

Gilgameš and Aga

(Sumerian text, 3rd Millennium BC, University of Oxford translation, The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature)

Envoys of Aga, the son of En-me-barage-si, came from Kiš to Gilgameš in Unug. Gilgameš presented the issue before the elders of his city, carefully choosing his words: "There are wells to be finished, many wells of the Land yet to be finished, there are shallow wells of the Land yet to be finished, there are wells to deepen and hoisting gear to be completed. We should not submit to the house of Kiš! {Should we not smite it with weapons?"

In the convened assembly, his city's elders answered Gilgameš: "There are indeed wells to be finished, many wells of the Land yet to be finished. There are shallow wells of the Land yet to be finished, there are wells to deepen and hoisting gear to be completed. So we should submit to the house of Kiš. We should not smite it with weapons"

Gilgameš, the lord of Kulaba, placing his trust in Inana, did not take seriously the advice of his city's elders. Gilgameš, the lord of Kulaba, presented the issue again, this time before the able-bodied men of his city, carefully choosing his words: "There are wells to be finished, many wells of the Land yet to be finished. There are shallow wells of the Land yet to be finished, there are wells to deepen and hoisting gear to be completed. Never before have you submitted to the house of Kiš. Should you not smite it with weapons?"

In the convened assembly, his city's able-bodied men answered Gilgameš: " "Standing on duty and sitting in attendance, escorting the king's son, and forever grasping the donkey's reins, who has that much breath?", as the saying goes. You old men should not submit to the house of Kiš! Should we young men not smite it with weapons?"

"The great gods created the structure of Unug, the handiwork of the gods, and of E-ana, the house lowered down from heaven. You watch over the great rampart, the rampart which An founded, the majestic residence which An established. You are its king and warrior, an exuberant person, a prince beloved of An. When Aga comes, what terror he will experience! That army is small, and scattered at the rear. Its men will be incapable of confronting us."

Then Gilgameš, the lord of Kulaba, rejoiced at the advice of his city's able-bodied men and his spirit brightened. He addressed his servant Enkidu: "On this account let the weaponry and arms of battle be made ready. Let the battle mace return to your side. May they create a great terror and radiance. When he comes, my great fearsomeness will overwhelm him. His reasoning will become confused and his judgment disarrayed."

Not five, not 10 days had passed when Aga, the son of En-me-barage-si, laid siege to Unug with his men. Unug's reasoning became confused. Gilgameš, the lord of Kulaba, addressed its warriors: "My warriors shall have the choice. My warriors, choose! Let someone with courage volunteer, and I will send him to Aga."

Birḫar-tura, his royal guard, spoke in admiration to his king: "My king, I shall goto Aga so that his reasoning will become confused and his judgment disarrayed."

Birḫar-tura went out through the city gate. As soon as Birḫar-tura went out through the city gate, they captured him at the gate's entrance, and then beat Birḫar-tura's entire length. He came into the presence of Aga and then spoke to Aga. Before he had finished speaking, an officer of Unug climbed up on the

rampart and leaned out over the rampart. Aga saw him and then spoke to Birḥar-tura: "Slave, is that man your king?"

"That man is not my king! Were that man my king, were that his angry brow, were those his bison eyes, were that his lapis lazuli beard, were those his elegant fingers, would he not cast down multitudes, would he not raise up multitudes, would multitudes not be smeared with dust, would not all the nations be overwhelmed, would not the land's canal-mouths be filled with silt, would not the barges' prows be broken, and would he not take Aga, the king of Kiš, captive in the midst of his army?"

They hit him, they struck him. They beat Birḥar-tura's entire length. Gilgameš climbed up on the rampart after the officer of Unug. His radiance overwhelmed Kulaba's young and old. He armed Unug's able-bodied men with battle maces and stationed them on the causeway at the city gate's door. Only Enkidu went out through the city gate. Gilgameš leaned out over the rampart. Looking up, Aga saw him: "Slave, is that man your king?"

"That man is indeed my king." It was just as he had said: Gilgameš cast down multitudes, he raised up multitudes, multitudes were smeared with dust, all the nations were overwhelmed, the land's canal-mouths were filled with silt, the barges' prows were broken, and he took Aga, the king of Kiš, captive in the midst of his army.

Gilgameš, the lord of Kulaba, approached close to Aga: "Aga my overseer, Aga my lieutenant, Aga my governor, Aga my commander, Aga my military commander! Aga gave me breath, Aga gave me life: Aga took a fugitive into his embrace, Aga provided the fleeing bird with grain."

(The able-bodied men acclaim Gilgameš:) "You watch over Unug, the handiwork of the gods, the great rampart, the rampart which An founded, the majestic residence which An established. You are its king and warrior, an exuberant person, a prince beloved of An." (Gilgameš addresses Aga:) "Before Utu, your former kindness is hereby repaid to you." "I watch over Unug, the handiwork of the gods, its great rampart, a cloudbank resting on the earth, its majestic residence which An established. The city will repay the kindness shown to me. Before Utu, your former kindness is hereby repaid to you." He set Aga free to go to Kiš.

O Gilgameš, lord of Kulaba, praising you is sweet.