -e
 [.....] ̄eš-ge-̄a₁?

[nin?] [za -e u₄ -de₃] 'a- ba in- na⁷ -ri -ri ia- am-ma-mu
 [.....] ̄eš-ge-̄a₁
 [mu-lu a-la-lu in] -gur⁷ ̄eš-ge-̄a₁

[.....]-x unu^{ki} -ra ušbar -e mu -un -šum₂[(.....)]
 [.....] za] 'e' u₄ -de₃ a -ba in -na -ri -ri ia -am-ma-mu
 [.....] ̄eš-ge-̄a₁
 [mu-lu a]- 'a⁷ -lu in -gur ̄eš-ge-̄a₁

ušbar, 'gu¹⁰ ga -ša -an -sumun₂-na -ra kaš -še₃ ga -an -na -sur
 'inana za -e u₄ -de₃ a -ba in -na -ri -ri ia -am-ma-mu
 e -e- ia -a ̄eš-ge-̄a₁
 mu -lu a-la -lu in -gur ̄eš-ge-̄a₁

e -rib -ba -gu¹⁰ 'mu -tin -an -na -ra kuru¹³ -še₃ ga -an -na -du₈
 'nin -e₂ -gal za -e u₄ -de₃ a -ba in -na -ri -ri ia -am-ma-mu
 e -e- ia -a ̄eš-ge-̄a₁
 mu-lu a-la -lu in -gur ̄eš-ge-̄a₁

mu -ud-na -gu¹⁰ 'ušungal -an -na -ra amaš -še₃ ga -an-na -ir -ir
 in -nin za -e u₄ -de₃ a -ba in -na -ri -ri ia -am-ma-mu
 e -e- ja -a ̄eš-ge-̄a₁
 mu-'lu⁷ a-la -lu in -gur ̄eš-ge-̄a₁

BM 85206, rev., transliteration

̄eš-ge-̄a₁

In our text, the performative instruction ̄eš-ge-̄a₁ marks the right half of the principal lines of each section. This unique use of the term ̄eš-ge-̄a₁, so well known from Old Babylonian Sumerian literary texts, demands further consideration.

The Akkadian translation of ̄eš-ge-̄a₁ as *meher zamāri* “answer/response of singing” has resulted in the standard translation as “antiphone”. The relevant lexical entries stem from the first millennium:

GIŠ gi-eš-gal₂ = MIN (*mi-ḥir*) *za-ma-ri* Erimḥuš II 239 (MSL 17, 39)
 mu-g[i-ma-a₁] = ̄eš-gi-gal₂ = *me-eḥ-ru* Emesal Voc. III 58 (MSL 4, 32)

[$\eta e\check{s}$ - $gi_{(4)}$ - ηa_1]₂] = MIN (*mi-ih-rum*) *ša₂ za-ma-ri* Nabnītu XVI 33
(MSL 16, 142)

In OB lexical lists, $\eta e\check{s}$ - $gi_{(4)}$ - ηa_1 is only attested in OB Proto-Lu 612, 843 (MSL 12, 66 and 64).

The description of Hartmann (1960, 239–244) is still generally accepted: $\eta e\check{s}$ - $ge_{(4)}$ - ηa_1 is used as a subscript for sections of one to four lines, usually set off from the rest of text by horizontal lines. The term always refers to a preceding section, marked as *ki-ru-gu₂*, *sa gid₂-da*, *sa- η ar-ra* or once as “Lament (*er₂-ša₃-ne-ša₄*) of a man’s god” (Gordon 1960, 150). This can be expressed either as $\eta e\check{s}$ - ge - ηa_1 -*bi*-(*im*), “(it is) its $\eta e\check{s}$ genal”, or as $\eta e\check{s}$ - ge - ηa_1 *ki-ru-gu₂-da-kam* (etc.) “it is the η . of a kirugu (etc.)”. A similar usage is found in OB Akkadian literary texts.³ $\eta e\check{s}$ - $ge_{(4)}$ - ηa_1 -*bi* occurs in one OB Balan composition (CT 42, 15, pl. 28 ii 8; CLAM 194: a+38), but it is not attested in LB Emesal literary texts, where instead the Akkadian translation *mehru* is found (see Mirelman 2010). CT 58, 12 is the only attestation in a literary text, where the term is not qualified.

The literal meaning of the term is obscure. Wilcke (1975, 260) suggests “Holz zurückkehren(?) (oder: zur[?] Erde[?]) lassen”, thus possibly indicating the absence of musical accompaniment. This interpretation implies that $\eta e\check{s}$ “wood” can be used as general term for “musical instrument” or short for $\eta e\check{s}$ -*gu₃-di*. However, we know of no place where $\eta e\check{s}$ is used alone as referring to musical instruments. Two post-OB references point in other directions. Examenstext A line 8 (Sjöberg 1975, 140f. and 151f.) equates $\eta e\check{s}$ *ge₄* with Akkadian *apālu* “to answer”, but subsequently the text uses the standard verb *ge₄* as Sumerian equivalent of *apālu* (lines 9 to 11). Is $\eta e\check{s}$ thus related to an element $\eta e\check{s}$ which appears in $\eta e\check{s}$ *tuku* “to hear” (related to $\eta e\check{s}tu$ “ear”) or in $\eta e\check{s}gem$ “sign”? For the latter possibility, the late unorthographic writing $\eta e\check{s}gem$ - ηa_1 -*bi* // *mi- ηi [r- $\check{s}u$]* (KAR 100 ii 10, bilingual hymn to Gula and Ištar) is suggestive.

The $\eta e\check{s}$ - $ge_{(4)}$ - ηa_1 passages are typically general statements, which comment and summarize the single statements of the preceding text. They may be compared to the fixed part in the refrain sections of Emesal songs.

³ In Agušaya (Groneberg 1997, 55–93): $\eta e\check{s}$ - $ge_{(4)}$ - ηa_1 -*bi* (passim), Hymn to Ištar (RA 22, 171: 60, see Groneberg 1999, 169–171, translating $\eta e\check{s}$ - ge - ηa_1 as “Zusammenfassung”, “Quintessenz” on p. 171 fn. 7); Hymn to Nanaya (ZA 44, 34). The Akkadian equivalent *mehrum* appears in a literary catalogue of late Old Babylonian or Kassite date (Finkel 1988) after 5 *irtum* songs, two incipits are called *mehrum*; Kilmer (1992, 109) suggests this is the antiphon of the five song incipits (or strophes according to Groneberg 2003, 58) listed above it.

Hartmann (1960, 243f.) correctly notes that $\eta e\check{s}$ -ge₍₄₎- ηa_2 has to refer to the musical performance of the text and suggests that the $\eta e\check{s}$ -ge₍₄₎- ηa_2 sections were sung by a second singer or a choir. Instead of the term “Antiphon”, which has a complicated history, we prefer to use the neutral musicological terms “Call” and “Response”. In this respect, the first opening part is the Call, the second the Response, whether it is a literal response or not.

The Call and Response-pattern identified by Hartmann corresponds well with CT 58, 12. Here, phrases marked as $\eta e\check{s}$ -ge- ηa_2 never start a section, but are always following an initial phrase. Furthermore, the $\eta e\check{s}$ -ge- ηa_2 phrases appear first as verbatim repetitions in the manner of a refrain: $u_4 / a\ n a m - n i n \dots$ in sections A, B, C, $m e n\ s a \eta - \eta a_2 \dots$ in D and E, $a - b a\ i n - n a - r i - r i$ in H' to L'; secondly, they start expressions of a similar structure (OBJECT- $\check{s}e_3$ ga-an-na-VERB) in J' to L'. Finally, as noted above, the vocable *a-a-a* can also be considered a $\eta e\check{s}ge\eta a$.

To sum up, $\eta e\check{s}$ -ge- ηa_2 phrases appear as constant refrains or as the completion of a sentence. Whereas the $\eta e\check{s}$ -ge- ηa_2 phrase itself is always in the Main Dialect, it may respond to either Main Dialect or Emesal phrases. The term $\eta e\check{s}$ -ge- ηa_2 thus does not refer to the dialogue between Dumuzi and Inana (or their human representatives). The first half-line shows more variation, although also some repetition is apparent here, a wide-spread feature of Sumerian literature. In general, passages marked as $\eta e\check{s}$ -ge- ηa_2 are Responses, which were most probably performed by a choir. However, it remains unknown if the enigmatic term $\eta e\check{s}$ -ge- ηa_2 refers to the literary-musical pattern ‘Response’, to the choir as performer,⁴ or to another aspect of the performance.

⁴ A few references concerning choral performance in Early Mesopotamia may suffice here: The OB Mari ritual for the Bala η uru`ama`irabi involves a group of musicians (*šīru*), *nārum* and *kalūm* singers (Ziegler 2007, 14 and 55–64); *kalūšunu izammarū* “they all/their *kalū* lamentation singers sing” in an OB Emesal text (BE 30, 12 i 24; cf. e.g. Krecher 1966, 118); $g a l a - z e_2 - e_3 = \bar{a}šū$ “solo(?) performer/*kalū*”, $g a l a\ k e\check{s}_2 - d a = M I N (= k a l a ? / \bar{a}šī ?)$ *kišri* “*kalū*/performer of the group/choir” (Lu IV 172f., MSL 12, 134); PBS 1/1 11 iv 84 $x - m e - e\check{s}\ t e\check{s}_2 - b i\ s i_3 - k e - b i - n e$ “they are ..., their (music) makings in harmony” // ii 52 *ša rigimšunu ištēniš šuteš[mū]* “(those) whose voices are together brought into accord” (translation by Westenholz 2005, 366) and other passages in the same text (Westenholz 2005); cf. also Alster (1985); Ambos (2006–2008, 501f. “Solo-Sänger und Chor-Sänger”).

The performance

The preceding considerations lead to a reconstruction of the performance of the text of CT 58, 12. It is reasonable to suggest that the first, more variable half-lines were performed by a male soloist or a female voice, whereas the second half-lines were sung by a (male) choir ($\eta e\check{s}-ge-\eta a_2$, Response). This means that at least three ‘parties’ performed the song of CT 58, 12: a male soloist and his choir, and a female voice.

A more detailed reconstruction of the performing parts must begin with the reverse. In I’ to L’ each section’s first line shows the sequence of a female Call and a male Response, i.e. a male choir (see commentary on lines 9’, 13’, and 17’). The second line (lines 2’, 6’, 10’, 14’, 18’) is a male Call and Response sequence, the latter ending in *-yammamu*. Although written separately, the vocable sequence *a-a-a* must be a choral Response (according to section A) which follows *e-eya-a*. *e-eya-a* was probably sung by the female part because of the close proximity to the phrase *mu-lu a-lu-lu in-gur* (see already above). The female phrase *mu-lu a-la-lu in-gur* concludes each section. This results in the following reconstructed sequence (example J’):

female voice: $u\check{s}bar_7(UR_2 \times U_2?) - \text{r} \eta u_{10}^1$ *ga-ša-an-sumun₂-na-ra*
(„For my mother-in-law Ninsumun”)

male choir: $ka\check{s}-\check{s}e_3$ *ga-an-na-sur* (“For beer, I will brew for her!”)

male soloist: $^d inana$ *za-e u₄-de₃* (“Inana, you, today!”)

male choir: *a-ba in-na-ri-ri yammamu* (“Who (but I) will direct something to her? *yammamu*”)

female voice: *e-eya-a*

male choir: *a-a-a*

female voice: *mu-lu a-la-lu in-gur* (“The man has returned the *alalu*-cheers!”)

Applying this pattern to the obverse, we obtain the following structure. In A to C, a male soloist’s Call is followed by a male choral Response in the first line. Since *e-eya-a* is clearly female on the reverse, we regard the same sequence as female on the obverse; furthermore, the graphic arrangement indicates that the vocable sequence *eya ellu* belongs to the female voice (see above on *ellu* in the Manchester Tammuz). Considering the top to bottom and left to right sequence of writing, we propose the following reconstruction (example section B):

male soloist: $\text{r}ku_3^1$ $^d inana-ke_4$ $suku_5$ *nam-dub* (“Holy Inana has encircled (her head) with the diadem”)

male choir: *u₄ nam-nin e nam-nin a* (“*u₄* ladyship *e* ladyship *a*”)

female voice: *eya ellu*

male choir: *a nam-nin nam-nin e yammamu* (“*a* ladyship, ladyship *e yammamu*”)

female voice: *e-eya-a*

male choir: *a-a-a*

female voice: *mu-lu a-la-lu in-gur* (“The man has returned the *alalu*-cheers!”)

This reconstruction is informed by the distribution of dialects, the position of the performative indication $\eta\epsilon\check{s}\text{-ge-}\eta\alpha\text{1}_2$ and the text’s graphic arrangement. Now we understand how the scribe of CT 58, 12 left important clues for the performance of this song, e.g. by placing *eya ellu* and *e-eya-a* close to each other on the ‘female side’ of the tablet. The possibility must not be excluded that some female vocables were sung simultaneously with the male choir parts, or that female and male vocables resounded together, but the available evidence does not point in this direction.

The ceremonial context

The main protagonists of the song CT 58, 12 are Inana and Dumuzi. In the first part of the song (obverse), the male soloist and the choir praise Inana’s beauty. In the second part, the men proclaim that they will provide food, namely beer (rev. 9’), barley for bread (rev. 13’) and meat from the sheepfold (rev. 17’). The food is destined for the new relatives of Inana, her mother-in-law Ninsumun, her sister-in-law Geština, and her husband Dumuzi himself.

Our song relates to a specific moment within the larger context of the marriage of Inana and Dumuzi. In the text called “Dumuzi’s wedding” (Dumuzi-Inana C₁, Sefati 1998, 286–300; Fritz 2003, 75–78) various men, called paranympths (*libirsi*, i 21) and including Dumuzi himself, bestow food-stuffs to Inana. Her mother, an expert in *ilu*-songs (*i-lu-zu*, ii 3) explains that he will be like a relative. Inana bathes and dresses up to receive Dumuzi.

Similarly, in Dumuzi-Inana C (Sefati 1998, 132–150), Inana presents herself as having bathed and dressed, and finally being adorned by a diadem and jewels (cf. above on CT 58, 12: 1 ff.). At the appearance of her ‘brother’, Dumuzi according to Sefati’s interpretation, the “musicians” (*nar-e-ne*) start their performance (DI C 28). Inana wishes that her bridegroom may provide her with animals.

Both Wilcke (1985, 274–279) and Greengus (1990) have pointed to the central role of a ceremonial meal in the context of marriage. The “bride-

wealth” consists of foodstuffs destined for the meal of the bride’s and the bridegroom’s families. There, the bridegroom does not appear alone; he is accompanied by his paranymphs, a group of young male companions (Malul 1989).

The song CT 58, 12 fits this context precisely: The bride Inana has dressed up, and appears at the door, where she is praised by the men. They, on their side, provide food for the communal meal. The group of men, the male choir who sings the $\eta e\check{s}\text{-}ge\text{-}\eta a_2$ passages of our reconstruction, can be identified with the paranymphs of the marriage ceremony. This is the right moment for singing and music, as it is referred to in Dumuzi-Inana C. Thus, the song preserved on the tablet CT 58, 12 was performed at a wedding ceremony: a female voice, representing the bride and (probably) her female companions, alternates with the male choir of the paranymphs, including the bridegroom. The male soloist addresses Inana and her attractive appearance, although there is no indication that the male soloist represented the bridegroom Dumuzi.

The reference to the mythological marriage of Dumuzi and Inana, the musical performance by men and women, and the correlation with marriage procedures in Early Mesopotamia all point to the actual use of this song in a wedding ceremony. The bride and the bridegroom are presented as the divine bridal couple Inana and Dumuzi. Similarly, in ancient Greek wedding songs, the names of the bride and groom are sometimes replaced by the names of gods, especially Zeus and Hera (Hague 1983, esp. 134). Furthermore, the physical features of the tablet (see Introduction) would point towards its practical use in performance.

The indicator $\eta e\check{s}\text{-}ge\text{-}\eta a_2$, the notation of the vocables and the graphic arrangement have allowed for a detailed reconstruction of the manner by which such a wedding song was performed. This singular text may thus serve as an example for the performance practice of other Sumerian songs, especially those concerned with Dumuzi and Inana.

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