

## The destruction of the silver pipes from Ur: a new proposal

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SÁNCHEZ MUÑOZ, D. The destruction of the Silver Pipes from Ur: A new proposal.

R. *Museu Arq. Etn.* 41: 62-74, 2023.

**Abstract:** This paper proposes that the silver pipes found in the Royal Cemetery of Ur (ca. 2450 BCE) were intentionally made unfit for use after having been used to play music during the funerary procession that led to the burial of the deceased in Private Grave 333. Based on Mesopotamian archaeological and cuneiform evidence, as well as brief comparative observations, it is suggested the reason for this was so that the spirits living inside this wind instrument could not at some point in the future disturb the living.

**Keywords:** Mesopotamia, Early Dynastic III Period, Silver Pipes from Ur, Dumuzi/Tammuz, ritual breakage

### Introduction

This article focuses on a pair of silver pipes (Fig. 1) found in the Royal Cemetery of Ur (mod. Tell al-Muqqayar, Iraq), dated to ca. 2450 BCE, in the ED<sup>1</sup> III period (ca. 2600-2350 BCE)<sup>2</sup>.

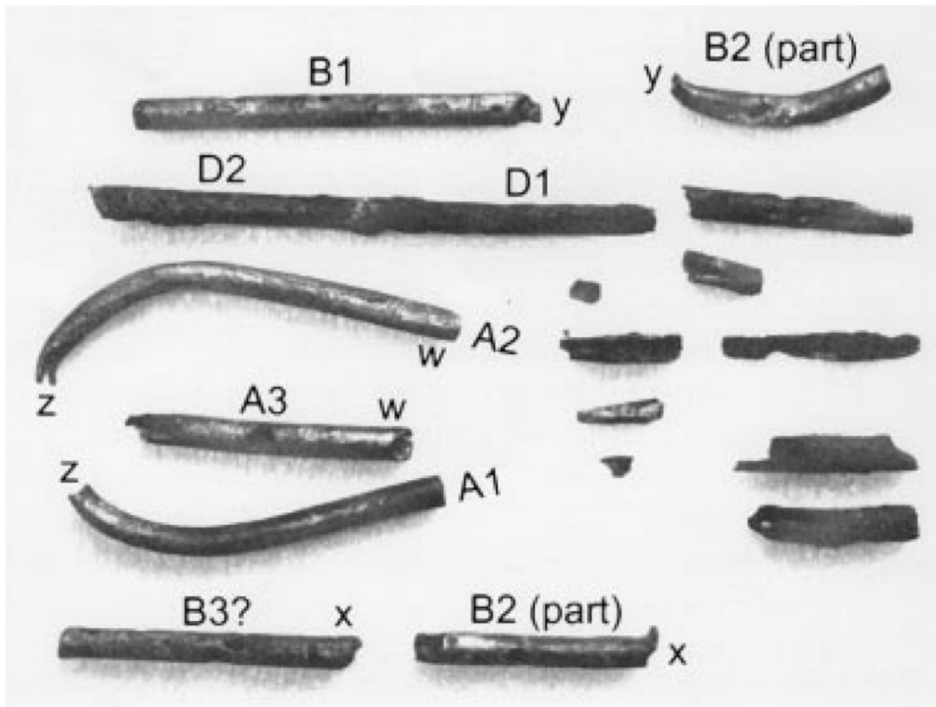
1 Abbreviations follow the *Reallexikon der Assyriologie*. The transcription of Sumerian and Akkadian texts and words follows the guidelines of the *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archäologie* and the system proposed by Attinger (2021a: 57-104) for the Sumerian words.

2 For a Mesopotamian chronology as a guide to the periods mentioned in this contribution, cf. [https://cdli.ox.ac.uk/wiki/doku.php?id=adopted\\_periodisation\\_in\\_cdli](https://cdli.ox.ac.uk/wiki/doku.php?id=adopted_periodisation_in_cdli).

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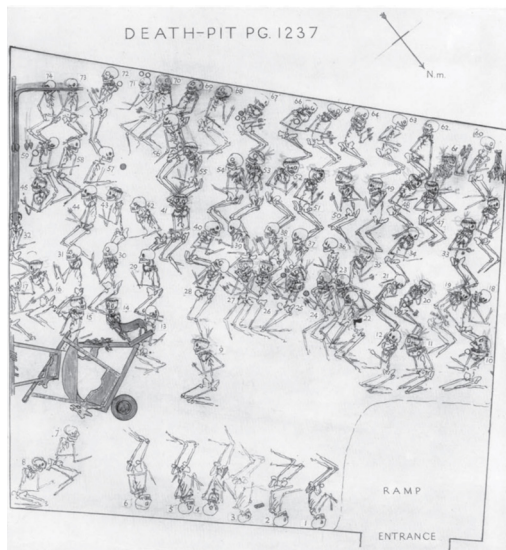
The pipes were recovered during the excavations led by Leonard Woolley at Ur between 1926 and 1931 in unit U. 8608 of PG/333, a tomb containing a coffin and a section with numerous ceramic, copper, silver, and lapis lazuli offerings (Woolley, 1934: 151 and <http://www.ur-online.org/location/938/>). The remains of this instrument are currently preserved in the Ancient Southwest Asian Archaeological Collection of the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, cataloged as CBS 17554.

As can be seen in Figure 1, the silver pipes were found in a disturbed state, having been bent and broken into small fragments. This contrasts with the well-preserved lyres found in PG/1237, the Great Death Pit of the Royal Cemetery of Ur as shown by Figures 2 and 3.



**Figure 1.** The remains of the Silver Pipes from Ur (CBS 17554) as they were in 1997.

**Source:** Lawergren (2000: 127, fig. 3).



**Figure 2.** Drawing of PG/1237.

**Source:** <http://www.ur-online.org/location/931/>.

Although many scholars have discussed these pipes (e.g., Galpin, 1937: 17; Sachs, 1943: 73; Hartmann 1960: 17; Rimmer, 1969: 35-36; Stauder, 1970: 185; Spycket, 1972: 172; Schmidt-Colinet, 1981: 20-21; Rašīd, 1984: 46; Cheng, 2009: 172; Kutzer, 2017: 33-34), only Lawergren (2000: 123-124) has attempted to explain why the pipes were distorted and broken. Suggesting this was done on purpose (that is, not that the breakage was a result of a post-depositional disturbance of the context), he proposes two different reasons as to why the silver pipes were broken:

- One possible reason is that, since the pipes were easy to make, they were not of value in the afterlife. Thus, they were destroyed after their owner's death.
- A second reason draws on lines 133-138 of the Neo-Assyrian version in Akkadian of

the mythological narrative of *Ištar's Descent into the Netherworld*, cited in the translation by Dalley (1988: 160). According to the story told in these lines, the goddess Ištar (Inana in Sumerian) returned to life by sending her husband Tammuz (Dumuzi in Sumerian) to the underworld as her temporary replacement in the land of the dead. During his time there, Tammuz was unable to play his lapis lazuli flute (*malīl uqni*); he could play them again only upon his return from the Netherworld. This text led Lawergren (2000: 124) to conclude that the destruction of the silver pipes from Ur may have commemorated such a mythological episode. The overall proposal might have a precedent in Grame (1973: 33), who highlighted the connections between wind musical instruments and resurrection.

Lawergren (2010: 88) subsequently discarded the first hypothesis, quite appropriately, since the pipes were made of silver, a valuable metal that was used to cover

the inner wooden cores of the Silver Lyre (BM 121199) and the Stag/Boat Lyre (30-12-253) found in the Great Death Pit (Hauptmann *et al.* 2018: 112)<sup>3</sup>. If the silver pipes were not considered musical instruments of value, one might expect to have found them discarded in a dump, as is the case of a globular flute (“ocarina”) from Uruk (W 21790) dated to ca. 2900 BCE (Nissen, 1970: 126, 148-149). Furthermore, if they were not considered valuable, they could also be recycled or remelted to be reused for another purpose, similar to the melting down of cymbals (*sem<sub>6</sub>*) to make a door mentioned in the Ur III text BBVO 11, p. 281 6N-T418 (Ibbī-Su'en 07-03-00): obv. 1-4 (see Zettler, 1990: 86).

Although Lawergren (2010: 88) still maintains his mythological hypothesis for the burial of the silver pipes, and recent studies have accepted this proposal (e.g., Kutzer, 2017: 91-92), it will be argued below that this is unsatisfactory for several reasons.



**Figure 3.** The zoomorphic lyres found *in situ*.

**Source:** Rašīd (1984: fig. 1).

<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, Hauptmann *et al.* (2018: 112) did not analyze the silver of the Silver Pipes from Ur.

### The fate of the pipes of Dumuzi/Tammuz

Bellow in this page, the reader will find is the reconstruction, by the *Electronic Babylonian Literature* team, of the main excerpt of the Neo-Assyrian version of *Inana/Ištar's descent into the Netherworld* telling us of the pipes of Dumuzi/Tammuz (<https://www.ebl.lmu.de/corpus/L/1/8/SB/->)<sup>4</sup>.

Scholars (e.g., Dalley, 1988: 160; Lapinkivi, 2010: 33) conventionally parse *ellānni* (lines 136-137) as a G durative, third-person plural of the verb *elū* with ventive *-am* (“to come up towards somewhere”). However, Frahm (2003: 296-297) suggested that it should be understood as a form of the interjection *elle'a* (“hurrah!”) given that *ellānni* appears to be grammatically feminine, whereas one would expect the masculine/impersonal *ellūnni* to correspond to

the various objects and people mentioned in these lines. However, the need for *ellānni* seems more obvious when one considers that this is a subordinate clause headed by *ina ūmi* (lit. “on the day in which...” an equivalent of “when”), and thus the verb should have the *-u* suffix for subordination. More recent linguistic research has shown that, in cases of a grammatical conflict, the ventive *-am* prevails over the *-u* subordinating suffix (Bjørn & Pat-El, 2020: 72 n. 5, 74). Therefore, *ellānni* can be used to describe the ascent of Dumuzi, the flute, the carnelian ring, and the mourners from the Netherworld as Lawergren (2000: 123-124; 2010: 88) thought.

Unfortunately, a methodological issue for Lawergren’s hypothesis is that he based his ideas about a third-millennium aerophone found in an archaeological context on a first-millennium, Neo-Assyrian text (ca. 934-612 BCE).

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|     |   |  |
|-----|---|--|
| 133 | <i>ikkil aḥīša tašmē tamḥaṣ Bēl-ilī<br/>šukuttaša ... [...]</i>           | <i>(After) she heard the lamentation of her<br/>brother, Bēl-ilī struck her jewelry [...],</i>   |
| 134 | <i>īnāti ša undallā pān litti</i>   | <i>the eye(stones) that had filled the face of<br/>the Wild Cow, (and said):</i>   |
| 135 | <i>aḥī ēda lā taḥabbilanni</i>  | <i>“Do not rob me of my only brother!</i>  |
| 136 | <i>ina ūmi Dumūzi ellānni malīl<br/>uqni šemer sāmti ittīšu ellā(nni)</i> | <i>On the day in which Tammuz came up to<br/>me, the flute of lapis lazuli and the carnelian<br/>ring<sup>5</sup> came up to me with him</i> |
| 137 | <i>ittīšu ellānni bakkā `ū u<br/>bakkātu</i>                              | <i>(and) the wailing men and women came<br/>up to me with him,</i>   |
| 138 | <i>mītūtu līlūnim-ma qutrinna<br/>liššinū</i>                             | <i>let the dead come up and smell the<br/>incense.”</i>  |

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4 All the translations of Sumerian and Akkadian texts in this article are my own. There is another mention of the pipe of Tammuz in line 129 (*šubāta luššā lubbissu malīl uqni limḥaṣ* [...] “Clothe him in a bright-orange robe! Let him strike up the lapis lazuli flute!”). However, it is not included here so as not to make this excerpt too long. Line 129 is part of a longer sentence that begins on line 126.

5 This pair (a flute made of lapis lazuli and a ring made of carnelian) may have an echo in the mention of an *embūbu ša sāndi* (“pipe of carnelian”, *sāndi* is here a variant of the *sāmti* found in the excerpt shown in the body text) in line 148 of Tablet VIII in the Gilgameš Epic (Standard Babylonian Version; see <https://www.ebl.lmu.de/corpus/L/1/4/SB/VIII#148> for a recent edition and translation).

There is still no version of *Inana/Ištar's Descent into the Netherworld* strictly from the third millennium. However, we do have one from the Old Babylonian period, in the early second millennium BCE. Since it is written in

Sumerian, it may have had an even earlier third-millennium origin. As reconstructed by Attinger (2021b: 60-62), the Old Babylonian version of the myth places the pipes of Dumuzi in quite a different context:

|      |   |  |
|------|---|--|
| 349  | dDumu-zi [pa]ra <sub>10</sub> maḥ-a i-im-tuš<br>maḥ-a tuš-a dur <sub>2</sub> [bi <sub>2</sub> ]-in-ġar  | <i>Dumuzi was sitting on a majestic [thro]ne, he had seated himself [thereon], being magnificently seated.</i>                           |
| 350  | te-a- <sup>r</sup> e <sup>?</sup> -[ne <sup>(?)</sup> ] ḥaš <sub>4</sub> -a-na<br>i-im-dab <sub>5</sub> -be <sub>2</sub> -eš  | <i>As th[ey]<sup>6</sup> approached (him), they took him by the belly</i>  |
| 351  | <sup>duš</sup> šakir umun <sub>7</sub> (-bi) ga<br>mu-un-de <sub>2</sub> -eš-am <sub>3</sub>  | <i>and poured out the milk of all his churns.</i>  |
| 352  | umun <sub>7</sub> -am <sub>3</sub> ama <sup>?</sup> lu <sub>2</sub> dur <sub>11</sub> -ra-gen <sub>7</sub><br>saġ mu-un-da-saġ <sub>3</sub> -ge-ne  | <i>As they were seven, they (brutally) struck (his) head as the mother of a sick person strikes (her head because of her suffering).</i> |
| 353  | sipa-de <sub>3</sub> ge-SU <sup>3-</sup> ge-di-da igi-ni šu<br>mu-un-ta <sub>3</sub> -ta <sub>3</sub> -ge   | <i>The shepherd wanted to play the flute and the double pipe<sup>7</sup> before her,</i>   |
| 353a | ge-šukur-[ra-gen <sub>7</sub> ge <sup>(?)</sup> da]b <sub>4</sub> <sup>?</sup><br>- <sup>r</sup> ba <sup>?</sup> -na <sup>?</sup> -gen <sub>7</sub> za <sub>3</sub> -ga-na<br>ba-an-dab <sub>5</sub> -be <sub>2</sub> -eš | <i>(but) they surrounded him [like a] barrier of reeds, as [a] fence [of reeds].</i>   |
| 354  | igi mu-un-ši-in-bar igi uš <sub>2</sub> -a-ka   | <i>She looked at him with a dead stare (and)</i>   |
| 355  | enim i-ne-ne enim libiš ge <sub>17</sub> -ga  | <i>spoke to him with a word that made his stomach ache.</i>  |
| 356  | gu <sub>3</sub> i-ne-de <sub>2</sub> gu <sub>3</sub> nam-da <sub>6</sub> -da <sub>6</sub> -ga   | <i>She called them with the command of destruction (saying):</i>   |
| 357  | en <sub>3</sub> -še <sub>3</sub> tum <sub>3</sub> -mu-an-ze <sub>2</sub> -en  | <i>“Because of this<sup>8</sup>, bring him (to me)!”</i>   |
| 358  | ku <sub>3</sub> <sup>d</sup> Inana-ke <sub>4</sub> su <sub>8</sub> -ba dDumu- <sup>r</sup> zi <sup>r</sup> -<br>da šu-ne-ne-a in-na-šum <sub>2</sub>  | <i>With their hands, they gave the shepherd Dumuzi to the pure Inana.</i>  |

6 The shepherd = Dumuzi; they = the demons accompanying Inana from the underworld; she = Inana.

7 Mesopotamian iconography shows only flutes played by shepherds so far (Delaporte cylinder-seal = Spycket, 1972: 127 fig. 27; BM 102417 = Rašid, 1984: fig. 40). However, the *argūl*, a double pipe made of reed, is common among shepherds in the Arab world (see, e.g. Collaer & Elsner, 1983: 42).

8 This refers to the *hybris* of Dumuzi, who sat on a magnificent chair oblivious to the suffering of his wife Inana in the Netherworld

Here the pipes appear before the death of Dumuzi when the demons accompanying Inana out of the Netherworld capture and bring him to Inana. The text nowhere ensures that Dumuzi is going to come back up to the Earth and play his pipes again.

Another story<sup>9</sup> about Dumuzi's death may even suggest that the pipes were left behind by Dumuzi once he headed towards the Netherworld, a sort of distant forerunner of the Greek myth of Marsyas, the satyr, getting hold of the double pipe (αὐλός) that the goddess Athena had previously cast away (e.g., Arist. Pol. VIII 1341b 3-8). Two Old Babylonian

ir<sub>2</sub>-sem<sub>5</sub>-ma texts<sup>10</sup> remembering the death of Dumuzi say, “the wind (now) plays his pipes” (ge-di-da-ni tumu-e am<sub>3</sub>-me<sup>11</sup> / ge-di-da-na tu-me<sub>3</sub> ʾa<sup>12</sup>-me<sub>3</sub>)<sup>12</sup>.

Thus, Old Babylonian Sumerian sources for the mythical descent of Inana/Īstar into the underworld –which were closer in time to the objects under investigation– suggest that this myth is not useful to explain the destruction of the silver pipes from Ur. Nor can one use other mythological or pseudo-historical destructions of musical instruments, such as the one described in an early Old Babylonian lament for the Mother Goddess<sup>13</sup>:

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|      |                                      |   |
|------|--------------------------------------|---|
| A 36 | <i>Adgege uparrū [p]itni[k]i</i>     | <i>They severed Adgege, [yo]ur [ch]ordophone!</i>               |
| A 37 | <i>algarram tayyērām inû-ma Mamī</i> | <i>The merciful algarrum was overturned, oh Mother Goddess,</i> |
| A 38 | <i>[i]štūtam ippuḥam išātam elšu</i> | <i>(and) [s]uddenly he (= the evil man) blew fire to it!</i>    |

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A chordophone (*pitnum*) called Adgege is being cut off (*parā'um*), perhaps, to break its sound box and/or arms<sup>14</sup>. The *algarrum* was overturned (*inû*), perhaps as a way for breaking it, and was then burned (*ippuḥam išātam*). In any case, as the editors of this text have shown (Oshima & Wasserman, 2021: 271, 275), the destruction referred to in this text occurs in the context of the desecration of a temple. Woolley (1934: 151)

indicated no such desecration detectable in PG/333. Below is a new reason for destroying this musical instrument.

9 Zgoll et al. (2023: 331-341) show that multiple versions of the death of Dumuzi existed.

10 A prayer that the gala-priest recited to appease the angry heart of the gods (Gabbay, 2014: 7-9).

11 Ir-sem<sub>3</sub>-ma 60: rev. 14 (Cohen, 1981: 89-92).

12 Ir-sem<sub>3</sub>-ma 175: rev. 8' (Cohen, 1981: 172-173).

13 My grammatical version, based on the transliteration of Oshima & Wasserman (2021: 271).

14 Oshima & Wasserman (2021: 271), and later Wasserman & Bloch (2023: 264) translate this line as “They severed (the strings of) the Adgigi, your lyre!”, suggesting that the instrument was desecrated by cutting off its strings, in a sort of parallel with the ancient Chinese musician Yú Bóyá (俞伯牙) breaking the strings of his zither (*qín*, 琴) once his friend Zhōng Ziqī (鍾子期) passed away (Katz-Goehr, 2015). However, the Old Babylonian text under comment might denote the severance of the whole stringed instrument, including its sound box and arms. The verb *parā'um* means “to cut through, to sever, to slit” in its G and D stems (CAD P, s.v. *parā'um* A). However, the Old Babylonian text under comment might denote the severance of the whole stringed instrument, including its sound box and arms. The verb *parā'um* means “to cut through, to sever, to slit” in its G and D stems (CAD P, s.v. *parā'um* A). However, the D stem used here implies a notion of more intensity compared to the G stem (Huehnergard, 2011: 257), thus suggesting more drama in the destruction. If this reasoning is correct, we might have something comparable to a lute from Antinoopolis preserved at the Grenoble Museum. The neck of this instrument was intentionally damaged in antiquity (Eichmann et al., 2012: 73).

## Re-explaining the destruction of the Silver Pipes from Ur

Motivations for ritually breaking an instrument differ among cultures, both in modernity (DeVale, 1988: 145-146; Johnson, 1996: 40) and in antiquity (Bonghi Jovino, 2007: 6-9; Maniquet, 2008: 66-67). Therefore, one should find a reason for the intentional bending<sup>15</sup> of the silver pipes of Ur in the broader Mesopotamian cultural milieu.

In this context, one should note that many types of objects (cult status, pottery, etc.) in early Mesopotamia (up to 2000 BCE) seem to have been ritually broken to neutralize the (evil) spirits residing inside those objects, so they would not disturb the living (Oates, 1978: 119-120; Bjorkman, 1994: 489-504; Verhoeven, 2013: 24).

Although silver pipes are not explicitly mentioned in these studies, the silver pipes from Ur could also have been intentionally bent to protect people from the (evil) spirits living inside the instrument. This bending would have been done once the silver double pipes had ceased to be used for playing music during the funerary procession leading the dead person into the final resting place. This proposal will be demonstrated below by considering the archaeological context in which the silver pipes were found (i.e., PG/333) and various cuneiform texts.

### The place of the Silver Pipes inside PG/333

As can be seen in Figure 4, the objects found in PG/333, including the silver pipes,

15 Lawergren (2010: 88) said that the pipes were “twisted and broken before burial.” However, the fragmentation was probably the result of an unintentional post-depositional process. We talk about two tiny tubes made from a single layer of silver pierced with four and three sound holes respectively. They were found at 4.60 meters below the modern surface for about 4,400 years (Woolley, 1934: 151) without a “core” like the one protecting Tutankhamun’s silver trumpet from deformation (Manniche, 1975: 31). If the Meroë *auloi* from the tomb of Queen Amanishakheto (10 BCE), made of two layers of bone and bronze, appeared highly fragmented (Gänsicke & Hagel, 2017: 382), what not to expect from the silver pipes from Ur?

were retrieved outside the coffin containing the human remains (Woolley, 1934: 151). This contrasts with the burial of other wind instruments, such as a bone flute from Tepe Gawra XII (Late Chalcolithic, ca. 4350-3600 BCE), which was found intact under the head of the skeleton of a child in an urn burial (Tobler, 1950: 215, plate XCIX.d no. 3).

Collinson (1975: 9-16) thought that PG/333 would be the grave of an ancient piper. This proposal reminds us of the case of James MacPherson (1675-1700), a Scottish fiddler who broke his fiddle before being hanged for a crime (Wilgus, 1965: 195-196)<sup>16</sup>. However, the other objects found in PG/333 hardly relate to a piper, as we have chisels (e.g., U. 8595 / B17365), axes (e.g., U. 8607 = B17446), and an arrowhead (U. 8609 = B17369). Moreover, the one buried in PG/333 could even be a child, according to the Ur Online Project (<http://www.ur-online.org/location/44/>).



Figure 4. Photo of PG/333.

Source: <http://www.ur-online.org/location/931/>.

16 Remark owed to Jerome Colburn.

Regardless of his/her profession and/or age, the person buried (or the parents, should the buried person be a child) in PG/333 should have enough wealth to afford a banquet. Such a fact might not be surprising when recalling that PG/333 was located in the so-called Trial Trench E (TTE). This large trench of the Royal Cemetery of Ur has revealed some tombs relatively rich in gold jewelry, an example being PG/337, considered a royal grave by Woolley (1934: 43; see also <http://www.ur-online.org/location/44/>). Wealthy individuals are also found in other non-royal graves of the Royal Cemetery of Ur (Hafford, 2019: 224-226).

The idea that the person buried in PG/333 was wealthy to some extent may explain the use of silver to fashion the pipes (otherwise made of cane; see Lawergren, 2000: 123). The same applies to other elements found in the grave: sheep and goat bones, clay pots, and special<sup>16</sup> copper shell dishes (Woolley, 1934: 409; Ellison *et al.*, 1978: 175; Cohen, 2005: 92, 172; Quenet, 2018: 21 n. 117). In any case, the silver pipes probably were used *before* that feast, during the funerary procession, as the cuneiform evidence suggests.

### The cuneiform evidence

The present observations will deal with the *ge-di* (lit. “sounding reeds”), most probably the Sumerian word for “double pipe.” Indeed, in addition to previous arguments for such an identification (Krispijn, 1990: 15 and 2010: 58), the lexical text OB Lu<sub>2</sub> A: 244 (MSL 12, 165) translates *ge-di* into Akkadian as *šulpum*<sup>17</sup>,

16 Lapis lazuli beads, another luxury product, also appeared in this grave (Hermann, 1968: 42 n. 112).

17 OB Lu<sub>2</sub> D: 243 (= MSL 12, 208) gives *ša inubī* (“player of the *embūbu*-pipes”) for *lu*, *ge-di-da* as well as *lu<sub>2</sub> ge-SU<sub>3</sub>* (player of the *ge-SU<sub>3</sub>*, a flute). However, *embūbu* might be just a generic word for “pipe, tube” in a sort of label for “woodwind instruments”. The matter would recall the Greek *αὐλός*, which may designate other aerophones different than double pipes (Hagel, 2023: 69). Note that the Akkadian *embūbu* may even be used without a musical meaning. Thus, the trachea/windpipe was known in Akkadian as *embūb hašē* (CAD E, s.v. *embūbu*), which refers to a tube (*embūbu*) for the lungs (*hašē*).

a cognate of the Ugaritic *ḫlb* identified with a double pipe in light of archaeological evidence (Koitabashi, 1998: 375; del Olmo Lete & Sanmartín, 2015: 892).

First, scholars have already noted the connections of the *ge-di* with the cult in general (Gabbay, 2014: 152 plus<sup>18</sup> SF 40: v 9-10<sup>19</sup>, TCL 5 6038: obv. iv 11, 13<sup>20</sup>, and UET 7, 73: obv. iv 21-23)<sup>21</sup>. One of the cultic contexts in which the *ge-di* were used is a funerary one, similar to their use in other regions in ancient Southwest Asia, such as Ugarit (Koitabashi, 1998: 375) and Israel (Braun, 2002: 14, 209; Pilch, 2007: 18). The most convincing piece of cuneiform evidence is found on the reverse of NATN 853, an Ur III administrative text from the city of Nippur (mod. Nuffar, Iraq)<sup>22</sup>:

This text mentions the rations of an uncertain product received by various specialists going to a tomb (*ḡiri<sub>3</sub> ki-ḫulu-a*, lit. “on the way to the destruction-place”). We find here a *ge-di* player under the expression *lu<sub>2</sub> ge-di<sub>3</sub>-da*, a non-standard spelling of *lu<sub>2</sub> ge-di-da* (Wilcke, 2000: 44; Shehata, 2009: 261). We also have the *ama ir<sub>2</sub>-ra* (“wailer,” lit. “mother of the laments”) and the *gala-priest*, two specialists in reciting prayers in the Emesal cultic dialect of Sumerian to appease the heart of the deities. This makes sense given that processions were a typical context in which to perform those prayers (see Gabbay, 2014: 170).

Second, regarding the possible spirits living inside the silver pipes from Ur, Sumerian texts occasionally consider the *ge-di* as something

18 For the Eblaite mentions of *ge-di* with the *NE-di* cultic dancers, see Catagnoli (1989: 178-179).

19 The cultic cymbals (*sem<sub>3</sub>*) appear along a *ge-di* (see Zand, 2020: 735 n. 26, 738 for edition).

20 A piper (*lu<sub>2</sub> ge-di-da*) belongs to the cultic staff (*ḡiri<sub>3</sub> se<sub>3</sub>ga*) of Šara, the tutelary deity of the city of Umma (text edited by BDTNS 006189).

21 This text mentions a piper (*Lu<sub>2</sub> gi.di.da.a*) along the *Lu<sub>2</sub> i.lu* and *Lu<sub>2</sub> balaḡ.di*, two types of reciters of Emesal prayers (see Westenholz, 1997: 162-164 for edition).

22 Edition BDTNS 025724.



alive, with its voice. The clearest piece of evidence comes in a group of lines from *Išbī-Erra E*, an Old Babylonian hymn in Sumerian

by King Išbī-Erra of Isin (ca. 2019-1987 BCE) addressed to Nisaba, the goddess of grain and the scribal arts<sup>23</sup>:

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|    |   |  |
|----|---|--|
|    | [...] Beginning lost  |  |
| 1' | [x] ʿlu <sub>2</sub> ge <sup>3</sup> -di <sub>3</sub> -da                       | [...] <sup>24</sup> the piper  |
| 2' | 5 sila <sup>3</sup> gada <sup>ĝes</sup> nu <sub>2</sub> ba-dul <sub>9</sub> -la | 5 liters <sup>25</sup> : those who have covered the (dead's) bed with linen. |
| 3' | 0.0.1 nagar du <sub>3</sub>   | 10 liters: the carpenter who built it.                                       |
| 4' | 0.0.3 azlag <sub>7</sub>  | 30 liters: the fuller.   |
| 5' | 0.0.2 ziz <sub>2</sub> gala   | 20 liters of emmer wheat: the gala-priest.                                   |
| 6' | 5 sila <sub>3</sub> ama ir <sub>2</sub> -ra                                     | 5 liters: the female wailer  |
| 7' | [x] ĝiri <sub>3</sub> ki-ḥulu-a   | [...] on the way to the tomb.  |

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|    |  |   |
|----|--|---|
| 26 | <sup>d</sup> Nisaba ki nu-te-a-za  | (Oh) Nisaba, in the place you do not approach,                                    |
| 27 | tur <sub>3</sub> nu-du <sub>3</sub> -e amaš nu-ĝa <sub>2</sub> -ĝa <sub>2</sub>                | no one builds a stall, no one installs a sheepfold,                               |
| 28 | sipa-de <sub>3</sub> ge-di-da ša <sub>3</sub><br>nu-mu-un-ib-kuš <sub>2</sub> -u <sub>3</sub>  | the shepherd does not talk (intimately) with the ge-di pipe,                      |
| 29 | sipa-ra mim zi-zi nu-ĝa <sub>2</sub> -ĝa <sub>2</sub> šu-luḥ-ḥa-bi<br>bi šu nu-du <sub>7</sub> | no one takes care of the shepherds, their ritual purification remains unfinished, |
| 30 | sipa tur-ra ga ni-ib-dun <sub>4</sub> -dun <sub>4</sub> <sup>dug</sup> šakira<br>nu-da-da      | the little shepherd does not stir the milk, nor does he pour it into the jug,     |
| 31 | ša <sub>3</sub> -bi-ta i <sub>3</sub> -GA <sup>3</sup> nu-mu-un-e <sub>3</sub> -a              | nor does butter come out from it, (and)   |
| 32 | <sup>[ĝes]</sup> bansur diĝir-re-e-ne šu<br>ba-ni-ib-du <sub>7</sub> -du <sub>7</sub>          | the setting of the table of the gods remains unfinished.                          |

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23 Edition: Reisman (1976: 359-360).

24 The quantity of the ration is expected here.

25 The non-specialist reader might want to note that the translation of sila<sub>3</sub> as “liter” is a modern compromise (see [https://cdli.ox.ac.uk/wiki/doku.php?id=ur\\_iii\\_metrological\\_systems](https://cdli.ox.ac.uk/wiki/doku.php?id=ur_iii_metrological_systems), n. 1). Some non-metrical measurement units, such as the US quart (1 quart = 0.90 liters; remark owed to Jerome Colburn), could be technically a better fit.

Some scholars (Reisman, 1976: 359; Karahashi, 2000: 147) have seen in line 28 an allusion to the shepherd (sipa) soothing his heart with the ge-di. Nevertheless, two aspects of such an interpretation are problematic. First, one would expect the expression ša<sub>3</sub>.g šed<sub>10</sub> (“to soothe the heart,” see Karahashi, 2000: 148), not the ša<sub>3</sub>.g kuš<sub>2</sub> (lit. “to tire the heart”) used by this text. Second, is the shepherd in this text soothing his own heart? The word ša<sub>3</sub>.g (“heart”) appears with no 3<sup>rd</sup> singular possessive suffix {ani} (“his/her,” i.e. ša<sub>3</sub>-ga-ni). The piper could be playing for others, for example, the people present with him in the excerpt from above (i.e., ša<sub>3</sub>.g, a non-human noun that may be both singular and plural, might be in plural “the hearts”).

The expression ša<sub>3</sub>.g kuš<sub>2</sub> typically refers to an intimate dialog between a person and an object that should be able to respond (Jaques, 2006: 272). Therefore, a translation, “to speak (intimately) with” (Attinger, 2021a: 659) is logical in this context. People today would not see a real dialog between a shepherd and his pipe. At most, they would say that the shepherd speaks *through* his pipe. Nevertheless, people in ancient Mesopotamia might have seen it differently or, at least, more poetically (*Išbi-Erra E* is, after all, a literary text): the shepherd talks with the pipe using his air, and the pipe responds with its sound.

## Conclusions

Lawergren (2000: 123-124; 2010: 88) mainly tried to compare the destruction of the silver pipes from Ur with the silence of the pipes of Dumuzi/Tammuz in *Inana/Ištar's descent into the Netherworld*. However, as shown at the beginning of this paper, no version of that myth refers to the silence of those pipes. On the contrary, they are still used to make sounds after the god's death. Based on the facts that there is evidence of the intentional destruction of musical instruments in

ancient and modern cultures, that objects were ritually broken in early Mesopotamia, and that the silver pipes from Ur were located outside the grave in PG/333 along with remains of a feast rather than inside the grave, it is proposed here that the silver pipes from Ur were used during the funerary procession for the deceased of PG/333 and then intentionally bent.

It is suggested that this was done so that the spirits living inside the pipes could not disturb the living. Cuneiform texts also seem to further support this, as the ge-di, a pipe, took part in funerary processions and had a voice.

Even if its conclusions largely differ from those of Lawergren, the present paper could not have been conducted without Lawergren's pioneer work. At least, it is hoped that this article will reinvigorate the research on Mesopotamian wind instruments among archaeologists of ancient Southwest Asia, Assyriologists, and (archaeo-)musicologists, not to mention other specialists.

## Acknowledgments

Thanks to Luis Calero for inviting me to the *I Seminario de Música y Danza en el Mundo Antiguo* (December 4, 2020), where the first version of this paper in Spanish was read (<https://youtu.be/adaVs9uLmOY?si=UhwTUPAsNJyNxyd7>). Fábio Vergara Cerqueira invited me to present an English, revised version of that paper in this special issue. Matthew Susnow revised the English of the to-be-submitted version, and Jerome Colburn did the same after the reports of the reviewers (conveniently taken into consideration here). They both and William B. Hafford offered scientific remarks as well. A Margarita Salas Postdoctoral Fellowship has funded the writing of this article.

SÁNCHEZ MUÑOZ, D. A destruição dos tubos de prata de Ur: Uma nova proposta. *R. Museu Arq. Etn.* 41: 62-74, 2023.

**Resumo:** Este documento propõe que os tubos de prata encontrados no Cemitério Real de Ur (ca. 2450 a.C.) foram intencionalmente tornados impróprios para uso após terem sido usados para tocar música durante a procissão funerária que levou ao sepultamento do falecido na Sepultura Privada 333. Com base em evidências arqueológicas e cuneiformes da Mesopotâmia, assim como breves observações comparativas, sugere-se que a razão para isto foi para que os espíritos que viviam dentro deste instrumento de sopro não pudessem, em algum momento no futuro, perturbar os vivos.

**Palavras-chave:** Mesopotâmia, Período Dinástico III, Tubos de Prata de Ur, Dumuzi/Tammuz, ruptura ritual

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