

The Jolly Brother: A Sumerian Dumuzi Tale

SAMUEL NOAH KRAMER

University Museum, Philadelphia

The text treated in this article concerns the shepherd Dumuzi, who is the beloved brother of Geštinanna and the rather fickle husband of Inanna. The tablet on which it is inscribed dates from the Old Babylonian period, though it may go back to a modified and redacted earlier original. It was published seventy years ago, and over the decades several scholars have tried their hand at translating and interpreting its text, but these attempts have proved to be abortive, in large part because of the lexical and grammatical ambiguities inherent in the language and script, not to mention the contextual obscurities that becloud the intelligibility of ancient documents in general. The edition presented in this article, though doubtless far from perfect, will, it is hoped, prove to be considerably more accurate than its predecessors, and bring us closer to a truer understanding of its contents. It is a very real privilege to dedicate this rather unusual example of Sumerian literary and mythopoeic invention to Theodor Gaster, one of the masters of comparative literary and mythic research.

The text, inscribed on BM 23702, a tablet copied by Leonard W. King and published in 1902 in *CT XV*, plates 28-29,¹ is a 59-line extract that constitutes the first part of a narrative poem² of unknown length whose remaining sections are still unrecovered. This extract is itself divided into two stanzas, or *kirugu*. The first and shorter *kirugu* begins with a two-line introductory passage that sets the action of the tale in a time of bliss, when the universe was luxuriating in prosperity and joy.³ In those days, the poet relates, the shepherd Dumuzi once set his heart to make merry and went to his stall to 'brighten its spirit', and to his sheepfold 'to light it up like

1. The copy which I collated recently in the British Museum is quite accurate, but note the following: The first sign in line 11 is *É* (not *KISAL*); the *ME* and *A* at the beginning of line 23 are a miscopy of the sign *KAL*; the first sign in line 24 is *NIN*₉ (not *NIN*); the fourth sign in line 44 (and the fourth and sixth signs in lines 52 and 53, respectively) are identical with the sixth sign in line 45—all are *SIG*₄; and the fifth sign in line 55 is *SU* (not *ZU*). Earlier translations of the document are found in Zimmern, *Tammuzlieder*, no. 8; Langdon *SBP*, 326f.; Witzel, *RA* 10 (1913), 157-66 and *An. Or.* 10 (Rome, 1935), 460-65. For my preliminary and partial translation of the text, cf. *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, 102-3.

2. In some respects the poem may be designated as a myth since it is a narrative tale concerned with deeds of the gods. But myths, including those involving Dumuzi, are not ordinarily divided into *kirugu*.

3. There is no indication, explicit or implicit, why the poet chose this blissful time in which to introduce his tale; perhaps it was simply because he felt it to be an appropriate background for this bucolic, picaresque tale, and had no direct bearing on the plot.

the day' (lines 4-6).⁴ Being an individual of decision and resolve, he determines to tell his wife Inanna of his plan to depart to the desolate steppe, in order to tend to the needs of his sheep (lines 7-16).⁵ Inanna is deeply disturbed by the news; she returns in consternation to their dwelling place, the Eturkalamma of Erech, and sprawls there 'like a flood wave'.⁶

Thus ends the first *kirugu*. The second begins with a passage relating that after Dumuzi had gone forth to the steppe, his sister Geštinanna, a goddess noted both as a scribe and a singer, came up to him as he was carrying milk into the stall.⁷ The two of them enter the sheepfold 'in whose midst the sheep dwell' (lines 20-27). While the two are living there, the poet continues, the stall and sheepfold are filled with abundance and plenty, so that they have 'pure food' as well as oil, honey, and ghee, and drink emmer-beer and strong liquors (lines 28-34). Then, perhaps a bit tipsy, Dumuzi decides to cheer up his sister by teaching her the meaning of the sexual act, at least as it was practiced among the domestic animals. After Dumuzi brought some sheep and goats into the stall,⁸ among whom were a mother ewe and its lamb, the lamb mounted its mother and copulated with her (lines 35-40). Whereupon Dumuzi tells his sister to look closely and tell him what the lamb is seeking of his mother. Geštinanna, not understanding what is going on, says that what she sees is a lamb riding on the back of its mother and making her cry out. Dumuzi then explains to his sister that the lamb is really copulating with its mother and filling her vulva with semen (lines 41-46). The same performance and dialogue are then repeated in connection with a kid and its sister (lines 47-54). This scene is followed by two obscure lines (55-56) that mark the end of the second *kirugu*: it may be that they consist of a remonstrance by Geštinanna, that her brother would make her an object of derision and contempt for years to come.⁹

The last two lines on the tablet begin the third *kirugu*. The first line is largely unintelligible, while the second introduces an address by Dumuzi to his sister that must have constituted the beginning of the text of another as yet unrecovered tablet, which continues this unique Dumuzi tale.

4. Note that the 'stall' and 'sheepfold' in this poem probably refer to the same structure, that is, the byre that sheltered the small cattle, such as sheep and goats; by and large the two are "paired" together in parallel lines, but now and then (cf. lines 23, 26, 37) one or the other is mentioned separately.

5. It is not clear whether or not Dumuzi's decision to go to the stall and sheepfold was part of a plan to rendezvous with his sister Geštinanna.

6. This interpretation assumes that line 19 is correctly restored, and that line 20 with its rather strange-sounding simile is correctly rendered.

7. So, if the last two signs of line 23 are correctly rendered; for Geštinanna as both a *dubsar* and a *nar*, cf. lines 21-22 of "Dumuzi's Dream" (edited by Bendt Alster).

8. The initial signs of line 37 are destroyed, and it is not clear what the object of the two verbal forms are; if the interpretation is correct, it should be an expression such as *udu-ùz*.

9. The nature of the remonstrance is uncertain, and it is not clear what Geštinanna found distasteful and irritating in Dumuzi's object lesson of the copulation of the domestic animals; perhaps she was afraid that the demonstration was intended to lead up to an incestuous attempt by Dumuzi to "mount" her.

Transliteration

1. u₄-h_é-gál-la na-nam gi₆-nam-h_é-na-nam
2. itu-giri_x-zal na-nam mu-asilal na-nam
3. u₄-ba lú-sipad-dè šà-húl-la ag-dè
4. [é]-tur-ra du-dè ħur-bi zalag-ge-dè
5. [am] aš-kù-ga u₄-gim kár-kár-re-dè
6. [s] u₈-ba^d dumu-zi-dè šà-kù-ga na-an-tum₄
7. ga-ša-an-an-na ga-ša-an-ki-a-ke₄
8. gù mu-na-dé-e galga-umuš-a-ke₄
9. ^dama-ušumgal-an-na inim mu-un-na-ni-ib-bé
10. nitadam a-zal ki-a-ri-a-šè ga-túm
11. é-tùr-dagal-la-mu en-bi ga-me-ši-tar
12. amaš-kù-ga-mu a-rá-bi ga-me-ši-zu
13. udu-mu ka ú-kú ga-me-ši-gar
14. a-nag-dùg-ga LI-bi ga-me-ši-kin
15. nitadam umuš-bi ba-an-na-dug₄
16. galga-a-ni e-ne-ra mu-un-na-an-sì
17. nitadam-ni tuš-bi-šè im-ma-an-gi₄
18. kù-ga-ša-an-na-ke₄ é-tùr-kalam-ma-ke₄
19. . . mu-ni-in-ku₄ níg-me-g[ar] ba-an-dab₅
20. mu-gi₁₇-ib ga-ša-an-an-na a-gi₆-gim ba-bará
21. ki-ru-gú-l-kam-ma
22. u₄-ba lú-sipad-dè edin-šè ba-ra-è
23. guruš^d dumu-zi-dè é-tùr-ra ga-túm
24. nin₉-a-ni ga-ša-an-dub-sar-ke₄
25. an-da ki-bi-da-šè ba-ši-re₇
26. amaš-kù-ga ki-udu-du-ru šà-ba
27. sipad-dè nin₉-a-ni ki-bi ba-an-su-né-èš
28. ti-le-da-an-ni sipad-dè ti-le-da-an-ni
29. nin₉-a-ni nar-èn-du-zu-a tuš-ba ti-le-da-an-ni
30. é-tùr-ra h_é-gál im-mi-in-si
31. amaš-e nam-h_é-a ì-zal-e
32. ì-kú-ne ú-sikil ì-kú-ne

33. ì-sur-sur-ra làl ì-nun-na-ke₄
34. i-na₈-ne ulušin kurun
35. ^ddumu-zi nin₉-a-ni šà húl-la zal-e-dè
36. su₈-[ba]-^ddumu-zi-dè šà-kù-ga na-an-tum₄
37. . . . mu-un-ši-lá tūr-ra ba-ši-in-ku₄
38. . . mu-un-na-ni-in-túm u₈-sila₄-bi-da
39. sila₄ ama-bi-[šè] ù-mu-un-na-an-kud
40. ba-ši-in-u₅ giš mi-ni-in-du
41. sipad-dè nin₉-a-n[i] gù mu-un-na-dé-e
42. nin₉-mu igi-bar-[r] a sila₄ ama-n[i] a-nam mu-un-ši-ki[n-kin]
43. nin₉-a-ni mu-un-n[a-ni-ib-gi₄-gi₄]
44. ama-a-ni murgu-na ù-mu-un-ši-[u₅] i-lu mu-un-du-du
45. tukum-bi murgu-na ù-mu-u[n-ši-u₅] i-lu mu-un-du-du
46. gen a-na-àm giš-a-ni mu-un-[du zal-l] e-eš a-ni mi-ni-in-si
47. máš nin₉-a-ni [u-m] u-un-ši-gud
48. ba-ši-in-u₅ [gi] š mi-ni-in-[du]
49. sipad-dè nin₉-a-ni [gu] mu-un-na-dé-e
50. nin₉-mu igi-bar-ra máš-e nin₉-[a-ni] a-na-àm mu-un-ši-kin-kin
51. nin₉-a-ni šà-nu-dab₅-ba-na [mu]-un-na-ni-ib-gi₄-gi₄
52. nin₉-a-ni murgu-na ù-m[u-un-ši-u₅] i-lu mu-un-du-du
53. tukum-bi murgu-na ù-mu-un-[ši-u₅] i-lu mu-un-du-du
54. te-àm a-ri-a-ni gal₄-[la] mi-ni-in-su-su
55. gar-ra šeš-mu su-lum-ma-ra e-ne-BAD ba-u₅
56. a-ba-a MI ŠA AM mi-ni-in-tuku-e en-na a-ga-bi-sè
57. ki-ru-gú-2-kam-ma
58. sipad-dè su nu-um-[z] i (?) UR SU la-ba-an-su
59. nin₉-a-ni gù mu-un-na-dé-e

Translation

1. It was a day of abundance, it was a night of plenty.
2. It was a month of luxuriance, it was a year of rejoicing.
3. In those days, the shepherd, to make joyous (his) heart,
4. To go the stall, to brighten its spirit,

5. To make shine the holy sheepfold like the day,
6. The sheperd Dumuzi brought into his holy heart.
7. To Inanna, the queen of heaven and earth,
8. He says—he of decision and resolve,
9. Amašumgalanna speaks to her:
10. "Wife, I would bring flowing water to the arid place,
11. I would look after my wide stall for you,
12. I would learn for you the way of my holy sheepfold,
13. I would feed my sheep for you,
14. I would seek out the runnels (?) of sweet drinking-water for you"—
15. Thus did he tell (his) wife (his) resolve about them (the sheep),
16. Did he give her his decision.
17. His wife returned to their dwelling,
18. The holy Inanna, to the Eturkalamma
19. Brought the . . . , was dumbfounded,
20. The hierodule Inanna sprawled out like a flood-wave.
21. The first *kirugu*.
22. Then did the sheperd go forth to the steppe,
23. The *guruš* Dumuzi, bringing (?) milk (?) into the stall,
24. His sister, the queen of the scribes,
25. Approached ,
26. Into the holy sheepfold, in whose midst the sheep dwell,
27. The sheperd and his sister entered there.
28. He was living (there), the shepherd. he was living (there),
29. His sister, a singer expert in song, was living in that dwelling,
30. Abundance filled the stall,
31. Plenty flowed in the sheepfold.
32. They eat—pure food they eat—
33. Pressed oil, honey, ghee,
34. They drink emmer-beer, liquor.
35. Dumuzi, to make the heart of his sister (over)flow with joy,
36. The shepherd Dumuzi brought into his holy heart.
37. He fastened (?) before her, made them (?) enter the stall,
38. He brought . . . there for her, a ewe and its lamb.

39. The lamb having jumped on its mother,
40. Mounted her, copulated with her.
41. The shepherd says to his sister:
42. "My sister, look, what is the lamb seeking of his mother?"
43. His sister answers him:
44. "Having [mounted] the back of his mother, he is making her cry out."
45. "If having [mounted] her back he is making her cry out—
46. Come, what it (really) is (is this): he filled her to [overflow(?)] with his semen."
47. The kid [having] jumped upon his sister,
48. Mounted her, [copulated] with her.
49. The shepherd [sa]ys to his sister:
50. "My sister, look, what is the kid seeking of [his] sister?"
51. His sister, not having grasped (its) meaning, answers him:
52. "Having [mounted] the back of his sister, he is making her cry out."
53. "If having [mounted] her back, he is making her cry out,
54. What it (really) is (is this): he filled (her) vulva with his ejaculated semen."
55. "To me (?), my brother, in derision ,
56. Who will take unto future time!"
57. The second *kirugu*.
58. The shepherd was not cowed(?), he did not ,
59. He says to his sister:

Commentary

Lines 1-6. In lines 1-2, note the effective use of a crescendo-like, cumulative parallelism. In line 3, *ag-dè* is parallel to *zalag-ge-dè* and *kár-kár-re-dè* (lines 4-5), and might have been expected to be written as *ag-ge-dè*.¹⁰ In line 6, note the Emesal writing *su₈-ba* for *sipa(d)*; by and large the scribe uses Emegir orthography, but he is by no means consistent.¹¹

Lines 7-14. In lines 7-8, the translation assumes that the subject of the verb is not Inanna but Dumuzi, the final *-ke₄* of line 7 is treated as if it were *-ra*, and the complex *galga-umuš-a-ke₄*¹² is assumed to refer to Dumuzi, who is mentioned in the line following by his name 'Amaušumgalanna'. In line 9, the first complex should have ended in *-ke₄*, if the translation is correct. In line 10, one might have expected 'My wife', instead of 'Wife'. Note, too, that the sign *ŠÈ* of *ki-a-ri-a-šè* has only two horizontals instead of the expected three.¹³ The *ga-me-ši-* of the verbal forms in lines 11-14 is assumed to be for *ga-m(u)-e-ši-*, and the *-ši-* is rendered as if it were *-ra*. For *ka ú-kú* in line 13, cf. CT XXXVI, pl. 28, line 24: *ka ú-kú ba-ba-kin-kin*,¹⁴ "May he (the king Ur-Ninurta) search out food (literally: 'food one eats with the mouth')"; also cf. line 24 of the Ašnan-Laḥar disputation: *udu-gim ka-ba ú mu-ni-ib-kú*, "They (the Anunna) ate food with their mouth like sheep." In line 14, the translation assumes that the *-bi* of *LI-bi* refers to the drinking water and that *LI* has a meaning such as 'small channel', or 'runnel' (cf. ŠL 59:8); perhaps, however, *LI* is to be read *èn*, and the compound verb, *èn-kin*, may have a meaning parallel to *èn-tar*.

Lines 15-20. In line 15, the first complex might have been expected to read *nitadam-a-ni-ra*; note, too, the use of the thematic particle *mu-* in this line, and of *ba-* in the line following, although the two verbal forms seem parallel in structure and meaning. In line 17 *nitadam-ni* is presumed to be instead of *nitadam-a-ni* (for the amissibility of a vowel of a grammatical element, see n. 10); the *-bi-* of *tuš-bi-šè* refers to Inanna and Dumuzi. In line 18, the use of *galga* as the direct object of the root *šè* seems rather strange, but note the approximate English equivalent in the translation. In line 19, the first sign, though preserved in large part, is difficult to restore; it looks much like *GALGA*, but the inscribed *GAR* (?) is rather differently placed, and in any case the context does not favor this reading. For *níg-me-gar ba-an-dab*, cf. Sjöberg, TH 144, but note that since the literal rendering is assumed to be 'she was seized by

10. It may be suggested by some scholars that *AG* is to be read *aga* and that the grammatical *aga-ed-a* became *aga-dè* in pronunciation and writing, but this rather easy solution is highly doubtful; it is more likely that *AG* is to be read *ag* and that the dropping of the *-e-* between *ag-* and *-de* is but another example of the dropping of a vowel of a grammatical element due to stress, or the nature of the preceding consonant (cf., e.g., GSG § 728a).

11. Thus to take the more certain examples, he wrote *su₈-ba* for *sipad* (lines 6, 36), *ga-ša-an* for *nin* (lines 7, 18, 20, 24), *mu-gi₁₇-ib* for *nu-gig* (line 20).

12. For the rendering of *galga* and *umuš* as 'decision' and 'resolve' cf. Gordon, *Sumerian Proverbs*, 2.1, n. 29, where the relevant examples cited, suit the translation of the words here suggested.

13. This is not a miscopy; this unusual form of the sign is characteristic of the scribe of this tablet. Note, too, that the *a-zal* and *ki-a-ri-a-šè* of this line might be rendered 'flowing semen' and 'the place where the semen has been ejaculated'.

14. So, one the original, not *-ur₄-ur₄*.

consternation', one might have expected the postposition *-e* following *níg-me-gar*. In line 29, the *-gi₆-* of *a-gi₆-gim* is clearer on the original than in the copy.

Line 22-27. In line 22, note that since the verb is intransitive, the subject element of the complex *lú-sipad-dè* is unjustified. The meaning of *guruš* in line 23 is 'a young vigorous male' (it has no close equivalent in English); the *-dè* of *^ddumu-zi-dè* is grammatically unjustified; the *ga-túm* at the end of the line seems identical on first glance with the *ga-túm* at the end of line 10, the different rendering is based on the context and may turn out to be wrong. In line 24, *ga-ša-an-dub-šar-ke₄* provides another example of the amissibility of a vowel of a grammatical element. In line 25, the first two complexes seem to consist of simple identifiable substantives and postpositions and are quite unintelligible in both structure and meaning. In line 27, the subject element of the first complex is grammatically unjustified since the verb *ba-an-su-né-ěš* (grammatically *ba-an-sun-ěš*), 'they entered,' (for *sun=erēbu*, cf. CAD E, s.v. *erēbu*) is an intransitive verb.

Lines 28-34. In lines 28-29, *ti-le-da-an-ni* is assumed to be instead of the more grammatical *til-ed-a-ni*,¹⁵ with the gemination of the *n* due to stress. Note, too, the rather interesting repetition and parallel pattern of these two lines: the poet begins line 28 with *ti-le-da-an-ni*, keeping its antecedent *sipad*¹⁶ in suspense, as it were, until he repeats the complex in the second half of the line; in the parallel line 29, which corresponds structurally only to the second half of line 28, he adds the complex *tuš-ba* that he omitted, suspensefully, from line 28. In line 32, note the repetitive pattern similar in some respects to that of line 28, as well as the poetic license exemplified by the placing of the object, or some of its components, after, rather than before, the verb, and not even on the same line. In the parallel line 34, too, the object follows the verb,¹⁷ but this time on the same line.

Lines 35-54. The initial signs in line 37 are destroyed, and the rendering and interpretations of this line are very uncertain (cf. n. 8).¹⁸ In line 38, the missing sign is quite small, but it is difficult to surmise its identity; the complex *u₈-sila₄-bi-da* is assumed to be the object of the preceding *mu-un-na-ni-in-túm*, but this reading may turn out to be erroneous, much depends on the restoration of the missing signs in lines 37 and 38. In line 39, note the use of *-bi* for the possessive, which refers to an animal, although *-ni* (or *-na*) is used in the lines that follow (42, 44-47, 52-54); the verb *ù-mu-un-na-an-kud* is assumed to be identical in meaning, and to some extent in form with *ù-mu-un-ši-gud*, despite the variant writings.¹⁹ In line 42, note that the traces point definitely to *-ni* following *ama*, and that the following *a* (not fully preserved) goes with the *nam* that follows—that is, it is assumed that *a-nam* is a variant writing for *a-na-àm*

15. For the timeless present-future participle, cf. GSG, 280-81, *sub* (b).

16. The *-dè* of the *sipad-dè* in this line may be either grammatically unjustified (cf. lines 22, 27), or it might be taken for a modified form of *-da*, the resulting *sipad-da* being an anticipatory genitive (grammatically, *sipad-ak*).

17. Note that, as expected, the root *na(g)* is not reduplicated in the verbal form.

18. Note, too, the writing *tùr-ra* for the expected *é-tùr-ra*; preceding *tùr-ra* is an erasure that originally may have contained *é-*, but this is quite uncertain.

19. The writing of the verbal root as *k/gud* is no serious problem, but the use of the infix *-na-* instead of *-ši-* is rather unexpected.

in the well-nigh identical line 50. In line 44, the root of the first verbal complex is broken (as it is in the corresponding lines 45, 52, 53), but the restoration seems reasonably assured, the *-du-du* of the second verbal form is no doubt instead of the more usual *-du₁₁-du₁₁*.²⁰ In line 46, the restoration [*zal-l*] *e-eš* is rather uncertain; note too that there seems to be no object of the verb *mi-ni-in-si* corresponding to the *gal₄-la* of line 50. Preceding line 47, one might have expected an introductory line similar to line 38, stating the kid and its sister had been brought into the stall. The intimation, in line 51, that Geštinanna did not understand what was going on in the stall between the kid and its sister, also applies, of course, to the preceding scene between the lamb and its mother, although this is not explicitly stated in the corresponding line 43. The meaning of line 54 is identical in large part with that of line 46, but note the following: the exclamatory *gen* is omitted; the Emegir *a-na-àm* is assumed to have been replaced by the Emesal *te-àm*;²¹ *a-ni* is replaced by the more expressive *a-ri-a-ni*; the root *-si* is replaced by *-su* (reduplicated) and seems to be synonymous with it.

Lines 55-59. The lexical and contextual difficulties in these lines are numerous and obvious. In line 55, *gar-ra* may turn out to be an Emesal writing of *mà-ra*; for *sulummar*, 'derision', cf. Wilke, *Das Lugalbandaepos*, 81, n. 338, and Hallo, *JAOS* 88 (1968), 83, line 31, where *lu-en-na su-lum-mar-še ba-ku₄-re-en* is to be rendered "The taunter brought me to derision"; the remaining complexes in the line are unintelligible to me. In line 56, the signs *MI*, *ŠA* and *AM* are uncertain in regard to word division, reading, and meaning; the root *tuku* may mean 'marry'; the adverbial complex *en-na a-ga-bi-sè* is assumed to follow the verb instead of preceding it. In line 58, *UR* may, of course, be read *teš* = 'buštum', but this does not help to clarify the meaning of the line.

20. Note that between lines 44-45, as well as between lines 52-53 and 54-55, there is no line indicating a change of speakers; this not unusual practice on the part of the scribes and poets is one of the more frustrating pitfalls in the path of the modern translator of Sumerian literary documents.

21. For the scribe's inconsistent use of Emegir and Emesal orthography, cf. n. 11.



