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ON THE COVER:
Gudea's head "Grande tête à turban" Louvre AO 13.
Photo: Gábor Kalla.

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Originators in the Old Babylonian Sumerian literary tradition

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Abstract: In the Mesopotamian scribal culture, the compositions' lack of titles and authors was justified by their oral origin. As pieces of literature gained their written form gradually, compilers and editors of the texts were responsible for the long process of selection, edition as well as the arrangement and rearrangement of the material. This resulted in an anonymous and somewhat chaotic textual culture. The birth of the author, or rather, the emergence of several models of authorship attempted to establish order in this chaos.

In this paper, I propose four models of attributed authorship based on examples from the Old Babylonian period and elaborate on the functions related to each. Attributed authorship, as I argue, aimed to anchor selected literary compositions in time and space. Authors contributed to the classification and interpretation of a body of ancient or invented literary tradition. Furthermore, attributed authors contributed to the preservation of a given text as a unit that might otherwise have been subject to disintegration or further revision and redaction.

Keywords: authorship, Enheduana, Old Babylonian period, Sumerian literature

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1. Introduction

Early Mesopotamian scribal culture did not reward originality. Manuscripts preserved compositions handed down from generation to generation without substantial changes in form and content.[1] Sumerian and Akkadian literary manuscripts indicated neither the titles nor the authors of the compositions. Literary compositions were identified by their incipits and the identification of their authors was apparently no matter of concern.[2] In the Old Babylonian period, the period this study focuses on, even traditional attribution of literary compositions to an author was

[1] On the one hand, scribes often attempted to reproduce their *Vorlagen* as accurately as possible. On the other hand, in course of copying, they could also adapt and actualize the compositions and introduce innovations into the tradition. On this dichotomy, see Lenzi 2015, 154.

[2] See Lambert 1957 and 1962; Foster 1991; Michalowski 1996, 183–185; Glassner 2009 and Van De Mieroop 2016, 20.

mostly missing.[3] B. Lion summarized the reason why the ancient Mesopotamian history of literature was not particularly interested in the concept of authorship:[4]

> "Texts were transmitted by a process of successive copying or recalling from memory for Sumerian literature, which sometimes tended to modify the original. The copyists thus participated in the development of compositions, so it does not make much sense to search for unique, original authors, successive authors and editors having merged over time."

The only exception during the Old Babylonian period acknowledged by modern scholarship is Enheduana, a priestess and princess identified as the originator in a handful of Sumerian literary compositions with manuscripts from the Old Babylonian period.[5] Nevertheless, while Enheduana is the only renowned author known from that era, she was by far not the only originator in the Old Babylonian history of literature, commemorated in some form in Sumerian literary compositions. Many other cases are dependent on our definition of authorship in a pre-modern context.

In the following, I will propose various models of attributed authorship[6] as evidenced in Old Babylonian manuscripts of Sumerian literary compositions and discuss the functions related to each. I will also revisit the question concerning the authorship of Enheduana within this framework. Beforehand, I propose a preliminary definition of the term "originator" to reach a common understanding of text production in early Mesopotamia and the interaction of author, scribe, patron and text.

2. The function of authorship

The lack of titles and authors in the case of Sumerian literary compositions is mostly justified by the oral origin of the compositions only written down later and thereafter transmitted as a

[3] According to Leichty 1988, 261, the attribution of literary compositions to a specific author is a late phenomenon, and rarely practiced in the history of Mesopotamian literature. Scattered examples from the Akkadian tradition are Kabti-ilāni-Marduk, known as the author of the *Epic of Erra*, Sîn-lēqi-unnīni, author of the *Epic of Gilgameš* or Saggil-kīna-ubbib, author of the *Babylonian Theodicy*. Further examples of authors' emergence or the concept of authorship are provided by a few catalogues. The *Catalogue of Texts and Authors* (Lambert 1962) enumerates various compositions attributed to famous authors, the *Uruk List of Kings and Sages* (Lenzi 2008) lists scholars and contemporary rulers indicating a relationship between these scholars and famous works from different periods of Mesopotamian history. However, as van der Toorn 2007, 44 convincingly argued, the *Catalogue* made no distinction between authors and editors as it had no focus on the matter of authorship, but instead "its principal purpose was to establish an order of authority" among the respective compositions. For a detailed analysis of the two catalogues, see also Helle 2018 and 2019c. Authorship remarks are somewhat more frequent in Akkadian than in Sumerian literary compositions. For a detailed discussion of authorship in Akkadian literature, see Foster 1991 and 2019 and van der Toorn 2007, 39–48.

[4] Lion 2011, 96.

[5] Several scholars regarded Enheduana as the sole author attested as early as the Old Babylonian period, see most recently Helle 2019a, 1–2 and Wagensonner 2020, 39.

[6] Although it is debated whether Enheduana was a real author or this role was assigned to her retrospectively, I also count her case to this category as it will be apparent in course of this study. In contrast, scribes and scholars known as originators of manuscripts, indicated e.g. by colophons, are not subject to the present investigation as they are likely no authors or originators of the compositions, but their editors.

traditional corpus of literature.[7] Pieces of literature gained their written forms gradually.[8] Some compositions known from the Old Babylonian period were certainly composed during the third millennium BCE, however, the written forerunners of the Old Babylonian versions were sketchy, mostly restricted to themes and formulaic expressions. Compositions likely underwent substantial redaction in the Old Babylonian period that manifests most notably in a more elaborate and complete written form. The crystallization of a written literary tradition required the professionalization of scholarly culture that also attempted to establish order in the transmitted text corpus. Potentially, this process resulted in the attribution of some compositions to legendary or historical authors.[9]

The compilers and the editors of the texts carried out a great deal of the redactional work. They were responsible for the long process of selection and edition as well as for the arrangement and rearrangement of the material.[10] Svärd introduced the concept of "agency" for analysing the nature of authorship.[11] Her two categories, instrumental as well as independent agency, are the two endpoints of a continuum: instrumental agency manifests in passing on the literary tradition and in faithful copying of compositions. Independent agency, in contrast, is the competence of authoring new compositions. A similar concept was described by Steineck and Schwermann with the categories of weak or implicit composite authorship, contrasted with strong or explicit individual authorship.[12]

The role of the editor is somewhere on this continuum, likely different from case to case: he was in some instances a truthful copyist, in others, he carried out minor or major adjustments and

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7 See the studies in Vogelzang – Vanstiphout 1992 on the oral or performative phase of early Sumerian literature. Here I do not argue for the primacy of an oral tradition over the written tradition or vice versa in the case of the Sumerian literary tradition; on this matter see e.g. Van De Mieroop 2016, 16–19. I rather argue for an oral origin of Sumerian literature based on the characteristics of the earliest literary manuscripts, where a complementary – and even a primary – oral tradition cannot be assumed away as the written texts were rather memory aids than complete and elaborate literary compositions. Nevertheless, a parallel oral tradition was not necessarily present as late as in the Old Babylonian period. In this period, the authority of the written text is beyond doubt, and any oral tradition was most likely restricted to the accurate reproduction of the written tradition, either by heart through memorizing or by reading it aloud (Delnero 2012).

8 This process consisted of a gradual transformation from oral to written literature at a point where a written form was necessary for the preservation or dissemination of the literary tradition. The elaborate written form could result from the lack of native Sumerian speakers endangering the preservation of the Sumerian literary heritage. Nevertheless, at this point, it is uncertain whether the Sumerian literary tradition condensed in a written form only drew on Sumerian material, or, especially in the case of oral sources, specific contents crystallized on specific languages in the spirit of the Old Babylonian functional diglossia. The transformation could also happen principally by expanding the written form of compositions, as it is obvious when comparing extant literary manuscripts from the Early Dynastic IIIa, IIIb, Ur III as well as Old Babylonian periods. However, pre-Old Babylonian literary manuscripts strongly imply a corresponding oral tradition, as the written form of literary compositions was too sketchy for being considered as a sufficient sole source of later, more elaborate, traditions.

9 For a similar process postulated in early China, see Zhang 2018, 1.

10 Evidence of all these editorial efforts is the variation detectable abundantly in Old Babylonian literary manuscripts. For a detailed analysis see Delnero 2012. For comparison, Zhang 2018, 12 explains the long process of text formation in early China as follows: "The recognition of the compiler's or editor's role in early Chinese text formation is crucial for our understanding of the concept of author and authorship in early China. The author-oriented traditional hermeneutics may still be a valid approach to understanding the texts, but the compilers and editors must fill the author's place, as they were the ones who did perform a role in text making. Even if authors contributed to the process of text making, their intent, defined by the historical moment at which a piece of literature was originally conceived, became unidentifiable by the time the long process of text compiling and editing was complete. To summarize, understanding early Chinese authorship necessitates a full consideration of the position of compilers and editors in traditional hermeneutics, as they may have projected their own intent into their textual amalgams seen through the pieces of texts they selected, categorized, edited, arranged, and rearranged."

11 Svärd 2013; see also Halton – Svärd 2018.

12 Steineck – Schwermann 2014, 31.

sometimes he likely even authored new compositions. It is impossible to make a difference between the intensity of these activities, as in course of the edition process, scribes actualized and updated even older contents in terms of their palaeography, vocabulary, orthography and grammar. In the context of ancient Mesopotamia, assuming a distributed or composite authorship seems to be the best approach.[13]

Old Babylonian editorial efforts also attempted to categorize literary texts: subscripts introduced in a number of manuscripts functioned similarly to generic attributions in modern literary studies. The first collections also point to this direction, the earliest attempts being detectable already in the third millennium BCE, e.g. in *The Instructions of Shuruppak*, a collection of proverbial sayings, or, conventional wisdom. Editors assembled brief, anonymous and untitled pieces and thereafter, these units were interpreted and transmitted as a single composition.[14]

Authors of the early Mesopotamian tradition thus faded into oblivion and the role of authors as *originators of the compositions* became insignificant. Nor was the role of those who secured the transmission of these pieces of literature in a written form, the scribes, being the *originators and mediators of a textual tradition* recognized and therefore their names were only rarely recorded in second millennium BCE Mesopotamia.[15] This resulted in an anonymous and somewhat chaotic textual culture. The birth of the author or rather, the emergence of several models of authorship in the Old Babylonian period was an attempt to establish order in this chaos.

Steineck and Schwermann elaborated on the potential functions of authorship.[16] These are to anchor selected literary compositions in time and space, to establish the unity of a work, to create differences between similar compositions, to link a composition to reference texts or to provide contexts.[17] Authors, on the one hand, contributed to the classification and interpretation of a body of ancient or invented literary tradition. On the other hand, an author contributed to the preservation of a given text as a unit that might have been subject to disintegration or further revision and redaction.

At this point, it is worth discussing briefly the concept of attributed authorship in particular. Van der Toorn compared three related concepts: honorary authorship, pseudepigraphy as well as attributed authorship.[18] According to his distinction, honorary authorship is ascribing authorship to the patron and commissioner of an oeuvre by the author. In the case of pseudepigraphy, the author pretends to be a famous figure of the past, therefore, any relationship established between the composition and the pseudepigraphic author is fictive. In this case, the author intends to present his work as part of an esteemed past and thus, to impose more authority on the composition. However, van der Toorn also raises the question of whether we should consider pseudepigraphy as a deliberate misleading of the audience or whether this concept could be in accordance with

13 See Steineck – Schwermann 2014, 6 and 8.

14 Indeed, the composition is a historical forerunner to the compilation of scholarly and literary series known abundantly from the first millennium BCE. On this process, see Heeßel 2011. Schwermann 2014, 37–38 describes a similar process in early China, namely assembling small, anonymous textual units to a single text and assigning fictive authors to these composite works.

15 Old Babylonian colophons might record the name of the scribe responsible for the production of a given manuscript, however, only a minority of manuscripts contained colophons. In addition, their terminology does not differentiate between copyists and editors and does not provide hints on the extent and type of modifications applied by the scribe. As a result, they rather intend to indicate ownership than authorship. On scribes and colophons, see Van De Mieroop 2016, 22–25.

16 Steineck – Schwermann 2014, 14–15.

17 Steineck – Schwermann 2014, 14–15 also mention another function, the legitimation of interpretative hypothesis, however, it is not relevant for the Old Babylonian literary discourse.

18 Van der Toorn 2007, 33–39.

literary conventions in the past.[19] Finally, the distinction between pseudepigraphy and attributed authorship is that while in the former case, the fictive, pseudepigraphic authorship was attributed by the real author, in the latter case, the authorship was assigned by the editor.

In the context of Mesopotamian literature, therefore, I will stick to the term of attributed authorship, assuming that ascribing authors for compositions was accomplished by the scribes, the editors and redactors of literary compositions. In some cases, for sure, this scribe was the sole author of a certain composition, but it is impossible to track these cases in the Old Babylonian corpus because the authors remained anonym. In other instances, indeed, the author might be the commissioner of the composition and for sure, honorary authorship is present in ancient Mesopotamia: especially insightful examples are votive inscriptions. But in the case of Old Babylonian literature, it is hard to identify the compositions commissioned by rulers centuries before, as it is problematic to assume that these did not undergo significant textual redaction. The question of whether the attribution of authors was the undertaking of originators or later editors thus should remain open. The concept of attributed authorship will be used in this article as a neutral term acknowledging the work of editors, who either initiated authorship by attributing compositions to certain historical or non-historical characters or kept former attributions alive.[20]

Attributed authorship is an established concept to interpret pre-modern literature in many disciplines. It is not only present in Biblical studies but it was also applied in relation to the historicity and authorship of Homer[21] and is particularly prominent in various discussions concerning the emergence of the concept of authorship in ancient China.[22] As it is apparently a controversially discussed matter whether authors like Homer were invented or not, Graziosi's question "on what grounds and with what authority modern critics determine what should and should not be invented" is justified.[23] An example in an ancient Mesopotamian context, proving that just like ancient audiences, also modern scholars tend to reconstruct the authors by reading their literary remains, was Konstantopoulos's meticulous study on "The Many Lives of Enheduana".[24]

In the following, I will concentrate on four models of attributed authorship, which made their appearance during the Old Babylonian period.[25] I will propose examples for the patron, the head of the lineage, the private individual and the cultural hero as an originator. I will also discuss why these models were restricted to specific contents and how the authorship functioned in these

19 Van der Toorn 2007, 35.

20 As Beecroft 2010, 286 argued, the birth of the author "is at once the death of performance and the emergence of a cultural world empire, a marker of a given literature's capacity to generate meaning far beyond and long after the creation of its central texts". This statement likely applied for the Sumerian literary heritage as inherited by Old Babylonian scholars. After the performative phase, implied by the relative rarity of written evidence, Sumerian literature and scholarship entered into a phase of textual consolidation, some compositions and themes making an impact even one or two thousand years after their presumed composition.

21 See, for example, West 1999 and Graziosi 2002.

22 See, for example, Lewis 1999; Beecroft 2010; and Zhang 2018.

23 Graziosi 2002, 242.

24 Konstantopoulos 2021.

25 Zhang 2018 also discusses models of attributed authorship more elaborate in his monograph. His categories are the cultural hero, the head of the teaching lineage, the scholarly patron and the individual author (Zhang 2018, 1–2). The overlaps between his categories and those discussed here is obvious and I gained much inspiration, way beyond the references allow to conclude, from his detailed and thoughtful work to the present article and highlight similarities between the early literary production in ancient China as well as ancient Mesopotamia. I have to point out that the categories established and discussed here do not intend to cover all possibilities but are partly based on the scope of my previous work and partly on compositions already included in the discourse on Mesopotamian authorship. A further important point is that in the Old Babylonian period, all authorial claims come directly from the compositions themselves, compared to the first millennium BCE, where Helle 2019c, 351 specified five different sources, namely catalogues, colophons and rubrics, literary epilogues, acrostics as well as other references.

particular cases. I consider all the aforementioned cases as retrospective attribution of authors to compositions initiated during the Old Babylonian period. The case studies presented here thus do not focus on the originators *of*, but as depicted *in* the early Mesopotamian literary tradition. This approach naturally assumes that the stories told about authors convey information on how literature was interpreted.[26]

3. Models of attributed authorship

3.1. The patron as author

Rulers with advanced literacy skills allowing them to access literary and scholarly compositions are exceptional in the ancient Mesopotamian tradition. The reigns of two prominent examples, Šulgi, ruler of the Ur III Dynasty and the Neo-Assyrian king Assurbanipal are over a thousand years apart. The Old Babylonian tradition was the first to consider rulers as originators of a written or oral tradition of specific literary compositions. The following examples feature Šulgi and Išme-Dagān in such a role.

Šulgi appears sporadically in his royal hymnody as the one securing the written as well as the oral tradition of literary compositions and thus, taking care of their transmission. The compositions featured him, though they are not regarded as authored by him, the authorship was rather attributed to deities. The focus of Išme-Dagān, in contrast, lies in securing the continuity of an oral tradition, including most probably both divine and royal praise poetry. There are several similarities in the gestures of these two rulers as reported in the quoted literary accounts.[27]

240 en_3-du-$ĝu_{10}$ ka-ga_{14} $ḫe_2$-$ĝal_2$
241 $šir_3$-$ĝu_{10}$ $ĝeštug_2$-ge na-an-dib-be_2
242 gu-kur silim-$eš_2$ dug_4-ga-$ĝa_2$-kam
243 inim ^{d}en-ki-ke_4 mu-ši-in-$ĝa_2$-$ĝa_2$-am_3
244 $ḫul_2$-$ḫul_2$-e $šag_4$-ta dug_4 tal_2-tal_2 ^{d}ĝeštin-an-na-ka-kam
245 ud ul-le_2-a-aš nu-$ḫa$-lam-e-de_3
246 e_2-$ĜEŠTUG_2$.^{d}NISABA $niĝ_2$-$umun_2$-a gal-gal mu-bi-$še_3$ mul an kug-gin_7 bi_2-sar
247 ud me-da na-me $ĝeštug_2$-ge $niĝ_2$ la-ba-ab-dib-be_2 […]-bi
248 nu-$ḫa$-lam-e mul an sag_2 nu-di mu da-ri_2 mu-dul_5[?]
249 nar-e dub-sar $ḫe_2$-en-ši-du igi $ḫe_2$-en-ni-in-bar-re
250 $ĝeštug_2$ ĝizzal ^{d}nisaba-ka-kam
251 dub za-gin_3-gin_7 gu_3 $ḫe_2$-˹em?˺-ta?-de_2-e
252 en_3-du-$ĝu_{10}$ kug ki-dar-ra-gin_7 pa $ḫe_2$-em-ta-e_3-e_3

(240) "May my hymns be in every mouth. (241) May the songs about me not pass from memory. (242) The aim of my laudation is (243) that the words what Enki conveyed about me (244) (and) what Ĝeštinana happily speaks from the heart and disseminates, (245) will never be forgotten. (246) (Thus) I have had written down the(se) great (repositories of) knowledge line by line in

[26] Beecroft 2010, 16 argues similarly: "Authorship is a property ascribed to a literary text. It reflects an attempt to ground and contextualize that text by assigning its composition and/or performance to a specific individual, real or hypothetical, and the narrative representation of that composition and/or performance constitutes a major category of evidence concerning authorship." Also Helle 2019c, 350 points out that "whether or not the authors actually existed, it is interesting that the ancient scholars found them interesting. The authorial claims are important not for their veracity, which is often dubious anyway, but because they show a new discourse about literature coming into being: the emergence of the narrative authorship."

[27] The transliterations and also the translations provided here make use of the edition of the ETCSL, however, in many instances, they were adjusted to render the grammatical structure of the Sumerian version more accurately.

Nisaba's House of Wisdom, as if they were shining heavenly stars. (247) No one shall ever let them pass from memory [...]. (248) They will not be forgotten, because indestructible heavenly stars extend over eternal years. (249) The scribe shall go to the singer and shall have him have a look at them, (250) (because) they are of the wisdom and understanding of Nisaba. (251) And he (= the singer) shall recite my hymns from it as if from a lapis-lazuli tablet (252) (and) he shall light them up from it as if (they were) silver in the lode." (*Šulgi E* [ETCSL 2.4.2.5] ll. 240–252).

330 [z]a$_3$-mi$_2$-ĝu$_{10}$ ka-ka-[g]a ḫe$_2$-ni-ĝar-ĝar

331 ^{d}ĝeštin-an-na nin ka lal$_3$-a-ĝu$_{10}$-u$_8$

332 šir$_3$-šir$_3$-ra ḫe$_2$-em-mi-dirig-dirig

333 um-mi-a nar gal-gal-e-ne

334 šag$_4$-ba la-la$_2$ ḫe$_2$-ni-in-ĝar

335 a-da-ab tigi$_2$ šumun-ša$_4$ ma-al-ga-tum

336 šir$_3$-gid$_2$-da <za$_3$>-mi$_2$ nam-lugal-ĝu$_{10}$ šag$_4$-bi niĝ$_2$ til-la

337 a-ra-ḫi bal-bal-e za-am-za-am kun-ĝar-bi

338 nar gal-an-zu-ne ma-an-ĝar-re-eš-a

339 en$_3$-du ki du$_{12}$-ba mu-ĝu$_{10}$ mi-ni-gal-eš-a

(330) "I placed my praise (songs) in (people's) mouths. (331) Ĝeštinana, the honey-mouthed lady, (332) made them surpass all songs. (333) Scholars and chief singers (334) put delight in them. (338) Skilled singers composed for me (335) adab, tigi, šumunša, malgatum, (336) šir-gida, royal praise poems - perfect in content -, (337) araḫi, balbale, zamzam and kunĝar compositions. (339) They magnify my name in the places where hymns are performed." (*Išme-Dagan A+V* [ETCSL 2.5.4.1] ll. 330–339)[28]

Šulgi is not featured explicitly as an author, explained by the divine authorship or divine origin of the royal hymns related to his person, as it is stated in the first passage quoted above.[29] Išme-Dagān, in contrast, appears as an originator of divine hymnody, what he as a ruler surely also was. His role, nevertheless, was rather that of a commissioner and not that of an author.[30] Furthermore, he appears as the person securing the transmission of the composition. This conclusion is mostly based on the interpretation of the Sumerian composite verb ka-ga – ĝar "to put in the mouth", with the potential interpretation "to order/establish the performance".[31]

The role of the ruler, according to these accounts, should be considered together with those of the scribe and the singer. While the written and oral forms of the transmitted compositions result from the activity of the scribe or the singer, the stream of tradition is secured by the ruler. The important role of the ruler particularly in the transmission of royal hymns might be explained by his performative duties in the corresponding rituals, and by his personal involvement, traceable

[28] I owe the interpretation of ll. 333–334 to G. Zólyomi.

[29] Divine origin of literature is a well-attested concept in ancient Mesopotamia, see e.g. Lenzi 2015, 153 or Van De Mieroop 2016, 20–21 with reference to the *Catalogue of Texts and Authors* listing compositions attributed to deities, who partly revealed them to human mediators. Beyond Mesopotamia, the most prominent example is the Bible, another proof from the Ancient Near East that literary production was anonym; nevertheless, texts could be attributed to authors, especially to important historical persons, which also provided authority to the respective compositions. See van der Toorn 2007, 28.

[30] This role of the ruler might be mundane, though not frequently stated overtly as part of the royal propaganda. A similar message was preserved from Gudea on St. B viii 21–25: en$_3$-du zu$_2$ keše$_2$-ra$_2$-ĝu$_{10}$ / mu-ĝu$_{10}$ u$_3$-ta-ĝar / mu-ni ba-ĝa$_2$-ĝa$_2$ / kisal ^{d}nin-ĝir$_2$-su lugal-ĝa$_2$-ka / eš$_3$-‹eš$_3$› ĝar-ra-be$_2$ bi$_2$-ib$_2$-da$_{13}$-da$_{13}$-a "who replaces my name with his name in the songs compiled by me, or prevents (the performance of these songs) at the regular festivals in the courtyard of Ninĝirsu". Transcription and translation follow the ETCSRI edition. I owe this remark to G. Zólyomi.

[31] On several compositions praising the ruler Išme-Dagān and concluding with a stanza including this composite verb, see Zólyomi 2010, 420–428.

both in the Ur III[32] and Old Babylonian periods. Still, the above-quoted compositions narrated in the first person should not be mistaken as pieces that can be dated back without difficulties to the lifetime of the respective rulers.[33] They should rather be interpreted as accounts reporting on royal duties as well as on the role of the scribe-scholar, as these texts were most probably intended for teaching professionals on various aspects of composing, performing, and transmitting royal and divine praise poetry.

The question still arises why past rulers were particularly suitable as originators, or, how this type of attributed authorship functioned in the Old Babylonian period. First of all, rulers were well-known historical figures and as such, they provided a clear anchor in time and space for the compositions attributed to them. Secondly, they had a real or attributed performative role mentioned in several compositions and thus a link existed even if their role was not authoring but performing the respective texts. Rulers likely commissioned praise poetry for various occasions, directly or indirectly, and in case they had a performative role, the respective pieces were obviously composed in their names. Potentially, even in case a ruler was absent at the performative rituals, the praise could be performed in his name. In fact, rulers taking part on occasional or regular religious events was the reality of not only the Old Babylonian period but also the earlier periods of Mesopotamian history.

Moreover, compositions presumably composed during the Old Babylonian period but attributed to earlier rulers, especially likely in the case of the autobiographic compositions of Šulgi, established the fiction that the particular oeuvre was part of a stream of tradition and has been composed during the lifetime of the respective ruler. Indeed, the attribution of compositions to the famous ruler Šulgi suggests that such pieces of literature were part of an original Sumerian literary tradition and have been transmitted down to the Old Babylonian period. In some cases, though, the form and content of the compositions raise doubts about whether these works were indeed transmitted, or, at least partially, newly composed on the basis of a few ancient models.[34] In both cases, the authorship was attributed to the ruler, either contemporaneously or posthumously. This type of attributed authorship was likely unproblematic as royal originators in a form of honorary authorship were no mere literary fiction in Mesopotamia. Therefore, such an

[32] For a detailed analysis of these and several other aspects in the Ur III period, see Pitts 2015, 62–65 and 92–122 with references to the presence and role of the Ur III ruler in specific festivities.

[33] Here I do not intend to argue for the Old Babylonian dating of the autobiographic compositions of Šulgi, on this matter, see Jáka-Sövegjártó 2020a. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that the corpus of Old Babylonian Sumerian literary manuscripts was partially dated back to preceding periods of literary production without a thorough linguistic, orthographic, lexicographic, and content analysis of the material. Even among the so-called "Šulgi hymns", at least three different layers can be distinguished, namely the autobiographic compositions, the liturgical compositions, and the epics. They have different structural and compositional features, significant differences concerning archaisms in terms of grammar and orthography, and they address different topics. Especially the autobiographic compositions, where the above-quoted passage comes from, fit thematically better the Old Babylonian literary discourse featuring the ruler as an able scribe and scholar in contrast with the epics centred on the image of the powerful ruler. Indeed, whether past rulers were commemorated in the Old Babylonian period by transmitting their praise poetry or by composing new pieces of literature to honour them, or eventually both, is today rather a matter of opinion, as it is not based on the outcomes of profound scholarly research. What is sure that the compositions were transmitted, copied, and studied already in the early phases of Old Babylonian scholarly education (see Tinney 1999) and thus, the rulers of the past entered in the cultural memory and were part of the scribal culture.

[34] Manuscripts attempting to imitate ancient models are traceable in several instances in the Old Babylonian literary corpus. A handful of manuscripts using the archaic short-line format and thus imitating literary manuscripts of the third millennium BCE prove this practice. On the origins of the short-line format see Jáka-Sövegjártó 2020b with earlier literature. Another phenomenon, also detectable particularly in the corpus of Šulgi hymns is the mixing of archaic and contemporary sign forms within a manuscript. On this phenomenon in general see e.g. Klein 2000, 135 with fn. 2 and Vacín 2011, 14–15; on particular manuscripts with archaic features see Klein 1976; 1981a, 27–32; 1981b, 64–70 and 131–134; 1985, *14–*19; 1990, 96–100; and 1991, 299–301.

attribution was a powerful means to provide a given oeuvre not only with an author but also with a date as well as an approximate territorial allocation.

3.2. The head of the family as author

Authorship was in some specific cases attributed to the head of the family. As an archetype, the head of the family represented the source of wisdom for a community. Wisdom in this context refers to everyday knowledge, norms, and common sense as it becomes apparent from these collections. The concept of the head of family as author manifests explicitly in the instruction literature, and particularly in the composition *The Instructions of Shuruppak* [ETCSL 5.6.1].

The earliest manuscripts of the composition date back to the Early Dynastic IIIa period, and still, this concept of attributed authorship was probably an Old Babylonian invention. The didactic concept, however, is already present in the earliest sources: a father gives instructions to his son.[35] The exposition of the Early Dynastic version from Tell Abu Salabikh[36] is as follows:

1 ĝeštug$_2$ inim-zu

2 [ka]lam [t]il$_3$-la

3 [šuruppag U]R$_2$.[A]Š

4 [ĝeš]tug$_2$ inim-zu

5 kalam ti-la

6 šuruppag dumu na [n]a-mu-ri

7 dumu-ĝu$_{10}$ na ga-ri

8 ĝeš[tug$_2$] ḫe$_2$-m[a]-ak

(1) "The intelligent one, the wise one, (2) who lived in the Land, (3) the man from Šuruppag, UR$_2$.AŠ; (4) the intelligent one, the wise one, (5) who lived in the land, (6) the man from Šuruppag, gave instructions to his son: (7) 'My son, let me give you instructions! (8) Let attention be paid to them.'"

In the Old Babylonian version, the following exposition has been preserved:

1 [ud] re-a ud su$_3$-ra$_2$ re-a

2 [ĝ]i$_6$ re-a ĝi$_6$ ba$_9$-ra$_2$ re-a

3 [mu] re-a mu su$_3$-ra$_2$ re-a

4 ud-ba ĝeštug$_2$ tuku inim galam inim zu-a kalam-ma til$_3$-la-a

5 šuruppag^{ki} ĝeštug$_2$ tuku inim galam inim zu-a kalam-ma til$_3$-la-a

6 šuruppag^{ki}-e dumu-ni-ra na na-mu-un-de$_5$-de$_5$

7 šuruppag^{ki} dumu ubara-tu-tu-ke$_4$

8 zi-u$_4$-sud-ra$_2$ dumu-ni-ra na na-mu-un-de$_5$-de$_5$

(1) "In those days, in those distant days, (2) in those nights, in those faraway nights, (3) in those years, in those distant years, (4) at that time the wise one who knew how to speak clever words lived in the Land. (5) Šuruppag, the wise one, who knew how to speak clever words lived in the Land. (6) Šuruppag gave instructions to his son. (7) Šuruppag, the son of Ubara-Tutu, (8) gave instructions to his son Ziusudra." (*The Instructions of Shuruppak* [ETCSL 5.6.1], ll. 1–8)

35 Nevertheless, the Early Dynastic sources likely refer to the father as UR$_2$.AŠ (= personal name) from Shuruppak (= city), while the son remains unnamed. See Chen 2013, 8–9 for a discussion of various interpretations and opinions on this matter as well as for further literature.

36 For the edition, see Alster 2005, 176. The Adab version agrees with the Tell Abu Salabikh version in its content, though it is slightly different and somewhat longer, see Alster 2005, 196. For a comparative discussion of the two Early Dynastic versions of the prologue see also Chen 2013, 132–135.

Beyond this introduction, the composition consists of a monologue of the father over 250 lines giving advice to his son in various domains of everyday life. Finally, the collection of pieces of advice ends with a recap of the exposition, followed by a doxology:

277 na de_5 šuruppag^{ki} dumu ubara-tu-tu-ke_4 na de_5-ga

278 šuruppag^{ki} dumu ubara-tu-tu-ke_4 na de_5-ga

279 nin dub gal-gal-la šu du_7-a

280 ki-sikil ^{d}nisaba za_3-mi_2

(277) "These are the instructions given by Šuruppag, the son of Ubara-Tutu. (278) That Šuruppag, the son of Ubara-Tutu, gave his instructions, (279) to the lady who completed the great tablets, (280) the maiden Nisaba be praise!" (*The Instructions of Shuruppak* [ETCSL 5.6.1], ll. 277–280)

Chen convincingly argued that the differences between the Early Dynastic and the Old Babylonian versions resulted from a stylistic update as well as from the adoption of the contemporary chronological scheme as it appears in various Old Babylonian sources.[37] As a result, the names of the members of the last antediluvian dynasty were introduced in the exposition, in accordance with contemporary historiographical compositions.[38] These alterations aimed to attribute to the composition's "wisdom teaching a higher status of antiquity and authority".[39] This process not only resulted in the inclusion of Ziusudra as the name of the son but also in the split of Ubara-Tutu, the one of Shuruppak into two personal names, also regarded as father and son.[40] Therefore, the original exposition mentioning father and son was adjusted to Old Babylonian indications of family relationships, namely by the reinterpretation of the name – designation sequence as name – paternal name.

It was only after this redaction that the concept of attributed authorship analysed here, the head of the family as author, emerged. In the Early Dynastic sources, Shuruppak was not yet embedded in a historiographic tradition; his appearance likely had no different meaning as that of the farmer: he was only a citizen of Shuruppak, maybe no more than the man of the street. The invention of the Old Babylonian editor(s) was to attribute the authorship to an antediluvian ruler and thus attribute antiquity and authority to the collection.

The compositions known under the modern titles *The Farmer's Instructions* [ETCSL 5.6.3], *The Instructions of Ur-Ninurta*[41] as well as the *Sumerian Counsels of Wisdom*[42] have very similar contents to that of *The Instructions of Shuruppak*. There is no special reason why these collections

37 Chen 2013, 102.

38 The idea that the antediluvian king list tradition influenced *The Instructions of Shuruppak* was first proposed by Wilcke 1978, 202. For more information on the sources, see also Chen 2013, 129–130. Sallaberger 2018, xix concluded similarly and pointed out the inconsistency of the collection dealing mostly with everyday life and the Old Babylonian framework introducing antediluvian kings. On this point see also the detailed analysis of Samet 2021, 211–215.

39 Chen 2013, 102.

40 Chen 2013, 153. A similar textual change was proposed by Galter 2005, 281, though without the detailed elaboration provided by Chen. For a similar interpretation of this process, but with a focus on the meaning of the signs UR_2.AŠ see Davila 1995, 202 fn. 21 quoting a personal correspondence with P. Steinkeller. Nevertheless, the assumption of Chen (as well as of Steinkeller) that the Ur III or Old Babylonian redactors of the composition directly drew on the Early Dynastic manuscripts is problematic as it was pointed out by Lenzi 2016. Though the process is plausible and indeed possible, it is impossible to say when the names were inserted in the exposition and thus it remains uncertain what role the Old Babylonian historiographic tradition played in this redaction. As the use of paternal names started after the Early Dynastic period (Nielsen 2011), it is hard to tell which tradition drew on the other or whether the two traditions are directly related at all.

41 Edition: Alster 1991 (with Alster 1992); more recently Alster 2005, 225–240.

42 Edited by Alster 2005, 241–264, not identical with the Akkadian composition known under the title *Counsels of Wisdom*.

should be attributed to a historical person, and particularly to an elder living before the Flood or to a ruler. *The Farmer's Instructions* begins with a similar, but briefer exposition compared to *The Instructions of Shuruppak*:

1 ud-ul-ur$_{11}$-ru dumu-ni na mu-un-de$_5$-ga-am$_3$

(1) "Ud-ul-uru gave advice to his son."

Despite the laconic exposition, it is obvious that the background of the collection is close to *other* pieces of the instruction literature: a father, in this case, no historical figure but with a name that specifies his profession as a farmer ("translation"), gives advice to his son who remains unnamed. The motif of the head of the lineage is also perceptible here, though without functioning as a historical anchor.

The introduction of the *Sumerian Counsels of Wisdom* is not preserved. The exposition of *The Instructions of Ur-Ninurta* only partly fits the concept presented here, being the instructions of a god given to a ruler.[43] Its exposition is a variation of the theme, the god being the supervisor and patron of the pious ruler. Ur-Ninurta was a usurper, thus he could not be instructed by his father or predecessor. The deviation from the pattern is explained by these circumstances. Specifying Ur-Ninurta, king of Isin in the role of the recipient of the instructions, his name also provided a historical anchor for the composition, comparable to Ziusudra. The exposition is particularly lengthy and multifaceted in this case, comprising 37 lines of composition, that is, slightly more than half of the total of 71 lines.[44] Therefore, we should not count this composition as a collection comparable to the aforementioned ones, but rather as a piece of literature alluding to this tradition and drawing on the concept of existing counterparts.

In the instruction literature, the attribution of a collection to the head of the family likely served the preservation of the collection by preventing it from disintegration. The head of the family is always specified in the Old Babylonian tradition, be it a mere name (Ud-ul-uru), a pseudo-historical character (Shuruppak) or a deity. However, the historical anchor was rather the son and not the father, in case he was specified by name.

The most important collection, *The Instructions of Shuruppak* aspires to appear as a historical account – providing not only the name of the attributed author but also his paternal name. Shuruppak, moreover, was also suitable as an approximate historical anchor dating the collection to the lifetime of a sage who lived before the Flood. The inclusion of the real historical anchor, his son Ziusudra, strengthened this association. Through the paternal name, the composition emphasized the historicity of the father as well, establishing a further connection between this text and the Sumerian King List and further compositions of the historiographic tradition.

Considering their contents, all the aforementioned collections provide the instructions of a farmer, framed by different expositions and thus integrating a collection of similar instructions into different frameworks. The instructions belong to popular wisdom, the father's role did not encompass inventing this particular set of knowledge, but phrasing it and passing it on to the next generation. The expositions, even the lengthiest, do not specify whether the written tradition or only an oral tradition is attributed to the head of the lineage.

Instruction literature flourished during the Old Babylonian period as it is apparent through a variety of compositions consisting of collections of popular wisdom. The attribution of similar contents of popular wisdom to a farmer, a ruler as well as a mythical character emphasized different aspects of the contents, and different editorial intentions. The farmer as an author justifies

[43] Line 37 of the composition is explicit on that: a$_2$ aĝ$_2$-ĝa$_2$ diĝir-ra-kam "These are the instructions of a/the god".

[44] See Chen 2013, 98–99 who described the composition as a mixture of mythological prologues, royal hymns as well as didactic literature.

reading the instructions as common sense, the reference to a god stresses their normative character, while their attribution to Shuruppak places them in the stream of the Sumerian tradition. These compositions show clearly how attributed authorship also contributed to the creation of differences between similar compositions.

From all of these compositions, *The Instructions of Shuruppak* was particularly successful in terms of transmission and preservation.[45] This success is likely a consequence of the choice of the framework, namely anchoring the composition not in a particular time of Mesopotamian history, but from before the Flood. As Ziusudra emerged and gained popularity during the Old Babylonian period, so became this composition also more widespread and likely more popular in the course of time. The author of the composition was, most importantly, suitable to anchor the text in a Sumerian stream of tradition and to present the contents – conveying universal values – as remnants of ancient wisdom from before the Flood.[46] In the Old Babylonian period, especially the esteemed Sumerian heritage proved to be worthy of preservation and transmission on the long run.

3.3. The private individual as author

A further model of attributed authorship emerges from the manuscripts of Old Babylonian elegies: the private individual.[47] The term authorship may be somewhat problematic in this case, as it will be apparent when analysing the following examples. The private individual is namely no historical person, rather a fictive concept which appears in the role of an author.

First of all, some text passages will be quoted to illustrate the concept of the private author in early Mesopotamian literature. The first, related passage is the beginning of the composition *The Message of Lu-diĝira to his Mother* [ETCSL 5.5.1] (ll. 1–9):[48]

1 lu_2-$kaš_4$-e lugal-la ḫar-ra-an-na ĝen-na
2 nibru^{ki} ga-e-gi_4 inim-bi dug_4-ba-ab
3 kaskal su_3-ra_2 i-im-du-de_3-[en]
4 ama-$ĝu_{10}$ mud-am_3 u_3 nu-mu-ni-k[u$^?$-ku]
5 ama_5-a-ni ka-$ĝiri_3$ al-gib-ba
6 lu_2 du kaskal-la silim-ma-$ĝu_{10}$ en_3 al-tar-tar-re
7 u_3-na-a-dug_4 silim-ma-$ĝu_{10}$ šu-ni-$še_3$ ĝar-i_3

[45] The success of *The Instructions of Shuruppak* in contrast with other instructions' collections is apparent if we compare the number of manuscripts preserved. *The Instructions of Shuruppak* counts over 70 extant manuscripts and fragments, while the *Farmer's Instructions* accounts for 44, the *Counsels of Wisdom* and the *Instructions of Ur-Ninurta* for 10 exemplars each. Furthermore, *The Instructions of Shuruppak* was also known in an Akkadian version, see BWL 92–95.

[46] The attribution of a collection to an alleged or real historical figure for the sake of its preservation is also known after the Old Babylonian period. The *Series of Sidu*, though its contents cannot be reconstructed in its entirety, was likely also – at least partially – a collection of popular wisdom attributed to an author whose aim was to keep the collection together and preserve it from disintegration. The customization of authorship is revealing in this case: the collection of thirty-five bilingual compositions, as it is plausible based on a catalogue of texts once included in the series (K.1870), was attributed to an author known under the Sumerian name Sidu (translated into Akkadian as Enlil-ibni). On the catalogue and the series see Finkel 1986 as well as Jiménez 2017, 112, 119 and 157. For the figure of Sidu see Frahm 2010, 169–176.

[47] Letter-prayers and letters, even those transmitted together with the corpus of literary compositions, will not be discussed here. In letters and letter-prayers, an originator is always explicitly stated, this genre is therefore beyond the scope of anonym literary production prominent in the Old Babylonian period.

[48] The composition was published by Çığ and Kramer 1976.

8 ama-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫul$_2$-ḫul$_2$-la-am$_3$ še-er-ka-an mi-ri-in-dug$_4$-ga

9 tukum-bi ama-ĝu$_{10}$ nu-e-zu ĝiškim ga-mu-ra-ab-šum$_2$

(1) "Royal courier, start the journey! (2) I want to send you to Nibru. Deliver this message! (3) You are going on a long journey. (4) My mother is worried, she cannot sleep. (5) Although the way to her woman's domain is blocked, (6) as she keeps asking the travellers about my well-being, (7) deliver my letter of greeting into her hands. (8) Then my mother will be delighted, and will treat you kindly (?) for it. (9) In case you should not recognize my mother, let me describe her to you. (…)"

Another composition mentions the same personal name, Lu-diĝira. The composition is entitled *An Elegy on the Death of Nannaya* [ETCSL 5.5.2].[49] The exposition of this composition (ll. 1–19) reports on Nannaya, a father who wished to see his son on his deathbed, but he did not come. The second part (ll. 21–112) is a lamentation of the son over his father's death. In between, a brief attribution of the composition is included as follows:

20 $^{\text{I}}$lu$_2$-diĝir-ra šag$_4$ NE-NE-a-ni-ta i-lu ab-sar-re

(20) "Lu-diĝira out of his inflamed heart wrote a lament."

In both cases, the name of the private individual featured as the compositions' author is Lu-diĝira, meaning "man of the god". Though it is well-attested as a real personal name, in the present context, it rather functions as a non-specific subject, like anybody or man in the street. It is, however, an important shift that the words or thoughts of this individual are quoted in the first person. This first-person narration proves a change of perspective, mostly attested in lamentations as well as in letters. The first composition indeed operates with the fiction of a letter; however, it is embedded in a narrative frame and lacks the formulaic expressions typical of the genre. In the second composition, Lu-diĝira is explicitly mentioned as the author of a lament.

It is, nevertheless, problematic to a certain extent whether Lu-diĝira meant to be the author in the present context or he is a symbolic figure, an anthropomorphic concept of individual authorship. His name appears in both compositions in the function of an author and thus there is no formal difference between his attributed authorship as well as the other types discussed above, except the fact that he cannot and should not be considered a historical person but an overtly fictive author. In the Old Babylonian history of literature, authors are not preserved in paratexts but the compositions make mention of them in some form. Therefore, these examples are also strong cases: an unspecified individual attributed with authorship of a composition with a very personal tone, composed in first person narration.

The concept of individual authorship is likely an invention of the Old Babylonian period, the era when in the context of manuscript production and use the private sphere extended gradually and significantly compared to the Ur III period's state-run scriptoria and centralized administration. Documents of everyday transactions were handed out to the individuals involved in the process and were kept by them in their private households. Also, literary colophons of the Old Babylonian period testify the emergence of the individual manuscript owner and producer, in contrast with the collective copying enterprises documented in course of the third millennium BCE. The abundance of manuscripts in the private sphere, e.g. in private households cannot be overlooked both compared to the preceding Ur III or to even earlier periods of Mesopotamian history. Further material proof for the individual use of manuscripts, especially literary manuscripts, are the glosses preserved on several tablets, which supported the individual study of the composition. Apparently, a model of authorship also revolved around the new phenomenon, namely manuscript production for private purposes, by one's own hand and for one's own use.

[49] The composition was published by Kramer 1960 and re-edited by Sjöberg 1983.

The concept of the private author also made its appearance in letter prayers and even private letters presenting the emotions and personal reflections of an individual. However, in this case, even if particular letters and letter-prayers are preserved in several copies and they were certainly part of the Old Babylonian scribal curriculum, these compositions might have been composed to fulfil practical purposes and their authors might be indeed historical.[50] Somewhat different is the innovative concept of the private individual, the man of the street as author, emerging together with new literary genres featuring this type of authorship. Both the author and the oeuvre were the products of this era and the results of the outlined socio-cultural development.

3.4. The cultural hero as author

When attempting to discuss authorship in early Mesopotamia, the central figure is certainly Enheduana, the only acknowledged author by modern scholarship and therefore, she cannot be dismissed from the present study. She was a historical figure known from non-literary sources[51] as the high priestess of Nanna in Ur, daughter of Sargon, king of Akkad. The main reason why Enheduana is recognized as a factual author by modern scholars is indeed her confirmed historicity and her status as a priestess.[52] Her person was suitable for authoring literary compositions, particularly hymns, as literary production was closely related to the temple personnel in early Mesopotamia. Interestingly though, no other priests or priestesses, attested or not in historical sources, were recorded as authors in the Old Babylonian literary tradition.[53] This fact might be the first hint that this case is also an example of attributed authorship.

Enheduana is attested in four literary compositions known from the Old Babylonian period: the *Temple hymns* [ETCSL 4.80.1], as well as the divine hymns *Inana B* [ETCSL 4.7.2], *Inana C* [ETCSL 4.7.3] and *Nanna C* [ETCSL 4.13.3].[54] Furthermore, a fifth composition is known from a fragmentary manuscript dating to the Ur III period.[55] Consequently, all known manuscripts date long after the lifetime of the priestess. This conflict was mostly resolved by the assumption that

[50] On the historicity of letter-prayers and private letters, partly even composed by or attributed to women, see Lion 2011, 97–98 and Halton – Svärd 2018, 98–102.

[51] The historical sources comprise the inscriptions on a disk-shaped alabaster plaque from Ur (CBS 16665) also known from an Old Babylonian tablet copy (U 7737, unknown IM number) as well as two cylinder seals (BM 120572 and IM 4221) and a seal impression (BM 123668), all from Ur, which belonged to individuals in Enheduana's entourage, identifying her by name. On these objects see Frayne 1993, 35–39 nos. 16 and 2003–2005 (with earlier literature).

[52] As a priestess, she could presumably read and write and she was also educated in Sumerian language and literature. See e.g. Glassner 2001, 117: "On observe, d'autre part, que les auteurs et les compilateurs des grandes oeuvres littéraires exercent, dans le grande majorité, les professions d'exorcistes, de lamentateurs ou de devins." Nevertheless, this statement holds true from the Old Babylonian period on, and certainly does not apply to the Early Dynastic IIIa period, where literary production is strongly connected to administration. Therefore, it is hard to tell whether the role of Enheduana as author should be interpreted as an Old Babylonian anachronism or it mirrors the reality of the late third millennium BCE. More convincing is Lion 2011, 97 who argues that "all kings, literate or not, had scribes at their service. (…) in antiquity unusual men, such as rulers, or a woman such as Enheduanna, exceptional because of her high birth and religious duties, could equally be regarded as authors". Indeed, it is hard to deny the possibility of commissioned pieces of literature in light of the evidence of votive inscriptions, see Lion 2011, 92–96.

[53] It is particularly noticeable that the only known author from before the Old Babylonian period is a woman, as "most activities which required reading and writing were situated in male-dominated fields" (Svärd 2013, 278).

[54] Traditionally, a fifth composition known from the Old Babylonian tradition, *Inana and Ebih* [ETCSL 1.3.2] was also attributed to Enheduana. Nevertheless, the composition does not mention her name, the assumption is merely based on the interpretation of the myth as a literary paraphrase of historical events which most likely occurred in the Sargonic period. See Bottéro – Kramer 1989, 227–228 and especially Konstantopoulos 2021, 59–60 with fn. 14, pointing out that the lack of the statement of authorship in this case is suspicious and it is at least certain that Enheduana was not regarded as the author of this composition in the Old Babylonian tradition.

[55] ISET 1 pl. 216 (Ni 13220), edited by Westenholz 1989, 555–556.

Enheduana composed the respective works in the late third millennium BCE and scholars tend to contemplate the reasons for the long transmission history of the respective hymns down to the Old Babylonian period.[56] In contrast, Konstantopoulos recently argued that Enheduana existed as "something between literary figure, historical reality, and invented symbol" already in the Old Babylonian period.[57]

The declaration of the priestess's authorship in these compositions is not uniform.[58] In the three divine hymns she appears in the first person, thus she is only the speaker, not the declared author.[59] However, as it is true in case of historical rulers, she could also be the commissioner of these compositions and she was certainly regarded as their author, already in antiquity. In the Ur III hymnic fragment, she is referred to in the third person, she is also subject to praise, therefore, this composition is a good candidate for later attribution, maybe only by modern scholarship.[60] The attribution of the *Temple hymns* to Enheduana is more specific:

> 543 lu_2 dub zu_2 $keše_2$-da en-$ḫe_2$-du_7-an-na
> 544 lugal-$ĝu_{10}$ $niĝ_2$ u_3-tud na-me lu_2 nam-mu-un-u_3-tud
> (543) "The compiler of the tablets was Enheduana. (544) My lord, something has been created that no one has created before."

Enheduana is described here as the compiler and not the author of the composition. She was identified as *the originator of the written tradition*. This distinction was, as stated above, likely unimportant in ancient Mesopotamia. The formal characteristics of this remark resemble a colophon, this is the main reason why this attribution is believed to be authentic, even by modern scholarship. However, the closing line of the composition (l. 545) positioned after this remark, as well as several copies of the composition indicate that, differently from unique colophons, this remark was part of the transmitted text of the *Temple hymns* in the Old Babylonian period.[61] A possible conclusion is that Enheduana was more significant or more meaningful for ancient scribes than others who declared their names in colophons and therefore, her name became part of the transmitted text of the *Temple hymns*.[62] Nevertheless, another explanation is that she was once indeed

[56] See e.g. Zgoll 1997, 60: "(…) die Frage, was der Text *NMS* (= Ninmešara, *Inana B* – Sz. S.) bewirken und bedeuten will und weshalb er über die Jahrhunderte hinweg bedeutsam blieb, ist wichtiger als die Frage, ob der Text von der historischen Person En-ḫedu-Ana stammt." Nevertheless, when raising these questions, Zgoll implies that the composition was a product of the Sargonic period, even if not written personally by Enheduana.

[57] Konstantopoulos 2021, 57.

[58] On the signs of authorial presence, see Steineck – Schwermann 2014, 16–18.

[59] These compositions can be compared to royal hymns featuring the ruler as the speaker, though he was unlikely the author of the composition. Those attributions rather suggest that the ruler was the performer of the composition in course of a ritual. The same can also hold true for Enheduana.

[60] There is no consensus whether Enheduana should be regarded as the author of these compositions. Hallo – van Dijk 1968, 2–3; Sjöberg – Bergmann 1969, 5 as well as Westenholz 1999, 76 supported this thesis. Lambert 1970 and 2001 was in favour of later attribution, while Civil 1980, 229 and Michalowski 1998, 65 demonstrated that the hymn *Inana C* is a product of the Old Babylonian period, regarding both its grammar and vocabulary, and as such, has been composed considerably later than the lifetime of Enheduana.

[61] All four manuscripts in which the relevant segment of the composition is preserved include these lines; the order of lines suggests in three of the four manuscripts that they belonged to the body of the composition, as they were placed before the closing line referring to the line count of each hymns. Only one manuscript positions these lines as a subscript. On this issue see Black 2002, 3.

[62] It is indeed possible that the name of an originator became part of the transmitted text of a composition, see e.g. *The History of the Tummal* [ETCSL 2.1.3] mentioning Lu-Inana, the chief leatherworker of Enlil as its author (or mediator of an oral tradition). In this case, Lu-Inana was likely no significant historical person of renown in the Old Babylonian period, still his name survived as it was integrated into the composition. In the case of Enheduana, especially because the attribution is close to the phrasing of a colophon, the question should be raised why this particular colophon was transmitted by the copyists. A definite answer is that Enheduana was not identified as any scribe making appearance in a colophon,

the author or compiler of this composition which was reshaped by other scribes and scholars in the course of time, preserving the name of the originator.[63]

The consolidation of Enheduana's authorship is more plausible though if we assume that scribes were aware of her historicity. If Enheduana was a known historical figure in the Old Babylonian period, a secondary attribution is not less likely than the preservation of her authorship in the long run and should be considered at least in the case of some of the five compositions.[64]

The *Temple hymns* use the Sumerian term zu_2 – $keš_2$ to describe the role of Enheduana. This verb has the meaning "to bind, to tie" as well as "to gather".[65] Helle recently elaborated on cross-cultural metaphors comparing text production to weaving, considering this passage as well.[66] The present instance is, however, not the only known attestation of this metaphor in Mesopotamia. In the introduction of the *Keš temple hymn* [ETCSL 4.80.2], Nisaba, the patron goddess of writing and the scribal profession wove the hymn like a net from the words of Enlil (ll. 10–11). The Sumerian term applied in this case was $sa\text{-}gen_7$ – sur "to weave/form like a net".[67]

It is likely no mere coincidence that these two compositions share a unique theme within the Old Babylonian corpus: both are hymns addressed to temples. As the Keš temple hymn is known from Early Dynastic manuscripts[68] and was included in the elementary school curriculum of the Old Babylonian period,[69] it could have served as an inspiration and model for the *Temple hymns* – either in the Old Babylonian period or before. In this case, the compilation of the hymns by Enheduana repeated or mimicked Nisaba's act of creation – in the sphere of humans. Since the

but her name was meaningful already.

63 Most temple hymns could be part of an original composition dating to the Sargonic period as suggested by Wilcke 1972, 46 and 48. Nevertheless, both Wilcke 1972, 48 and Black 2002, 2 pointed out that some hymns were addressed to temples erected in the Ur III period, i.e., after Enheduana's lifetime, particularly to the temple of Šulgi at Ur and the temple of Nanna at Gaeš. The mention of the Eninnu in Lagaš is also problematic. All these elements suggest that the compilation underwent substantial redaction during the Ur III period.

64 The best candidates are certainly the *Temple hymns* and *Inana B*, maybe in this sequence of probability. Zgoll 1997, 179–184 enumerates multiple arguments for the pre-Old Babylonian dating of *Inana B*, nevertheless, they are less convincing than the topographical arguments impacting the dating of the *Temple hymns*. Especially the grammatical and lexical archaisms are sporadic, considering the rather high number of manuscripts and the length of the composition, and some of them could be relativized (e.g. the rather equal distribution of the orthographic variants nu-gig and $nu\text{-}u_8$-gig within the Old Babylonian literary corpus). As an example, some hymns of Šulgi preserved on a few manuscripts only exhibit the multiples of such archaisms (see e.g. Klein 1981b, 65–70 particularly concerning Šulgi D, but also in general on this phenomenon) However, the dating of *Inana B* to the Sargonic period cannot and should not be entirely excluded, the state of the art might also result from the popularity of the composition and the thorough redaction of Old Babylonian scribes. Such a meticulous redaction is indeed likely as the composition was part of the elementary scribal curriculum, the Decad.

65 The interpretation of this term is based on its Akkadian translation, lu_2 dub zu_2-$keš_2$-da being translated as *kāṣir tuppī* "binder of tablets". On the Sumerian compound verb see Karahashi 2000, 129 and on the interpretation of this specific text line, see also Konstantopoulos 2021, 61. The same composite verb was used in Gudea St. B viii 21 to refer to the hymns of the ruler, see fn. 30 above. Note that also Kabti-ilāni-Marduk, the author of the *Epic of Erra* used the corresponding Akkadian verb, *kaṣāru* "to tie, to knot" to describe the act of securing the composition revealed to him in writing, presumably by the god Erra. Therefore, he does not count as an originator either but a compilator, see Lenzi 2015, 152 as well as van der Toorn 2007, 41.

66 Helle 2019b, 123–128.

67 Conceptualizing authorship through metaphors is rare in the Sumerian literature; nevertheless, it is a well-attested strategy, for example, in medieval Persian prose, see Rubanovich 2009.

68 Biggs 1971.

69 The *Keš temple hymn* is attested in two Old Babylonian literary catalogues (ETCSL 0.2.1 from Nippur and ETCSL 0.2.2, likely from Nippur; both published in Kramer 1942) as one of the ten elementary curricular texts labelled by modern scholars as the "Decad". A third attestation in a catalogue from Ur (UET 6 123) is possible. All three literary catalogues include also the incipit of the *Temple hymns* which apparently belonged to a more advanced stage of the curriculum in Nippur schools.

priestess was a proper interlocutor with access to the divine sphere, the creation of a new piece of literature was rationalized through a human mediator, a cultural hero.[70] This function is likely central in the Old Babylonian literary discourse and relevant when contemplating why Enheduana's name was linked to several compositions.

In conclusion, three central elements of this model of attributed authorship can be identified:

Enheduana as a female author and priestess was a suitable counterpart of Nisaba in the human sphere. Moreover, considering a priestess as an originator would allow or even support the divine inspiration and thus the divine origin of the literary tradition, Enheduana acting as mediator between the divine and the human sphere.

As a priestess, she was fitting for the role of an author as priests were likely responsible for most of the literary production of the Old Babylonian period. This might be an anachronism or also the reality as early as in the Sargonic period, the scarcely preserved literary production of the era does not allow conclusions on that matter. However, as a member of the elite, she was suitable as commissioner of literary compositions regardless of time and space and maybe this factor was even more important than her function as high priestess of Nanna in Ur.

As a historical figure, she was a proper anchor in time and space. It is difficult to prove that Old Babylonian scribes were informed by the historicity of Enheduana; however, some historical sources preserving her name and function survived up to now. It is likely that these votive objects were still in situ in the early second millennium BCE and thus available for scribes and scholars who studied and copied them while collecting pieces of information on the past. Perhaps her name was also known from one, or a few, literary compositions which invited the attribution of further, thematically related pieces.

Whether her Akkadian ancestry was an important factor in the selection or transmission process as the author of *The temple hymns*[71] is not explicitly stated in the material. The unity of temples represented in the collection did not necessarily reflect the reality of the Sargonic times, it might be considered as the unity of cities from the perspective of Old Babylonian Nippur.[72]

4. Conclusions

The present paper aimed to revisit the concept of authorship and the role it played in the formation and transmission of Sumerian literary compositions. The nominal author was intended to function as a guide to text formation and interpretation, nevertheless, this author was considered retrospectively as the originator of the composition. Such a strict correlation between the author and the text results from later conceptions of literary history. Before the modern era, and particularly in the ancient Mesopotamian tradition, a conceptual gap between the author and

[70] Helle 2019a, 10 reflects upon the authorship of Enheduana from a different angle, but concludes similarly on the role of Enheduana as an author: "The local traditions required a sense of coherence if they were to be united despite their differences, and that coherence was provided by the author. The notion of authorship, especially the idea that different poems could be attributed to the same person, guaranteed the unity of what was fundamentally a composite text."

[71] So Helle 2019a, 16: "Her (= Enheduana's – Sz. S.) works fully display the might of the Old Akkadian empire that had brought the city states under one rule. But they also illustrate the loss of that power." This hypothesis calls to mind the suggestion of Beecroft (2010, 4): "Archaic Greece and Early China were both regions in which cultural unity overlay a politically fragmented and disordered world; biographical and anecdotes about authors provided a site in which these tensions could be negotiated, freeing literature in both cultures from its origins in specific if poorly known political contexts and facilitating its greater circulation, both within the linguistic community and, ultimately, beyond it." This could be indeed also true for ancient Mesopotamia, where Enheduana would be a fitting author symbolizing unity.

[72] The closing hymn for the temple of Nisaba including the reference to Enheduana also establishes a connection between this piece of literature and the Old Babylonians scribal culture, Nisaba being mentioned in the doxology of many school compositions.

the originator is perceptible in many ways: the originator of the text, the originator of the manuscript and the nominal author mentioned in the text were all different individuals, or in some cases, groups of individuals. This study intended to address these issues by emphasizing the connection of the text, the author, and the social and cultural settings in which these texts were embedded.

Among all the examples discussed above, Enheduana is the only acknowledged author in the Sumerian history of literature, because she is the only historical person attested in this function. Nevertheless, this fact does not make her claim stronger as a factual author, in contrast, she likely fits into the model of attributed authorship because of her historicity. Interestingly, all attested authors in Old Babylonian literary compositions were no scholars, thus they did not belong to the group producing and transmitting the contemporary corpus of literary texts. The choice of scholars falls to individuals who could serve as an anchor and contribute to the interpretation of the composition.

This consideration brings us back to the question of why specifically these characters qualified as authors and why these models had been applied to contextualize literary compositions by Mesopotamian scholars. Therefore, I aim to revisit the various functions of authorship proposed by Steineck and Schwermann and their relevance for the four models proposed and discussed in this article (Table 1).[73]

	Patron	Head of the family	Private individual	Cultural hero
Anchor in time and space	+	+		+
Establish unity		+		
Create differences		+	+	
Link to reference texts	+	+		+
Provide contexts	+	+	+	+

Table 1. The four models of attributed authorship presented in this article, evaluated within the framework proposed by Steineck – Schwermann 2014 regarding their potential functions.

Apparently, attributed authorship could fulfil a number of functions as early as in the Old Babylonian period. The various models were used in most cases to anchor the composition in time and space, and to provide an interpretative context for the work. However, it is also obvious that the stronger the historical embedment of a concept is, the greater variety of functions could be arranged to it. The concept of authorship in Mesopotamia likely emerged from honorary authorship, heading towards the acknowledgement of individual achievements. Even if this development took a great amount of time, the core concept is already present in the symbolic concept of the individual author.

Only later, in the first millennium BCE, the idea emerged that literary and scholarly texts should be attributed to scholars and not rulers or significant historical persons. This concept is documented in the *Uruk List of Kings and Sages* retrospectively attributing fictive authorship for scholars, as well as mentioning rulers who still fulfilled the function of the historical anchor, apparently of importance from the Mesopotamian scholars' point of view.

Attributed authors in the ancient Mesopotamian tradition emerged first in the Old Babylonian period, but they did not outlive in the literary tradition. They seem to fulfil ephemeral roles by anchoring and contextualizing the Sumerian literary tradition, or, a literary tradition in Sumerian, for those who only learned this language in the course of their professional training. Also, they

[73] Steineck – Schwermann 2014, 14–15.

were not numerous enough to contribute significantly to mapping and managing the chaotic textual culture of Sumerian literature. Attributed authors should be considered, however, as the very first attempts to establish a history of literature and raise awareness of continuity as well as ongoing change in the ancient Mesopotamian literary tradition.

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