

# Death in Sumerian Literary Texts

Establishing the Existence of a Literary Tradition on How to  
Describe Death in the Ur III and Old Babylonian Periods

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# Introduction

Death is a topic that is rarely discussed in Sumerian texts. Few literary texts deal with this topic while some only touch upon it, even though death was, and still is, unavoidable. The literary texts that concern death originate predominantly from the Ur III and Old Babylonian periods (2100 – 1600 BC). The subjects of these texts, the ones that die, are wide-ranging: humans, both kings and non-royal Mesopotamians had to come to terms with their mortality; gods, who, although immortal, were not invincible; and cities, which could ‘die’ by being destroyed and abandoned. Since there was a great variety in subjects dying, the question arises as to whether they were all treated the same in the texts. This forms the first research question: did the scribes follow a literary tradition when describing death?

Furthermore, the preserved copies of these texts all date to the period after the transition from the Ur III dynasty to the first dynasty of Isin, and might reflect some of the ideological developments that are characteristic of this transition, such as in the ideology of divine kingship. The second research question addresses the issue of how the texts are related to royal ideology and whether during this post-Ur III period death was consistently described in similar terms or that other, perhaps political, influences are noticeable.

The first chapter of this thesis will introduce the texts on which the study will be based and discuss the problems regarding their dates and findspots. This text corpus is where the originality of this research lies: these texts have not been discussed together in one study yet and neither have they been compared on how they describe death.

In the second and third chapters I will present a textual comparison of the texts regarding three aspects central to the various descriptions of death – the nature, reason and acceptance – and in the fourth chapter the remaining similarities such as the use of similar metaphors will be discussed. The fifth and final chapter will focus on the historical context of the texts, how they fit into the ideology of their respective time periods and how different ideologies possibly influenced how death was described. The findings of these chapters will be summarised in the conclusion, where the question regarding the existence of a literary tradition to describe death will be answered.

## List of Abbreviations

In this thesis, I will use the system of abbreviations according to the CAD. For the abbreviations of the literary compositions, I have aimed to abbreviate using parts of the full name of the composition whenever possible. See the outline below, including the used abbreviation, full name of the composition and its ETCSL number if available.

<i>Curse</i>	The Curse of Agade (2.1.5)
<i>DoD</i>	Death of Dumuzi
<i>Dream</i>	Dumuzi's Dream (1.4.3)
<i>Eridu Lament</i>	The Lament for Eridu (2.2.6)
<i>GEN</i>	Gilgameš, Enkidu and the Netherworld (1.8.1.4)
<i>Gilgameš</i>	The Death of Gilgameš (1.8.1.3)
<i>Inanna and Bilulu</i>	Inanna and Bilulu (1.4.4)
<i>Inanna's Descent</i>	Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld (1.4.1)
<i>LSUr</i>	The Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur (2.2.3)
<i>Lugalbanda</i>	Lugalbanda in the Mountain Cave (1.8.2.1)
<i>Nanna</i>	The Elegy on the Death of Nanna (5.5.2)
<i>Nawirtum</i>	The Elegy on the Death of Nawirtum (5.5.3)
<i>Nippur Lament</i>	The Lament for Nippur (2.2.4)
<i>Ur Lament</i>	The Lament for Ur (2.2.2)
<i>Ur-Namma</i>	The Death of Ur-Namma (2.4.1.1)
<i>Uruk Lament</i>	The Lament for Uruk (2.2.5)

# Chapter One

## Introducing the Texts

The many parallels and similarities between Sumerian literary texts suggests the existence of literary traditions – selections of words, phrases and elements that had become the prevalent manner to describe certain events or ideas.<sup>1</sup> In order to investigate whether such a literary tradition for describing death existed, I have selected pertinent texts. In this chapter I will outline these primary sources and address the problems that arise from their dates and findspots. Lastly, I will comment on the present state of research and how this study aims at contributing to a better understanding of the texts

### 1.1 The Sources

The corpus for this study consists of eight texts whose topic is the death of its protagonist or subject. A secondary corpus consisting of texts that feature death but do not deal with it as the main topic will be used to support the findings in the main texts. The secondary corpus will thus not be discussed as extensively as the main corpus.<sup>2</sup>

Excluded from this research are those texts which are concerned primarily with mourning. Examples are *In the Desert by the Early Grass*<sup>3</sup> and *Lisin's Lament*<sup>4</sup>, both compositions are about the death of the young fertility god but only discuss how a woman, either a goddess, his mother or sister, mourns and potentially searches for him. Since these texts do not describe an actual death they are excluded from this research.

Also excluded are the *balaĝ*-compositions. Although they do detail the destruction of cities the name of that city is never mentioned. This is the opposite of the city lamentations that deal with a (potentially historic) event in a specific city. Additionally, there is no consensus yet on which genre was developed first. While the date for the composition of the city lamentations is accepted as the early Old Babylonian period the same cannot be said of the *balaĝ*-compositions; some scholars argue they derived from the city lamentations and others see them

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<sup>1</sup> Alster, *Dumuzi's Dream: aspects of oral poetry in a Sumerian myth*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>2</sup> Since the secondary corpus serves in a supportive manner only their main editions will be given in the footnotes instead of in the main text. They will also be excluded from the overview of previous research done on the present topic.

<sup>3</sup> Also known as *edina-usaĝake*, see Cohen, *Canonical Lamentations of Ancient Mesopotamia*, pp. 677-682.

<sup>4</sup> Kramer, "Lisin, the Weeping Mother: a New Sumerian Lament", pp. 133-144.

as their predecessors.<sup>5</sup> Because of this issue I will only include here the city lamentations since they have a clear subject and date. Also, it is not within the scope of this study to discuss both the balaĝ-compositions and the city lamentations.

### 1.1.2 Main Sources

The texts of the main corpus can be divided into different categories based on the main character that dies: a god, kings, non-royal humans, but also cities. For the category of gods Dumuzi, the young fertility god who died at the hand of demons, will be the main subject. While his death is alluded to and referenced in multiple texts it is never described in detail. Only two texts are known that provide details on his final moments, namely *Dumuzi's Dream* edited by Alster<sup>6</sup> and *The Death of Dumuzi*, written partly in Emesal, published by Kramer.<sup>7</sup> In both cases the precise moment of Dumuzi's death is not described but the events leading up to it and moments directly after it are, providing enough context to investigate his death.

Two kings who ruled during the third millennium BC had their deaths described in literary texts, namely Gilgameš and Ur-Namma. *The Death of Gilgameš*, edited by Cavigneaux and Al-Rawi<sup>8</sup>, details the deathbed of the legendary Urukian king and provides an explanation as to why immortality was not destined for him but the text leaves out the moment he passes away. Ur-Namma's death is described in *Ur-Namma A*, edited by Kramer<sup>9</sup> and more recently by Flückiger-Hawker in her study of Ur-Namma in literary texts,<sup>10</sup> elaborating on the events leading up to as well as the moment of his death, followed by his journey and stay in the Netherworld. However, in certain crucial parts the text is fragmentary so important details have been lost.

The deaths of two non-royal humans are described in the so-called Pushkin elegies, consisting of *The Elegy on the Death of Nanna* and *The Elegy on the Death of Nawirtum*, both edited by Kramer.<sup>11</sup> The elegies are written on the same tablet and deal with the death of a father and wife.<sup>12</sup> The first elegy is well preserved, but the second is in such a fragmentary state that

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<sup>5</sup> Cohen, *Balaĝ-compositions: Sumerian Lamentation Liturgies of the First and Second Millennium BC*, pp. 11-12; Dobbs-Allsopp, "Darwinism, Genre Theory, and City Laments", pp. 628-629 and Samet, *Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>6</sup> Alster, *Dumuzi's Dream*.

<sup>7</sup> Kramer, "The Death of Dumuzi: A New Sumerian Version", pp. 5-13.

<sup>8</sup> Cavigneaux, Al-Rawi, *Gilgameš et la Mort: Textes de Tell Haddad VI: avec un Appendice sur les Textes Funéraires Sumériens*.

<sup>9</sup> Kramer, "The Death of Ur-Nammu and His Descent to the Netherworld", pp. 104-122.

<sup>10</sup> Flückiger-Hawker, *Urnamma of Ur in Sumerian Literary Tradition*.

<sup>11</sup> Kramer, *Two Elegies on a Pushkin Museum Tablet*.

<sup>12</sup> Kramer continues the line count from the first elegy to the second, therefore I will use the line count according to the ETCSL.

few details can be made out. Still, these are the only texts that deal with the deaths of non-divine and non-royal Mesopotamians, so both are important texts to include in this study. They will show whether the same literary elements were used to describe their deaths as those used for the gods and kings.

The last category concerns the death of cities. The metaphor of death refers to the total destruction of a city. While the destruction of cities is the topic of multiple texts I will here mainly focus on two, *The Curse of Agade* edited by Cooper<sup>13</sup>, and *The Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur* edited by Michalowski.<sup>14</sup> They are the oldest texts detailing the death of cities, *The Curse of Agade* was likely composed during Ur III and *The Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur* during the beginning of the first dynasty of Isin, possibly under its first king Išbi-Erra.<sup>15</sup>

### 1.1.3 Secondary Sources

Apart from the texts outlined above, several other texts feature death as well but not as their main topic. These texts will be used to support the findings in the main texts and when they can provide additional insights into the use of certain literary elements and passages. Interestingly, all texts in this group are related to main corpus texts since they are either connected to or feature the same protagonist or subject.

As mentioned above, multiple texts reference the death of the god Dumuzi. Among those are *Inanna and Bilulu*<sup>16</sup> and *Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld*.<sup>17</sup> The former shows the wife of the god, the goddess Inanna, seeking revenge for his untimely passing through which more details about Dumuzi's death become clear. The latter, a text focused on Inanna, provides an explanation for Dumuzi's fate as well as the somewhat peculiar circumstances of his place in the Netherworld.

*Lugalbanda in the Mountain Cave* is also of interest to this research.<sup>18</sup> On their way to conquer the city of Aratta, Lugalbanda, a legendary Urukian king and father of Gilgameš, falls ill and is left for dead by his brothers. Although Lugalbanda comes close he does not actually die, yet his condition is described in similar terms as in the main texts concerning actual deaths.

Apart from *The Death of Gilgameš* there is another Sumerian Gilgameš tale that

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<sup>13</sup> Cooper, *Curse of Agade*.

<sup>14</sup> Michalowski, *The Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur*.

<sup>15</sup> Michalowski, *Lamentation*, pp.6-7.

<sup>16</sup> Jacobsen, Kramer, "The Myth of Inanna and Bilulu", pp. 52-72.

<sup>17</sup> Sladek, "Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld".

<sup>18</sup> No complete edition of this text has been published yet. For the transliteration and translation of the text see Vanstiphout, *Epics of Sumerian Kings: The Matter of Aratta*, pp. 104-131.

describes death and what comes after, namely *Gilgameš, Enkidu and the Netherworld*.<sup>19</sup> After Gilgameš drops his favourite toys into a hole that leads to the Netherworld Enkidu offers to go there and retrieve them. When Enkidu returns he tells Gilgameš about what he has seen, the fates of people who died in different circumstances, providing an important view of life in the Netherworld and the effect that the manner in which one died had on their quality of life there.

Besides *The Curse of Agade* and *The Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur* there are four other texts that concern the destruction, or ‘death’, of cities. These four texts are *The Lament for Eridu*, *The Lament for Nippur*, *The Lament for Ur* and *The Lament for Uruk*.<sup>20</sup> Together with *The Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur* they form the genre of ‘city lamentations’.<sup>21</sup> They are quite different from the two main texts and will therefore only be used to support the similarities and differences found there.

## 1.2 Problems with Date and Place

The study of literary texts from the late third and early second millennia BC is complicated by the fact that the surviving copies are known predominantly from one period and place: Old Babylonian Nippur. Barring one exception, all of the main compositions discussed here date to the Old Babylonian period although some likely have older origins. The exception is *The Curse of Agade*. That text, known from a total of 96 copies, has three fragmentary tablets that date to the Ur III period and contain about 35 lines out of 281 of the complete composition.<sup>22</sup> The same goes for the findspots of the texts, of which only *The Death of Dumuzi* does not have any Nippur versions – the one tablet known to contain this text was found in Sippar.<sup>23</sup> While the texts have been found in places other than Nippur as well, mostly Ur and Kiš, the city remains the dominant source for all the texts under discussion here.

This could be considered a persuasive argument in favour of the existence of a literary tradition: the use of the same elements is to be explained by the fact that the texts principally come from the same time and place and reflect the then and there current ideas about death. The few copies found in cities other than Nippur could attest to the spread of these ideas throughout Mesopotamia.

However, this excludes the important aspect of the historical content and context, which

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<sup>19</sup> Gadotti, ‘*Gilgameš, Enkidu and the Netherworld*’ and the Sumerian *Gilgameš Cycle*.

<sup>20</sup> Green, “Eridu in Sumerian Literature”; Tinney, *The Nippur Lament*; Samet, *Lamentation for Ur*; Green, “The Uruk Lament”, pp. 253-279.

<sup>21</sup> Vanstiphout, “Some Thoughts on Genre in Mesopotamian Literature”, pp. 7-9.

<sup>22</sup> Cooper, *Curse*, p. 41.

<sup>23</sup> Alster, Geller, *Sumerian Literary Texts*, p. 7 and plates 51-53.

could argue for an earlier origin of the texts. *The Curse of Agade* and *Ur-Namma A* are fine examples to illustrate this importance. Both texts refer to historical events, the former to the fall of Agade (ca. 2150 BC) and the latter to the death of Ur-Namma, the first king of the Ur III dynasty (ca. 2100 BC). Therefore it is likely that the original compositions of both predate the Old Babylonian period.<sup>24</sup> When seen in their historical context, it would be logical for both *The Curse of Agade* and *Ur-Namma A* to have been composed during the Ur III period since the former could be used to legitimize the Ur III dynasty<sup>25</sup> while the latter explained the death of its first king. The kings of Isin, who presented themselves as the heirs to the Ur III dynasty and ruled during the first century of the Old Babylonian period, did not have any specific need to compose these particular texts; they succeeded Ur, not Agade, so *The Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur*, composed during the Old Babylonian period, would serve the ideological needs of the Isin kings considerably better than *The Curse of Agade* could have.<sup>26</sup> And while Ur-Namma influenced the kings of Isin in many ways, composing a text to explain his sudden death a century after the fact makes little sense.<sup>27</sup>

Based on content and context a tentative distinction between texts that likely have older origins and those composed during the Old Babylonian period can be made. It gives the following overview: predating the Old Babylonian period would be the texts concerning Dumuzi, Gilgameš, Lugalbanda, Ur-Namma and the fall of Agade. It has been generally accepted in scholarship that the texts concerning Gilgameš and Lugalbanda have traditions that go back to the beginning the third millennium BC, but that they started to be written down from the Ur III period onwards.<sup>28</sup> For the Dumuzi tradition this is similar, it likely goes back to the first half of the third millennium BC with the attestation of his name and temples already in the Fara period (ca. 2600 BC).<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Flücker-Hawker, *Urnamma* p. 17. The exact date for the composition of *The Curse of Agade* is debated, Cooper places it somewhere in the 150 years between the end of the Akkadian Empire and the reign of Ibbi-Sîn, see Cooper, *Curse*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>25</sup> Based on the notion that there could only be one king or dynasty ruling over Babylonia, meaning that the previous ruling dynasty had to fall. See Cooper, *Curse*, p. 8.

<sup>26</sup> Cooper, *Curse*, pp. 8-9. See also Tinney, *Nippur Lament*, pp. 35-36 for a comparison of the two texts with another city lamentation that illustrates their different purposes. Chapter Five of the present study is dedicated to the main difference between the texts, the fate of the city at the end, and will be discussed elaborately there.

<sup>27</sup> The ways in which the Ur III dynasty, especially Ur-Namma and Šulgi, influenced the kings of Isin will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five. An explanation for the fascination of the Isin kings with their predecessors is offered by Michalowski, *Lamentation*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>28</sup> Cavigneaux, Al-Rawi, *Gilgameš et la Mort*, p. 10; Matouš, “Zur neueren Literatur über das Gilgameš-Epos”, p.5.

<sup>29</sup> The Dumuzi referred to in personal names of the Fara period is contested, either the goddess Dumuzi-abzu is meant or Dumuzi the young god. Either way, scholars have not yet come to a consensus. See Klein, “The Assumed Human Origins of Dumuzi: A Reconsideration”, pp. 1122-1123. The central problem here is the existence of Dumuzi in the Early Dynastic period as a proper god, since Ama-ušumgal-anna is attested in the god-lists of the ED period, not Dumuzi, and they only became counterparts later during the Old Babylonian

Dating to the Old Babylonian period would be the lamentation for Sumer and Ur, the other city lamentations, the Pushkin elegies, *The Death of Dumuzi* and *Inanna's Descent*. Although the tradition of Inanna and Dumuzi was already established during the third millennium BC these particular compositions are more likely to have been composed during the Old Babylonian period based on their content.<sup>30</sup> Only two of the five city lamentations can be dated with certainty to the reign of Išme-Dagān, fourth king of Isin, the others more generally to the Isin-Larsa period; all are therefore Old Babylonian in origin.<sup>31</sup> The Pushkin elegies are known only from the one tablet found in Nippur that dates to the Old Babylonian period, leaving little room to argue for an earlier composition date.<sup>32</sup>

Since several texts are considered to have originated before the Old Babylonian period, any literary tradition created in Old Babylonian Nippur is likely to have incorporated or reacted to, other, older traditions.<sup>33</sup>

### 1.3 History of Research

Fortunately, most of the main sources were quite popular with the ancient scribes and modern scholars alike, meaning that they have received much attention over the years. Most have been studied extensively with multiple publications dedicated to them. I will not discuss the history of scholarship on all of the eight main sources since this has already been done extensively in the most recent editions of the texts. Instead I will present an overview of the comparisons that have already been made between the main sources, and to a certain extent with the secondary sources, on how death is described.

For the subject of destroyed cities this has been done most successfully. In his edition of *The Curse of Agade*, Cooper provided multiple comparisons of his text to the city lamentations, including *The Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur*, and noted the similarities regarding the descriptions of various themes including the destruction of cities.<sup>34</sup>

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period. The god Dumuzi did, however, have a temple in Badtibira already during the Early Dynastic (III) period which was likely established even earlier. See Kutscher, "The Cult of Dumuzi/Tammuz", pp. 30-31. This would support the view of Dumuzi the young fertility god being referred to in the personal names.

<sup>30</sup> For *Inanna's Descent*, see Alster, "Inanna Repenting: The Conclusion of Inanna's Descent", p.16. The myth is generally considered to consist of several separate myths which were combined in the Old Babylonian period, see Katz, "How Dumuzi Became Inanna's Victim: On the Formation of 'Inanna's Descent'", pp. 93-94 and Sladek, "Inanna's Descent", pp. 26-27. A proposed chronological order of the four Dumuzi texts is outlined in Chapter 5.3.2.

<sup>31</sup> For a discussion and overview of the dates see Green, "Eridu", pp. 314-315.

<sup>32</sup> Kramer, *Two Elegies*, p. 48.

<sup>33</sup> A discussion on the discrepancy between the date of compositions and the origin of Sumerian literature has been conducted by Falkenstein, "Zur Chronologie der Sumerischen Texten". This is further agreed upon by Hallo, "On the Antiquity of Sumerian Literature", pp. 167-168.

<sup>34</sup> Cooper, *Curse*, pp. 20-28.

Following this, Michalowski included in his edition of *The Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur* a short comparison to *The Curse of Agade* and also placed both texts in their historical context, showing that when the texts are considered together they reflect a shift in kingship ideology from the Ur III dynasty to the first dynasty of Isin.<sup>35</sup> This development concerns the lasting effect of death, i.e., whether the cities would remain destroyed and abandoned, which will be one of the main issues discussed in Chapter Five of this study.

In her work on the texts of *Ur-Namma*, Flückiger-Hawker noted the similarities between *Ur-Namma A* and several other texts. She provided a detailed comparison of that text to *The Curse of Agade*, and to a lesser extent to the city lamentations, whereby she showed that, while the two texts deal with completely different subjects, a king versus a city, they are highly compatible.<sup>36</sup>

*Ur-Namma A* has been compared by Wilcke to *The Death of Gilgameš* as well on the basis of their descriptions of death.<sup>37</sup> Both *Ur-Namma A* and *The Death of Gilgameš* are in turn referred to by Löhnert in her discussion of the Pushkin Elegies dealing with the deaths of Nanna and Nawirtum, where she has noted various parallels between the texts regarding the circumstances surrounding death.<sup>38</sup>

The focus of previous research on *Ur-Namma A* would suggest that it is of greater importance than the other texts because it has been compared to at least one text in all of the different categories. However, instead of predominantly comparing *Ur-Namma A* to another text it should be investigated whether or not the texts made use of the same elements in comparison to each other. Despite the many published comparisons between these texts that research has not been undertaken.

It is the aim of this study to do so and in the following chapters I will discuss how the main texts, supported by the secondary texts, relate to each other based on content and context.

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<sup>35</sup> Michalowski, *Lamentation*, pp. 4-9. See also Tinney, *Nippur Lament*, pp. 30-36.

<sup>36</sup> Flückiger-Hawker, *Urnamma* pp. 85-91.

<sup>37</sup> Wilcke, "Eine Schicksalentscheidung für den toten Urnammu?", pp. 82-83.

<sup>38</sup> Löhnert, "Coping with Death according to the 'Elegy on the Death of Nannā'", pp. 53-54.

# Chapter Two

## The Nature of Death<sup>39</sup>

Descriptions of death involve three different aspects: its nature, reason and acceptance. This chapter will deal with the first and Chapter Three with the other two since they are closely related. The approach applied in these two chapters will be a comparative one, outlining the deaths of the different subjects while noting similarities and contrasts between the texts for all three aspects. The texts are ordered based on subject and chronology, starting with Dumuzi, followed by Gilgameš, Ur-Namma, Nanna and Nawirtum, and ending with Agade and Sumer and Ur.

The first aspect to be discussed is the nature of the subjects' death. The Mesopotamians believed that death was inevitable and could happen naturally or violently.<sup>40</sup> The Sumerian word *nam-tar* denotes fate which was decreed by the gods and closely associated with death since that was the final event in a person's life, meaning that Mesopotamians accepted the idea of dying. However, they also believed that fate could be altered to a certain extent by a person's behaviour.<sup>41</sup> Death could be delayed for a person with proper behaviour and devotion towards the gods. An early death, when a person was not yet elderly but considered to be in his prime, was therefore unnatural because all Mesopotamians had the potential to live long lives.<sup>42</sup> Several agents could cause an early death: gods, humans, diseases and demons, all of which will be encountered in the texts under discussion here.

### 2.1 The God Dumuzi

In *Dumuzi's Dream (Dream)* the death of the god is prophesized in a dream he has. He desperately tries to escape his fate but to no avail. After multiple escapes from the demons send to catch him, they finally manage to surround him in the sheepfold of his sister Ĝeštinanna. Although the precise moment of his death is not described, lines 250-260 provide important context:

gal<sub>5</sub>-lá-diš amaš tūr-šè ku<sub>4</sub>-ra-ni  
ĝi<sup>š</sup>gag-ga-ra izi b[a-ni]-in-ra

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<sup>39</sup> This chapter and the next were originally written as a separate paper and are presented here in an elaborated and revised form.

<sup>40</sup> Lambert, "The Theology of Death", p. 65.

<sup>41</sup> Rochberg, "Fate and Divination in Mesopotamia", pp. 24-26.

<sup>42</sup> See Katz, "Tod A", pp. 716-717 where she also discusses the possible Akkadian influences on Mesopotamian beliefs about death.

mina-kam-ma amaš tūr-šè ku<sub>4</sub>-ra-ni  
 ġi<sup>š</sup>ma-nu izi ba-ni-ra  
 éša-kam-ma amaš tūr-š[è ku<sub>4</sub>-ra]-ni  
<sup>du</sup>gšakir kù-ga-a TÛN-b[i ba-ra-bad-DU]  
 4-kam-ma amaš tūr-šè k[u<sub>4</sub>-ra-ni]  
 an-za-am ġi<sup>š</sup>kak-ta lá-a ġi<sup>š</sup>gag-ta [ba-ra-si-ig]  
 5-kam-ma amaš tūr-šè ku<sub>4</sub>-ra-ni  
<sup>du</sup>gšàkir ì-dúr-dúr ga nu-un-dé  
 [an]-za-am ì-dúr-dúr <sup>d</sup>dumu-zi nu-un-tìl [ama]š líl-lá al-dù  
<sup>d</sup>dumu-zi ug<sub>5</sub>-ga šir<sub>3</sub>-kal-k[al-am<sub>3</sub>]

When the first demon entered the sheepfold and stall, he set fire to the bolt. When the second entered the sheepfold and stall, he set fire to the shepherd's stick. When the third entered the sheepfold and stall, he removed the cover of the pure churn. When the fourth entered the sheepfold and stall, he tore down the drinking cup from the peg where it hung. When the fifth entered the sheepfold and stall, the churns lay (on their side), no milk was poured. The drinking cups lay (on their side), Dumuzi was dead (lit. no longer lived), the sheepfold was made into a wind (haunted). Dumuzi is dead, it is a *kal-kal* song.<sup>43</sup>

The verb used here for Dumuzi's death is *tìl*, 'to live', with the negation prefix *nu-*. So, the text does not explicitly state that Dumuzi died, literally it states that Dumuzi 'no longer lived'. The last line of the text, however, mentions the dead Dumuzi using the verb *ug<sub>5</sub>* 'to die'.

Although Dumuzi's death is not explicitly mentioned the fact that he is no longer alive after five demons had entered his hiding place suggests an unnatural and violent death. This is supported by a passage detailing that the demons carry ġi<sup>š</sup>tukul saġ kud-a 'head-smashing weapons' with them.<sup>44</sup> The passage that hints most at his potentially violent death has to be that of his capture, one of many, by the demons as well as the demons being violent in their handling of him, lines 156-163:

lú ba-an-níġin-níġin-ne-eš a-níġin ba-ni-in-du<sub>8</sub>-uš  
 gu mu-un-na-sur-ru-ne sa mu-un-na-kéše-da-[ne]  
 gu zi-ip-pa-tum mu-un-na-sur-ru-ne

<sup>43</sup> Alster, *Dumuzi's Dream*, pp. 82-83.

<sup>44</sup> Alster, *Dumuzi's Dream*, pp. 66-67 lines 124-125.

ġiš<sup>5</sup> ma-nu mu-un-na-ḥur-ru-ne  
 lú igi-na-ke<sub>4</sub> níġ mu-un-ra-ra  
 lú murgu-na-ke<sub>4</sub> l kuš<sub>3</sub>-gin<sub>7</sub> mu-un-búr-[re]  
 šu-ni šu-dù-a ba-e-dab<sub>5</sub>-bé  
 á-ni á-lá-a ba-e-lá-e

The men surrounded him and tormented him with thirst.<sup>45</sup> They twisted a cord for him, they knotted a net for him. They wove a *ziptum*-cord<sup>46</sup> for him, they cut sticks for him. The one in front of him threw things at him, the one behind him gives him only a cubit of leeway.<sup>47</sup> His hands were bound in handcuffs, his arms were bound in fetters.<sup>48</sup>

Instead of an explicit description the text *The Death of Dumuzi (DoD)* provides a literary and ambiguous account of the god's death. It is Dumuzi who states in line 40: kur-ki-in-dar-ra-mà ġir-mà ba-an-zé-ir ur<sub>5</sub> nu-mu-un-da-[e<sub>11</sub>] 'my foot has slid into my excavated grave, it does not let me [ascend] from it'.<sup>49</sup> The demons and their capture of Dumuzi are mentioned in this text as well, in similar terms as in *Dream*, lines 44-49:

gal[la]-gu-la ba-niġin-ne-eš a-niġin-na ba-an-ni-<du<sub>8</sub>>-us  
 [galla-tur] ba-an-niġin-ne-eš a-niġin-na ba-an-ni-<du<sub>8</sub>>-us  
 ...  
 galla gi-NÍGIN-šukur-nu-me-a [zag-ga-na ba-an-díb-bé-eš]  
 šu-ni šurim(?) -ma(?) du<sub>8</sub>-du<sub>8</sub>-a [ba(?) -an-dù-uš]  
 maḥ-a-dúr-a ba-gar-ra-àm [ḥaš<sub>4</sub>-a-na i-im-díb-dé-eš]

The big galla surrounded him, tormented him with thirst, [The little galla] surrounded him, tormented him with thirst, .... The galla – there being no surrounding reed hedge – [held on to his side], [They bound] his hands

<sup>45</sup> The translation of Alster for a-niġin ba-ni-in-du<sub>8</sub>-uš 'they let the standing waters flow' is ambiguous and therefore I choose to follow Kramer's translation of a parallel line in *DoD*, see Kramer, "The Death of Dumuzi", p. 12.

<sup>46</sup> Alster, *Dumuzi's Dream*, p. 112.

<sup>47</sup> The l kuš<sub>3</sub>-gin<sub>7</sub> mu-un-búr-[re] remains untranslated in the publications probably because the release of Dumuzi (búr) makes little sense. My proposed translation for this sentence is based on the previous line, because the demon stands closely behind Dumuzi he has little room to avoid or dodge the objects thrown at him since kuš<sub>3</sub> denotes 50 cm. For the measurement of kuš<sub>3</sub> see Huehnergard, *A Grammar of Akkadian*, p. 581.

<sup>48</sup> Alster, *Dumuzi's Dream*, pp. 70-71. See also lines 182-190 and 213-225.

<sup>49</sup> Kramer, "Death of Dumuzi", pp. 7, 10.

that had been smeared in dung, him who had settled himself on a lofty seat,  
[they seized by his thighs].<sup>50</sup>

While the death of Dumuzi was likely unnatural and violent, the texts never explicitly state so. The most convincing evidence for the violent nature of Dumuzi's death are only two lines hidden away in another text within the Dumuzi tradition, namely *Inanna and Bilulu*. One of the hiding places named in *Dream*, the house of old woman Bilulu, plays a central part in this composition for it is there that Inanna goes to avenge her dead lover. Here, however, it is named as the place where Dumuzi was killed instead of it being a hiding place. Despite this difference it is still an important parallel because it details what happened to Dumuzi in the sheepfold, see lines 74-76:

si[g<sub>4</sub> é]- <sup>d</sup>be-li-li-šè [...]  
ki-bi-a sipad saĝ-a ra [...]  
<sup>d</sup>dumu-zi saĝ-a ra

To the brick-built house of Belili [I went], there the shepherd, head beaten  
in, ... [lay on the ground], Dumuzi, (his) head beaten (was) in.<sup>51</sup>

When all these statements are taken into consideration it can be concluded that Dumuzi did not die of natural causes. On the contrary, after a catch-and-release with a group of demons who handled him without care he is surrounded and ceases to live after his skull was smashed. The young god went into the grave having died an unnatural and violent death.<sup>52</sup>

## 2.2 Kings and Non-Royal humans

The human-categories of kings and non-royal humans will be discussed together in the following section. This will give a clear overview of the similarities and differences between the two. Beginning with the kings, the two texts that deal with their deaths, *The Death of Gilgameš (Gilgameš)* and *The Death of Ur-Namma (Ur-Namma)*, share similar elements with each other as well as with the two Pushkin elegies. Starting with *Gilgameš*, the text is quite unclear about the nature of the king's death. The moment he passes away has not been

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<sup>50</sup> Kramer, "The Death of Dumuzi", pp. 7-8, 10 and 12. The unpleasant capture of Dumuzi is also attested in *The Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur* line 265 where Dumuzi is captured as prisoner of war and taken away in fetters.

<sup>51</sup> Jacobsen, Kramer, "Inanna and Bilulu", pp. 64-65. Note that in this text it is the son of Bilulu, Girgire, who leaves his victims scattered in the fields after hitting them with a mace, not demons. See lines 88-94.

<sup>52</sup> The ending of *Inanna's Descent* likely reflects the same turn of events but unfortunately the section is too fragmentary to make out any details other than Dumuzi's capture by the demons.

preserved, if it was even mentioned in the text in the first place. The text does elaborate on the king's condition leading up to his death, *Gilgameš* lines 1-2, 8 and 13-15:

am-gal-e ba-nú ḥur nu-mu-un-[da]-an-z[i-z]i  
en <sup>d</sup>gílgameš ba-nú ḥur nu-mu-un-da-an-zi-zi

lib<sub>4</sub>-lib<sub>4</sub>-bi ma-da ba-nú ḥur nu-mu-un-da-an-zi-zi

gub-ba nu-ub-sig<sub>9</sub>-ga tuš nu-ub-sig<sub>9</sub>-ga a-nir ib-ĝá-ĝá  
ú kú nu-ub-si-ga a naĝ nu-ub-si-ga a-nir ib-ĝá-ĝá  
nam-tar-ra ig-šu-úr ba-ḥa-za zi-zi nu-ub-sig<sub>9</sub>-ga

The great Bull is lying down, he can never rise again. Lord Gilgameš has lain down and is never to rise again.

The adventurer of (our) land is lying down, he can never rise again.

Unable to stand up, unable to sit down, he laments.

He cannot eat, he cannot drink, he laments.

Held fast by the door-bolt of fate, he is unable to rise.<sup>53</sup>

It is impossible to conclude from his weak condition whether Gilgameš died a natural or unnatural death. A passage later on in the text is more informative. In the text Gilgameš has a dream in which the gods explain to him why he has to die. Enlil explains it to him as follows, lines 14, 17-18:

<sup>d</sup>GIŠ.BÍL-ga-mes nam-zu nam-lugal-šè mu-túm/ [...t]i da-rí-  
šè nu-mu-un-túm

níĝ gig ak nam-lú-ùlu-ke<sub>4</sub> ne-en de<sub>6</sub>-a ma-ra-du<sub>11</sub>

níĝ gi-dur ku<sub>5</sub>-da-zu-ka ne-en de<sub>6</sub>-a ma-ra-du<sub>11</sub>

“Oh Gilgameš, I made your destiny a destiny of kingship but I did not make it a destiny of eternal life.

The bane of mankind<sup>54</sup> is thus come, I have told you. What (was fixed) when your navel-cord was cut is thus come, I have told you.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Cavigneaux and Al-Rawi, *Gilgameš et la Mort*, pp. 25-26 and 55. They translate here ‘Namtar’, presumably the deity. I prefer to translate ‘fate’.

<sup>54</sup> For a discussion of the term níĝ gig (ak) see Cavigneaux, Al-Rawi, *Gilgameš et la Mort*, p. 20 and Klein, “The ‘Bane’ of Humanity”, pp. 64-65 note 15.

<sup>55</sup> Cavigneaux, Al-Rawi, *Gilgameš et la Mort*, pp. 16, 61, this version of the dream is attested in the Nippur sources but not in those from Meturan.

Enlil speaks about the fate (nam-tar or simply nam) of mankind, that is destined at birth and denotes that all men die at one point. For Gilgameš this time had come and it would be impossible for him to escape it now. He has lived the life he was destined to live, suggesting he died at an old age after living a full life. A similar expression is found in *Lugalbanda in the Mountain Cave (Lugalbanda)* where his brothers leave Lugalbanda to die in the cave. Based on the evidence from both *Gilgameš* and *Lugalbanda* the death of Gilgameš can be classified as a natural death. See *Lugalbanda* lines 133-136:

áb kug <sup>d</sup>nanna ság dug<sub>4</sub>-ga-gin<sub>7</sub>  
gu<sub>4</sub>-áb-ba nam-sumun-ba šurum-ma taka<sub>4</sub>-a-gin<sub>7</sub>  
šeš-a-ne-ne gu<sub>5</sub>-li-ne-ne  
kug <sup>d</sup>lugal-bàn-da ħur-ru-um kur-ra-ka mu-ni-ib-taka<sub>4</sub>-a-aš<sup>56</sup>

As do the migrating cows of Holy Nanna, when they leave a decrepit breeding bull in the cow-pen, his brothers and companions abandoned Holy Lugalbanda in the mountain cave.<sup>57</sup>

The condition of the other king, Ur-Namma, leading up to his death is described in similar terms as that of Gilgameš, see *Ur-Namma* lines 36-37:

šu-ni dab<sub>5</sub>-ba nu-mu-un-dab<sub>5</sub> in-nú tur<sub>5</sub>-ra-àm  
ġìri-[ni] díb-ba nu-mu-un-da-dib ì-nú tur<sub>5</sub>-ra-àm<sup>58</sup>

His hands which seized, he was not able to seize anymore. He lies suffering. With his feet which had tread, he was not able to tread anymore. He lies suffering.<sup>59</sup>

Contrary to *Gilgameš*, *Ur-Namma* contains a statement that the king has passed away. However, there is again no explicit description of the moment of his death. In *Dream* the words *tìl* and *ug<sub>5</sub>* are used to denote the dead Dumuzi while *Ur-Namma* shows a different approach,

<sup>56</sup> In the verbal form the -b- and the -eš cannot occur together. The -b- should be a -n- for the third singular agent as it is in line 140 of the text. See Vanstiphout, *Epics*, p. 112.

<sup>57</sup> Vanstiphout, *Epics*, pp. 110-113.

<sup>58</sup> Note the rare use of the comitative *da* in line 37 as a marker of ability, see Jagersma, “A Descriptive Grammar of Sumerian”, p. 453. This line has a variant that reads *ġìri-[ni] díb-ba [ x x x (x)] ġá-ġá*, which has a parallel in *Lugalbanda* line 80: *ġìri-ni gú-ba nu-mu-da-an-ġá-ġá*. The translation of this line in *Ur-Namma* is likely based on the parallel in *Lugalbanda*. See Flückiger-Hawker, *Urnamma*, p. 107 and Vanstiphout, *Epics*, p. 108.

<sup>59</sup> Flückiger-Hawker, *Urnamma*, p. 107.

in line 51 the following expression is used: u<sub>4</sub> dug<sub>4</sub>-ga-ni sá mu-ni-ib-dug<sub>4</sub> a-la-na ba-ra-è ‘his appointed time has reached him, he went out in his prime.’<sup>60</sup>

Katz has discussed the different terms and phrases used to describe death, noting that ug<sub>5</sub> is one of three Sumerian verbs for ‘to die’.<sup>61</sup> In her section on euphemisms for death she lists two Sumerian paraphrases, ‘(to go to) the fate (nam-tar)’ and ‘his appointed time has reached him’ which is used in *Ur-Namma* line 51, similar to the explanation of Gilgameš’ death. However, in the second part of line 51 another paraphrase for death is used, ‘to go out in his prime’ (i.e. he died in the prime of his life) with the verb è ‘to go out’ or ‘to leave’. This combination of a-la è occurs only once in Sumerian literary texts showing that scribes, at least the one who wrote *Ur-Namma*, tried to express death in different words.<sup>62</sup> The nu-un-tìl ‘lived no longer’ for Dumuzi in *Dream* is another example of the use of euphemisms.

Despite not being explicitly described, the text does hint at a violent death for Ur-Namma. Ur-Namma had been wounded and was taken back to Ur but ultimately passed away. An important argument that supports Ur-Namma dying in a violent manner is the use of the Sumerian word ki-lul-la in line 58 of the text:

a-[gin<sub>7</sub> k]i-lul-la ur-<sup>d</sup>namma dug gaz-gin<sub>7</sub> a-ba-ni-in-taka<sub>4</sub>-aš

Afterwards they abandoned Ur-Namma on the battlefield like a broken pitcher.<sup>63</sup>

Kramer noted in his edition of the text that the translation of the sentence is tentative but did not elaborate further on it nor on the translation of ki-lul-la.<sup>64</sup> Different translations have been provided such as ‘field of battle’ by Kramer, ‘murder’ or ‘place of iniquity’ by the PSD<sup>65</sup> and Löhnert’s ‘treacherous place’.<sup>66</sup> Since ki-lul-la is an obscure word but of great importance for the understanding of the nature of death in *Ur-Namma* and multiple other texts, a detailed discussion of its meaning and attestations will be included in Chapter Four. Based on the findings there the translation of ki-lul-la as ‘battlefield’ seems the most fitting. Especially in the context of *Ur-Namma*, given the following statement where Ur-Namma himself laments his death in lines 189-192:

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<sup>60</sup> Flückiger-Hawker, *Urnamma*, p. 110 and ETCSL 2.4.1.1.

<sup>61</sup> The other two are ug<sub>7</sub> and úš, which are written with the same sign ÚŠ.

<sup>62</sup> See a-la in *PSD A.I*, p. 99 (5).

<sup>63</sup> Kramer, “Death of Ur-Nammu”, pp. 113, 118. For the translation of the term ki-lul-la see Chapter 4.1.

<sup>64</sup> Kramer, “Death of Ur-Nammu”, p. 121.

<sup>65</sup> PSD ‘ki-lul-la’.

<sup>66</sup> Löhnert, “Death of Nannā”, p. 54.

ĝi<sup>š</sup>gu-za ĥi-li-bi nu-mu-til-la-ĝu<sub>10</sub>  
 saĥar pú-saĝ-ĝá-/ka\ lú im-mi-in-tuš-ù [...]

ĝi<sup>š</sup>-nú ki-nú TUR-bi nu-mu-un-[til]-la-ĝu<sub>10</sub>  
 edin bar sug<sub>4</sub>-ga-ka lú im-mi-in-šub-bu-na<sup>67</sup>

That, instead of my throne, whose luxuriance I had not exhausted, they make me squat in the dust of the pit! That, instead of my bed, the sleeping place whose ... I had not exhausted, they (lit. the man) make me lie down (way out) in the open, desolate steppe!<sup>68</sup>

Ur-Namma's death was possibly the inspiration for an entry in *Gilgameš, Enkidu and the Netherworld (GEN)*.<sup>69</sup> Although the text details the deceased people Enkidu encountered in the Netherworld, little detail is given on how most of them died. In general, Gilgameš asks Enkidu about specific deeds, misdeeds or events of the deceased and how that affected their existence in the Netherworld. Only twice is the nature of the deceased' death mentioned; one who was eaten by a lion and one who fell in battle. The latter is reminiscent of the description in *Ur-Namma*, see *GEN* lines 287-289:

lú mè-a šub-ba igi bí-du<sub>8</sub>-àm igi bí-du<sub>8</sub>-àm a-na-gin<sub>7</sub> an-ak  
 ki ama-ni saĝ-du-ni nu-un-dab<sub>5</sub>-bé dam-a-ni ér mu-un-še<sub>8</sub>-še<sub>8</sub>  
 ad<sub>6</sub>-da-a-ni edin-na an-nú igi bí-du<sub>8</sub>-àm igi bí-du<sub>8</sub>-àm  
 a-na-gin<sub>7</sub> ì-ĝál [...] -ta šu?-ta im-da-dul(?)

“Did you see the man who fell in battle?”

“I saw him”. “How does he fare?”

“At the place where his mother cannot hold his head, his wife cries bitterly.”

“Did you see (the man) whose corpse lies in the steppe?” “I saw him”.

“How does he fare?” “He is covered(?) with [...]”.<sup>70</sup>

The obscure ki-lu-la, found in *Ur-Namma* above, is attested in *The Elegy on the Death of Nanna (Nanna)*, the first of the two Pushkin elegies, as well. The text provides several details on the death of Nanna, using the verb ug<sub>5</sub> to state that Nanna had died and disclosing the place

<sup>67</sup> I prefer the variant reading of šub instead of nú chosen by Flückiger-Hawker because it is grammatically correct and fits better in context of the previous lines.

<sup>68</sup> Flückiger-Hawker, *Urnamma*, pp. 133-134, 179.

<sup>69</sup> The suggestion is made already by Gadotti, *GEN*, p. 296 in her commentary on line 189.

<sup>70</sup> Gadotti, *GEN*, pp. 160, 167-168. For the lion attack see lines 279-280 on pp. 159, 167.

he died: Nippur. More specifically, he died in a ki-lul-la in Nippur. While that in itself is already an indication for violent and unnatural death, it is strengthened by the mention of a lú-ug<sub>5</sub>-ge, ‘murderer’.<sup>71</sup> See lines 15, 77-78:

dub-zu nibru<sup>ki</sup>-a ki-lul-la b[a-a]n-ug<sub>5</sub>

lú-ug<sub>5</sub>-ge-zu šà-IGI .. (?) -gin<sub>7</sub>

zag-zu á ħul-la za-e ma-ra-kíĝ-ĝá

The scholar died in Nippur on the battlefield.<sup>72</sup>

The man who killed you, [who] like one who ... the heart, ...

The one who assaulted you, (yes) you, with cruel strength.<sup>73</sup>

The ki-lul-la is not the only connection between *Nanna* and *Ur-Namma*. In *Nanna* the condition of the scholar leading up to his death is described in similar terms as it is in both *Gilgameš* and *Ur-Namma*, with him being weak and unable to even eat or drink. This connection has been noted already by Löhnert<sup>74</sup>, see the similarities in *Nanna* lines 9-10:

tur<sub>5</sub>-ra ù nu-kú gab aba-ri tur<sub>5</sub>-ra ba-an-dab

ka ù-ba-e-šú ninda nu-mu-un-šú-šú šà-sù-ga ba-an-nú

(the scholar) had become ill—and had not eaten—was languishing away,  
with mouth shut tight he tasted no food, lay famished.<sup>75</sup>

Due to the fragmentary state of the text only few details can be made out concerning the death of Nawirtum in *The Elegy on the Death of Nawirtum (Nawirtum)*. Fortunately, the final lines of the text have been preserved and hint at a non-violent death, line 66:

gal<sub>5</sub>-lá šu-ni ma-ra-an-de<sub>6</sub>-a áš ħul-bi ħé-en-dug<sub>4</sub>

ki-sikil dùg la-la-na gu<sub>4</sub>-gin<sub>7</sub> nú-a re i-lu-zu [gi]g-ga-àm

<sup>71</sup> This is the only attestation of *lú-ug<sub>5</sub>-ge*, Kramer, *Two Elegies*, p. 80 translates it as ‘the man who killed (you)’ and Löhnert, “Death of Nannā”, p. 60 translates ‘murderer’.

<sup>72</sup> Kramer’s translation for ki-lul-la in this line, ‘(of wounds received) in an attack (?)’, is too speculative. See Kramer, *Two Elegies*, pp. 52, 58.

<sup>73</sup> Kramer, *Two Elegies*, pp. 52-54, 58-60. Whether the scholar had participated in an actual battle or that the ‘battlefield’ here should rather be interpreted as a ‘crime scene’, the scholar’s personal battlefield where he fought for his life, is not specified in the elegy.

<sup>74</sup> Löhnert, “Death of Nannā”, p. 54.

<sup>75</sup> Kramer, *Two Elegies*, pp. 52, 58.

The demon who has brought his hand against you – may a cruel curse be uttered against him, because the kind matron lies like an ox in her splendour —[bit]ter is the lament for you!<sup>76</sup>

Demons and ghosts are known to spread diseases especially by touching people. Diseases such as ‘the hand of a ghost’ or ‘the hand of god X’ are common in Mesopotamian medical texts.<sup>77</sup> Although not a violent death, the death of Nawirtum was likely unnatural since instead of living a full life a demon intervened and cut it short. However, because most of the lines of *Nawirtum* are damaged it cannot be ruled out she was already at an old age when she became ill.

Based on the texts discussed it would seem that a majority of the subjects died a violent death. Dumuzi, Ur-Namma and Nanna all died in a violent and unnatural manner. Nawirtum did not but her passing was unnatural nonetheless. Gilgameš is the only subject that likely died a natural death. Remarkable is that four out of five protagonists (Gilgameš, Ur-Namma, Nanna and Nawirtum) were physically in poor condition – ill or unable to move – before they died. Only Dumuzi was in good condition when he died, since he was able to escape from the demons numerous times there seems to be no problem of him being weak or unable to move, which is probably why the element is missing in the texts concerning his death.<sup>78</sup>

One of the secondary texts and the only one to actually explicitly describe the moments leading up to death, even though the subject did not die, also details the subject being ill and lying down with tur<sub>5</sub>. In *Lugalbanda* the king is left behind to die by his brothers, which is described as follows in lines 75-80:

kaskal mu-un-sa<sub>9</sub> kaskal mu-un-sa<sub>9</sub>  
ki-bi-a tur<sub>5</sub>-ra mu-na-te saĝ gig mu-na-te

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<sup>76</sup> Kramer, *Two Elegies*, pp. 57-64.

<sup>77</sup> See Heeßel, “Diagnosis, Divination and Disease: Towards an Understanding of the Rationale Behind the Babylonian Diagnostic Handbook”, p. 99. On the galla-demon as an agent of death at its role in literary texts see Katz, *Images of the Netherworld*, pp. 126-144.

<sup>78</sup> The element of lying down is present in *Dream* when the dream foreboding the god’s death is introduced but is here, in contrast to the other texts, a plot device to set the events of *Dream* in motion rather than a description of the dying protagonist. See *Dream* line 16 in Alster, *Dream*, pp. 54-55. Note that in the Gilgameš Epic sleep is used as a metaphor for death when Gilgameš is tasked by Ziusudra to stay awake for one week to earn immortality, see tablet XI lines 209-241 in George, *The Epic of Gilgameš: the Babylonian Epic Poem and other Texts in Akkadian and Sumerian*, pp. 95-97. See also Tigay, *The Evolution of the Gilgameš*, p. 5 and note 2.

šu-ni dab<sub>5</sub>-ba nu-mu-da-an-gi<sub>4</sub>-gi<sub>4</sub>  
ġiri-ni ġú-ba nu-mu-da-an-ġá-ġá<sup>79</sup>

When they had covered half the way, covered half the way, a sickness befell him there, ‘head sickness’ befell him ... No longer could his hands return the hand grip, no longer could he lift his feet high.<sup>80</sup>

It has become clear that the scribes of the texts described death differently while making use of the same words, phrases and elements. Not one description of a protagonist’s death is identical to that of another yet the elements and language are, to varying extents, similar. Euphemistic expressions nu-ti<sub>l</sub> and è were used to indicate the end or the passing of life as well as the more direct verb ug<sub>5</sub> for ‘dying’. Different verbs were used to describe the situations leading up to the deaths of the protagonists as well, all referring to the weak conditions of the subjects. All except Dumuzi lie down, nú, before their deaths either because of an illness, tur<sub>5</sub>, or more generally because they were unable to move.<sup>81</sup> This is all indicative of the different scribes having a common understanding of how to describe death.

## 2.3 Cities

The death of a city is a metaphor for its complete destruction and abandonment. From a practical point of view a city is considered to be ‘alive’ when people populate it and use it as a place to live. If a city is destroyed and the people move away it becomes a ruin, no longer in use and no longer ‘alive’. From an ideological standpoint Vanstiphout argues that a Sumerian city was considered dead when it was in such a bad state, because of destruction and/or bad religious policy, that the gods abandoned it.<sup>82</sup> These two aspects, destruction and divine abandonment, go hand in hand in both *The Curse of Agade (Curse)* and *The Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur (LSUr)*.

The destruction of Agade is brought on by Enlil who is furious after his Ekur temple is destroyed and plundered by Naram-Sîn. He wonders what a fitting punishment would be for this grave sin and decides on the following, lines 152-157:

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<sup>79</sup> See note 58 for the use of the comitative.

<sup>80</sup> Vanstiphout, *Epics*, pp. 108-109 and ETCSL 1.8.2.1.

<sup>81</sup> Note also the use of tur<sub>5</sub> to denote Inanna’s corpse in *Inanna’s Descent* lines 171-172, see Sladek, “Inanna’s Descent”, pp. 124, 166.

<sup>82</sup> Vanstiphout, “The Death of an Era: The Great Mortality in Sumerian City Lamentations”, p. 85.

kur gú-bí-na-šè igi na-an-íl  
 ḥur-saĝ daĝal téš-bi nam-ta-an-si-ig  
 ùĝ-ĝá nu-sig<sub>10</sub>-ga kalam-ma nu-šid-da  
 gu-ti-um<sup>ki</sup> ùĝ kešé-da nu-zu  
 dí-m-ma lú-ùlu<sup>lu</sup> ĝalga ur-ra ulúdim <sup>u</sup>gu<sub>4</sub>-bi  
<sup>d</sup>en-líl-le kur-ta nam-ta-an-è

He (Enlil) lifted his gaze towards the Gubin mountains, he scoured all of the broad mountain ranges. Not classed among the people, not counted as part of the land, Gutium, (whose) people know no inhibitions (lit. bindings); with human instincts, canine intelligence and monkey features, Enlil brought them out from the mountains.<sup>83</sup>

The Gutians destroyed everything in their path, sheepfolds and cities alike. Not only the land and buildings suffered their wrath, the population did as well. The situation in Sumer was dire, as is described in lines 183-192:

ùĝ šà-ĝar-bi-ta ní-bi-a šu im-dúb-dúb-ne  
 ki-ùr ki gal <sup>d</sup>en-líl-lá-ke<sub>4</sub>  
 ur sila sig<sub>9</sub>-ga zú ba-ni-ib-kéše  
 šà-ba lú 2 du téš-e ba-ni-ib-gu<sub>7</sub>  
 lú 3 du téš-e ba-ni-ib-gu<sub>7</sub>  
 giri<sub>17</sub> ba-dub-dub saĝ ba-dab<sub>5</sub>-dab<sub>5</sub>  
 giri<sub>17</sub> ba-dub saĝ numun-e-eš ba-ab-ĝar  
 saĝ zi saĝ lul-la šu bal ba-ni-ib-ak  
 mèš mèš-e an-ta i-im-nú  
 úš lú-lul-e úš lú zid-da-ke<sub>4</sub> an-ta na-mu-un-du

People were flailing at themselves from hunger. At the ki-ur, Enlil's great place, dogs were gathered together in the silent streets; two men would go there and be eaten by them, three men would go there and be eaten by them. Noses were crushed, heads were smashed, noses were piled up, heads were sown like seeds. Honest people were confounded with traitors,

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<sup>83</sup> Cooper, *Curse*, pp. 56-57.

heroes lay dead on top of heroes, the blood of traitors ran upon the blood of honest men.<sup>84</sup>

*LSUr* also identifies Enlil as the one to bring the destruction in similar terms as in *Curse*, see lines 69-75:

nam-lú-ùlu ní te-bi-a zi gíg mu-un-pa-an-pa-an  
ud-dè šu-ne-ne ba-dù-dù u<sub>4</sub> nu-mu-un-ne-gur-re  
u<sub>4</sub> gi<sub>4</sub>-a mu-un-ne-tuku-àm u<sub>4</sub> dab<sub>5</sub>-bé-šè nu-ĝen  
<sup>d</sup>en-líl sipad saĝ ge<sub>6</sub>-ga-ke<sub>4</sub> a-na bí-in-ak-a-bi  
<sup>d</sup>en-líl-le é zi gul-gul-lu-dè lú zi tur-re-dè  
dumu lú zi-da-ke<sub>4</sub> dumu-saĝ-e igi ħul dím-me-dè  
u<sub>4</sub>-ba <sup>d</sup>en-líl-le gu-ti-um<sup>ki</sup> kur-ta im-ta-an-èd

The people, in fear, breathed only with difficulty, the storm immobilizes them, the storm does not let them return. There is no return for them, the time of captivity does not pass. This is what Enlil, the shepherd of the black-headed people did: Enlil, to destroy the loyal household, to decimate the loyal man, to put the evil eye on the son of the loyal one, on the first-born, Enlil then sent down Gutium from the mountains.<sup>85</sup>

And it is the people of Sumer, Ur in particular, that suffer, lines 293-299:

urim<sub>5</sub><sup>ki</sup>-ma lú ú-šè nu-ĝen lú a-šè nu-ĝen  
ùĝ-bi a túl-lá dé-a-gin<sub>7</sub> šu ì-ni<sub>10</sub>-ni<sub>10</sub>-ne  
usu-bi ní-bi-a nu-ĝál ĝìri-bi ba-ra-an-dab<sub>5</sub>  
<sup>d</sup>en-líl-le šag<sub>4</sub>-ĝar lú níĝ-ħul iri-a ba-an-da-dab<sub>5</sub>  
níĝ iri gul-gul-e níĝ é gul-gul-e iri-a ba-an-da-dab<sub>5</sub>  
níĝ igi-bi-šè <sup>ĝi</sup>š tukul-e la-ba-gub-bu-a iri-a ba-an-da-dab<sub>5</sub>  
šag<sub>4</sub> nu-si-si igi níĝin-bi iri-a ba-an-da-dab<sub>5</sub>

In Ur no one went to fetch food, no one went to fetch drink, its people rush around like water churning in a well. Their strength has ebbed away, they cannot (even) go on their way. Enlil afflicted the people in the city with a horrible famine. He afflicted the city with something that destroys cities,

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<sup>84</sup> Cooper, *Curse*, pp. 58-59.

<sup>85</sup> Michalowski, *Lamentation*, pp. 40-41. See also lines 1-54 of *LSUr* which introduce the damage that will be done to the land and the people.

that destroys temples; he afflicted the city with something that cannot be withstood with weapons; he afflicted the city with dissatisfaction and treachery.<sup>86</sup>

See also lines 398-402, which shows the desperation of the population caught between two evils, famine and enemy hordes:

èn-šè-àm ka gáraš-a-ka i-im-til-le-dè-en-dè-en  
 urim<sup>ki</sup>-ma šag<sub>4</sub>-bi nam-úš-àm bar-bi nam-úš-àm  
 šag<sub>4</sub>-bi-a níĝ šag<sub>4</sub>-ĝar-ra-ka i-im-til-le-dè-en-dè-en  
 bar-bi-a ĝi<sup>š</sup>tukul elam<sup>ki</sup>-ma-ka ga-nam ba-[e-til]-le-en-dè-en  
 urim<sup>ki</sup>-ma lú-erím-e á bí-ib-ĝar ga-nam ba-til-e-dè-<en>-dè-en

“How long until we are finished off by (this) catastrophe? Ur, inside it there is death, outside it there is death. Inside it we are being finished off by famine, outside it we are being finished off by Elamite weapons. In Ur the enemy has oppressed us, oh, we are finished!”<sup>87</sup>

Compare these lines to the following in the *Curse*, where the gods curse Agade as a punishment for Naram-Sîn’s behaviour against Enlil and the Ekur. Interestingly, the *Curse* also contains several elements encountered in the previous texts, like the population not being able to move, lines 245-249:

a-ga-dè<sup>ki</sup> á-tuku-zu á-ni ħé-eb-ta-kud  
<sup>kuš</sup>lu-úb dag-si-ni na-an-íl-íl-e  
<sup>anše</sup>ni-is-kum-zu á-ni na-an-ħúl-e u<sub>4</sub> šú-a ħé-nú  
 iri<sup>ki</sup>-bi šà-ĝar-ra ħé-ni-ib-ug<sub>7</sub>-e  
 dumu-gi<sub>7</sub> ninda sa<sub>6</sub>-ga kú-kú-zu ú-šim-e ħa-ba-nú

“Agade, may your strong one be deprived of his strength, so that he will be unable to lift his sack of provisions, may your *niskum*-ass not enjoy its strength and lie idle all day! May this make the city die of hunger! May your citizens, who used to eat fine food, lie hungry!”<sup>88</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Michalowski, *Lamentation*, pp. 54-55.

<sup>87</sup> Michalowski, *Lamentation*, pp. 60-61.

<sup>88</sup> Cooper, *Curse*, pp. 62-63.

The descriptions of the people of Sumer and Agade on how they suffer because of the destruction that Enlil brings shows great similarities not only between the *Curse* and *LSUr* but with the other texts as well. Because the enemy hordes destroy the land a famine ensues, which leaves the population weak, hungry and unable to move. The motif of being weak, hungry and unable to move is used in *Gilgameš*, *Ur-Namma*, *Nanna* and possibly *Nawirtum* as well. Barring only Dumuzi as the single exception, it would seem that this motif is characteristic of death and its description in general.

Apart from the physical destruction of the land, divine abandonment is also an important element in the death of a city. The first stage of destruction as detailed in *LSUr* is actually the divine abandonment of cities all over Sumer. This is not the typical abandonment of gods leaving their cities and temples, although that also happens later in the text, but rather a side-effect of it.<sup>89</sup> Kingship, authority, victory in battle, justice – everything was granted to a city or a ruler by the gods and when they decide to abandon that city they took their gifts away with them, see *LSUr* lines 60-64:

<sup>d</sup>nin-tur<sub>5</sub>-re ama<sub>5</sub> kalam-ma-ka <sup>ĝi</sup>šig-šu-úr im-mi-in-de<sub>6</sub>  
<sup>d</sup>en-ki-ke<sub>4</sub> <sup>í</sup>digna <sup>í</sup>dburanun-na a im-ma-da-an-kéše  
<sup>d</sup>utu níĝ-si-sá inim gen<sub>6</sub>-na ka-ta ba-da-an-kar  
<sup>d</sup>inana-ke<sub>4</sub> mē šen-šen-na ki-bal-e ba-an-šúm  
<sup>d</sup>nin-ĝír-su-ke<sub>4</sub> ki-en-gi ga-gin<sub>7</sub> ur-e ba-an-dé

Nintu bolted the door of the storehouses of the land, Enki blocked the water in the Tigris and Euphrates, Utu took away the pronouncement of equity and justice, Inanna handed over (victory in) strife and battle to a rebellious land, Ningirsu wasted Sumer like milk poured to the dogs.<sup>90</sup>

This can be compared to *Curse* lines 63-71:

ur-saĝ <sup>ĝi</sup>štukul-a saĝ ĝá-ĝá-gin<sub>7</sub>  
iri<sup>ki</sup>-ta mē šen-šen im-ma-ra-è  
lú-kúr-ra-ra gaba ba-ni-in-ri  
u<sub>4</sub> nu-5-àm u<sub>4</sub> nu-10-àm  
sa nam-en-na aga nam-lugal-la  
ma-an-si-um <sup>ĝi</sup>šgu-za nam-lugal-la šúm-ma

<sup>89</sup> Lines 115-281 deal with various cities whose gods are forced to abandon it.

<sup>90</sup> Michalowski, *Lamentation*, pp. 40-41.

<sup>d</sup>nin-urta-ke<sub>4</sub> é-šu-me-ša<sub>4</sub>-na ba-ni-in-kur<sub>9</sub>  
 iri<sup>ki</sup> ka-inim-ma-bi <sup>d</sup>utu ba-an-de<sub>6</sub>  
 ĝéštug-bi <sup>d</sup>en-ki-ke<sub>4</sub> ba-an-de<sub>6</sub>

Like a warrior hurrying to arms, she removed the gift of battle and fight from the city and turned to the enemy. Not even five or ten days had passed and Ninurta brought the jewels of rulership, the royal crown, the emblem and the royal throne bestowed on Agade, back into his Ešumeša. Utu took away the eloquence of the city. Enki took away its wisdom.<sup>91</sup>

The physical destruction and divine abandonment of a city together form the prerequisites for a city to die. When the gods decide a city has to ‘die’ they cause its complete destruction to make it become abandoned. Their aim is detailed in the final lines of the *Curse*, an epilogue of sorts, stating that what the gods had cursed Agade with had indeed come to pass. Paths were overtaken by grasses and wild animals, fresh water no longer flowed in the city and people avoided going there altogether. See lines 273-280:

gú <sup>ĝiš</sup>má gíd-da íd-da-ba ú gíd-da ba-an-mú  
 ḥar-ra-an <sup>ĝiš</sup>gigir-ra ba-ĝar-ra-ba ú-a-nir ba-an-mú  
 2-kam-ma-šè gú <sup>ĝiš</sup>má gíd-da ki a-lá íd-da-ba  
 šeg<sub>9</sub>-bar mul muš ul<sub>4</sub> kur-ra-ke<sub>4</sub> lú nu-mu-ni-in-dib-bé  
 edin šag<sub>4</sub> ú sag<sub>9</sub>-ga mú-a-bi gi ér-ra ba-an-mú  
 a-ga-dè<sup>ki</sup> a dùg-ga dé-a-bi a mun-na ba-an-dé  
 iri<sup>ki</sup>-bi-a ga-tuš bí-in-dug<sub>4</sub>-ga ki-tuš nu-um-ma-an-da-dùg  
 a-ga-dè<sup>ki</sup>-a ga-nú bi-in-dug<sub>4</sub>-ga ki-nú nu-um-ma-an-na-dùg

On its canal bank tow-paths, long grass grew. On its highways laid for wagons, the mourning grass grew. Moreover, on its tow-paths built up with canal sediment, wild rams (?) and mountain snakes allowed no one to pass. On its plains, where fine grass grew, now lamentation reeds grew. Agade’s flowing fresh water flowed as brackish water. Whoever said, “I will dwell in that city!” – there was no acceptable dwelling place

<sup>91</sup> Cooper, *Curse*, pp. 52-53. The abandonment of senses and other elements is a well-known motif in lamentation literature, as noted by Samet, *Lamentation for Ur*, p. 106. See also *Ur Lament* lines 230-231 where the justice of the land has been taken away and similarly the *Nippur Lament* lines 103-104 where the intelligence is removed. Note as well the use of the motif in other texts: Dumuzi’s shepherd staff in *Dream* lines 53-54, the intelligence of the land in *Ur-Namma* line 27 and possibly also the removal of Inanna’s divine powers leaving her vulnerable in the Netherworld in *Inanna’s Descent* lines 129-164.

for him there. Whoever said, “I will rest in Agade!” – there was no attractive resting place for him there!<sup>92</sup>

Similar language is found in *LSUr* lines 37-40:

sim<sup>mušen</sup> é-bi ba-ra-an-dal-a-gin<sub>7</sub> iri-ni-šè nu-gur-re-dè  
í<sup>d</sup>idigna í<sup>d</sup>buranun-na gú tab 2-a-ba ú ħul mú-mú-dè  
kaskal-la ġiri nu-ġá-ġá-dè ħar-ra-an nu-kíġ-kíġ-dè  
urú á-dam ki ġar-ġar-ra-ba du<sub>6</sub>-du<sub>6</sub>-ra šid-dè

That he does not return to his city like a sim-bird that has flown from its nest, that on the two banks of the Tigris and Euphrates “bad weeds” grow, that no one set out for the road, that no one seek out the highway, that the city and its settled surroundings be razed to ruins.<sup>93</sup>

Metaphors succinctly describe how life was no longer possible in Agade and Ur. Paths overgrown with grass signifies that the paths were no longer in use; wild animals roaming the streets allowing no one to use them made it impossible for people to go to the city and brackish water instead of fresh water made the city by default a place unfit to live in. The last lines explicitly state the intention of the gods to end the city: they made it so that no one could ever again experience any pleasure of living there. The city would become a ruin, a process that could be seen as a metaphor for death: it symbolises death slowly taking over the city with no possibility of stopping or reversing it. This process is reminiscent of a motif used for the other subjects discussed above: when they lie down and are unable to move, eat or drink, death creeps up on them and eventually claims them. Although it is impossible for a city to lie down in a literal sense, the symbolisms in the grass and other metaphors are compatible with the descriptions of death for the other categories of subjects. The motif of lying down therefore seems to be applicable not only to the population of Sumer but also symbolically to the destroyed cities.

## 2.4 Conclusions

Analysis of these texts shows that the scribes did not seem to differentiate between the subjects when writing about their deaths. Death is usually violent and unexpected as in *Dream*, *DoD*, *Ur-Namma*, *Nanna*, *Curse* and *LSUr*. Even when it is not violent there is still the element

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<sup>92</sup> Cooper, *Curse*, pp. 62-63.

<sup>93</sup> Michalowski, *Lamentation*, pp. 37-38. See also lines 305-328.

of surprise because the subjects do not expect to meet their end already, as is the case in *Gilgameš* and *Nawirtum*.

Although different terms were used to describe the deaths of the subjects, they all contain one similar element: lying down. All the texts detail that their subject at one point lies down either from illness or simply being in a weak condition, except for those concerning Dumuzi. Perhaps his divinity that prevented him from being sick and weak, or the element simply did not fit the narrative of Dumuzi's swift demise. This forms a clear contrast between Dumuzi and the other protagonists; Dumuzi had been on the run for some time but died quickly while the others suffered on their deathbeds.

When all the elements discussed in this chapter are considered it can be concluded that death did not make any distinction when it comes to whom, or what, it claimed and neither did the scribes. The texts show that the same elements were used to describe death for different subjects even though the terms used by the scribes differed between them. Noteworthy is that descriptions of the death of cities contain the same elements as the texts dealing with gods and humans, which is a strong indication for the existence of a literary tradition.

## Chapter Three

### The Reason and Acceptance of Death

Apart from the nature of the subjects' deaths there are two other aspects to consider, the first being the reason for their deaths: do the texts elaborate on why a subject had to die? Secondly, whether or not the subjects accepted their fate. Did they gently go along with the events or did they resist and try to escape from their deaths? The aim of this chapter is to outline the different reasons for death and reactions to it by the subjects, to investigate whether the subjects were treated equally or that contrasts become apparent.

#### 3.1 The God Dumuzi

Of the different categories of subjects discussed here the gods are the least likely to die. Although gods were immortal, they could be killed. A killed god, however, is a rare occurrence in Sumerian mythology since only the figure of the young fertility god is known to have died, for example Dumuzi and his counterpart Damu. In the Old Babylonian period only Dumuzi remained.<sup>94</sup> This is also the time period in which gods start to be killed under different circumstances, namely for the creation of mankind and in divine succession and power struggles.<sup>95</sup>

Thus, the god Dumuzi dying is the exception rather than the rule. Then what reason do the texts provide for this rare death of a god? *Dream* is silent about this topic and does not provide any indication as to the reasons for Dumuzi's death although the foreboding dream would suggest it was his fate. In *DoD* it becomes clear that it was indeed his fate to die but that another god was responsible for this, namely the goddess Inanna. This appears from lines 20-21 and 51-52:

guruš-e šà-nam-tar-ra-ka ír im-ma-ni-in-pàd  
<sup>d</sup>dumu-zi-dè šà-nam-tar-ra-ka ír im-ma-ni-in-pàd

[u<sub>4</sub>-bi-a ga-ša-an-e nu-un-ti kur-[nu-gi<sub>4</sub>-a-šè] ki-bi-[gar-na  
mu-un-sì] dam-usum-gal-an-na-ka mu-un-ti ki-bi-gar-na mu-  
un-[sì]<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> See Katz, "Tod", pp. 717-718.

<sup>95</sup> Lambert, "The Theology of Death", pp. 64-65.

<sup>96</sup> Note the verb *ti* in lines 51 and 52: *nu-un-ti* vs. *mu-un-ti*. The verbal form in line 52 must be a scribal mistake because the line is a clear repetition of line 51 with a replaced subject.

The lad wept at the meaning of the decreed fate, Dumuzi wept at the meaning of the decreed fate.

On that [day] the queen did not save his life, she [gave him over] to the Land of no Return as [her substitute]. The spouse of Ušumgalanna did not save his life, she [gave him over] as her substitute.<sup>97</sup>

Dumuzi died because Inanna gave him as her substitute in the Netherworld. This connects *DoD* with the well-known myth *Inanna's Descent*, where Inanna travels to the Netherworld, violates its rules and is only able to escape because the god Enki and his clever plan. However, since no one simply leaves the Netherworld alive, not even gods, Inanna has to appoint a substitute in her place. Because Dumuzi, her lover and husband, was not even mourning her absence Inanna quickly made up her mind as to whom she would sacrifice, lines 348-358:

ĝi<sup>š</sup>ḥašḥur gul-la edin kul-aba<sup>4ki</sup>-šè ĝiri-ni-šè ba-e-re<sup>7re</sup>-eš  
<sup>d</sup>dumu-zid túg maḥ-a i-im-mur<sup>10</sup> maḥ-a dūr-a dūr im-ma-ĝar  
gal<sup>5</sup>-lá-e-ne ḥaš<sup>4</sup>-a-na i-im-dab<sup>5</sup>-bé-eš  
<sup>du</sup>gšakir 7-e ga mu-un-dé-eš-àm  
7-àm X-TU-ra-gin<sup>7</sup> saĝ mu-un-da-sàg-ge-ne  
sipad-dè gi-gíd gi-di-da igi-ni šu /nu\ -mu-un-tag-ge-ne  
igi mu-un-ši-in-bar igi úš-a-ka  
inim i-ne-ne inim lipiš gig-ga  
gù i-ne-dé gù nam-tag-tag-ga  
èn-šè tùm-mu-an-zé-en  
kug <sup>d</sup>inana-ke<sup>4</sup> su<sup>8</sup>-ba <sup>d</sup>dumu-zid-da šu-ne-ne-a in-na-šúm

They followed her to the great apple tree in the plain of Kulaba. There was Dumuzi clothed in a magnificent garment and seated magnificently on a throne. The demons seized him there by his thighs. The seven of them poured the milk from his churns. The seven of them shook their heads like ..... They would not let the shepherd play the pipe and flute before her (?). She looked at him, it was the look of death. She spoke to him (?), it was the speech of anger. She shouted at him (?), it was the shout of heavy

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<sup>97</sup> Kramer, "The Death of Dumuzi", pp. 7-10.

guilt: “How much longer? Take him away.” Holy Inanna gave Dumuzi the shepherd into their hands.<sup>98</sup>

The demons mentioned in *Inanna’s Descent* appear in both *DoD* and *Dream*. It has been argued by various scholars that the final section of *Inanna’s Descent* was actually based on *Dream*.<sup>99</sup> To what extent the sections share similarities cannot be answered fully since the final lines of *Inanna’s Descent* are too fragmentary.

Dumuzi, however, did not simply accept this fate of becoming a substitute and having to live in the Netherworld. In *Inanna’s Descent* a fragmentary passage describes Dumuzi asking the god Utu for help to escape the demons. He asks Utu to turn him into a snake so the demons cannot catch him.<sup>100</sup> The passage was likely inspired by or based on a parallel in *Dream*, lines 165-173:

<sup>d</sup>utu murum<sub>5</sub>-ĝu<sub>10</sub>-me-en ĝe<sub>26</sub>-e mussa-z[u-me-en]  
é-an-na-šè ú ĝur-ru-m[e-en]  
unug<sup>ki</sup>-šè níĝ-mussa ak-a-me-en  
nundum kug-ge ne su-ub-ba-[me-en ]  
dùb kug-ga dùb <sup>d</sup>inana-ka e-ne di dug<sub>4</sub>-g[a-me-en ]  
šu-ĝu<sub>10</sub> šu maš-dà ù-mu-e-ni-[sig<sub>10</sub>]  
ĝiri-ĝu<sub>10</sub> ĝiri maš-dà ù-mu-e-ni-[sig<sub>10</sub>]  
[gal<sub>5</sub>-lá]-gal<sub>5</sub>-lá-ĝu<sub>10</sub> ga-ba-da-an-zé-er  
KU-<sup>ĝi</sup>bir<sub>5</sub>-re-eš-dil-da-r[e-eš] zi-ĝu<sub>10</sub> ga-ba-ši-túm

“Utu, you are my brother-in-law, I am your sister’s husband! I am the one who carries food to Eanna, I am the one who brought the wedding gifts to Uruk, I am the one who kisses the holy lips, I am the one who dances on the holy knees, the knees of Inanna! When you have changed my hands into gazelle hands, changed my feet into gazelle feet, let me escape my demons! Let me escape with my life to Ku-bireš-dildareš!”<sup>101</sup>

The god Utu grants him this prayer and Dumuzi escapes from the demons, three times in total, before they eventually surround him in the sheepfold of his sister. This motif lacks in

<sup>98</sup> Sladek, “Inanna’s Descent”, pp. 146-148, 179.

<sup>99</sup> Jacobsen, *Treasures of Darkness: a History of Mesopotamian Religion*, pp. 60-62; Katz, “How Dumuzi Became Inanna’s Victim”, pp. 93-96 and Sladek, “Inanna’s Descent”, pp. 26-27.

<sup>100</sup> Sladek, “Inanna’s Descent”, lines 368-383. See also Alster, *Dream*, pp. 114-117 for the particular manuscripts of *Inanna’s Descent*.

<sup>101</sup> Alster, *Dream*, pp. 72-73. See also lines 192-199 and 227-234.

*DoD* but there Dumuzi sheds tears when he learns of his fate, wondering what he did to deserve it. By trying to run away from his death, embodied in the demons hunting him, he clearly did not accept his fate.

The stance of Inanna in this event is unclear. In *Inanna's Descent* she gives Dumuzi up to be her substitute because she is angry with him, while in *DoD* she is mourning the fact that he will be her substitute. In *Inanna and Bilulu* there is no mention of a substitute and Inanna simply avenges her lover and husband, while in *Dream* she plays no part at all. This issue cannot be investigated in the context of the present thesis.

The ending of *Inanna's Descent*, however, even further complicates this matter. Although she gives Dumuzi up to be her substitute she orders him and his sister Ĝeštinanna to take turns in the Netherworld. Dumuzi will be resurrected every year, but must return to the Netherworld half a year later, see lines 409-412:

za-e mu-sa<sub>9</sub>-àm nin<sub>9</sub>-zu mu-sa<sub>9</sub>-àm  
u<sub>4</sub> za-e al-di-di-e u<sub>4</sub>-bi ħé-tuš-[e]  
u<sub>4</sub> nin<sub>9</sub>-zu al-di-di-e u<sub>4</sub>-bi ħé-búr-[e]  
kù <sup>d</sup>inana-ke<sub>4</sub> <sup>d</sup>dumu-zi saĝ-bi-šè X X bí-in-sum-[sum-mu]

“You (Dumuzi) half the year, and your sister half the year (in the Netherworld). The day when you are asked, on that day you will stay! The day when your sister is asked, on that day you will be released!” And thus Holy Inanna handed over Dumuzi as her substitute...<sup>102</sup>

The reason for Dumuzi's death thus also becomes his salvation, defying death. The resurrection of Dumuzi and his sister is known only from *Inanna's Descent* and constitutes a major contradiction within the Dumuzi-tradition. The resurrection, its implications and its origin will be further discussed in Chapter Five.

### 3.2 Kings and Non-Royal Humans

Unlike the gods, humans are not immortal and must come to terms with the prospect of death, the fate of every human. Although death is predestined for all humans, not everyone can accept the reason for their death or the manner in which it happens. But if gods cannot escape their fate, how do humans imagine to do so?

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<sup>102</sup> Alster, “Inanna Repenting”, pp. 9, 14.

The deaths of Gilgameš and Ur-Namma were fated, predestined, like it was for all humans, as discussed above (see Chapter 2.2). However, their fates were implemented in different ways: for Gilgameš it was simply decreed he would die at this age while for Ur-Namma his fate was altered, resulting in his premature death. The gods responsible for their fates seem to be the same in both texts, namely An and Enlil. The clear difference between the two fates is that in *Gilgameš* the fate of the king is explained to him while this does not happen in *Ur-Namma*.

*Gilgameš* relates how the king dreamt he was attending a meeting of the gods. In this meeting the gods discussed his fate and it was decided that Gilgameš must die, no exception could be made. Gilgameš wakes up and the decision of the gods has to be explained to him again, as if he refuses to believe what he had heard. Enlil is one of the gods to explain to Gilgameš that death is only natural and that the fate created for him at his birth has now come. The gods destined Gilgameš for kingship, not for eternal life.<sup>103</sup>

The text also explains why humans cannot be immortal by referencing the hero of the flood-story Ziusudra. He was the only person to have been granted eternal life by the gods and they decided that he would be the last as well. This is why Gilgameš finds his fate unfair; before the flood humans would live forever but now, after the flood, no exception could not be made for him even though he was the son of a goddess. After multiple explanations Gilgameš seems to come to terms with his imminent death and the text details the planning for his burial. The king accepts his fate at last. See lines 72-79:

[pu-uḫ-ru-um] a-ma-ru ba-ùr-ra-ta  
 numun na[m-l]ú-ùlu [ḫa-l]a-me-dè-e-ed-nam  
 murub<sub>4</sub>-me-a [xxxxx] ùlu NE nam-tìl-àm  
 zi-u<sub>4</sub>-DU-[...] lú-ùlu nam-tìl-àm  
 [u<sub>4</sub>-bi-ta zi an-n]a zi ki-a mu-u[n-p]à-da-nam  
 [u<sub>4</sub>-bi-ta nam-l]ú-ùlu-úr nu-mu-tìl-[à]m [...] -bi e-ed-nam  
 [e]-[n]e-š[è] <sup>d</sup>GIŠ.BÍL-ga-mes igi-bi ba-ni-ib-tu  
 š[u n]am-ama-a-[ni nu-m]u-un-da-kar-kar-re-ed-nam

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<sup>103</sup> Jacobsen has already noted that the Mesopotamians could react to death in two manners: acceptance or denial. He classifies *Gilgameš* as the former, an example of ‘mere non-resistance’, with which I do not agree. Gilgameš was clearly in denial when he first learned of his fate and only later showed acceptance. See Jacobsen, “Death in Mesopotamia”, pp. 19-20.

[After] the assembly had made the Deluge sweep over, so we could destroy the seed of mankind, in our midst a single man still lived, Ziusudra, one of mankind, still lived! From that time we swore by the life of heaven and the life of earth, from that time we swore that mankind should not have life eternal. And now we look on Gilgameš: despite his mother we cannot show him mercy!<sup>104</sup>

Similar to Gilgameš, fate is also what caused the death of Ur-Namma but in his case it is not explained to him. After a description of the dire situation in Sumer, the text then names the gods An and Enlil as the ones responsible for the death of the king because they changed his fate. This shows the contradiction within the workings of fate, *nam-tar*: while it is certain that death comes for everyone, the moment when it comes is, however, not fixed.<sup>105</sup> See *Ur-Namma* lines 8-9:

an-né inim kù-ga-ni-a mu-un-kúr šà-an-...-sù-ga-àm  
<sup>d</sup>en-líl-le nam tar-ra-ni-a šu lul [mu]-ni-ib-bal

An altered his holy word, the heart ... is empty.

Enlil deceitfully changed his decreed fate.<sup>106</sup>

The lack of explanation for Ur-Namma's death did not go unnoticed. The goddess Inanna was sent as an emissary to foreign lands by Enlil when Ur-Namma died and upon her return is told by Enlil what had happened. Inanna is furious when she learns of his death and voices her anger against Enlil for the decision to alter the fate of Ur-Namma. She laments his loss, now she that will never be able to see him again.

Another person lamenting the unfairness of the whole ordeal is Ur-Namma himself. After his death and his journey to the Netherworld he takes a moment to himself and hears the laments sung for him by the people of Sumer. Moved by their grief he reflects on his situation and concludes that he has lived his life taking care of the gods but when he needed them to take

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<sup>104</sup> Cavigneaux, Al-Rawi, *Gilgameš et la Mort*, p. 28, 56; George, *Epic of Gilgameš*, p. 199. Concerning the translation of the fragmentary section see the commentary of Cavigneaux and Al-Rawi on pp. 41-43.

The statement in this text that death was created after the flood is problematic. It would mean that before the flood humans were immortal while other texts contain contradictory statements. For a detailed discussion on when death was installed see Lambert, "The Theology of Death" pp. 53-58 and Katz, "When was natural death created or why did Gilgameš go to Uta-napištim?", pp. 68-69.

<sup>105</sup> See Rochberg, "Fate and Divination", pp. 24-26.

<sup>106</sup> Kramer, "Death of Ur-Nammu", pp. 112-117.

care of him, to oppose An and Enlil’s decision to alter his fate, they abandoned him. He seems to be quite unaccepting of his death, or at least of the way in which it happened, lines 160-165:

diġir ki-ġá la-ba-e-gub šà-ġu<sub>10</sub> la-ba-ni-ib-šed<sub>7</sub>  
 . . - me-en níġ ġiškim saġ<sub>9</sub>-ga-ġu<sub>10</sub> an-ġin<sub>7</sub> mu-ne-sù-ud  
 [ġi<sub>6</sub>-u<sub>4</sub>]-da gub-ba sá-a-ġá a-na šu ba-ni-ti  
 [ġi<sub>6</sub>-u<sub>4</sub>]-da gub-ba ù nu-ku-ġá-a u<sub>4</sub> im-ma-ni-til  
 [ì]-ne-éš im an-ta šèġ-ġá-ġin<sub>7</sub>  
 [me-l]i-e-a šeg<sub>12</sub>-úri<sup>ki</sup>-ma-šè šu nu-um-ma-ni<sub>10</sub>-ni<sub>10</sub>

“No god stood by me, nor did they relieve my heart! I, the.., my good omen has become as distant as heaven.

While I served (the gods) day and night, what has been accepted of my efforts? While spending day and night serving (the gods) without sleeping, the days become endless. But now, like rain that has fallen from the skies, alas, I cannot return to the brickwork of Ur!”<sup>107</sup>

The gods had great influence in the deaths of both kings because they were the ones to decree their fates. Both Gilgameš and Ur-Namma were unaccepting of their fates which they experienced in different ways. Gilgameš questioned what he had seen in his dream and had it interpreted while Ur-Namma did not have the chance because he was wounded in battle after which he was unable to move or speak. He laments his death when he is in the Netherworld and does not question the situation, rather he addresses the betrayal he feels being abandoned by the gods. In the end Gilgameš seems to have accepted his fate but the same cannot be said for Ur-Namma.

The gods and their interferences with fate are notably absent in the two Pushkin elegies. No reason for the deaths of Nanna and Nawirtum is given in the elegies, in contrast to the two texts discussed above. The gods also seem to stay out of their affairs: they do not explain, oppose or cause the deaths of Nanna and Nawirtum while they did do so for Gilgameš and Ur-Namma. Another clear contrast with the texts concerning kings is neither Nanna or Nawirtum have the opportunity to voice their thought on the situation. Instead it is the scribe who does so, *Nanna* lines 3-8:

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<sup>107</sup> Kramer, “Death of Ur-Nammu”, pp. 115, 119.

ab-ba urú<sup>ki</sup> tuš-a-ra tur<sub>5</sub>-ra gaba ba-ri  
 sù-âg kal-la kur sù-da pàd-da tur<sub>5</sub>-ra gaba ba-ri  
 KA-dim sag<sub>9</sub>-sag<sub>9</sub> lú inim zíl-zíl<sup>108</sup>-le tur<sub>5</sub>-ra gaba ba-ri  
 alan sud tuku saĝ-du tuku téš-bi<sup>109</sup> tur<sub>5</sub>-ra gaba ba-ri  
 gal-zu ĝiš-ĥur-ra me-te ukkin-na tur<sub>5</sub>-ra gaba ba-ri  
 lú gin<sub>6</sub>-na ní tēg-ĝe<sub>26</sub> diĝir-bi tur<sub>5</sub>-ra gaba ba-ri

The city-dwelling father had become ill. The precious brilliance, found in a distant mountain, had become ill. Who was fair (and) pleasing of speech, had become ill. Who had an attractive figure as well as a head, had become ill. Who was wise of plan and highly qualified for the assembly, had become ill. Who was a man of truth, god-fearing, had become ill.<sup>110</sup>

The same feeling of not understanding why the subject dies can be seen in *Nawirtum* lines 1-2 and 7:

u<sub>4</sub> ĥul díb-bé-da-na ki-sikil-ra ba-...  
 munus sag<sub>9</sub>-ga ki-sikil ĥé-du<sub>7</sub>-ra igi ĥul ba-...  
 a-gig li-bí-in-dug<sub>4</sub>-ga èn-bi la-ba-ši-in-[tar]<sup>111</sup>

An evil day came upon the matron in her ... Upon the fair lady, the well-favoured matron, the evil eye came.

She who did not ever say “I am sick!”, who did not ask anyone...<sup>112</sup>

These opening lines seem to suggest that the author of the texts found the deaths of Nanna and Nawirtum tragic and unfair. They are depicted as good people, Nanna also as a religious and wise man, which suggests that there had been no reason for them to die and would thus classify their deaths as unfair, similar to the situation of Ur-Namma. In the two texts the scribe cannot make sense of why death took Nanna and Nawirtum because, in his eyes, their

<sup>108</sup> The signs zíl-zíl are not in Kramer’s transliteration, the addition is based on ETCSL 5.5.2 line 5.

<sup>109</sup> Kramer proposes to consider the téš-bi as ‘as well as’ to come to a somewhat logical reading of the line. What the scribe actually meant by this line remains unknown, perhaps something along the lines of having a healthy body and mind. See Kramer, *Two Elegies*, p. 65.

<sup>110</sup> Kramer, *Two Elegies*, pp. 52, 58.

<sup>111</sup> The first part of the line is in accordance with Kramer’s translation, the second part is my proposed translation. As Kramer has noted in *Two Elegies*, p. 67, the meaning of the line is difficult to comprehend, mostly because of the èn-bi. Where he translates èn tar as ‘was not cared for’ I propose to translate it as ‘to ask’, so she did not (la) ask (èn tar) it (èn-bi) toward (ši) anyone (ba, unspecified non-human indirect object). Although this does not solve all the problems within the verbal form, it is more in line with the first part of the sentence (did not say – did not ask). See also Attinger, “Les ‘verbes composés’ en sumérien”, pp. 80-81.

<sup>112</sup> Kramer, *Two Elegies*, pp. 55, 62.

fates should have been favourable. The ambiguous lines, reflecting the grief and inability of the scribe to explain the deaths of the two, are the opposite of the explicit statements from Ur-Namma and also of Gilgameš' disbelief of his own fate.

### 3.3 Cities

In *Curse* the destruction of Agade is described in detail and how it was caused by Naram-Sîn, its king. In the beginning of the text all is well, but when Inanna moves to Agade and establishes a sanctuary there problems arise. Inanna receives offerings from Sumer and foreign lands alike but hardly has room to accept them all, which the catalyst that sets off the events in the text, see lines 55-62:

nidba-bi kug <sup>d</sup>inana-ke<sub>4</sub> šu tëĝ-ĝe<sub>26</sub> nu-zu  
dumu-gir<sub>15</sub>-gin<sub>7</sub> é ki ĝar di<sup>113</sup>-da la-la-bi nu-um-gi<sub>4</sub>  
inim é-kur-ra me-gin<sub>7</sub> ba-an-ĝar  
a-ga-dè<sup>ki</sup> tuku<sub>4</sub>-e mu-un-na-lá-lá  
ul-maš<sup>ki</sup>-a ní im-ma-ni-in-te  
iri<sup>ki</sup>-ta dú-ra-ni ba-ra-ĝen  
ki-sikil ama<sub>5</sub>-na šub-bu-gin<sub>7</sub>  
kug <sup>d</sup>inana-ke<sub>4</sub> èš a-ga-dè<sup>ki</sup> mu-un-šub

Holy Inanna knew not how to accept those offerings there; as if she were a citizen there, she could not get enough of talking about establishing a house (i.e. a temple), but the statement coming from the Ekur was disquieting. Agade was reduced to trembling before her, and in (the) Ulmaš she became afraid. She withdrew her dwelling from the city, like a young woman abandoning her woman's domain, Holy Inanna abandoned the sanctuary of Agade.<sup>114</sup>

Cooper observed that the Ulmaš is written without é 'house, temple', leading him to suggest that, at least according to the author of *Curse*, there was no proper temple for Inanna in

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<sup>113</sup> Cooper clarifies in his commentary that he prefers the variant reading for this verb, dù 'to establish a well-founded temple', instead of di. However, his suggestion that there was no proper temple in Agade for Inanna yet because Enlil had not approved of it goes against this translation. Inanna 'could not get enough of establishing a well-founded temple' if she had not previously established such a temple. The verb di is therefore the most suitable in this line, referring to how Inanna is making plans to build her temple. See *Curse*, pp. 239-241.

<sup>114</sup> Cooper, *Curse*, pp. 52-53.

Agade.<sup>115</sup> As Inanna notes, seeing all the offerings makes her want to establish a temple; meaning that the èš, a ‘shrine, sanctuary’ part of a larger complex or a smaller temple, she established when she came to Agade was not sufficient.<sup>116</sup> Note also that the Ulmaš is written with the determinative ki, indicating that this is a location, possibly the site of the new temple.<sup>117</sup>

Next the text shifts to Enlil and the negative decision he makes. Cooper suggests that the offerings brought to Agade were actually supposed to go the Ekur in Nippur, causing Enlil’s anger. Since Enlil had to grant permission for new temples to be built, Cooper believes Enlil denied the request to establish a temple for Inanna in Agade which caused her to abandon the city.<sup>118</sup>

This is further supported by a following passage in which Naram-Sîn has a dream showing him that Enlil has no intention of letting Agade have a favourable future. He is distraught by the dream but confides in no one. Instead he performs extispicy to discover the fate of the temple which resulted in the following, lines 94-99:

é-šè máš-àm ši-gíd-dè  
 é dù-a máš-a nu-mu-un-dè-gál  
 2-kam-ma-šè é-šè máš-àm ši-gíd-dè  
 é dù-a máš-a nu-mu-un-dè-gál  
 ì-sig<sub>10</sub>-ga-na šu-a bal-e-dè  
<sup>d</sup>en-líl níĝ-dug<sub>4</sub>-ga-ni ba-en-dè-kúr

Performing the extispicy with regard to the temple, the (omen for) building the temple was not present in the extispicy. Performing the extispicy for a second time with regard to the temple, the (omen for) building the temple was not present in the extispicy. In order to change his situation he tried to alter Enlil’s pronouncement.<sup>119</sup>

Since this was not the answer Naram-Sîn expected he decides to take fate into his own hands; by destroying the Ekur he wants to change Enlil’s mind. This, of course, angers Enlil

<sup>115</sup> See Cooper’s commentary to lines 55-57 in *Curse*, pp. 239-241.

<sup>116</sup> For the definition of èš, see Allred, “Labour Assignments from the City of Girsu”, p. 2.

<sup>117</sup> George, *House Most High: The Temples of Ancient Mesopotamia*, p. 155 shows that there was a temple called ‘Ulmaš’ for Inanna in Agade, located at Ulmaš. Based on lines 59-62 it would seem that the èš was located at Ulmaš, suggesting that rather than establishing a new temple the èš was to be expanded into a proper temple for Inanna.

<sup>118</sup> See Cooper’s commentary to lines 55-57 in *Curse*, pp. 239-241.

<sup>119</sup> Cooper, *Curse*, pp. 54-55.

only further and results in him destroying and cursing Agade. Other gods also urge him to treat Agade similarly to how Nippur and the Ekur have been treated, i.e. being destroyed and defiled, resulting in them cursing the city.

Naram-Sîn clearly does not accept the fate Enlil decreed for the temple and tries to alter it by doing extispicies and, as a last resort, destroying the Ekur. The text states nothing about Naram-Sîn's opinion regarding the curse against the city but considering the above it is likely he would not have accepted that fate either.

While *Curse* and *LSUr* display many similarities in the nature of their deaths, here they show striking differences. First of all is the reason for the end of Sumer and Ur: no god was angered and no offerings were taken away from the Ekur; there is no apparent reason for the destruction other than the gods deciding it needs to happen. See *LSUr* lines 1-5 and 55-57:

u<sub>4</sub> šu bal ak-dè ĝiš-ḥur ḥa-lam-e-dè  
u<sub>4</sub>-dè mar-uru<sub>5</sub>-gin<sub>7</sub> ur-bi ì-gu<sub>7</sub>-e  
me ki-en-gi-ra šu bal ak-dè  
bal sag<sub>9</sub>-ga é-ba gi<sub>4</sub>-gi<sub>4</sub>-dè<sup>120</sup>  
úru gul-gul-lu-dè é gul-gul-lu-dè  
an <sup>d</sup>en-líl <sup>d</sup>en-ki <sup>d</sup>nin-maḥ-bi nam-bi ḥa-ba-an-tar-re-eš  
nam-tar-ra-bi níĝ nu-kúr-ru-dam a-ba šu mi-ni-íb-bal-e  
inim dug<sub>4</sub>-ga an <sup>d</sup>en-líl-lá-kam saĝ a-ba-a mu-un-ĝá-ĝá

To overturn the (appointed) time, to forsake the (preordained) plans; the storms gather to strike like a flood. To overturn the (divine) decrees of Sumer, to make the favourable reign disappear, to destroy the city, to destroy the temple... (the gods)

An, Enlil, Enki, and Ninmaḥ decided its fate. Its fate, which cannot be changed, who can overturn it – who can oppose the commands of An and Enlil?<sup>121</sup>

Contrary to *Curse*, in *LSUr* the gods mourn this decision and with heavy hearts leave their temples and cities. The gods do not support this decision but cannot go against it, they

<sup>120</sup> The verbal form é-ba gi<sub>4</sub>-gi<sub>4</sub>-dè is translated by Michalowski as to lock (the favourable reign) in its abode' but could also be interpreted as 'to make it disappear', which corresponds better with the event described in the opening lines of *LSUr*. See Attinger, *Lexique sumérien-français*, p. 63 for the translation of é-possessive suffix- locative-gi<sub>4</sub>.

<sup>121</sup> Michalowski, *Lamentation*, pp. 36-39.

have no choice but to accept it. The god that is the most devastated by the events is the god of Ur, Nanna, who begs his father Enlil to explain why he ordered this destruction. Enlil explains that the fate of the city cannot be reversed but also reveals the real reason for the destruction according to lines 366-370:

urim<sub>5</sub><sup>ki</sup>-ma nam-lugal ḥa-ba-šúm bal da-rí la-ba-an-šúm  
u<sub>4</sub> ul kalam ki ḡar-ra-ta zag ùḡ lu-a-šè  
bal nam-lugal-la saḡ-bi-šè è-a a-ba-a igi im-mi-in-du<sub>8</sub>-a  
nam-lugal-bi bal-bi ba-gíd-e-dè šag<sub>4</sub> kúš-ù-dè  
<sup>d</sup>nanna-ḡu<sub>10</sub> na-an-kúš-kúš-ù-dè iri<sup>ki</sup>-zu è-bar-ra-ab

Ur was indeed given kingship (but) it was not given an eternal reign. From time immemorial, since the land was founded, until the population multiplied, who has ever seen a reign of kingship that would take precedence (for ever)? The reign of its kingship had been long indeed but has exhausted itself. Oh my Nanna, do not exert yourself (in vain), leave your city!<sup>122</sup>

So, the reason for the destruction of Sumer and Ur is that Ur cannot hold kingship forever, which is reminiscent of the fate decreed for Gilgamesh, and that it must come to an end. Kingship moves in a cyclical manner, it comes and brings prosperity but when it leaves the city is destroyed, its reign brought to an end. As much is explained by Enlil in a later section, lines 461-462:

dumu-ḡu<sub>10</sub> iri nam-ḡé giri<sub>17</sub>-zal ša-ra-da-dù-a bal-zu ba-ši-  
ib-tuku  
iri<sup>ki</sup> gul bàd gal bàd-si-bi sig<sub>10</sub>-ge<sub>5</sub> ù ur<sub>5</sub>-re bal an-ga-àm

My son, the city that was built for you in joy and prosperity, it was given to you as your reign. The destroyed city, the great wall, the walls with broken battlements: all this is likewise (part of that) reign.<sup>123</sup>

The fundamental difference between *Curse* and *LSUr* as well as the reason why *Curse* is not regarded as a city lamentation is the ending of both texts: while both are completely destroyed Agade is to remain that way but Ur is to be restored to its former glory,

<sup>122</sup> Michalowski, *Lamentation*, pp. 58-59.

<sup>123</sup> Michalowski, *Lamentation*, pp. 66-67. See also lines 17-21.

urim<sup>5ki</sup> iri an-né nam tar-re ki-bi ha-ra-ab-gi<sub>4</sub>-gi<sub>4</sub> ‘may Ur, the city whose fate was pronounced by An, be restored for you!’<sup>124</sup>

The plot twist at the end of *LSUr* is the complete opposite of the other endings except Dumuzi’s in *Inanna’s Descent*. Instead of death being permanent, as it was for the other subjects, Ur is connected to the cyclical movement of kingship. This means that the city would be destroyed and restored again and again similar to how kingship comes and goes. The other city lamentations also place their cities in this cycle of destruction and restoration which is in clear contrast with *Curse*, where it is made explicit that Agade will not be restored.<sup>125</sup> Similar is Dumuzi’s resurrection although his is not explicitly connected to a cyclical movement in the texts.<sup>126</sup>

### 3.4 Conclusions

Having looked at the texts it becomes clear that there are two main reasons why the subjects had to die: either the gods had decreed their fate or no apparent reason is given at all. Dumuzi, Gilgameš, Ur-Namma, Agade and Ur all die because the gods interfered in their lives, deciding their end had come. For Nanna and Nawirtum there is remarkably no interest from the gods and the reason for their deaths is never explicitly stated in the texts.

Whatever the reason, one motif the texts share is the inability of the subjects or other persons in the texts to accept death. This is often stated explicitly: Gilgameš and Ur-Namma almost argue with the gods over their unfair fate, Dumuzi literally tries to outrun his fate, Naram-Sîn uses extispicy to change the fate of his city and even resorts to destroying the Ekur, or the god Nanna’s dialogue with his father asking him to explain why his land and city had to be destroyed. Again *Nanna* and *Nawirtum* differ from the other texts because here the protagonists themselves do not complain to the gods about the unfairness of their situation but the scribe details how both had no reason to die. Nanna had been a good and religious man while Nawirtum had never been ill yet now she is dead.

The difference can be explained through the nature of the subjects. Of course the god Dumuzi and kings Gilgameš and Ur-Namma were closer to the gods than non-royal

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<sup>124</sup> Michalowski, *Lamentation*, pp. 66-67 line 469. See for the complete restoration lines 465-518.

<sup>125</sup> The distinction between *Curse* and the city lamentations is also attested in Old Babylonian catalogues that mentions *Curse* separately from the lamentations. The catalogues indicate that there are six city lamentations although only five have presently been identified. Green suggests that *Ur-Namma* could have been catalogued as a city lamentation but the different subject and ending refrain me from accepting her suggestion. See Green, “Eridu”, p. 279.

<sup>126</sup> Several scholars have argued that Dumuzi, Ĝeštinanna and even Inanna’s journey and stay in the Netherworld are based on various cyclical processes in nature. This will be discussed in Chapter Five.

Mesopotamians and therefore in a position to speak their minds against the decision. The cities were also closely related to the gods since they had their temples there. The different relations between the subjects and the gods becomes clear from the presence, or lack thereof, of divine intervention on behalf of the subjects as well. Dumuzi is helped by Utu, Gilgameš by Enki, Ur-Namma by Inanna, Lugalbanda by Utu<sup>127</sup>, Enkidu by Enki and Utu<sup>128</sup> and the city lamentations see many gods voicing their anger at the decision made to destroy the city.

The most apparent distinction between the subjects is, of course, the resurrection of Dumuzi and Ur. Since the god Dumuzi and cities are the only non-human categories of subjects to have died this was only a possibility for them, not the others, although Gilgameš and Ur-Namma certainly would have been open to the idea. Dumuzi's resurrection is quite ambiguous and the motivations of Inanna unclear; she sentences him to be her substitute in the Netherworld but then takes pity on his mourning sister and decides they can take turns in the Netherworld, which separates them nonetheless. The resurrection, or restoration, of Ur makes more sense. Since kingship comes and goes so do cities rise and fall; they grow and become powerful until they have to be destroyed, a cycle that keeps repeating. The resurrections and their historical and ideological implications will be discussed further in Chapter Five.

All in all, the texts show great similarities in the descriptions of the reason and acceptance of death for the different subjects, which is in line with the findings of the previous chapter. It seems the scribes used the same elements to describe these aspects despite the different natures of the subjects. Although for certain subjects the elements are written more explicitly than for others, the ambiguous reasons and unfairness are found, to different extents, in all the texts.

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<sup>127</sup> See Vanstiphout, *Epics*, pp. 112-115 lines 148-172.

<sup>128</sup> See Gadotti, *GEN*, pp. 158-159, 166-167 lines 230-243.

# Chapter Four

## Additional Similarities

Besides the three main aspects used to describe death there are other noteworthy similarities between the texts. These are the use of similar phrases, words and metaphors, which show that the close connection between the texts is established in the main story and continued in the details. Several topics discussed in this chapter are elements that have already been mentioned in Chapters Two and Three where they could be considered characteristic of one category of subjects. In this chapter it will become apparent that those elements found their way into other texts as well.<sup>129</sup>

### 4.1 ki-lul-la

The ambiguous term ki-lul-la, which indicated the violent nature of both Ur-Namma and Nanna's deaths in Chapter 2.2, appears in several of the texts discussed here. Because various translations have been offered for the term its attestations will be presented here with the aim to establish an appropriate translation.

Before examining the attestations of ki-lul-la it is important to understand where the different translations such as 'field of battle', 'treacherous place', 'place of murder' and '(place of) slaughter', are based on.<sup>130</sup> Sumerian ki means 'place' and lul means 'false', 'lie' or 'danger'. The -la can be taken as a genitive -ak or a locative -a, which makes ki-lul-la either a genitive construction or a compound. In the case of a genitive construction, ki-lul-la would mean 'place of falsehood/danger'. As a compound with a locative case ki-lul-la means 'in the false/dangerous place'.<sup>131</sup> An Akkadian gloss in *Nanna*, however, gives a different interpretation of ki-lul-la: *ina šagašti* meaning 'in murder, slaughter'.<sup>132</sup> Although this is not conform the literal Sumerian translation it does explain the origin of most translations for ki-

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<sup>129</sup> The use a wide variety of topics in metaphors has been surveyed by Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite: Aspects of Faith, Myth, and Ritual in Ancient Sumer*, pp. 41-48. Regrettably, he does not list the compositions in which the metaphors were found.

<sup>130</sup> The term has been discussed on several occasions without establishing a proper translation. See Flückiger-Hawker, *Urnamma*, p. 169; Sjöberg, "The First Pushkin Elegy and New Texts", p. 319; Wilcke, *Das Lugalbandaepos*, pp. 80-81 note 337 and Zgoll, *Der Rechtsfall der En-ħedu-Ana im Lied nin-me-šara*, pp. 411-412. Note that Sjöberg argues against a violent connotation of ki-lul-la based on duplicated lines on new tablets of *Nanna*. The lines about Nanna's killer (lines 77-78 of Kramer's edition) are not included in the new texts, meaning Sjöberg based his argument on the beginning of the text noting that Nanna is only depicted as sick and therefore ki-lul-la cannot be related to violence.

<sup>131</sup> Jagersma, "A Descriptive Grammar of Sumerian", pp. 116-117, 125-127.

<sup>132</sup> Kramer, *Two Elegies*, p. 69. See CAD Š/1, p. 69.

lul-la. When ‘murder’ and ‘dangerous place’ are combined it is easy to understand translations such as ‘place of murder’ and ‘(place of) slaughter’. These translations can be taken a step further – the place where murder and slaughter frequently occur is on the battlefield, explaining Kramer’s ‘field of battle’.<sup>133</sup>

I assume the translations are purposefully ambiguous in an effort to refrain from implying a concrete meaning for ki-lul-la because of the term’s obscurity. However, I propose to translate it as ‘on the battlefield’, choosing to interpret ki-lul-la as a compound. Based on Kramer’s ‘field of battle’, the compound ‘battlefield’ in the locative case fits with all the attestations of the term in the texts under discussion. Because the relevant lines in *Ur-Namma* and *Nanna* have already been quoted above, where Ur-Namma was abandoned and Nanna murdered on the battlefield, I will not repeat them here but outline the other attestations of ki-lul-la.

Two texts, one concerning Gilgameš and the other Lugalbanda, connect the ki-lul-la with water. In one manuscript of *GEN* the ki-lul-la is mentioned following a section mentioning the Amorites, likely referencing a battle.<sup>134</sup> Gilgameš asks Enkidu about how the people of the land are faring in the Netherworld and gets the following response in lines 13’-16’:

dumu ki-en-gi ki-ùri-ke<sub>4</sub> igi bí-du<sub>8</sub>-àm igi i-ni-du<sub>8</sub>-àm a-na-gin<sub>7</sub>  
 an-ak  
 a ki-lul-la a lù-a bí-íb-naĝ-me-eš<sup>135</sup>  
 a-a-ĝu<sub>10</sub> ù ama-ĝu<sub>10</sub> me-a se<sub>12</sub>-[me]-eš igi bí-du<sub>8</sub>-àm igi i-ni-du<sub>8</sub>-  
 ’àm’ [a-na-gin<sub>7</sub> an-ak]  
 [min]-a-ne-ne-{ne} a ki-l[ul-la a lù-a!...] bí-íb-naĝ-[me-eš]

“Did you see the citizens of Sumer and Agade?”

“I saw them”. “How do they fare?”

“They drink the water on the battlefield, roiled water”.

“Did you see the place where my father and my mother dwell?”

<sup>133</sup> Kramer, “Death of Ur-Nammu”, p. 118.

<sup>134</sup> An exemplar from Ur, UET 6, 158. See Gadotti, *GEN*, pp. 130-131, 161 and 168. For the referred battle as a historical allusion see Cavigneaux, Al-Rawi, *La fin de ‘Gilgameš, Enkidu et les Enfers’*, p. 2.

<sup>135</sup> Note the -m- written directly behind the verb. I would like to thank Lucrezia Menicatti for informing me that in her research on bilingual texts she found that the -m- was often used to write the ĝ-sound phonetically in the Old Babylonian period. See RIME 3/2.1.2.38 obv. 7-9.

“I saw it”. “How do they fare?”

“They both drink the water on the battle[field, roiled water]”.<sup>136</sup>

Since the preceding lines refer to a battle it would seem that the people of Sumer and Agade mentioned here were its casualties. The proposed translation ‘battlefield’ for ki-lul-la fits well in this context and is in line with the original translation of Gadotti ‘murderous place’. The meaning of the line is not clear, especially the connection between water and the ki-lul-la. The two are used together in *Lugalbanda* as well, when Lugalbanda prays to Utu in line 165 to help him recover from his weak state and says a-gin<sub>7</sub> ki-lul-la nam-ma-e ‘let me not be poured away like water on the battlefield!’<sup>137</sup>

The ki-lul-la is also mentioned in two of the city lamentations. *LSUr* line 223 is partly broken so Michalowski is only able to read lú zid ki-lul-la [...] ‘the loyal men (in) the dangerous place ...’<sup>138</sup> From a later section it becomes clear that they were fighting the Gutians, making ‘on the battlefield’ a more suitable translation.<sup>139</sup> In the *Ur Lament* the goddess Ningal is begged to return to her now destroyed city. The losses she has suffered are described in detail, lines 339-341:

uru du<sub>6</sub>-du<sub>6</sub>-da ba-ĝar-ra-za mušen-bi nu-ĝen  
é zi <sup>ĝi</sup>al-e ba-ab-ĝar-ra-za tuš-bi-šè la-ba-tuš-en  
ùĝ ki-lul-la ba-ab-laĥ<sub>5</sub>-a-za nin-bi-šè la-ba-ku<sub>4</sub>-re-en

Your city that has been made into ruins—you are no longer its bird. Your faithful house that has been given over to pickaxes—you no longer dwell (in it) as its resident. Your people who have been led off to the battlefield—you are no longer their lady.<sup>140</sup>

The destruction was caused by the storm and invading Elamites and Šimaškians. The implication of this line is clear: when Ningal returns to her city most of the population would have died during the destruction. Samet translates ki-lul-la here as ‘slaughter’, with the text

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<sup>136</sup> Gadotti, *GEN*, pp. 161, 168.

<sup>137</sup> Vanstiphout, *Epics*, pp. 112-113. He translates ki-lul-la as ‘dismal place’. Note that this line is part of a series of metaphors for death and the Netherworld. See lines 163-170 and Katz, *Images*, p. 72 note 15.

<sup>138</sup> Michalowski, *Lamentation*, pp. 50-51.

<sup>139</sup> Michalowski, *Lamentation*, pp. 52-53 lines 255-258.

<sup>140</sup> Samet, *Lamentation for Ur*, pp. 72-73. I find the translation provided by Jacobsen for lines 340-341 too literal and tries too hard to connect the lines together: ‘do not dwell as its resident in your good house given over to the pickaxe; you cannot enter it as queen of your nation that was led off to slaughter.’ The translation by Samet treats the lines as individual statements with causal relations: because the people have been slaughtered Ningal cannot be their queen, in clear contrast with Jacobsen who connects this statement to being able to enter the temple. See Jacobsen, *The Harps that Once...*, p. 469. I prefer to follow the translation of Samet here.

implying that this ‘slaughter’ took place either on the battlefield or that the city itself was turned into one by the invading enemies.<sup>141</sup> A similar sentiment can be found in the *Uruk Lament* lines 4.25-31:

maš-gána á-dam-bi mu-[un-gul]-gul-lu-uš du<sub>6</sub>-du<sub>6</sub>-ra  
mi-ni-in-si-ig-eš  
ki-en-gi saĝ-e saĝar-gin<sub>7</sub> mu-un-dub-bu-uš x [(...)  
mu-u]n-tu<sub>11</sub>-bé-eš  
nam-lú-ùlu-bi àga-kár bí-in-sig<sub>10</sub>-ge<sub>5</sub>-eš tur maḥ-bi  
mu-un-til-le-eš  
kul-aba<sup>ki</sup> iri ul in-ga-me-a ki-lul-la bí-in-sà[g-sàg-ge-eš]<sup>142</sup>

They destroyed its settlements and villages; they razed them to rubble; the best of Sumer they scattered like dust; they heaped up ... ; they massacred its populace-they finished off young and old (lit. great) alike.

And even Kulaba, which was a primeval city, they turned into a battlefield.<sup>143</sup>

When all of these attestations of ki-lul-la are considered it becomes clear that the term is closely connected to violence, danger and death. The translation ‘on the battlefield’ is fitting for all of the attestations in the present corpus; in *Ur-Namma*, *Nanna*, *GEN*, *Lugalbanda*, *LSUr*, *Ur Lament* and *Uruk Lament*. The conclusion is that ki-lul-la is a clear indicator of a violent and unnatural death.

## 4.2 Broken Pots

One of the images used as a metaphor for death in the texts is that of broken jars or pots. In *Ur-Namma* this metaphor was used together with the ki-lul-la, where it is stated that Ur-Namma was abandoned there ‘like a broken jar’.<sup>144</sup> This implies that Ur-Namma, who likely sustained fatal wounds on the battlefield, was left for dead on the ki-lul-la similar to how a broken jar would be thrown away because it could not fulfil its function anymore. The broken pot metaphor can also be found in *Nawirtum* lines 5-6:

<sup>141</sup> Samet, *Lamentation for Ur*, pp. 66-67 line 244.

<sup>142</sup> The ending of this line is broken making the verb unreadable. Note that the verb reconstructed by Green, sàg ‘to beat’, does not fit her translation ‘to turn into’.

<sup>143</sup> Green, “Uruk Lament”, p. 273, translates ki-lul-la as ‘place of murder’.

<sup>144</sup> Kramer, “Death of Ur-Nammu”, pp. 113, 118 line 59.

áb sig<sub>7</sub>-ga šilam bar-šu-ĝá gakkul<sup>?</sup>-gin<sub>7</sub> bí-in-[X]  
<sup>m</sup>na-wi-ir-tum šilam bar-šu-ĝál gakkul-gin<sub>7</sub> bí-in-[X]

The fawn-coloured cow, the fertile cow, [lies crushed] like a gakkul-vessel. Nawirtum, the fertile cow, [lies crushed] like a gakkul-vessel.<sup>145</sup>

For both Ur-Namma and Nawirtum it is clear they became ‘like broken pots’ – they are unable to perform the task that they are supposed to do: staying alive. This is supported by the use of the metaphor in *GEN* lines 273-274:

munus nu-ù-tu igi bí-du<sub>8</sub>-àm igi bí-du<sub>8</sub>-àm a-na-gin<sub>7</sub> an-ak  
 dug ni ke<sub>4</sub>-da-gin<sub>7</sub> ti-na ì-gurud lú nu-mu-un-ĥúl-e

“Did you see the woman who did not give birth?”

“I saw her”. “How does she fare?”

“Like a pot that is ..., she has been violently cast aside, no man takes pleasure in her.”<sup>146</sup>

Because the woman does not act as she is supposed to, i.e. to bear children, she is discarded like a, presumably broken, pot and has to suffer the consequences of her behaviour in the Netherworld. Being like a ‘broken pot’ seems to be connected to death: for Ur-Namma and Nawirtum it was a foreshadowing, for the woman in the Netherworld it shows that even in death she finds no peace.

Two other texts also contain a metaphor involving pots. The first is in line with the metaphors outlined above. Although not technically a pot, the imagery detailed in *Dream* shows a great similarity to that of the others. In the final lines of the text the demons enter the sheepfold where Dumuzi is hiding and when the last demon enters the following takes place, lines 256-260:

4-kam-ma amaš tūr-šè k[u<sub>4</sub>-ra-ni]  
 an-za-am <sup>ĝiš</sup>kak-ta lá-a <sup>ĝiš</sup>kak-ta [ba-ra-si-ig]  
 5-kam-ma amaš tūr-šè ku<sub>4</sub>-ra-ni  
<sup>dugš</sup>àkir ì-dúr-dúr ga nu-un-dé  
 [an]-za-am ì-dúr-dúr <sup>d</sup>dumu-zi nu-un-til [ama]š líl-lá al-dù

<sup>145</sup> Kramer, *Two Elegies*, pp. 55, 62.

<sup>146</sup> Gadotti, *GEN*, pp. 159, 167.

When the fourth entered the sheepfold and stall, he tore down the drinking cup from the peg where it hung. When the fifth entered the sheepfold and stall, the churns lay (on their side), no milk was poured. The drinking cups lay (on their side), Dumuzi was dead, the sheepfold was made into a wind (haunted).<sup>147</sup>

The text equates the moment when the churns and cups lay on their sides, when they have been turned over, to the moment of Dumuzi's death. Presumably the demons knocked them over when they entered the sheepfold and approached Dumuzi to kill him. The symbolism here is striking: as the churns and cups fall or were thrown over, so does Dumuzi.<sup>148</sup>

The second text is *LSUr*, where the broken pot metaphor is of a different nature than the ones already discussed. While the others all used the metaphor in a figurative way in *LSUr* it is based on a visual image. The Elamites enter Ur and fight the population, line 406: *urim<sup>5</sup>ki-ma ĝištukul-e dugsaĝar-gin<sub>7</sub> saĝ gaz ì-ak-e* 'in Ur (people) were smashed as if they were clay pots'.<sup>149</sup>

Although different in nature than the previous metaphors, it does highlight the connection between death and the use of broken pots in metaphors. While the reason for using broken pots as a metaphor for broken skulls is quite obvious it is less so for the likes of Ur-Namma, Nawirtum and Dumuzi. As I have argued, I find it likely that the broken pots represent the subjects themselves being 'broken' in a way, unable to continue living and their bodies being as useless as a broken pot.<sup>150</sup>

### 4.3 Storm and Flood

In the texts, the storm and flood are used in three manners: either as an epithet of the gods, as a means of destruction or as a metaphor for death or destruction. In epithets, both can be mentioned in combination with a deity, usually Enlil. So in *Curse* Enlil is *u<sub>4</sub> te-eš dug<sub>4</sub>-ga kalam téš-a ĝar-ra* 'the roaring storm that subjugates the land' and *a-ma-ru zìg-ga gaba-šu-ĝar nu-tuku* 'the rising flood that cannot be confronted'.<sup>151</sup> The description in *LSUr*

<sup>147</sup> Alster, *Dream*, pp. 82-83.

<sup>148</sup> See also Jacobsen, "Inanna and Bilulu", pp. 68-69 lines 131-134 where the dead Dumuzi is described to be lying on the ground.

<sup>149</sup> Michalowski, *Lamentation*, pp. 62-63.

<sup>150</sup> Sallaberger has also shown that broken pots represent destruction and the end of human life outside the literary texts as well, mainly in omen texts and incantations. Sallaberger, *Der Babylonische Töpfer und seine Gefässe: Nach Urkunden Altsumerischer Bis Altbabylonischer Zeit Sowie Lexikalischen Und Literarischen Zeugnissen*, pp. 90-93.

<sup>151</sup> Cooper, *Curse*, pp. 56-57 lines 149-150.

is slightly different, there it is not Enlil himself but his word that u<sub>4</sub>-dam al-du<sub>7</sub>-du<sub>7</sub> ‘is an attacking storm’.<sup>152</sup> In *Ur-Namma* a deity other than Enlil is designated as the storm, namely the goddess Inanna. She is described as u<sub>4</sub> ḫuš ‘the angry storm’ when she berates Enlil for changing Ur-Namma’s fate.<sup>153</sup>

The storm and flood can appear side by side, one as a metaphor and the other as the agent of destruction, where it is implied that they can cause physical damage. This results in confusing statements, which is illustrated in *LSUr* lines 107-113 where the storm appears both as a metaphor and the agent of destruction:

a-ma-ru du<sub>6</sub><sup>1</sup> al-ak-e šu im-ùr-ùr-re  
u<sub>4</sub> gal-gin<sub>7</sub> ki-a mur mi-ni-ib-ša<sub>4</sub> a-ba-a ba-ra-è  
iri gul-gul-lu-dè é gul-gul-lu-dè  
lú-lul lú zid-da an-ta nú-ù-dè  
urin lú-lul-e lú zid-ra ugu-a-na DU-šè ...  
u<sub>4</sub>-dè mar-ru<sub>10</sub>-gin<sub>7</sub> téš-bi ì-gu<sub>7</sub>-e

The flood dashing a hoe on the ground was levelling everything. Like a great storm it roared over the earth -- who could escape it? -- to destroy the city, to destroy the house, so that traitors would lay on top of loyal men and the blood of traitors flow upon loyal men, on his skull ... the storms gather to strike.<sup>154</sup>

In other cases the storm or flood is a clear metaphor for the charging hordes. This is made clear in *Lugalbanda* lines 404-405:

ki-bal ḫul gig<sup>d</sup> suen-na-šè u<sub>4</sub>-dè DU.DU-e-me-eš  
lú u<sub>4</sub>-dè DU.DU-e e-ne-ne ḫé-en-na-me-eš

They descend like a storm on a rebel land hated by Suen, indeed they descend like a storm.<sup>155</sup>

Vanstiphout argued that the storm does not represent attacking enemy hordes or actual physical damage to the city but is a metaphor for destruction on a far greater scale: an

<sup>152</sup> Michalowski, *Lamentation*, pp. 40-41, 46-47 lines 69-71 and 163.

<sup>153</sup> Kramer, “Death of Ur-Nammu”, pp. 116-120 line 203.

<sup>154</sup> Michalowski, *Lamentation*, pp. 42-43. For a parallel see also *Ur Lament* lines 101-111; see Samet, *Lamentation for Ur*, 58-61.

<sup>155</sup> Vanstiphout, *Epics*, pp. 126-127. Note also *LSUr* lines 75-78, see Michalowski, *Lamentation*, pp. 40-41.

epidemic.<sup>156</sup> In the damage done to the cities and Sumer in general he sees not the destruction done by violence but that of a disease that has disrupted all of society. Drought and famine are also considered by him to be the events referred to by the storm, however, the epidemic is his preference although it is the hardest to prove. He considers the storm to be a combination of all three: a drought, brought on by the gods, would cause a famine and after the period of drought the storms set in, creating the perfect conditions for diseases to spread.

All city laments reference certain elements of this theory; the lack of water and food, dead people lying in the streets and the storms coming in.<sup>157</sup> The extent to which the texts corroborate the theory of Vanstiphout, however, is not as convincing as it needs to be. There are clear differences between the city lamentations and their use of the storm as the agent of destruction.

An important factor overlooked by Vanstiphout is that in the *Nippur Lament* there is no mention of a storm, only of winds destroying a temple.<sup>158</sup> A historical development might be at play here which can be explained through the provisional dates of the compositions as outlined by Vanstiphout himself.<sup>159</sup> The oldest city lamentation, *LSUr*, was composed soon after the fall of the Ur III empire with the aim to legitimize the first dynasty of Isin. According to Vanstiphout the *Ur Lament*, *Uruk Lament* and *Eridu Lament* were composed in a second phase with the *Nippur Lament* signifying the third and final phase.<sup>160</sup> Although his scheme is based on themes other than the storm, it works nicely for the metaphor as well. In the first phase the storm operates together with enemy hordes, both figuring as the agents of destruction.<sup>161</sup> The second phase sees the storm as the sole agent of destruction and the enemy hordes arriving later, likely after the storm had left.<sup>162</sup> The third stage, however, sees the abandonment of the storm

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<sup>156</sup> This idea was first presented in 1974, see Vanstiphout, “Was een pestepidemie de oorzaak van de ondergang van het Nieuw-sumerische Rijk?”, pp. 351-370 where he focused on *LSUr* and the *Ur Lament*. Later, in 1980, he published a new article “The Great Mortality”, pp. 84-89 where he presents his idea that the epidemic could also be present in the other city lamentations. This idea is developed more elaborately by him in his article “Some Thoughts on Genre”, pp. 1-11 from 1986.

<sup>157</sup> See the following lines: *Ur Lament* lines 207-217, 227 and 265-274; *LSUr* lines 94, 123-132, 251-253, 303-313, 389-391; *Nippur Lament* lines 105-106, 55-61; *Uruk Lament* lines 2.27, 4.23-31; *Eridu Lament* lines 6.15-17.

<sup>158</sup> Tinney, *Nippur Lament*, pp. 95-123.

<sup>159</sup> Vanstiphout, “The Great Mortality”, p. 84.

<sup>160</sup> See Vanstiphout, “Some Thoughts on Genre”, pp. 7-9.

<sup>161</sup> See *LSUr* lines 163-184 where Enlil is both equated to the storm and the one that orders it. In lines 163-173 the connection between the storm and foreign invaders is quite clear but note in lines 174-183 that while the storm seems to be the main cause of the destruction it is stated in line 180 that the city ‘is delivered to the foreigners’, implicating the presence of the foreign invaders here as well. Based on this I believe that the storm and flood metaphors in lines 107-113 cited above refer to an (impending) enemy attack although this is not specified.

<sup>162</sup> In *Ur Lament* it is explicitly stated that after the storm had left the city (line 208) the enemies arrived (line 244). See Samet, *Lamentation for Ur*, pp. 64-67. The same might be alluded to in *Eridu Lament*, where the enemies appear only in line 4.10, but the text is too fragmentary to draw any conclusions. See Green, “Eridu”, p. 345.

metaphor and contributes the destruction of the city mostly to Enlil and partly to foreign enemies.

The use of the storm metaphor clearly changed throughout the first, second and third phases of the city lamentations. Interesting to note is the fact that there is no mention of a storm in *Curse*, meaning that the storm as a metaphor for the destruction of cities was likely developed during the beginning of the Old Babylonian period. This development shows the flaws in the theory of Vanstiphout. Although the idea that the cities were succumbed to a storm as a metaphor for an epidemic is still plausible in the lamentations of the second phase, where the enemies appear after the storm, for the others it does not necessarily have to be the case.<sup>163</sup> There the storm is not the main agent of destruction and the blame is placed with the gods and enemies. All the cities in the lamentations could have been destroyed by an epidemic but the different uses of the storm metaphor show that the two were not necessarily synonymous.<sup>164</sup>

That the storm and epidemics are not synonymous also becomes clear when subjects other than cities are considered. There the storm and flood could also serve as a metaphor for death and destruction in general. This is not unsurprising since none of those subjects, i.e. Dumuzi, the kings and non-royal humans discussed in the previous chapters, died from a storm, flood or attacking enemy hordes.<sup>165</sup> Of those texts two include a metaphor using the storm, *Nawirtum* and *DoD*.

Nawirtum likely suffered from a disease and in the text this is envisioned as a storm, to which is said in line 64: u<sub>4</sub> gig za-ra ma-ra-ni-ib-gi<sub>4</sub>-a re an-ur<sub>2</sub> ħe<sub>2</sub>-eb<sub>2</sub>-gi<sub>4</sub> ‘may the bitter storm that is turned against you be turned back (lit. to the horizon)’.<sup>166</sup> Although this line could be an argument in favour of the storm and epidemic metaphor it should be kept in mind that one case of a disease does not make an epidemic. Due to the fragmentary nature of the text it is impossible to ascertain whether more cases of the disease or destruction in Sumer are mentioned. But based on the subject of the text, a non-royal Mesopotamian woman, the storm most likely refers simply to the disease slowly taking her life or to death in general.

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<sup>163</sup> The *Uruk Lament*, however, I would classify in the first phase: the gods invoke a flood (lines 3.3 and 4.1-4.4) which strikes together with invading enemies (lines 4.8-5.35). See Green, “Uruk Lament”, pp. 269-274.

<sup>164</sup> This theory has not been generally accepted by scholars, for example, see Samet, *Lamentation for Ur*, pp. 22-24 and Snell, “Plagues and Peoples in Mesopotamia”, pp. 95-96 and note 28.

<sup>165</sup> With the possible exception of Ur-Namma. However, while it is most likely he died from wounds sustained in battle, the attacking enemy horde is not mentioned in *Ur-Namma*. Whether he died on a battlefield because he went on a campaign or because he had to protect Sumer from attacking enemies coming down from the mountains with divine favour remains unclear. *Ur-Namma* lines 1-30 might have contained storm metaphors or attacking enemies but this cannot be reconstructed from the broken lines. See also the commentaries by Flückiger-Hawker, *Urnamma*, pp. 93-97 and Kramer, “The Death of Ur-Namma”, p. 104.

<sup>166</sup> Kramer, *Two Elegies*, pp. 57, 64 line 176.

The metaphor in *DoD* is part of a larger statement about Dumuzi's impending death where he speaks of his grave, see lines 40-43:

kur-ki-in-dar-ra-mà gîr-mà ba-an-zé-ir ur<sub>5</sub> nu-mu-un-da-[e<sub>11</sub>]  
unu-gal ig-gal-àm igi-mà ba-an-gub ur<sub>5</sub> nu-mu-un-da-[e<sub>11</sub>]  
im-ḥul-šèg-gá me-ri-mà ba-an-zé-ir ur<sub>5</sub> nu-mu-un-da-[e<sub>11</sub>]  
im-u<sub>16</sub>-lu bal-ri-a im-ma-da-laḥ<sub>4</sub> ur<sub>5</sub> nu-mu-un-da-e<sub>11</sub>

“My foot has slid into my excavated grave; it does not let me [ascend] from it. The tomb has stationed itself before me as a big door, it does not let me [ascend] from it. My foot has slid into the rain-pouring cruel wind, it does not let me [ascend] from it. The tempest has carried me off to the opposite shore, it does not let me ascend from it.”<sup>167</sup>

The metaphors in this section refer to Dumuzi's death in general since there are no specific references to Inanna or the demons keeping him from leaving. The storm represents death, but from this section no knowledge about its nature or reason for it can be gained.

The different uses and meanings of the storm and flood metaphor make it difficult to determine what they are meant to refer to. One thing the different metaphors all have in common is that they refer to death, for persons and cities alike. I think it best to conclude that the storm and flood used in metaphors should be seen as the bringers of death and destruction, leaving it to the scribes to either describe the type of death and destruction they bring or not.

## 4.4 Animal and Hunting Metaphors

Of the many metaphors employed in Sumerian literary texts a great amount involve animals. Animal metaphors are used to describe death in multiple of the texts under discussion and some examples of animals used either for metaphors or other plot devices have already been treated above, such as Dumuzi who prays to the god Utu to turn him into a gazelle so that he can escape the demons keeping him captive.<sup>168</sup> Here the gazelle is not used as a metaphor but in a literal manner, by turning into a fast gazelle Dumuzi would be able to outrun the demons. The image of Dumuzi as the gazelle being trapped by demons and eventually being killed by them seems to have developed into a metaphor in other texts. Those subjects were no

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<sup>167</sup> Kramer, “Death of Dumuzi”, pp. 7, 10-11. The lines are complex and Kramer emphasizes the tentativeness of his translations.

<sup>168</sup> See p. 32; also note *Gilgameš* lines 1-2 on p. 16.

gods and could not actually be turned into a gazelle but could identify with the notion of being trapped by death.

In *Lugalbanda* line 78 the king is maš-dà ġiš-búr-ra dab<sub>5</sub>-ba-ġin<sub>7</sub> ka saḥar-ra bí-ús ‘like a gazelle caught in a snare he was biting the dust.’<sup>169</sup> In *Gilgameš* line 17 only the beginning of a gazelle-snare metaphor is preserved ‘like a gazelle trapped in a snare, he ...couch’ is all that is traceable.<sup>170</sup>

In *Curse* the snare is used as a metaphor for the enemy hordes, the Gutians, and how they will sweep through the land, destroying everything in their path. See lines 159-161:

á-bi gu máš-anše-ġin<sub>7</sub> edin-na mu-un-na-an-lá  
níġ na-me á-bi la-ba-ra-è ú na-me á-bi la-ba-an-da<sub>13</sub>-da<sub>13</sub>

They stretched their arms out across the plain like a net for animals.  
Nothing escaped their clutches. No one left their grasp.<sup>171</sup>

The notion of being trapped in a snare is also used without a reference to animals. In this case it is usually the subject of the text, the one who is dying, which is described as being trapped in the snare. So in *Nawirtum* line 4 it is the lady herself that is trapped, ama gan ama dumu tur ġiš-bur-re ba-an-[díb] ‘the fertile mother, mother of small children, is seized by the snare’.<sup>172</sup> Kings could also be caught in snares, as can be seen in *LSUr* line 35, stating <sup>d</sup>i-bí-<sup>d</sup>suen kur elam<sup>ki</sup>-ma-šè ġiš-búr-ra túm-ù-dè ‘That Ibbi-Sîn be taken in fetters to Elam’.<sup>173</sup>

Apart from humans and animals the land of Sumer itself could also be ensnared as detailed in *Ur Lament* line 195: ki-en-ġi<sub>4</sub> ġiš-búr-ra-àm ì-bal-e ùġ-e še àm-ša<sub>4</sub> ‘Sumer writhes as in a snare, the people moan’.<sup>174</sup> And also Dumuzi, although not caught like a gazelle, is ensnared in the Netherworld, *DoD* lines 53-54:

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<sup>169</sup> Vanstiphout, *Epics*, pp. 108-109. This line has a parallel in the *Ur Lament*, line 220; see Samet, *Lamentation for Ur*, pp. 66-67.

<sup>170</sup> Cavigneaux, Al-Rawi, *Gilgameš et la Mort*, pp. 26, 55.

<sup>171</sup> Cooper, *Curse*, pp. 58-59.

<sup>172</sup> Kramer, *Two Elegies*, pp. 55, 62.

<sup>173</sup> Note that ġiš-búr is translated with ‘fetters’ instead of ‘snare’ since in this context it is more appropriate. Although it generally denotes a snare used to catch gazelles, the translation offered by Sjöberg (‘an instrument of wood that spreads’) allows for ‘fetters’ as well. See Sjöberg, *The Collection of Sumerian Temple Hymns*, pp. 129-130.

<sup>174</sup> See Samet, *Lamentation for Ur*, pp. 64-65. This line has a close parallel in the *Uruk Lament* line 4.12, see Green, “Uruk Lament”, p. 272.

<sup>d</sup>dumu-zi-dè èš-lam-šè ĝiš-búr-ra ba-an-d[íb]  
 èš-lam-šè ga-ša-an-ki-gal-la-a-šè ĝiš-búr-ra ba-an-[díb]

Dumuzi was [held fast] by the snare at the èšlam. He was [held fast] by the snare at the èšlam of Ereškigal.<sup>175</sup>

Being trapped in a snare was thus used as a metaphor for death, either by using an animal comparison or the subject of the text. A royal praise poem of Šulgi, son of Ur-Namma and second king of the Ur III dynasty, demonstrates the significance of these metaphors, *Šulgi B* lines 91-94:

anše edin-na-šè ĝišés AD la-ba-nú-en pú la-ba-ba-al-e  
 ĝišgag-ú-tag-ga la-ba-ši-gíd-en  
 gaba-ri-ĝu<sub>10</sub>-gin<sub>7</sub> dùb bí-búr

For the wild asses I set no snares, dig no pits, shoot no arrows against them.  
 But I race after them as against my equal.<sup>176</sup>

In his praise of himself Šulgi also discusses his excellent hunting skills. The important section here is where he explicitly states that he does not hunt by using snares or other tools. Intriguing, since this goes directly against the method used in the metaphors above: Dumuzi was caught and surrounded by the demons and other subjects were trapped by snares. But why was Šulgi against the use of these methods? One clue can already be found in the quote; Šulgi would run as equals with his prey and not use some trick to kill it. Another insight into the king's virtues concerning hunting can be found in lines 59-64 of Šulgi B:

ur-maḥ ug ušumgal edin-na-ke<sub>4</sub>  
 me-da im-ti-ba me-a ĝen-na-ba  
 gù nam-ur-saĝ-ĝá-bi-ir edin-na ĝá-la ḥa-ba-ni-dag-dag  
 sa-dù-a-ta ba-ra-ab-ši-ĝen-ne-en  
 še-er-tab-ta en-nu-ùĝ ba-ra-bí-ak  
 á ĝiš-lá-a ba-ab-ak ĝištukul ba-ra-bí-šub<sup>ub</sup>  
 ud zú sis-a-bi <sup>urud</sup>šukur zi-ba ḥé-bí-ĝar  
 za-pa-áĝ-bi-šè gaba-ĝu<sub>10</sub> ba-ra-bí-zìg

<sup>175</sup> Kramer, "Death of Dumuzi", pp. 8, 10. The meaning of èšlam is uncertain, Kramer suggests some kind of shrine of/to the Netherworld, based on lam in rare occasions denoting the Netherworld see "Death of Dumuzi", p. 6 note 11 and CAD L, p.68.

<sup>176</sup> ETCSL 2.4.2.02.

ĝe<sub>26</sub>-e tuš-ĝu<sub>10</sub>-šè ba-ra-ba-ta-ĝen-ne-en  
ur-saĝ ur-saĝ-e gaz-a-gin<sub>7</sub>  
edin-na níĝ ul<sub>4</sub>-la-aš ħu-mu-ni-ak

The lions, dragons of the plain, wherever it comes from and wherever it is going, I truly put an end to them and their heroic roar in the plain. I absolutely do not go towards it with a net, I do not guard from behind a fence (enclosure); it comes to a battle, I will not ‘simply’ let my weapon fall on it. The day I put the bitter lance at its throat I do not flinch (lit. my chest does not rise), I absolutely do not retreat to my hiding-place. Like a hero killed by (another) hero, I do everything swiftly on the open plain.<sup>177</sup>

Šulgi boasts of himself as being a great warrior and hunter but also a fearless one. Instead of using snares or nets he would face his prey head on and not use any tool, above all he would, of course, never hide. Šulgi, or so his audience is made to believe, fought honourably and that is why the snares and nets do not fit with his style. Šulgi believed that using them was cheating, unfair, and therefore did not. Could it be that the metaphors for death involving snares point to the unfairness of death, like the use of snares would be for Šulgi in hunting?<sup>178</sup> That does fit nicely with the metaphor: the life of the animal, or another subject, is cut short when it is caught in a treacherous snare. This shows the inevitability of death as well as how sudden it can occur, leading to statements about death being unfair in the texts.

## 4.5 Conclusions

In this chapter it has become clear that the texts under discussion, supported by the texts of secondary corpus, not only share similarities concerning the three main aspects of death, namely nature, reason and acceptance, but also in the details used to describe these aspects. While clearly not all the texts made use of the same elements it is noteworthy that those outlined in this chapter have great overlap in the present corpus. As an overview I present the following table:

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<sup>177</sup> ETCSL 2.4.2.02.

<sup>178</sup> From a broken section in *Šulgi D* it would seem that using nets was acceptable when fighting enemy troops, see lines 150-176 in Klein, *Three Šulgi Hymns: Sumerian Royal Hymns Glorifying Šulgi of Ur*, pp. 76-77.

	<i>Dream</i>	<i>DoD</i>	<i>Gilgameš</i>	<i>Ur-Namma</i>	<i>Nanna</i>	<i>Nawirtum</i>	<i>Curse</i>	<i>LSUr</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup> c.
Ki-lul-la	-	-	-	X	X	-	-	X	X
Broken pot	X	-	-	X	-	X	-	X	X
Storm/flood	-	X	-	-	-	X	X	X	X
Animal/snare	X	X	X	(X) <sup>179</sup>	-	X	X	X	X

Table 1

The number of elements differs from text to text; see, for example, *Gilgameš* and *LSUr*. However, if the categories of subjects as a whole are compared to each other, so *Dream* and *DoD* together, *Gilgameš* and *Ur-Namma*, *Nanna* and *Nawirtum* and finally *Curse* with *LSUr*, the image changes. When taken together, the Dumuzi texts contain three out of four elements, as do the texts about kings. And while *Nanna* uses only one element that is found in other texts, it is exactly the element not used in *Nawirtum*, so together they contain all four elements. The elements are best represented in the texts concerning cities with *LSUr* containing all of them.

The main point of this table is not to visualise which text contains most of these elements. It is to show that these elements could be and were used for all these different subjects, establishing again that the Mesopotamian scribes did not differentiate between subjects. Although the ultimate fate of the subjects differed because of their nature, as concluded in the previous chapter, the events leading up to their deaths and the details used to describe that remained the same. From this it is a logical conclusion that a literary tradition concerning death indeed existed.

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<sup>179</sup> Lines 170-171 likely contained a bull metaphor but because the lines are too fragmentary it is impossible to recover their exact content.

# Chapter Five

## Historical Context and Royal Ideology

Now that the textual connections have been established it is time to consider what took place outside the texts. How do these texts fit into the historical context of Ur III and Old Babylonian periods and was their composition, or content, influenced by the events and developments of this period? The main development that will be discussed in this chapter and the events related to that is the royal ideology of the Ur III kings (2112-2004 BC), which was largely adopted by the Isin kings (2004-1794 BC) after them. The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate that the texts are not only related through content but also by context. By investigating the extent to which they fit into the narrative of the royal ideology of the time period it will become clear how deeply the texts are connected to each other.

### 5.1 Ur III Royal Ideology, an Introduction

The first order of business for Ur-Namma (2112–2095 BC), the founder of the Ur III dynasty, when he came into power was to present himself as the legitimate ruler. He laid the foundation to a new, intricate, royal ideology based on three main elements: first he presented himself as an ideal ruler according to Sumerian standards, secondly, he presented the main deity of Ur, the god Nanna, as the first-born son of Enlil and lastly, he placed the origin of his dynasty in Uruk.<sup>180</sup>

While the significance of the first element is self-explanatory, for the second and third it is less so. Presenting Nanna as the first-born son of Enlil secured the blessing of the head of the pantheon, Enlil, for Ur as a ruling city and therefore that of the Nippur priesthood as well. The close connection between Nanna and Enlil automatically meant that Ur-Namma, the king of Nanna's city, also had a close relation with the head of the pantheon. As for the importance of Uruk as the original home of the dynasty, Uruk had to be the home of the new royal dynasty because it had been the home of the previous one; without a relation to the previous legitimate ruler Ur-Namma would not have been accepted as the legitimate successor. Ur-Namma was a relative of the previous king of Uruk, Utu-ḫeḡal (2119–2113 BC), although in what capacity remains unclear; some have argued he was the brother, son, or son-in-law of Utu-ḫeḡal.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Ur-Namma's ideological system has been discussed in detail by Vacin, "Šulgi of Ur", pp. 27-33.

<sup>181</sup> Wilcke, "Zum Königtum in der Ur III-Zeit", p.180 n.67 as well as his review of *Spätbabylonische Texte aus Uruk* (Teil I), pp. 143-144 and Cooper, "Paradigm and Propaganda: The Dynasty of Akkade in the 21st

There is an additional factor that makes Uruk of great importance to the new king and dynasty: its history. The legendary Sumerian kings Lugalbanda and Gilgameš were from Uruk, the epitomes of ideal rulers Ur-Namma could relate himself to. In his inscriptions he is the son of Lugalbanda and the goddess Ninsun, making him the brother of Gilgameš. These connections to both the kingship and religious sphere of Uruk gave Ur-Namma the perfect image: that of a legitimate ruler, based on his relation to Utuḫeġal, and an ideal one because of his relation to the ideal Sumerian monarch Gilgameš, now his brother. This in combination with the other elements provided Ur-Namma with the needed ideology to establish the Ur III Empire.

These three elements and their implications provided such an ideologically strong framework for the legitimacy of the ruler that Ur-Namma's successor Šulgi (2094–2047 BC) went even further than his father. After Ur-Namma's sudden death Šulgi was left with an enormous religious crisis: a king never suddenly dies and if he did, it could only mean that he had committed such grave sins that the gods immediately abandoned him. It took Šulgi twenty years to stabilize the empire after this crisis.<sup>182</sup> He continued to use the ideological system created by his father and implemented another element to unify the empire: sacred marriage.

The sacred marriage denotes the union of the goddess Inanna and the god Dumuzi and originates from the first half of the third millennium BC. The main purpose of the ritual was to secure the fertility of Sumer through the union of the two gods.<sup>183</sup> It was, however, not the god Dumuzi himself who participated in the ritual, his role was taken on by the king.<sup>184</sup> By taking on the role of Dumuzi, Šulgi and his successors not only strengthened their relations with the gods but were also raised to be on the same level with them.<sup>185</sup> Moreover, the texts concerning Dumuzi on some occasions hint at his human origins, that he become a god through his marriage to Inanna.<sup>186</sup> However, as of yet there is no evidence from non-literary sources to support this claim.<sup>187</sup>

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Century", p. 20. See also Hallo, "The Coronation of Ur-Namma", pp. 137-139, in which he details the working relationship between Ur-Namma and Utuḫeġal.

<sup>182</sup> This is based on the year names for Šulgi's reign, see Michalowski, "Mortal Kings of Ur: A Short Century of Divine Rule in Ancient Mesopotamia", pp. 35-36.

<sup>183</sup> See Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, pp. 49, 58-63.

<sup>184</sup> The discussion concerning the extent to which this was an actual ritual or merely a reading of the sacred marriage texts is not relevant here. For an overview of the different interpretations and argumentations of Jacobsen, Kramer, Steinkeller and others, see Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage in the Light of Comparative Evidence*, pp. 69-72.

<sup>185</sup> Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods: A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religion as the Integration of Society & Nature*, pp. 296-299.

<sup>186</sup> *Dream* lines 110 and 206 in Alster, *Dream*, pp. 64-65 and 76-77; also *DoD* line 22 in Kramer, "Death of Dumuzi", pp. 7, 9.

<sup>187</sup> Alster, *Dumuzi's Dream*, p.14-15; more recently also Klein, "The Assumed Human Origin of Dumuzi", pp. 1122-1133.

This led to a drastic development initiated by Šulgi. After years of consolidating the empire, saving it from the crisis caused by the death of his father, and adding another connection to the divine realm in the royal ideology, Šulgi himself became the ultimate tool for the unification of the empire: he was declared a god. Complete with the divine determinative, Šulgi would not only be seen by all the people in his empire as their king but would also be worshipped by them as their god.<sup>188</sup>

While Šulgi was not the first Mesopotamian king to deify himself, he did succeed where his predecessor failed. Naram-Sîn of Agade (2254–2218 BC), the main cause of Agade's destruction in the *Curse*, was the first Mesopotamian king to declare himself a god but the ideology behind it was not thought out properly. Naram-Sîn received his divinity as a reward from the people of Agade for defending the city against enemies, fighting nine battles in one year, according to the Bassetki inscription.<sup>189</sup> The origin of his divinity, therefore, seems to have been connected to the person of Naram-Sîn alone, so much so that it left the scribes confused as to whether his son and successor Šar-kali-šarri was divine as well, as shown by the inconsistent use of the divine determinative for the king.<sup>190</sup>

The great difference between the deification of Naram-Sîn and Šulgi is that the latter was derived from an elaborate ideological system that connected the king to the most important deities and cities while the first was not. The ideological foundations of Ur-Namma connected the king to the greatest gods as family, providing a far more secure basis for divinity than military achievements ever could.<sup>191</sup> Since the ideological system of Ur-Namma is based on family, the ambiguity surrounding the succession was resolved: Šulgi's successors were deified on the day of their coronations,<sup>192</sup> eliminating the problem that had caused divine kingship to be abandoned in the Old Akkadian period.<sup>193</sup> The foundation of the system was so secure that

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<sup>188</sup> The innovative nature of the ideological system used by Šulgi to support his divine states is outlined by Vacin, both in his dissertation “Šulgi of Ur”, pp. 178-221 and in a later article “Tradition and Innovation in Šulgi's Concept of Divine Kingship”, pp. 179-193. Note especially the scheme on p. 214 of the former and p. 187 in the latter that illustrate the detail and depth of the system that was created by Ur-Namma and elevated to a new, higher, level by Šulgi.

<sup>189</sup> RIME 2.1.4.9.

<sup>190</sup> No pattern becomes apparent for the use of the determinative when the king's royal inscriptions are surveyed, see Frayne, *Sargonic and Gutian Periods*, pp. 186-208.

<sup>191</sup> The observation that the ideology supporting deification was based on family relations is presented by Vacin, “Šulgi of Ur”, pp. 215-218.

<sup>192</sup> See Sallaberger, “Der Tod des göttlichen Königs: Die Krise des Menschenbilds in altbabylonischer Zeit”, p. 125 and Steinkeller, “How Did Šulgi and Išbi-Erra ascend to Heaven?”, pp. 463-464.

<sup>193</sup> This would also suggest that only the office of the king was now divine, not the person occupying it. See Sallaberger, Westenholz, *Akkade-Zeit und Ur III-Zeit*, p. 154. For the divine origin of kingship see Wilcke, “Vom göttlichen Wesen des Königtums und seinem Ursprung im Himmel”, pp. 65-68.

after the fall of the Ur III Empire it was adopted by the kings of Isin, albeit with some adjustments.

## 5.2 Death in Context of Ur III Ideology

The ideology of divine kingship and the relation between the Ur III kings and the city of Uruk are of great importance for establishing a connection between the texts concerning death and royal ideology. This connection will be investigated for the main corpus texts in the following section.

The main problem that has troubled divine kingship from the beginning and is never explicitly dealt with in the texts is the death of the divine kings. Although Šulgi made sure the succession of the divine component to his successor went smoothly, a clear explanation is nowhere to be found. Because gods are immortal and can only be killed with violence, how were the deaths of the divine kings of Ur explained?

This is where the connection to the texts under discussion in this study becomes apparent. The choice of Ur-Namma and Šulgi to relate themselves to Uruk also brought the connection to the two most prominent divine beings known to have died: Gilgameš and Dumuzi. Gilgameš, who was of the same parentage as Ur-Namma and Šulgi, could not be saved by the gods even though he was the son of a goddess. Dumuzi, the young shepherd god, was murdered and his divinity could not save him from his fate. By being related to these two figures specifically, Šulgi established the explanation for his death: even his divinity could not prevent him from dying, similar to how it could not for Gilgameš and Dumuzi. The fact that Ur-Namma's death is explained in similar terms as that of Gilgameš, even though Ur-Namma was not a divine being and despite him dying in a violent manner, likely indicates that the preparations for Šulgi's explanation began by explaining the death of his father.<sup>194</sup> It is unfortunate that as of now no texts are known that describe the death of a deified king.<sup>195</sup>

The existence of *Gilgameš*, *Dream*, *DoD* and *Ur-Namma* combined with the strikingly similar manner in which they describe death shows that the connection of the Ur III kings to Gilgameš and Dumuzi was not random but deliberately created, both for the ideological reasons

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<sup>194</sup> It has already been noted by Vacin that *Ur-Namma* was likely composed in line with Šulgi's ideology, to save his father's reputation and prevent the demise of the young state, "Innovation and Tradition", p. 180 n.4.

<sup>195</sup> For the practical aspects of the deaths of divine kings, so outside the literary texts, see Sallaberger, "Der Tod des göttlichen König", pp. 124-127, 130-132 and Steinkeller, "Šulgi and Išbi-Erra", pp. 459-478.

discussed above as well as to explain why a divine king could not avoid death. That they related themselves to the only divine beings known to have died can be no coincidence.<sup>196</sup>

Another text could potentially be added to the list of texts connected to divine kingship, in this case a text without Ur III origins. On the surface it would seem that *Nanna* has no place in the scheme of either royal ideology or divine kingship. However, one line in *Nanna* might change that perception. When the son of Nanna condemns his father's killer he mentions the following about justice: *šu ĝar gen<sub>6</sub> lugal sipad diĝir-za-a-kam* 'it is the judgement of the king, the shepherd, your god.'<sup>197</sup>

If this reading is correct it shows a direct reference to divine kingship in the text, meaning that this text was either composed when the ideology was still in use, moving its original composition date up from ca. 1700 BC by one or two centuries, or that it was a newly composed text in line with an older ideology. Although the ideology would no longer be used by the present ruling dynasty, it was well-known in the scribal curriculum because of the many royal hymns to divine Ur III and Isin kings. While the latter may seem farfetched, I want to point out that Robsen has demonstrated that scribal schools active in 1700 BC had preferences for the texts of certain historical kings, with the famous House F in Nippur mostly focusing on Išme-Dagān of Isin (1955-1937 BC) who ruled more than two centuries earlier. A contemporary school in Ur favoured the last king of Larsa, Rim-Sîn (1822-1763 BC), whose reign had ended more than half a century earlier. In this environment a new text, most likely composed for scribal training, certainly could have employed ideological elements of past kings that were out of use by then.<sup>198</sup>

While the exact composition date might never be known, the possibility that the text was composed after divine kingship had died out attests to the long reach of the ideology implemented by Šulgi. Additionally, it places the school text *Nanna* within the literary tradition of divine kingship. The other elegy, *Nawirtum*, does not have a direct connection with divine kingship or royal ideology but since the only known source of the text is written on the same

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<sup>196</sup> This is, of course, excluding the gods that died in Akkadian texts from the Old Babylonian period in succession struggles and for the creation of mankind.

<sup>197</sup> Kramer, *Two Elegies*, pp. 54, 60, line 79. This line is part of the section (ll. 27-90) that is not duplicated in any of the other sources, see Sjöberg, "First Pushkin Elegy", p. 315.

<sup>198</sup> See Robsen, "The Tablet House: A Scribal School in Old Babylonian Nippur", p. 60. For the arguments in favour of these being school texts and the unlikely possibility that they are based on historical persons and events see Kramer, *Two Elegies*, pp. 50-51 and notes 10-12 and 22-23. The original composition date Kramer proposes for the text, 1700 BC, is based on the fact that almost all literary texts come from that period (and place, Nippur) without further discussing it, see p. 48 and note 4. He does leave the option of an earlier composition date open. Interestingly, he does not comment on *Nanna* line 79, even though it clearly adds another layer to the discussion of the original composition date of the text.

tablet as *Nanna*, in addition to the similarities established in the previous chapters, it clearly comes from the same environment and tradition. Despite the lack of strong ideological connections between *Nanna*, *Nawirtum* and royal ideology the texts do echo the message of the other main corpus texts about death, that it was unavoidable, but do so for a different subject – non-royal Mesopotamians instead of kings and divine beings.<sup>199</sup>

So far all of the main corpus texts connect, to varying extents, to divine kingship, one aspect of royal ideology. This leaves only the two texts concerning cities, *Curse* and *LSUr*. Although they have no role in divine kingship, the texts are of great importance to the royal ideology of their respective dynasties. As became clear through the measures taken by Ur-Namma to present himself as the legitimate heir to Utu-ḫeḡal, the legitimation of the new dynasty was one of the first tasks of its kings and both *Curse* and *LSUr* are examples of that.

Even though *LSUr* is a product of the Isin dynasty and not that of Ur III, it still shows the basic principle of explaining the religious cause for the fall of the previous royal dynasty. The changes in ideology present in the text seem to be inventions from the Isin dynasty and will be discussed below in Chapter 5.3.

All in all, every main corpus text has a connection to Ur III royal ideology with most being clearly related to the concept of divine kingship. The texts all operated within the ideological system of the Ur III kings, which is where I believe the explanation lies for the great amount of textual similarities found in Chapters Two, Three and Four of this study.<sup>200</sup>

Of the eight main corpus texts four (*Dream*, *Gilgameš*, *Ur-Namma*, *Curse*) were first written down in the Ur III period in line with their ideology. The royal scribes and poets drew from the same well of motifs, elements and expressions to be used in certain situations, which resulted in parallel lines and highly similar descriptions.<sup>201</sup> The four texts first composed in the Old Babylonian period (*DoD*, *Nanna*, *Nawirtum*, *LSUr*) were created with the Ur III texts as reference since they had become part of the scribal curriculum.<sup>202</sup> The texts concerning death should therefore in the future not only be considered together, as done in Chapters Two, Three and Four, but also in light of Ur III royal ideology, even the Old Babylonian texts.

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<sup>199</sup> This would be in line with new beliefs that developed during the Old Babylonian period in the wake of divine kingship. Since this development is based on Akkadian texts it will not be discussed here. See Sallaberger, “Der Tod des göttlichen König”, pp. 123-124, 130-132 and Katz, “Tod”, pp. 716-717.

<sup>200</sup> Note that the secondary corpus texts also fit into the system of royal ideology because their subjects are either the same or related to those of the main corpus texts.

<sup>201</sup> Alster, *Dream*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>202</sup> With the exception of *Gilgameš*, see Robsen, “The Tablet House”, pp. 55-56. For possible explanations regarding the absence of *Gilgameš* in the Old Babylonian school curriculum see Cavigneaux, Al-Rawi, *Gilgameš et la Mort*, p. 10.

This leads to the following question: how can we be certain that all these descriptions reflect the Ur III ideology when only their Old Babylonian versions, which have likely undergone several changes, are presently known? Already in Chapter One the concern about the findspots and dates of all the texts being the same, namely Old Babylonian Nippur with only two exceptions, has been raised and it remains valid. The answer to this concern is, however, relatively simple because there are obvious differences in the ideology of the Isin kings that are only reflected in Old Babylonian original compositions. This presents a clear distinction between the newer ideas of the early Old Babylonian period and the older ones preserved from the Ur III period.

### 5.3 The Changes in Isin Royal Ideology

After the fall of the Ur III Empire kingship went to Isin, where its kings presented themselves as the legitimate heirs to the empire and took over many of its policies, including divine kingship.<sup>203</sup> However, they did not simply copy the ideology used by the Ur III kings. Apparent changes manifest themselves in mainly two manners: first, in the fate of the cities in the city lamentations and, second, in the fate of the god Dumuzi. These were the only subjects to defy death in their respective texts, a plot twist that might be connected to the changing royal ideology of the Isin kings.<sup>204</sup>

#### 5.3.1 Means of Legitimation

The most obvious development in royal ideology is visible in the different endings of *Curse* and *LSUr*. Both deal with the legitimation of their dynasties by presenting the fall of their predecessors as legitimate but do so in different manners. While Agade remains destroyed, Ur will be rebuilt. This shift is apparent in the other city lamentations as well, clearly following the example set by *LSUr*.<sup>205</sup>

This development, the belief that the life of a city is a cycle of life and death, is connected with the ideology of kingship. As explained by Enlil in *LSUr*, no city can rule forever; when kingship leaves the city is first destroyed and then rebuilt since this was part of

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<sup>203</sup> An overview of elements concerning divine kingship in the hymns of the Isin kings has been provided in Römer, *Sumerische "Königshymnen" der Isin-Zeit*, pp. 55-57.

<sup>204</sup> This process likely started during the reign of Iddin-Dagān (1976-1956 BC) and was continued by his successor Išme-Dagān. The first kings of Isin, Išbi-Erra and Šu-ilīšu, according to their titles and epithets, continued the Ur III ideology. It is likely that with the loss of several important cities, Nippur and Ur under Iddin-Dagān, the royal ideology underwent significant change. See Charpin et al., *Die altbabylonische Zeit*, pp. 60-63.

<sup>205</sup> For a survey of themes present in all five city lamentations, including the restoration, see Green, "Eridu", pp. 294-310.

its reign. In the case of *LSUr* the city is rebuilt as part of the new reign of Nanna, its patron deity, showing the promise of the possibility that kingship would return.<sup>206</sup> This new view on kingship is not only visible in the city lamentations but in another prominent text as well, which shows that it is beyond doubt an Old Babylonian development. The *Sumerian King List (SKL)*, an Old Babylonian text, details how kingship came down from heaven and went to different cities, in a cyclical movement, in which all cities great and small got a chance to rule over Sumer.<sup>207</sup>

However, the Ur III version of the list (*USKL*) shows a completely different image. Here kingship moved in a linear manner: first was the dynasty of Kiš, followed by a short reign of Uruk after which Sargon of Agade took over control and established the Akkadian Empire.<sup>208</sup> This order of dynasties with hegemony over Sumer is described similarly in *Curse* lines 1-6:

saĝ-ki gíd-da <sup>d</sup>en-líl-lá-ke<sub>4</sub>  
kiš<sup>ki</sup> gu<sub>4</sub> an-na-gin<sub>7</sub> im-ug<sub>5</sub>-ga-ta  
e<sub>2</sub> ki unug<sup>ki</sup>-ga gu<sub>4</sub> maḥ-gin<sub>7</sub> saḥar-ra mi-ni-ib-gaz-a-ta  
ki ud-ba šar-ru-gen<sub>6</sub> lugal a-ga-de<sub>3</sub><sup>ki</sup>-ra  
sig-ta igi-nim-še<sub>3</sub> <sup>d</sup>en-líl-le  
nam-en nam-lugal-la mu-un-na-an-šúm-ma-ta

After Enlil's frown had slain Kiš like the Bull of Heaven, had slaughtered the house of the land of Uruk in the dust like a mighty bull, then to Sargon of Agade, Enlil, from north to south, had given sovereignty and kingship.<sup>209</sup>

This illustrates the development of the ideology of kingship from Ur III compositions *Curse* and *USKL* to the Old Babylonian *LSUr* and *SKL*. So, what prompted the change from *USKL* to *SKL*, which resulted in the different endings for *Curse* and *LSUr*? Steinkeller has convincingly argued that the answer is to be found with the fall of the Ur III Empire. While the demise of the dynasty of Agade was perfectly explicable by the bad actions of Naram-Sîn, this was not the case for Ur. There had to be an explanation for the sudden fall of the Ur III dynasty, one that at the same time would help the Isin kings claim hegemony over Sumer. This resulted in the cyclical movement of kingship; kingship came and went, distributed equally between the

<sup>206</sup> Michalowski, *Lamentation*, pp.68-69 lines 114-115.

<sup>207</sup> Jacobsen, *The Sumerian King List*. See also ETCSL 2.1.1.

<sup>208</sup> Steinkeller, "Ur III Manuscript of the SKL", p. 274-275, 285. It is generally believed that the original *SKL* was composed during the Old Akkadian period, however, no sources have yet been identified. See pp. 281-283.

<sup>209</sup> Cooper, *Curse*, pp. 50-51.

different cities. The kings of Ur had thus not committed religious sins like Naram-Sîn, it was simply time for kingship to leave Ur and to move on to another city. This turn of events is also presented in *LSUr*, where the emphasis is placed on it being the fate of the city that it had to be destroyed and that not even the gods could intervene.

The consequence of this development was that the entire Sumerian history, as known from *USKL*, had to be revised. Where the *USKL* saw before the Akkadian Empire one long reign of Kiš, this would now contradict the new ideology of kingship and therefore had to be altered. The *SKL* sees kingship moving between a great number of cities of which some held kingship multiple times, for example the city Ur. When Ur-Namma founded his dynasty that was the third time the city held kingship, according to *SKL*, hence it is called Ur III. Because of this, kingship became more common and smaller cities could also exercise hegemony over Sumer.<sup>210</sup>

While the importance of the *SKL* for recording history, or at least the prevalent ideas about it, should not be disregarded, its political impact was of greater importance. History could clearly be rearranged in favour of legitimising the current dynasty. The parallel development of the *USKL* to *SKL* and from *Curse* to *LSUr* not only clearly shows the ideological shift from Ur III to the Old Babylonian period, but also attests to the preservation of Ur III ideological elements in the Old Babylonian copies of *Curse*.

### 5.3.2 Divine Kingship

The final lines of *Inanna's Descent* are reminiscent of the development in *LSUr*, with Dumuzi and Ĝeštinanna becoming part of a cycle comparable to kingship. Similar to how the development in *LSUr* represents a change in royal ideology, the same could be true of Dumuzi's resurrection.

Although the kings of Isin continued the practice of divine kingship, they deviate from the ideological system of the Ur III kings by deriving their divinity from only their divine parentage and the sacred marriage. Although still centred around the idea of family it was not as elaborate as the system of Ur-Namma. Several of the key divine relations are done away with in this new system, meaning it could hardly have been a proper foundation.

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<sup>210</sup> Steinkeller, "An Ur III Fragment of the *SKL*", pp. 284-286. Impressively, twenty years before Steinkeller's publication of the Ur III fragment Michalowski already argued for this purpose of the *SKL*. Although he could not have known the *SKL* presented a completely new view of kingship, he maintained that the *SKL* served to legitimize the Isin kings by presenting them as the legitimate successors to the Ur III Empire. He also notes the clear connection between the *SKL* as source and *LSUr* as the product of their royal ideology, see "History as Charter: Some Observations on the Sumerian King List", pp. 240-243.

First of all, claiming divine parentage is not a unique feature of the Ur III and Isin kings since the practice is well known throughout the third millennium BC.<sup>211</sup> Additionally, the kings could be presented as either the sons of Dagān, god of corn, or the sons of Enlil.<sup>212</sup> This is in clear contrast with the kings of Ur whom all were sons of the goddess Ninsun and the ultimate goal of this connection was, of course, to connect the kings to Gilgameš. A similar purpose for establishing divine parentage appears to be missing with the Isin kings, who only established the common idea that they descended from the gods, albeit the most powerful god.

Secondly, the sacred marriage in Ur III was only one element in a much more elaborate ideological system while for the Isin kings it became the focal point. A survey of the royal inscriptions shows that all kings used the epithet ‘spouse of Inanna’, clearly referencing their successful participation in the sacred marriage ritual.<sup>213</sup> Interestingly, the Ur III kings, who had earlier also performed this ritual, do not reference it in their titles and epithets nor are they the ‘spouse of Inanna’.<sup>214</sup> As for the royal hymns, the sacred marriage is the topic of eleven hymns of the Isin kings, in contrast to four of their Ur III counterparts.<sup>215</sup> These developments point to the sacred marriage serving a more important purpose for the Isin kings than for their Ur III predecessors.<sup>216</sup>

The main issue with the sacred marriage as the foundation for divinity lies in the explanation of the king’s death. As Scurlock has shown, choosing Dumuzi to be identified with is rather foolish. The god who had no choice but to take Inanna’s place in the Netherworld, a place well-deserved as the consequence of her own actions, is far from ideal. A figure like Gilgameš, well-known and respected, who could not avoid death despite his divine status and died peacefully, was obviously the more preferable choice.<sup>217</sup> So, it would seem that the death

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<sup>211</sup> Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, pp. 299-301.

<sup>212</sup> For example, Išbi-Erra presented himself as the son of Enlil (*Išbi-Erra C*), Iddin-Dagān as son of Dagān (*Iddin-Dagān B*), Išbi-Erra was both the son of both Dagān and Enlil (*Išme-Dagān A+V, H and M*) and Lipit-Ištar was the son of Enlil (*Lipit-Ištar A*); see ETCSL. The shift coincides with Iddin-Dagān losing control over Nippur, and therefore unable to claim descent from Enlil, and Išme-Dagān taking it back sometime during his reign. See Charpin, *Die altbabylonische Zeit*, pp. 62-63.

<sup>213</sup> See Frayne, *The Old Babylonian Period*, also Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p. 61.

<sup>214</sup> See Frayne, *The Ur III Period*. Note that the Ur III kings were called the ‘beloved of Inanna’ although this does not have the same ideological implication as ‘spouse’ and also was not used as an epithet. In Amar-Sîn 13 (RIME 3/2.1.3.13) Inanna is referred to as ‘his beloved spouse’, however, this is not an exception to the above stated observation since the element is not used as an epithet of the king. Additionally, the Isin kings used this epithet in most of their royal inscriptions while this is the only attestation of Amar-Sîn being referenced as the spouse of Inanna.

<sup>215</sup> Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp. 47-54, no. 29-33 (Ur III) and 34-44 (Isin).

<sup>216</sup> An overview of similarities and differences between the hymns of Šulgi and Išme-Dagān has been presented by Tinney, *Nippur Lament*, pp. 78-80.

<sup>217</sup> Scurlock, “Images of Tammuz: Intersection of Death, Divinity and Royal Authority in Ancient Mesopotamia”, pp. 160-161. For an explanation of Dumuzi’s passive nature see Jacobsen, *Treasures*, p. 10. In his detailed discussion on the purpose of the *SKL* Michalowski has noted that the Isin dynasty was of Amorite origin. This would make it impossible for them to claim kinship with the legendary king and his family from Uruk,

of divine kings was not a concern during this period. The focus is clearly on Inanna and sacred marriage itself, not on trying to explain that divine kings had to die like the god Dumuzi had to. It is likely that the ideological system of the Ur III kings had normalised the death of the divine king, leaving the Isin kings to deal only with their legitimation.<sup>218</sup>

The Isin kings thus focused their attention on becoming the husband of Inanna and claimed their divinity based on that, identifying themselves with Dumuzi not because of his divinity or as one of few divine beings known to have died but because of his connection to Inanna. By performing the sacred marriage ritual the kings became Dumuzi, embodying the husband of the goddess, establishing their divine status.<sup>219</sup> Although the ritual was already performed during the third millennium BC, only from the Isin period a direct reference to its timing is known: *Iddin-Dagān A* clearly states that the ritual was performed during the New Year festival.<sup>220</sup> This would make the sacred marriage, like Dumuzi's death and resurrection, an annual occasion.<sup>221</sup>

So, how are Dumuzi's death and resurrection, the sacred marriage and the changes in Isin royal ideology related? It all seemingly starts with the drastic overhaul of the royal ideology by the kings of Isin to include the cyclical movement of kingship. The aim of *LSUr* was to explain how a relatively insignificant city like Isin could hold kingship, meaning their original claim to legitimacy was rather weak. Apart from *LSUr* the kings strengthened their claim by continuing the practice of divine kingship which had worked well for their Ur III predecessors. However, if the kings of Isin needed to go to such lengths to legitimize their hegemony, would their divine status simply be accepted?

In this context it seems to be a logical step for the Isin kings to celebrate the sacred marriage ritual annually as a means of confirming their divine status for another year. The

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especially since they lacked any connection to the city which Ur-Namma did have at the time. See Michalowski, "History as Charter", pp. 241-242.

<sup>218</sup> In light of Steinkeller's observations that both Šulgi and Išbi-Erra ascended to heaven after their deaths, I find this likely to be the case, see Steinkeller, "Šulgi and Išbi-Erra", pp. 460-464.

<sup>219</sup> For the opposing viewpoints regarding the performance of the sacred marriage ritual see note 117. The king as the embodiment of Dumuzi was thus either performed in the ritual or the image was created through the reading of the texts.

<sup>220</sup> Jacobsen, *The Harps That Once ... Sumerian Poetry in Translation*, pp. 112-124, also ETCSL 2.5.3.1. See lines 173-176. Evidence for the celebration of the ritual involving the king during the New Year festival from earlier periods is circumstantial and knows no consensus among scholars, see Klein, *Three Šulgi Hymns*, pp. 126, 129 and note 205 as well as Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.77-79.

<sup>221</sup> A small amount of evidence suggests that the sacred marriage was quickly followed by Dumuzi's death: two love songs combine the events, see Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature: Critical Edition of the Dumuzi-Inanna Songs*, pp. 267-280 and Kramer, "BM 88318, The Ascension of Dumuzi to Heaven", pp. 5-9; and in the cultic calendar of Ur III Umma the marriage is followed by a period of mourning, see Sallaberger, *Der kultische Kalender der Ur III-Zeit*, pp. 257-263. The calendar, however, deals with local versions of Dumuzi and Inanna, not the state cult. Also, both the love songs and the calendar make no mention of the rituals being performed annually.

annual death and resurrection of Dumuzi forms a great justification of this development: the annual performance of the ritual is never explicitly stated in the royal hymns but the resurrection would allow the Isin kings to perform it every year when Dumuzi comes up from the Netherworld.<sup>222</sup> The addition of the resurrection motif to the end of *Inanna's Descent* is in line with the new view that kingship, and nature, moves in cycles. Dumuzi being resurrected thus becomes the occasion to celebrate the sacred marriage annually, functioning as a vehicle for the Isin kings to confirm their divine status.<sup>223</sup>

What should be noted is that the sources, evidence and interpretations concerning Dumuzi's resurrection are, unfortunately, contradictory. At first glance a chronological distinction between the Dumuzi texts discussed in this study can be made based on the presence or absence of elements concerning resurrection or Dumuzi being a substitute.<sup>224</sup> The oldest are the texts with no reference to his resurrection whatsoever, where Dumuzi dies and remains dead: *Dream* and *Inanna and Bilulu*. Next would be *DoD* where his death is caused by having to become Inanna's substitute. The final text in this development would be *Inanna's Descent*, which combines elements of *Dream*, *Inanna and Bilulu* and *DoD* and adds the, somewhat unexpected, compassion of Inanna resulting in Dumuzi and Ĝeštinanna alternating in the Netherworld.

It is imperative to stress that *Inanna's Descent* is the only text that contains Dumuzi's resurrection, recorded on a single tablet from Ur dated to the Old Babylonian period.<sup>225</sup> There is no textual evidence to suggest that Dumuzi was resurrected before this time nor that his resurrection was a widespread, generally accepted development.

The annual resurrection of Dumuzi is, however, accepted by most scholars and

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<sup>222</sup> Both the timing and frequency of the sacred marriage remain unclear. The annual performance of the ritual has, however, generally been assumed by scholars, see, for example, Klein's discussion of *Šulgi X* lines 35-41 in *Three Šulgi Hymns* p. 126 where he takes the sacred marriage as an annually performed ritual although this is never specified in the hymn.

<sup>223</sup> Although the main function of the sacred marriage ritual has long been considered to be to ensure fertility, its importance for divine kingship (establishing a connection to Inanna as well as identifying with a god of human origin, Dumuzi) and the establishment of the king's divine status is becoming more acknowledged. See Cooper, "Sacred Marriage and Popular Cult in early Mesopotamia", pp. 89-91 and Lapinkivi, *Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>224</sup> Note that all texts are known solely from Old Babylonian copies. However, if I am correct in suggesting that the resurrection is an early Old Babylonian development in line with *LSUr*, it means that *Dumuzi's Dream* and *Inanna and Bilulu* preserved the tradition from before the Old Babylonian period.

<sup>225</sup> UET 6/1 no. 10, see Falkenstein, "Review of *Ur Excavation Texts*", p. 281. For an overview of the available sources and lines see Sladek, "Inanna's Descent", pp. 100-102 and Alster, "Inanna Repenting", pp. 8-9, 12 and 14.

presupposed for Dumuzi's entire existence.<sup>226</sup> Scholars have presented various explanations for Dumuzi's resurrection but the fact that only one source records the ending of *Inanna's Descent* is mentioned briefly and after that never considered again, if it is mentioned at all. Examples of this are the various identifications of Dumuzi with natural products by Jacobsen; such as grain, which is harvested (death) and sown again (resurrection), with his sister Ĝeštinanna representing grapes. His explanation that grain and grapes are harvested in the opposite times of the year symbolising the alternating stays of Dumuzi and Ĝeštinanna in the Netherworld sounds promising but never takes into account the scarce evidence for the resurrection.<sup>227</sup> The same is true of Kramer who identifies Dumuzi with the withering of vegetation in general during the summer and notes that the sacred marriage, which ensured fertility in all of Sumer, must therefore be closely related with Dumuzi's death and resurrection.<sup>228</sup>

This is where the problem with the resurrection of Dumuzi lies; the explanations are logical, Dumuzi seems to be unmistakably connected to the fertility of Mesopotamia, but unless more texts become available to shed light on the resurrection of the god nothing can be concluded with certainty, no matter how sensible the explanation.<sup>229</sup>

The suggestion I have presented above, that the resurrection of Dumuzi might be seen in line with the changing ideology of the Isin kings and ensured the annual confirmation of their divine status, remains hypothetical. The resurrection and sacred marriage are both highly complex topics and to fully develop this hypothesis would fall outside of the scope of the present thesis. The increased importance of the sacred marriage and being the spouse of Inanna for the kings of Isin is clear enough; however, further research into the contradictory statements regarding the death and resurrection of Dumuzi and its function in the ideology of the Isin kings remains necessary.

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<sup>226</sup> This idea was already questioned and debated by Gurney, "Tammuz Reconsidered: Some Recent Developments", p. 155. Although this article appeared in 1962, before the discovery of the final lines of *Inanna's Descent*, his criticism remains valid.

<sup>227</sup> See Jacobsen, *Treasures of Darkness*, pp. 61-63; "Inanna and Bilulu", pp. 56-59 and "Toward the Image of Tammuz", pp. 73-74, 100 where he also argues for the identification of Dumuzi and the other actors in the texts with various elements of nature like milk and thunderstorms.

<sup>228</sup> Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, p. 107.

<sup>229</sup> An overview of the different ideas concerning Dumuzi's resurrection, such as his connection to vegetation, possible human origins and celebrations of his return from the Netherworld, is provided by Mettinger, *The Riddle of Resurrection: "Dying and Rising Gods" in the Ancient Near East*, pp. 187-204. Note, however, that he does not deal with any of the problems outlined above.

## 5.4 Conclusions

In this chapter it has become clear that the main corpus texts of this study are not only closely connected through textual similarities but also because of their connection to and role in the royal ideology of the Ur III kings. This can be specified into two aspects: legitimation and divine kingship. All the main corpus texts are, to different extents, related to one of these aspects. The texts concerning cities present the legitimation of their respective dynasties by explaining the end of the previous royal dynasty. The other texts relate to divine kingship, an elaborate ideology carefully implemented by Šulgi based on the ideological foundation of his father. The texts concerning Gilgameš and Dumuzi not only reflect the dynasty's connection to Uruk but were also of great importance in solving the main issue of the death of the king in divine kingship since they were the only divine beings known to have died at the time. It is therefore unlikely that Ur-Namma and Šulgi chose these two figures to identify themselves with at random. The two elegies, written on the same tablet, do not concern a god or divine king but do contain a reference to the practice of divine kingship. This shows that while the texts describing the deaths of Ur-Namma, Gilgameš and Dumuzi were part of the effort to accept the death of a divine king, the elegies were the product of divine kings ruling for centuries.

The two big plot twists, the endings of *LSUr* and *Inanna's Descent*, can be explained through the ideological changes that developed from the Ur III to the early Old Babylonian period. This is most clearly illustrated in the endings of *Curse* and *LSUr* and the parallel texts *USKL* and *SKL*. The same development is described in two sets of texts where the Ur III versions see kingship moving in a linear manner between cities while their Old Babylonian counterparts sketch the contrasting image of kingship moving in a cycle, distributing hegemony more equally. This development is easily understood when considered that Isin had never been a great or culturally relevant city so the more or less equal distribution of kingship would be one step towards legitimizing their claim as successors to the Ur III Empire.

The case of Dumuzi's resurrection is, however, more complicated. The ideological foundation and the practice of divine kingship were established so thoroughly that they were taken over by the Isin kings after the fall of Ur III. Similar to the view on kingship, obvious changes have become apparent here as well. Although still divine, the kings of Isin based their divinity no longer on Gilgameš and Dumuzi but on Dagān/Enlil as their divine father and on being the husband of Inanna. The epithets showing their connection to Inanna and the multitude of sacred marriage texts indicate the increased importance of the ritual for the kings of Isin.

Additionally, it is from this period that the timing of the ritual is first mentioned, the New Year festival, suggesting an annual performance of the sacred marriage ritual. This is where I propose to see the origin of Dumuzi's resurrection.

The composition of *LSUr* shows that the Isin dynasty had a weak claim on hegemony over Babylonia, so when they continued the practice of divine kingship there was no guarantee they would be accepted as rulers. The annual performance of the sacred marriage ritual ensured the yearly confirmation of their divinity by embodying Dumuzi on his return from the Netherworld. This is also in line with the new view regarding kingship, because if kingship could come and go it was imperative that the kings did everything in their power to ensure it stayed in Isin. The cycle of Dumuzi then embodies the cyclical nature of kingship.

To summarize, the main corpus texts all operated within the system of Ur III royal ideology. The apparent differences in the endings of *LSUr* and *Inanna's Descent* in contrast to the others can be explained through the developments in the ideology of legitimation and divine kingship in the early Old Babylonian period. Therefore, they also attest to the persistence of Ur III beliefs in all the texts – these endings are the only instances in which descriptions of death are contradictory, demonstrating that in all other cases the descriptions follow the literary tradition based on Ur III ideology despite their Old Babylonian composition date.

## Conclusion

The death of different subjects – a god, kings, non-royal humans and cities – is described in the same manner in Sumerian literary texts concerning death of the Ur III and Old Babylonian periods. Regardless of the subject death was always unexpected and often violent, with the moments leading up to it showing the weakened state of the subject. The scribes did not employ the exact same words and phrases to describe death in every text, instead they used similar language – creating comparable situations while using different terms.

This is true for the reason and acceptance of death also. The reasons provided for the death of the subjects are always ambiguous; the gods either decreed, or altered, their fates or there is no apparent reason at all. As for the acceptance of one's fate, feelings of disbelief and unfairness are present in all the texts, for some subjects to a greater extent than others. These differences can be explained based on the nature of the subject of the text and its connection to the gods.

Apart from these main aspects the descriptions of death also show great similarities in detail. The use of similar terms and metaphors further supports that the scribes made no distinctions between divine, royal and non-royal subjects or even cities in how or why they died. Also, the same elements were used in texts where death is not the main topic. This is all indicative of an established tradition on how to describe death.

In addition to the textual evidence, the existence of a literary tradition concerning death is supported by the historical context of the texts. Despite the majority of the texts only being known from Old Babylonian copies they all operated within the system of Ur III royal ideology. Ur-Namma and his son Šulgi proved to be key figures: the new royal ideology of Ur-Namma focused on legitimating his dynasty and resulted in the installation of divine kingship under Šulgi is the context that connects all the texts. It became essential for this ideology to provide an explanation for death: the end of a royal dynasty needed to be legitimate for a new one to follow it, and the death of the divine king had to be explained because gods are typically immortal. The connection of the texts with their historical context reveals the purpose for the literary tradition: death was an integral part of the royal ideology and therefore had to be presented accordingly. It is this environment that resulted in the very similar description of the deaths of different subjects – of the god Dumuzi, kings Gilgameš and Ur-Namma, the non-royal humans Nanna and Nawirtum, and of the cities Agade and Ur.

Based on these findings I conclude that there indeed existed a literary tradition on how to describe death. When the textual and contextual evidence are considered together no room is left to argue otherwise; the texts relate to each other because of the similarities in their descriptions of the main aspects and details of death while following the ideological developments of the Ur III and early Old Babylonian periods. The two plot twist endings that saw the god Dumuzi and the city of Ur defy the finality of death do not in the slightest undermine this statement: firstly, they are the only instances in which the texts contradict each other in their descriptions of death; and secondly, it actually argues in favour of a literary tradition that was closely connected to the prevalent royal ideology at the time of the composition of these texts. The fact that death is described in the same manner throughout this period, also in texts that do not deal with death as their main topic, clearly demonstrates that there was a standardized vision, a literary tradition, within the scribal community on how to describe death.

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