

Sam Mirelman

The Ala-Instrument: Its Identification and Role¹

Introduction

Concerning musical instruments, we are fortunate to have many terms, many visual representations and a handful of material remains from ancient Mesopotamia. However, a precise identification or matching between text and image (or material source) has remained elusive. The one clear exception is the *lilissu*, which can safely be identified as a kettledrum in the Seleucid period, due to the presence of text and image on the same physical object (Rashid 1984: 140). A further methodological problem lies in the fact that names of instruments change over time. However, although the identity of an instrument might change, it usually retains familial characteristics with its predecessor of the same name. For example, Anglo-Saxon *hearpe*, from which the word “harp” is derived, originally denoted a Teutonic lyre (De Vale 2008: V: 1). In the following, it is argued that, at least originally, Sumerian *á-lá* or Akkadian *alû* referred to a giant, double-membraned, cylindrical, struck drum (as opposed to a friction drum), as depicted on several third-millennium-BCE iconographic sources. The giant drum that is depicted on the Gudea and Urnamma Stelae (Rashid 1984: 70–73, Ill. 51–55) has been identified as the ala-drum by Galpin. Although I agree with Galpin, his reasoning was based on weak evidence, largely the descriptions of the instrument’s sound as “thunder” (Galpin 1937: 6–7). Galpin’s view has been followed by Sachs 1940: 74ff.; Hartmann 1960: 79–82; Spycket 1972: 179–180; Marcuse 1975: 131; Picken 1975: 103; Shehata 2006: 369; Gabbay 2007: 59 and Ziegler 2007: 74. The purpose of this article is to confirm this identification with a more detailed consideration of the sources, to show that the ala-instrument is, along with the *lilissu*, one of the few securely identifiable instruments in ancient Mesopotamia. Secondly, an attempt will be made to examine the instrument in its cultic role. My methodology is philological, iconographic and ethnographic. Examples of drum-making from various parts of the world are relevant, although no direct link is claimed. The giant cylindrical drum has died out in contemporary Iraq; thus comparisons with other musical cultures from around the world must be made. In making such comparisons, no historical links are implied.

¹ I would like to express my thanks to Walther Sallaberger for his comments. Of course, I remain responsible for errors.

The Term *á-lá* = *alû*

Lieberman treats *á-lá* as a Sumerian loanword in Akkadian, resulting in *alû* (SLOB: 145, no. 41). It is also possible that the Akkadian or Semitic form is a loanword in Sumerian, as there is a form of Semitic loanwords in Sumerian which feature -a, such as *mātu* > ma-da, *manû* > ma-na (see Gelb 1961: 5–6, 141). A possible etymology of *á-lá* is “stretched on the side,” which might describe the membrane stretched across the side of the drum. Besides a musical instrument, *á-lá* can signify at least four other objects, including a type of vessel (maybe a cauldron),² perhaps a leather strap or part of a door, a part of the donkey or ox harness or a part of the arm of the scales. In addition, a general meaning of “sin” has been tentatively put forward (for these suggested definitions, see PSD A/II: 83).

In Akkadian, the meaning of *alû* as “demon” (see CAD A/I: 375, s.v. *alû* A) further complicates the semantic field, especially if we consider the Akkadian form as a loanword in Sumerian. The Sumerian form of this word, meaning “demon,” is usually written a-lá, although it is occasionally written *á-lá* (PSD A/I: 101–103). It is likely that there is an association between the two meanings of *alû* as “drum” and “demon,” at least in the first millennium. An Akkadian hymn to Ninurta suggests the *alû* was performed in a festival for Ninurta (BWL: 120, see below). An epithet of Ninurta is ⁴ud-u₁₈-lu “thunder”, for which Caplice has suggested that u₁₈-lu “storm” (*mehû*) may be personified in the demon u₁₈-lu = *alû* “demon” (Caplice 1971: 161; see CAD A/I: 375, s.v. *alû* A for u₁₈-lu as a rare writing of *alû* “demon”). The association of Ninurta as a warrior-god (see Streck 1998–2001: 517) with cultic fighting matches accompanied by the *alû* is considered below. The association between the *alû*-drum and thunder or storms is confirmed below.

The same is true for the a-lá “device for hoisting water”, which is sometimes written *á-lá* (PSD A/I: 103–104).³ In Akkadian there are further meanings, including a mythological bull and other uncertain realia, which from their context are unlikely to be musical instruments. A multiplicity of meanings is also apparent in the term *uppu*, which may signify type/s of realia, as well as a musical instru-

² In PSD A/II: *á-lá* A “(a percussion instrument),” item no. 6 of the lexical section is misplaced, as it refers to a metal object, perhaps a cauldron: uruda-šen-á-lá = *nap-ru-ú* (îh XI 396; MSL 7, 145; see Attinger 1997: 117). Similarly, Limet 1960: 200 mistakenly identifies the šen-á-lá zabar in Nik 2, 528: 3 as a musical instrument, as opposed to a vessel. This is caused by a confusion between Á and DA in šen-da-lá “cauldron.”

³ The reference to lú *á-lá* in UET 3, 1265 has been interpreted as “ala-man/men,” although with reservations (PSD A/II: 82). This attestation is excluded here as, given the context, *á-lá* here probably refers to a hoisting device or harness. lú *á-lá* also appears in an inscription of Šin-iddinam where it is used in apposition to lú *á-dah*, and has nothing to do with a musical instrument (Frayne, RIME 4, E4.2.9.2, 60’).

ment, probably a drum (Kilmer 1977). Reiner's idea that KUŠ.GU₄.GÁL, followed by the phonetic complement -ú or -e, is a logogram for *alû* "drum", is possible, although we have no firm evidence (see Reiner 1969; CAD K: 598, s.v. **kušgugalû*). The ala-drum is associated lexically with the algar(sur) (see PSD A/II: 82, sub. lex.; Veldhuis 1997–1998: 120; Shehata 2006: 369–371). However, the usefulness of this information is dependent on an identification of the algarsur, which remains tenuous.

Iconographic Evidence for Large Cylindrical Drums

Images of large cylindrical⁴ drums dating to the third millennium come from the Mesopotamian heartland, or its near-periphery. These are the Gudea, Urnamma and Bedreh Stelae, the fragment of a vase from Tello (Rashid 1984: 68–73, Ill. 49–56) and the Scarlet-Ware vase from Khafajah (Delougaz 1952: 70–71, Pls. 62, 138).⁵ Later examples are from early second-millennium Ebla (see Matthiae 1987) and early first-millennium Carchemish (Stauder 1970: 185; Sabatini 1974: 41–43, Figs. 15, 16; Schmidt-Colinet 1981: 17, Ill. 75). These iconographic examples are relevant to the following discussion in terms of both structure/materials and performance contexts.

Materials and Construction

In Sumerian the á-lá may be written with determinatives (which are sometimes omitted) for wood (giš) or skin (kuš).⁶ These determinatives should not lead to

⁴ Such drums are sometimes described as "frame drums." Although such a description is technically correct, the term "frame drum" is usually reserved for single- or double-membraned, hand-held drums.

⁵ I do not accept Rashid's interpretation of the cylinder seal IM 60313 as the representation of a large drum (Rashid 1971: 101–102., Ill. 12a, b; Rashid 1984: 50–51, Ill. 26; this interpretation is followed in Amiet 1980: 208 (Pl. 131) and Schmidt-Colinet 1981: 17). The lower register shows an agricultural scene, where bulls are used as draft animals. The left upper register shows a seated figure and a standing figure, who seem to be compiling strands of an agricultural produce. The standing man's raised arm is less likely to be a greeting gesture, as advocated by Rashid (see Rashid 1984: 50). The right upper register shows two figures who are holding a round bundle of some agricultural produce. It is unlikely to be a drum. The object is above the ground, and no means of support by base or strap is shown.

⁶ In PSD A/II: 80 a determinative for bronze (*zabar*) is included amongst the writings of the ala-instrument. This is based on a variant manuscript of one line in *Šulgi A* (Klein 1981: 194 n.

confusion, as they refer to different parts of the instrument. In the third millennium at least, it is proposed that the skin refers to the membrane, and the wood is the body or “frame” of the drum. There are various ways in which a membrane on a drum can be secured to its body. The membrane can be glued, fastened with a hoop, lacing, wedges, nails or pegs. Any combination of these methods is also possible. These are universal features of drums around the world. Indeed, methods of fastening the membrane have become a means of classifying drums, together with the drum’s overall shape, such as conical, cylindrical, hourglass etc. (for example, see Wieschhoff 1933: Pl. 1). In a substantial study of drums from the Belgian Congo, types are classified according to their means of fastening the membrane — firstly, nails and pegs; secondly, straps and strings; lastly, combinations of the first two methods (Boone 1951). Several subcategories of attachment are also possible; there are, for example, at least six lacing methods (see Norborg 1982: 27). We have no remains of drums from ancient Mesopotamia. However, remains do survive from ancient Egypt. There are actual examples of gut straps, attached to drum membranes, from the Egyptian Middle Kingdom (Hickmann 1949: 109, Pls. LXXVII, LXVIII).

Kilmer has argued that both the á-lá = *alû* and the balag = *balaggu* exhibit features of both harps and drums; it is suggested that they were drummable resonators and stringed instruments at the same time (see Kilmer 1995–1997: 465; Kilmer 2004: 369; for the balag only, see Kilmer 2000: 115; for this interpretation, also see Stauder 1970: 215). The perceived “hybrid” nature of the ala-instrument is based on an association of “strings” or “cords” of animal gut/tendon/sinew with harps and lyres. However, such materials are common means of fastening drum membranes, and they serve this purpose as materials of the ala-instrument, along with wool.

The ala, balag and balag-di feature a gûr = *kippatu* “hoop” (𐎠𐎡 VI 105–107, MSL 6, 60). For this reason, all three of these instruments are, in my opinion, types of drums. A hoop is visible on the depictions of large cylindrical drums on the Gudea and Urnamma Stelae and the Tello vase fragment. On the same iconographic sources, ridges on the drum’s circumference. Stauder interprets these ridges as “Pflöcke” (pegs) (Stauder 1970: 185). Schmidt-Colinet sees ca. 60 nails, making a “jangling” noise (Schmidt-Colinet 1981: 16). That type of effect is not improbable. For example, the *rebana*-frame-drum from Sumatra features a nailed membrane, and a single “bell-plate,” which produces such a jangling sound (Collaer 1979: Abb. 99, 100). The *rebana*-drum’s side profile looks strikingly similar to the large drums on the Gudea and Urnamma Stelae. Nixdorff

53). *zabar* here most likely refers to the directly preceding *šem*, (cf. *šem*, ^{zabar} in the passage from *The Marriage of Martu* in this article).

has suggested that this drum was brought to Indonesia by either the Portuguese or the Arabs (Nixdorff 1971: 147). A historical link with Mesopotamia is possible, but probably impossible to prove.

Stauder has argued that the giant drums seen on the Gudea and Urnamma Stelae are definitely double-membraned, as the men are shown with one hand behind the drum (Stauder 1970: 185). In the Gudea and Urnamma Stelae, this question is unclear, as the players' arms on the other side of the drum could, for example, be used for dampening the instrument. On the Tello vase fragment, it is clear that this is a double-membraned instrument. To the right of the drum, the player strikes the membrane with the left hand, with the right hand raised, ready to strike the other side.⁷ There is an Ur III text that supports this conclusion:

2 giš á-lá 4 kuš gu₄ pú-bi

Two ala-instruments, their sound box (consists of) four ox skins (BIN 5, 130: 1–2)

Here, I follow PSD's translation of pú or ub₄ "hole, well, pit" as "sound box" (PSD A/II: 80). If this translation is accepted, two ox skins are used for each ala-instrument, one for each of the instrument's two membranes. The skin of an ox would be more likely than goatskin for such a large drum, as an ox skin would be significantly larger. The membrane would be made out of a single skin, as sewn or glued-together skins will not form a durable membrane. The preparation of hides for drumskins takes place worldwide. For example, the membrane of the Japanese *dadaiko*-drum measures 210–240 cm in diameter, which in view of the depiction of human proportions in the visual sources, is comparable to the large drums on the Gudea and Urnamma Stelae. The membrane of the *dadaiko* is made from the whole skin of a cow, consisting mainly of the stomach side, but also the skin of the limbs, which are used to cover the drum body beyond the rim (Tukitani and Ochi 1996: 285). In one example of drum construction in Scandinavia, the hides are left to rot in water or urine; they are then stretched on a wooden frame, followed by scraping of the skin. Preparation of the membrane is the first step in drum construction, along with manufacture of the frame (Alebo 1986: 41–45). Thus, it is logical that hides appear first in BIN 5, 130.

This text continues as follows: 2 kuš gu₄-gi₆ ḪAR-bi (BIN 5, 130: 3). Here, I follow Molina's (2002) transliteration, against PSD A/II: 80: 2 kuš gu₄ MI.ḪAR-bi. PSD's reading of MI.ḪAR and its tentative equation with Akkadian *pukku* (Erimḥuš

⁷ Incidentally, there is no evidence for the playing of this drum with a stick. The identification of such a stick (Rashid 1984: 72) is based on a misleading early reconstruction of the Urnamma Stele (Börker-Klähn 1975: 236 n. 7).

II 60; MSL 17, 29) is less likely than a reading of gu_4-gi_6 as simply “dark skin,”⁸ followed by HAR , Sumerian har “ring” of leather might refer to the decoration of the circumference of the drum with dark skin.

The rest of the text is mostly fragmented, and sometimes obscure. However, the following lines demonstrate the use of sa and $\text{\textcircled{S}E-GIN}$ in the construction of the ala-instrument:

BIN 5, 130: obv. 4–7: 1 $ku\text{\textcircled{S}}-e$ $\text{\textcircled{X}}^4$ bi $[x]$ $\text{\textcircled{M}A}$ - na sa bi $[x]$ $\text{\textcircled{X}}$ KAL - $\text{\textcircled{S}}E$ [...] $\text{\textcircled{S}E-GIN}$ rev. 8–9: $\text{\textcircled{X}}^4$ ma - na $\text{\textcircled{S}E-GIN}$ $[x]$ bi

PSD suggests $\text{\textcircled{S}E-GIN}$ may be translated here as “dye-stuff” (PSD A/II: 80). It is almost certain that this is in fact glue, which is traditionally made with animal skin (see Sigrist 1981: 157), the principal concern of this text. Glue is also one of the most common means of attaching the membrane of a drum.

The use of plaited wool as a means of fastening the membrane is known, for example, in a *davul* (bass drum) from Urfa, southeastern Turkey (Picken 1975: 108).

The following two passages specify two minas of $uli-gi$ wool for fastening the membranes of ala-instruments:

2 ma - na $s\text{\textcircled{G}}-GI$ ga - $d\text{\textcircled{U}}$ $ku\text{\textcircled{S}}$ - a $b\text{\textcircled{I}}$ - du_{11} - ga - $\text{\textcircled{S}}E$ (BIN 5, 130: rev. 10–11)⁹

2 ma - na $s\text{\textcircled{G}}-GI$ $ku\text{\textcircled{S}}\text{\textcircled{A}}$ - $l\text{\textcircled{A}}$ - e $\text{\textcircled{S}}$ du_{7} - a “2 minas of ‘uli-gi wool’ to make an ala-instrument complete.” (AAICAB 1/1, Ashm. 1924-0666, lines 18–19; my translation)

BIN 5, 130 lists amounts of flour and oil which may be used as adhesive or to treat the membrane, respectively.¹⁰ The text is sealed by $\text{\textcircled{S}E\text{\textcircled{S}}-KAL-LA}$ of Umma, who cannot be assumed to be the same $\text{\textcircled{S}E\text{\textcircled{S}}-KAL-LA}$ who acquired ox tendon/sinew/gut for making an ala-instrument in MVN 10, 200 (provenance Umma, see below). The connection of the ala-instrument with Umma is confirmed by the mention of the instrument in the account of cattle hides of herders connected to the temple household of $\text{\textcircled{S}ARA}$, the tutelary god of Umma: [...] $ku\text{\textcircled{S}}$ gu_4 $\text{\textcircled{A}}$ - $l\text{\textcircled{A}}$ $\text{\textcircled{S}ARA}$. x ox hide(s)

⁸ PSD’s reading $MI.\text{\textcircled{H}AR}$ = *pukku* is probably influenced by the suggested definition of *pukku* as a drum (for a review of the arguments, see Edzard 1993). It is more likely that *pukku* is a ball (see George 2003: 898–900).

⁹ For $siki-GI$ as “wool of uli-gi-sheep,” see UNT 73.

¹⁰ Rev. 14 and 15. The suggestion in PSD A/II: 80 of a “kind of cover” is based on an erroneous transliteration of line 15, which should read: 1 ($b\text{\textcircled{A}N}$) $z\text{\textcircled{I}}$ - $b\text{\textcircled{I}}$, “1 $b\text{\textcircled{A}N}$ is its (amount of) flour,” not: bar - dul_3 - bi . The second sign has three horizontals, which generally differentiates it from dul_3 in the third millennium.

for the ala-instrument of Šara. (WorAM 2000.47, obv. i 31 [CDLI P218067]; see Englund 2003).

A large amount of wool cord may be used to secure the membrane before the nails/pegs are fastened. Alternatively, these cords are not part of the finished product, but they are used in order to stretch the membrane over the frame, during which nails or pegs are driven into the frame's circumference (for an illustration, see Tukitani and Ochi 1996: 286, Figs. 11, 12):

Obv. 2/120¹¹ éš-maḥ¹² síg ud, á-lá-a lá-dè ki-lá-bi 31 ma-na (Nik 2, 506: 1-2)

2/120 cords, (made of) goat wool, to be “stretched” over an ala-instrument/over ala-instruments; their weight is 31 minas [ca. 16.5 kilos]

In Ur III Drehem, the provision of wool for making an ala-instrument during the *akītu* month may imply that the drum was used during the New-Year festival (Nik 2, 506). The provision of five shekels of silver for a “small” ala-instrument in Ur (Ur III period), for the festival of Mekigal may have similar implications (UET 3, 0643). In Old Babylonian Ur, issues of oil appear together with references to particular festivals, which may imply that the ala-instrument was used during these occasions: šu-eš-ša (UET 5, 745; 785), *akītu* (UET 5, 752; 779), *elūnum* festival of Ningal (UET 5, 781; 787¹³), *elūnum* and *akītu* (UET 5, 786; see Figulla 1953 for editions). This oil may have been used to treat the membrane. The distinction between materials used for offerings, and materials used for instrument construction, treatment and preservation is sometimes unclear.

The body of the ala was made from a wood called ḫalub = *ḫa/uluppu*. An inventory list of objects belonging to the temple includes 1 á-lá^{gis}ḫalub (see Limet RA 62, 11, line 17). This wood has tentatively been identified as an eastern species of oak. It was normally used for furniture and vessels (Moorey 1994: 353). If the drum was constructed from a cross-section of the tree, which was then hollowed out (a traditional method, ensuring the strength and integrity of the frame), it

11 This number is ambiguous. Molina 2002: 2; PSD A/II: 80: 120.

12 PSD A/II: 80 reads éš-maḥ as ébiḫ. The reading ébiḫ is based on slim evidence, from a variant in *Inana and Ebiḫ* (see Farber 1991). Indeed, it is not adopted in the transliteration of Molina 2002. This passage may support the reading of Nabnitu 32, ii 16 (MSL 16, 252): éš-á-^{gis}lá = *ši-rit'* [*alê*], although the two texts are completely unrelated in period and genre. I am unclear whether Kilmer's suggestion that this reading should probably be given up in favor of the “new collated reading éš-á-^rdù (?)” (Kilmer 2004: 369) is based on a collation of the tablet, or of MSL 16, 252. UET 7, 126 has been sent back to Iraq, and it was not collated for MSL 16.

13 UET 5, 781 indicates the “*elūnum* (festival) of Ningal.” UET 5, 787 specifies the *elūnum* festival and the kuš-á-lá Ningal “ala of Ningal.”

would have had a wide trunk. Alternatively, the frame could have been made from narrow boards which are attached together (for illustrations of such methods, see Tukitani and Ochi 1996).

In the text which deals with the delivery of tendon, sinew or gut (sa)¹⁴ of an ox (gu₄) from lú-banda₃ to Šeš-kal-la for making an á-lá (MVN 10, 200), Grégoire (in the commentary to the text in MVN 10) has interpreted the á-lá as “courroies” (straps), contra PSD A/II: 80, which treats it as a musical instrument:

2 1/3 ma-na sa-gu₄...mu-kuš-á-lá-šè “2 1/3 minas of ox sinew...for (making) an ala-instrument” (MVN 10, 200: 1–4)

The mina averages at 1/2 a kilo, making this about 1 1/6 kilos of tendon/gut/sinew. Although it is theoretically possible to make a strap with this amount of sinew, it would not seem worth the effort. Animal skin would be much more efficient. Tendon/gut/sinew is commonly used in the construction of drums, for the purpose of securing the membrane. Such a material may also be used as snares, suspended on the back of the membrane, to create a rattling effect (e.g., the North African *bendir*). This type of material may also be used for the strings of a harp or lyre, which has led to confusion regarding the identity of the ala-instrument as a drum or harp/lyre. In fact, materials of this nature are used in a wide variety of musical instruments throughout the world; tendons are commonly dried, softened with water and then twined for added strength (see Alebo 1986: 46–48). 1 1/6 kilos of this material is a large amount for a single drum, making it likely that we are dealing with a huge instrument.

From Old Babylonian Mari, we have detailed information concerning the use of hides, bronze, alum and oil in the manufacture of the *alû*-instrument. These sources suggest that the instrument was very large and heavy. Ziegler’s identification of the instrument at Mari agrees with mine (Ziegler 2007: 74–76). As with the use of noncontemporaneous sources in Mesopotamia, we should, of course, not assume that we are dealing with exactly the same instrument as in Mesopotamia. However, it is highly likely that we are dealing with an instrument which

¹⁴ The distinction between tendon, sinew and gut does not seem to be clearly delineated in Sumerian. The word refers to cord-like parts of the anatomy, as opposed to the soft parts, which are usually called *širu*. See CAD Š/II: 308, s.v. *šer’ānu*. Here, Grégoire translates sa as “nerfs.” I have examined various drums first hand at the Horniman Museum in London (November/December 2007). What has been identified as sinew is commonly used to secure the membranes of drums in various parts of the world. At least one drum uses Buffalo gut lacing, according to its maker (north Indian *pakhāvaj*; Horniman Museum 2006: 478). Sinew is used to fasten membranes in frame drums from North America and North Asia (Nixdorff 1971: Katalog: 19, 21, 27, 56, 57, 72, 75, 81, 90, 122, 127, 128, 133).

is at least generically related to that which is known from the Mesopotamian heartland. One *qa* (ca. 1 litre) of vegetable oil is used to treat (*pašāšum*; literally “anoint, smear”) five *alû* instruments (ARM 23, 482: 8–9). Four minas of alum (*gabû*) is used to tan hides of the *alû* (ARM 23, 136: 1–3; this line is partly restored). Forty minas of bronze and four bull hides (*kuš rîmi*) are used (ARM 26/2, 286: rev. 4, 16).¹⁵ In a broken context, we may deduce that 17 1/3 minas of bronze were used to make “stars” (MUL) for an *alû* in Terqa (ARM 22/2, 204: rev. 2: 36–45; Kilmer 2004: 371). These may be the rivets which appear on the Gudea and Urnamma Stelae, which serve to fasten the drum’s membrane. Five talents of bronze is the weight of *pitqu* “casts” of the *alû* (ARM 21, 258: 38–39). As five talents are approximately equal to 150 kilos, these “casts” may refer to the drum frames. It is also possible that some of these attestations refer to the *alû* with a meaning other than “drum” (cf. note to ARM 23, 136).

However, the attestations of *alû* in letters concerning the transportation of the object leave us in little doubt that at least in these contexts, we are dealing with the drum. Letters concerning the transportation of an *alû* to Aleppo indicate that this object had a cultic function. These letters also confirm that we are dealing with a large, heavy object. One letter says that 16 people are needed to carry it, and another specifies 30 at least (ARM 26/1, 119–133; texts 18 and 20). If the *alû* is the type of drum shown on the Gudea and Urnamma Stelae, so many men may be required to carry the object over long distances. This would imply that the men alternated in groups of, perhaps four, due to fatigue. Despite the completely different context, we are reminded of the *mukîl [alê]* “holder of the [*alû*]” (MSL 12, 165: 248; PSD A/3: 148, sub. lex. 2; see also CAD M/II: 183).¹⁶

The text referred to above, mentioning oil to “anoint” *alû*-drums (ARM 23, 482: 8–9), could also be interpreted as evidence for the use of leather, tanned or treated with oil, for the membrane of *alû*-drums. Oil was one of the substances used for tanning of hides in Mesopotamia (see Stol 1981: 535). In Old Babylonian Ur, the issues of oil to ala-instruments have usually been interpreted as offerings (see Figulla 1953 for editions of UET 5, 739; 742; 744; 745; 752; 756; 761; 765; 767; 768; 777; 779; 780; 781; 783–787;¹⁷ PSD A/II: 81; Van de Mieroop 1992: 99). Here,

¹⁵ If we consider *a-li-im* (rev. 5) to refer to *alû* “drum”, not *ālum* “city”, which was convincingly argued in Villard 1989, contra the translation in ARM 26/2. For the delivery of hides for the *alû*, see also A.471 (unedited, ref. Ziegler 2007: 74, n. 255). There is also a text that refers to a leather worker who is an *alû* maker (A.4340 + unedited, ref. Ziegler 2007: 75, n. 256).

¹⁶ Admittedly, the reconstruction of this line is tentative. Note the suggested reading as *mukîl algarsurrû/algušurru* (Shehata 2006: 371).

¹⁷ Figulla translates *kuš-â-lâ* as “leather door-hinges,” which was corrected to “ala-instrument” in Loding 1976: 236.

the issues are consistently of 1/2 *qa* or 15 shekels of oil.¹⁸ On the other hand, it is possible that these issues of oil are indeed offerings. Such an interpretation is clear from many other “minor” issues to instruments in the third millennium, such as those (of an unknown substance) to the šêm and ala in ITT 2, 833, rev. 15, 16 (for other minor offerings to musical instruments, see Selz 1997: especially 175).

Sound and Character

The sound of the ala is described in various contexts and periods as formidable and comparable to storms and thunder. In *Gudea Cyl. B*, the sound of the ala is compared to a storm: â-lâ u₄-dam sig₄ mu-na-ab-gi₄ “and the ala-instruments sounded for him like a storm” (Edzard, RIME 3/1, 98 xix 1).

The ala “roars” (šeg₁₁...gi₄) in *The Keš Temple Hymn* (Geller 1996: 72, line 116a) and *The Marriage of Martu* (Klein 1997: 111, line 61). The šêm and ala “roar” (šeg₁₁...gi₄) in *The Debate between Hoe and Plough* (Civil 1965: line 28), *Inana and Enki* (Farber-Flügge 1973: 52, line 47), *Šulgi A* (Klein 1981: 194, line 53) and *Šulgi D* (sig₄...gi₄, Klein 1981: line 366). The šêm and ala “resound” (gû nun...dug₄) in *The Lament for Unug* (Green 1984: 276, 12: 16)¹⁹ and *Iddin-Dagan A* (Reisman 1970: 153, line 79).

The following passage from the Gudea Cylinders is of particular interest for our understanding of the role of the ala within an ensemble of instruments: si-im-da â-lâ balag nam-nar šu-du₇-a “together with the sim, the ala and balag might sound in perfect concert” (Edzard, RIME 3/1, 97 xv 20). Here, the verb šu...du₇ could also be translated as “to make perfect.” nam-nar in this context seems to be the closest we might get to a word corresponding to our “music.” Thus, this line could either be an indication of “sounding together” or “musical perfection.” The latter is preferred, taking into consideration the use of this compound verb in the context of an ala-instrument in AAICAB 1/1, Ashm. 1924-0666, lines 18–19 (see below).

In the following bilingual incantation, Sumerian ka-kû-gâl = *āšipu* “incantation priest” is written syllabically. In the Akkadian translation, ka is interpreted as “voice” and the phonetic /ala/ element in ku-gal-la is interpreted as the *alû*-in-

¹⁸ UET 5, 783 specifies 1 *qa* of oil for kuš-â-lâ 2-bi, which must indicate 1 *qa* for 2 ala-instruments, resulting in 1/2 each. UET 5, 742 specifies 1/2 *qa* of oil for kuš-â-lâ 2-a-bi, which must indicate 1/2 *qa* for each ala.

¹⁹ Green translates this verb as “to sing in fine voice” (together with the instruments). I think it unlikely that the ala was performed simultaneously with the voice, due to its volume.

strument. Although this passage evidently displays mistranslation, it displays the fact that the “voice” of the *alû*-instrument was not insignificant:

nam-erím igi-bi-šè ka-ku-GAL-la-gin, // *ma-mit ina maḥ-ri-šú ri-gim-šá* GIM *a-le-e*

The oath (stands) before it [the river] as (before) an incantation priest (Sumerian) //
The oath before it [the river], its cry like (that of) an *alû*-instrument (Akkadian)

(Reiner 1958: 52, lines 24–25)

This impression is confirmed by the following: [...] *li ti-rik a-le-e ra-mi-mi* “the beating of the *alû*-drum is my (the dog’s) sound” (BWL 204, KAR 48, frag.3, col. A, 9). The verb *rašānu* “to roar, thunder”, in the Dt stem, is probably used to describe the sound of the *alû*-drum in the SB Gilgameš epic: *a-ša[r ur-t]a-aš-š[a-n]u a-lu-ú* “where *alû*-drums resound” (George 2003: 552, line 229: “where the *alû*-drums are perpetually beaten”).²⁰ In an astrological context, the sound of the *alû*-drum is compared to thunder, along with the *ḫalḫallatu* and the *lilissu*: *Adad rigimšu kīma a-li-e iddi* “(if) Adad thunders like an *alû*-drum” (parallel: *ḫalḫallatu/lilissu*; ACh Adad 11: 15). Similarly, the following passage supports the image of the “roaring *alû*-drum” (*ki-ma a-li-e ta-šag-gu-ma eli-ia*) (Meier 1937–1939: 143, line 14). Meier read *alû* here as “Dämon”; in CAD A/I: 378, s.v. *alû* C it is read as “drum.” Although both are possible, the latter is preferred, due to the fact that *šagāmu* = *šeg_{11/12}...gi₄* is the compound verb which is used to depict the ala-drum in Sumerian contexts (see above).

Performance Contexts

The sources we have for the performance context of the ala-instrument are, as for most instruments in Mesopotamia, almost exclusively cultic. Three attestations of the instrument in Old Babylonian year names refer to the construction of an ala-instrument for the temples of Zababa and Nanna (Simmons 1960: 83; Charpin 1978: 28 e). However, there are implications that the ala was not exclusively cultic. In Šulgi A, Šulgi sails to Nippur after a military success, during which the *šem*, ala and *tigi* are played for him (Klein 1981: 194, lines 53–54). However, it may be that this is indeed “cultic,” as the king may have considered himself as a worthy recipient of offerings, such as musical performances. There is no doubt that the ala-instrument was among the most important cultic instruments. In *Inana and*

²⁰ George follows AHW 959, contra CAD A/I: 378, s.v. *alû* C: *ašar [it-t]a-az-z[a-ma-ru pit]-nu a-lu-ú*, “where *pitnu*-instruments and *alû*-drums are played.”

Enki, the ala-drum is included toward the end of the long list of me “properties/powers” that Inana took from Enki, along with the (tigi), lilis, ub and meze (all translated as “Trommel” by Farber-Flügge 1973: 60–61, II, vi, 24).

Building Rituals

The evidence for performance of the ala-instrument during building rituals comes from the Gudea Cylinders, which, together with the Gudea Stele, form an unusually complementary picture. The following example demonstrates such a performance during the libations which accompanied the initial preparation of the brick-mold from which the bricks of the Eninnu temple would be made: gá-ù-šub-ka a-sa-ga ì-a₃ énsi-ra a-dab₆ si-im á-lá mu-na-tuku-àm “He libated propitious water in the shed of the brick-mould while sim and ala accompanied an adab song²¹ for the ruler” (Edzard, RIME 3/1, 80 xviii 17–18). Following the construction of the Eninnu, animal sacrifice and libation accompany the ala, amongst other instruments (Edzard, RIME 3/1, 98 xvii 18–22; xix 1). The sim and ala, sometimes with the balag, are played in the courtyard of the Eninnu (Edzard, RIME 3/1, 87 xxviii 18; 97 xv 19–22).²²

Wrestling/Boxing Matches

The use of šem- and ala-instruments, accompanying wrestling or boxing, and sometimes animal sacrifice, is clear from both textual and visual evidence. This is a rare instance where textual and visual sources complement each other in such a transparent fashion.

The following passage from *The Marriage of Martu* describes such a performance during a festival for Numušda in the city of Inab:

uru-a šem₅ zabar zi-ig-za-ag [...-za] kušá-lá ʾ7ʾ-e šeg₁₁ mu-da-an-[gi₄] nitaḥ [x]-ne en íb-lá-[ne] é-gešpú-šè mu-na-da-an-kur₉-kur₉

²¹ ETCSL 2.1.7500 treats adab here as an instrument, not a song genre.

²² Black claims that the large drums on the Gudea Stele are “balag-drums” (Black 1991: 28f. n. 41). C.E. Suter follows Black, adding that the identification is strengthened by the relatively frequent attestations of the balag-instrument in Gudea’s Cylinder Inscriptions and other contemporaneous texts (Suter 2000: 193). Although I agree that the balag was a drum, as it has a hoop (see above) it is an instrument which was primarily used for ritual lamentations. Such a huge, overpowering instrument would drown out the voices of even a small choir.

In the city, bronze šem-instruments were clanging, and ala-instruments were resounding, as strong men, girdled champions, entered the wrestling house.²³

The association between wrestling/boxing and music on a professional level in the third millennium is confirmed by the following: 1 ḫar kū-babbar 10 gín ^dŠul-gi-gal-zu dumu Al-la nar-ke₄ mu gešbá in-TAG.TAG-a-šè in-ba... “Šulgigalzu, the son of Ala the nar-musician, received a 10 shekel silver ring as payment for wrestling/boxing” (PDT 1, 456, lines 1-4).

The Bedre Stele (Börker-Klähn 1982: no.12) is the principal iconographic evidence for the large drum, which is performed during wrestling. The upper register of 12d shows a bearded man in a skirt, who strikes a drum with his bare left hand. A figure plays clappers in the background. A diminutive figure stands on top of the drum. The direct continuation of the upper register (12c), on the stele’s broad side, represents what is clearly a wrestling match. The upper register is continued on the thin side (12b), which shows two men, one of which holds a long stick. I follow Rashid’s interpretation of these men as referees, not musicians (Rashid 1984: 68). The lower register of 12b shows sheep being carried as an offering. Similarly, in Canby’s recent reconstruction of the Urnamma Stele, figures next to the drum on register 4 of the “poor face” are likely to represent wrestlers (Canby 2001: Pl. 11, p. 24–25). Other depictions of music and fighting include the lowest register of an Early Dynastic wall plaque, depicting a harp player and a fighting match (if we accept the proposed join; see Boese 1968–1969: Ill. 7; 1971: CS 7/K7, pp. 106–107, Pl. IX), and the relief depicting a boxing match accompanied by a kettledrum and cymbals (Rashid 1984: 79, Ill. 60).

The “Ištar ritual” from Mari mentions a wrestler (*ša ḫumūšim*) in the same context as the performance of an eršemma-lamentation by a *kalū*-singer, to the accompaniment of a *ḫalḫallatu*-(Sumerian šem) instrument (Ziegler 2007: 59, rev. 3, 16–22). The following passage from a bilingual hymn to Ninurta suggests that the ala and šem were performed during boxing/wrestling matches, accompanied

²³ The transliteration and translation is adapted from Klein 1997: 111, lines 60–63, which is followed by ETCSL 1.7.1 The translation of *ib-lá-[ne]* as “wrestling belt/girdle” is based partly on the observance of wrestling belts in iconography (Klein 1993: 98). *gešpú* may also be translated as “boxing” (see Sallaberger 1993: 178 n. 838; for a detailed discussion, see Rollinger 1994). Note Römer’s more tentative interpretation of this passage (Römer 1989: 322, II, 24–27), which sees a change of narrator at this point. However, this is not directly relevant for our interpretation of the function of musical instruments here. This text features a further attestation of the ala, as part of the ensi of Ninab’s personal name: *tigi-ùb(or šem)-^{kuš}á-lá* (Kramer 1990: 14, line 11; Klein 1997: 110, line 11). Whether these three instruments do indeed constitute a personal name is however unclear (see Römer 1989: I, 11).

by animal sacrifice, during the entrance of Ninurta's cult statue into the Ešumeša temple in Nippur:

^{uru}dušēm á-lá x [...mu-r]a-an-tuku-[ne] sizkur-sizkur-lugal-la gu₄-niga ud[u-niga] mu-ra-an-gaz-[gaz-e-ne] guruš á-tuku-bi gešpú lirim-ma mu-ra-an-ra-r[a-e-ne] dumu nibru^{ki} ildú-ildú-ba ḥé-gál-ta u₄ mu-[x x] šēr-zu un-sag-ge₆-ga me-téš im-i-i-[(x)]. // ḥ[a-a]l-ḥal-la-tu a-lu[ú...]_x -tu iz-za-am-mu-[ru-ku] ni-iq šar-rim alp^{mes} marūt^{mes} i[mmeri^{mes} marūt^{mes}] up-tál-la-k[u-ku] eṭ-lu-tu be-el e-mu-qi ina ú-ma-ši u a-ba-ri im-taḥ-ḥa-š[ú x x]_x mārū^{mes} ni-ip-pu-ru ina il-la-ti-šu-nu ḥi-in-gál-la uš-[x x (x)] zi-im-ri-ka ni-šu šal-mat qa-q-a-di ut-ta'-a-d[u].

šem and ala [...] are performed for you, fat oxen and [fat] sheep are slaughtered for you as the king's offering, strong young men box and wrestle for you, the people of Nippur by families...[...] prosperity, the dark-headed people sing your songs of praise (adapted from BWL 120, 2–10).

The relevance of fighting, accompanied by animal sacrifice and instrumental performance involving the ala-instrument, is also clear in the following passage:²⁴

udu-as-lum šum...^{gis}gù-dé tag-tag...gala-maḥ nam-[maḥ-zu]...á-lá zà-mí-zu ḥ[é]...lú lirim gu₄-ud... // as-lum tu-ub-b[u-uh]...i-nu lap-tu-ka... gal-ma-ḥu nar-bi-ki...i-na a-le-e t[a-nit-ta-kí]...šá a-ba-ri i-n[a šitaḥḥuti (?)]...

Slaughter of the *aslu*-sheep...the plucked *inu*-instrument...the galamaḥ shall sing praise about your greatness[...]with the ala...the wrestlers/ boxers...[with acrobatic feats?]... (OECT 6, Pl. 16 K. 3228, rev. 1–11).

Other Festivals

Gudea Statue L, obv. 4'

é-^rmaḥ¹-bi kar-ká-sur-ra-ka i₄-da a-a-su-su-da-bé nar-á-lá igi-šè ba-DU 1 gu₄ 4 udu 1 máš ba-ša₆ mí i-e bur-gi₄-a-bé 1 gu₄ 4 udu 1 máš má-GÍN-ga[l²-x(?)] (Steible 1991: part 2: 226–229).

“...am Kai von Kasurra tritt zu des Flusses bewässernden Fluten der Musikant der ala-Trommel hervor. 1 Rind, 4 Schafe (und) 1 Zicklein wurden geschlachtet, wobei man peinlich acht gab. Beim Burgia (-Opfer) ([haben]) 1 Rind, 4 Schafe (und) 1 Zicklein die (/der) Ober-schiffverpicher (?)” (Steible 1991: part 2: 226–229).

²⁴ The translation of lines 6–9 in PSD A/II: 82: “the galamaḥ shall sing praise about your greatness to (the accompaniment) of the ala-instrument,” is misleading. There is no indication in the text that the instrument accompanied the galamaḥ, as this passage is broken and separated over two lines (I thank U. Gabbay for this observation).

Jacobsen translates this passage as follows: “When the exalted cabin (of the boat) was to be lowered into the water in the river at the Kasurra quay, a Lyre-singer walked in front, he offered up to it 1 ox, 4 sheep, and 1 kid and sang the praise hymn. This *burgû*-offering, 1 ox, 4 sheep, and 1 kid, the...” (Jacobsen 1957: 135, n. 100).

It seems fairly clear that this passage describes the inauguration of a boat, during which animals are sacrificed and music is played by the “ala-man.” In general, I follow Steible’s translation. In particular, Jacobsen’s translation of the verb *mí...dug₄* as “to sing” seems to be based on the mention of an *á-lá*, which Jacobsen assumes is a lyre, and which he therefore associates with singing. In fact, there is no direct evidence for the performance of the *á-lá* during songs. If I am correct in my identification of the instrument, this would not make sense. A large drum would drown out the voice/s of anything except a huge choir. *mí...dug₄*, which is conventionally “to pay attention, praise,” might here be interpreted as “to play, perform (the *á-lá*),” during animal slaughter.²⁵

The performance of the ala-instrument during animal slaughter is confirmed by *Enki’s Journey to Nibru*. In the following passage, the reference to the slaughter of oxen may indicate the use of those ox hides for the construction of the ala. The sheep, however, are clearly an offering: ^dEn-ki-ke₄ gud im-ma-ab-gaz-e udu im-ma-ab-šár-re ^{kuš}á-lá nu-gál-la ki-bi-šè sá im-dug₄ “Enki had oxen slaughtered, and had sheep offered there lavishly. Where there were no ala drums, he installed some in their places” (al-Fouadi 1969: 74, lines 93–94).

The performance of the ala-instrument during animal sacrifice is also clear in *Inanna and Enki*, when Inanna makes a procession into Uruk with the “Boat of Heaven,” having obtained the me from Enki:

lugal-e gud h́e-em-ma-ab-gaz-e ‘udu’ [h́e-em-ma-ab-šár-re] kaš bur-ra h́e-em-‘dé’-[e] šem
^{kuš}á-lá-e šeg₁₁ ha-ba-[gí₄-gí₄].

The king shall slaughter bulls, shall sacrifice sheep. He shall pour beer from a bowl. He shall have the šem and **ala** instruments resound. (Farber-Flügge 1973: 52, lines 45–47)

Almost the same passage occurs in *Šulgi A* (Klein 1981:194, lines 51–53). Such a description of animal sacrifice, libation and performance of the šem and ala occurs in *The Debate between Hoe and Plough* (Civil 1965: lines 25–28). The function of these instruments to accompany a cultic banquet is also apparent in *The Debate between Winter and Summer* (Vanstiphout 1997: 587, lines 230–240) and *The Lament for Unug* (Green 1984: 276, 12 lines 11–16).

²⁵ This meaning is suggested in Sumerian literary texts; see Attinger 1993: 609.

The ala-instrument was performed by the nar, which is implied by the following line of *The Keš Temple Hymn*: nar^{kuš}á-lá-e šeg₁₁ mu-ni-ib-gi₄ “the musician “roars” with the ala-instrument” (Geller 1996: 72, line 116a).²⁶ *The Lament for Urim* implies that the šem and ala were performed by the aua-priest, during certain rituals which no longer take place in Ur: a-ù-a é ezem-ma-za ezen nu-mu-ni-in-dùg-ge-eš šèm²⁷ kuš^á-lá-e níg šag₄ húl-le-da tigi-a nu-mu-ra-an-du₁₂-uš “the aua priests do not celebrate the festivals in your house of festivals. They do not play for you the šem and ala instruments...”²⁸ *The Lament for Sumer and Urim* similarly names the šem and ala, together with the tigi, as instruments which are no longer played, thus, symbolizing the breakdown of cultic routine (Michalowski 1989: 64, line 436). The same function is apparent in *The Lament for Nibru*, where the šem and ala are again paired, this time without the tigi (Tinney 1996: 98, line 38), and in the broken context of *The Lament for Eridug* (Green 1978: 134–135, 3, esp. line 11).

Iddin-Dagan A implies that the place in which the tigi, šem and ala were performed during a ritual which has been interpreted as a “sacred marriage” (Reisman 1973) was the dais (barag) of the gú-en-na (gú-en-na: Reisman 1973: 188: “throne-room”; ETCSL 2.5.3.1, 80: “guena hall”), during libations of blood. The temple hymns imply that the šem and ala²⁹ were performed in the place where food offerings were made: unú gal-zu kug šem₅ kuš^á-lá “your great, holy place of food offerings with šem and ala instruments” (my translation).³⁰

26 This line is clear only from the manuscript published in Geller 1996. Gragg 1969 (TCS III) refers to part of the line on p. 174, s.v.-line 115. ETCSL translates nar here as “singer” (ETCSL 4.80.2, line 118); “musician” is preferable, as vocal performance with the ala is unlikely.

27 PSD A/II: 81, s.v. á-lá reads this sign as šem₅, although it is unclear whether this is a collated reading. The reading šèm vs. ùb is clear in the frequent instances where the instrument is paired with the ala, due to the writing si-im, when paired with the ala in some of these attestations (see Römer, SKIZ 167, s.v.-line 79; Klein 1981: 212, s.v.-line 53).

28 Römer 2004 does not take the aua priests as the subject here: “šèm Trommeln (und) á-lá-Instrumente, die Dinge um das Herz zu erfreuen, und (?/mit?) tigi-Trommeln hat man dir nicht (mehr) spielen lassen” (Römer 2004: 102). The translation of ETCSL is more plausible, as we know that lexically the aua was associated with the nar musician (PSD A/I: 199, s.v. a-ù-a). For further discussion of this rarely attested cultic official, see Sigrist, BiMesop. 11, 169.

29 Possibly, this also includes the adab, which ETCSL 4.80.1 takes as a song genre, but could equally well be read as an adab-instrument.

30 unú has been translated as “holy banqueting hall” (ETCSL 4.80.1, line 107), or as “holy of holies” (Sjöberg 1969: 23, line 107). A translation as “place of food offering” is more appropriate. Firstly, due to the lexical equivalence of unú with *mākālu* “food, meal, food offering to gods” (CAD M/I: 123, s.v. *mākālu*), secondly, due to the many attestations of performance of the šem and ala together with sacrificial offerings of animals.

The following inscription of Nebuchadnezzar I describes the return of Marduk's statue from Elam, and the subsequent celebrations. Offerings were made and animal sacrifice took place, accompanied by *alû*- and *lilissu*-drums:

[...še]n (?) -šen-na ṛšen-(erasure)-hur¹-[s]ag-gá a-lá-e // [...] ú-nam-ma-ru a-ṛlu¹-ú ṛu¹ [l]i-li-si.

[praise of Marduk] makes brilliant the *alû*-drum and the *lilissu*-drum (Frame, RIMB 2, 31, lines 38-39).

In a Late Babylonian ritual, playing of the *alû*-instruments seems to take place at the gate of a cella in the Esagil temple at Babylon. The *alû*-instruments are “arranged” there (*ta-ra-šu šá a-le-e*; see Çağırğan and Lambert 1991–1993: 95, line 57). This “arrangement” implies that the drums are large objects which are difficult to move. It seems certain that these drums had fixed physical positions, as the text describes activities which take place “between” or “behind” the *alû*-instruments (Çağırğan and Lambert 1991–1993: 95-97, lines 59, 80, 82), and that they are not instruments which can be held. However, in lines 102 and 103 of the same text, Çağırğan and Lambert’s translation implies that the *alû*-instrument is portable:

ù áš-bat E-le-e ina muḫ-ḫi KAŠ-ŠE-BAR ta-nam-di 7 ši-ṭir ta-šaṭ-ṭár ši-ṭir ina šumēlī(150)-šú tu-kal-la ù á-lu-ú KAŠ-ŠE-BAR ina imitti(15)-šú ina pānat^{at}

And seated...she [the *nadītu*-priestess] will put the *alû*-drum by the barley beer, she will write seven inscriptions, she will hold the inscriptions in her left hand and the *alû*-drum by (?) the barley beer in her right hand (Çağırğan and Lambert 1991–1993: 98, lines 102–103).

As Çağırğan and Lambert remark in the notes, there seems to be some corruption here. Firstly, *alû* is spelled two alternative ways in consecutive lines: *E-le-e and á-lu-ú*. Secondly, if the *alû*-drum is meant here, it is clearly a portable instrument, which could be moved while seated. It is possible that the *alû*-vessel is meant here. The vessel is placed next to the barley beer (and it is filled with beer), then the *nadītu* holds a vessel of beer in her right hand, and the inscriptions in her left.

In this ritual, there is no explicit indication that singing takes place at the same time as the *alû*-instrument is played. However, both *nāru* and *kalû* singers take part in the ritual. OECT 6, Pl. 16 K. 3228 rev. 1–11 (see above) also suggests that the *kalû* performs before, after or during sounding of the *alû*-drum. The association between the *alû*-instrument and the *kalû* is apparently a phenomenon of the first millennium, although there is an attestation in the Old Babylonian “forerunner” to the following Balag –lamentation, which seems to refer to the absence of the ala-instrument and, consequently, the absence of joy:

ta-a ù-li mu-^rni-ib-DU^{kuš}á-lá-a mu-ni-ib-DU^{kuš}á-lá-a-ta mu-un-da-dúr-ru-ne-eš // <ina> *lal-la-ra-a-ti mi-nam i-r[e-e]d-di-a-am a-le-e i-red-di-a-^ram^r ina a-le-e aš-bu-^ršim^r*.

Was, oh weh, führt sie mit sich? Die ala-Trommel führt sie mit sich. Mit der ala-Trommel sitzen sie [die gala-Priester(schaft)] bei ihr.³¹

By the Neo-Babylonian period, the associations of the *alû*-drum have changed. For example, the inscription of Marduk-apla iddina II demonstrates an association with the *sammû* (^{gis}ZĀ-MÍ), and possibly the *inu* (^{gis}GÛ-DĒ):

[*ina...GIŠ.GÛ*].DĒ ^{gis}ZĀ-MÍ ^{gis}Ā-LÁ G[IS x x *ina za*]-*ma-ru rišāti u taknê...ú-šar-ra-ḫu [...u]na'adu ušarbû bēl bēlē*.

They glorify, praise and extol the lord of lords (i.e., Ea) with songs of joy and homage to the accompaniment of the [*in*], *sammû* and *alû* (BBst. no. 35 rev. 2–4).

Generally, the ala-instrument is associated with the balag and balag-di, as all three instruments feature a hoop (Ḫḫ VI : 105–107; MSL 6 : 60); hoops which are fitted around the drum's circumference are common means of securing the membrane, often together with other means, such as lacing and/or pegs/nails. Furthermore, the close association of these instruments is confirmed by the following line of a bilingual incantation: *ma-mit a-le-e pa-lag-gi ù tim-bu-ti* “the ‘oath’ of *alû*, *b/palangu* and *timbutu* instruments” (Reiner 1958: 21, line 90). In Sumerian literary texts, the ala is usually associated with the šem/sim = *ḫalḫallatu*. This association is not entirely lost later on. The *alû* appears next to the *ḫalḫallatu* in a further Neo-Babylonian royal inscription (VAT 2199 i; cited in AHw s.v. *alû*). The cymbals pictured next to the giant drum in the Gudea and Urnamma Stelae may be šem-instruments by association with the ala-drum, due to the common pairing of these instrument-terms (as suggested already in Gabbay 2007: 81).

References

AAICAB. Grégoire, J.-P., Archives Administratives et Inscriptions Cunéiformes: Ashmolean Museum, Bodleian Collection, Oxford.

³¹ This transliteration and translation is from Volk 1989: 49, lines 49–50. The transliteration of these two lines is a composite of the two first-millennium manuscripts (83, 49–50). See Volk 1989: 32 for the Old Babylonian “forerunner.”

- Alebo, L.
1986 Manufacturing of Drumskins and Tendon Strings for Prehistoric Musical Instruments. In: *Second Conference of the ICTM Study Group on Music Archaeology; Stockholm, 19–23 November 1984*, vol. 1: *General Studies*, ed. C. S. Lund, 41–48. Stockholm.
- Amiet, P.
1980 *La glyptique mésopotamienne archaïque*. Paris.
- ARM Archives royales de Mari
- Attinger, P.
1993 *Éléments de linguistique sumérienne*. Fribourg and Göttingen.
1997 Review of The Sumerian Dictionary of the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, ed. Åke W. Sjöberg et al., vol. 1, “A” Part II. *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und verwandte Gebiete* 87: 112–122.
- BBS^t L.W. King, *Babylonian Boundary Stones* (London 1912)
- BIN Babylonian Inscriptions in the Collection of J. B. Nies
- Black, J.
1991 Eme-sal Cult Songs and Prayers. *Aula Orientalis* 9: 23–36.
- BiMesop Bibliotheca Mesopotamica
- Boese, J.
1968–1969 Ringkampf-Darstellungen in frühdynastischer Zeit. *Archiv für Orientforschung* 22: 30–38.
1971 *Altmesopotamische Weihplatten; eine sumerische Denkmalsgattung des 3. Jahrtausends v. Chr.* Berlin and New York.
- Boone, O.
1951 *Les tambours du Congo belge et du Ruanda-Urundi*. Tervuren.
- Börker-Klähn, J.
1975 Šulgi badet. *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und verwandte Gebiete* 64: 235–240.
1982 *Alt Vorderasiatische Bildstelen und vergleichbare Felsreliefs*. Mainz am Rhein.
- BWL W.G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford 1959)
- CAD The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago
- Çağırçan G. and Lambert W. G.
1991–1993 The Late Babylonian Kislîmu Ritual for Esagil. *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 43–45: 89–106.
- Canby, J. V.
2001 *The “Ur-Nammu” Stela*. Philadelphia.
- Caplice, R. I.
1971 Namburbi Texts in the British Museum. *Orientalia* 40: 133–183.
- CDLB Cuneiform Digital Library Bulletin <<http://cdli.ucla.edu/pubs/cdlb.html>>
- Charpin, D.
1978 Recherches sur la Dynastie de Mananâ (I): Essai de localisation et de chronologie. *Revue d'Assyriologie et d'Archéologie Orientale* 72: 13–40.
- Civil, M.
1965 *Le débat Sumerien entre la Houe et l'Araire*. Paris.

- Collaer, P.
1979 *Musikgeschichte in Bildern*, vol. 1, part 3: *Südostasien*. Leipzig.
- DeVale, S. C. et al.
2008 *Harp. Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Accessed 14 July 2008. <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/45738pg6>>
- Delougaz, P.
1952 *Pottery from the Diyala Region*. Chicago.
- Edzard, D. O.
1993 Mekkû, pukku. *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie* 8, 1(2), 34.
- Englund, Robert K.
2003 Worcester Slaughterhouse Account. *Cuneiform Digital Library Bulletin* 2003: 1. <<http://cdli.ucla.edu/pubs/cdlb.html>>
- ETCSL The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk>)
- Farber, W.
1991 The City Wall of Babylon. *Nouvelles Assyriologiques Brèves et Utilitaires* 72: 45–46.
- Farber-Flügge, G.
1973 *Der Mythos "Inanna und Enki" unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Liste der me.* Rome.
- Figulla, H. H.
1953 Offerings in the Ningal Temple at Ur. *Iraq* 15: 88–122, 171–192.
- Al-Fouadi, A.-H.
1969 *Enki's Journey to Nippur: The Journeys of the Gods*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania. Philadelphia.
- Gabbay, U.
2007 *The Sumero-Akkadian Prayer "Eršemma": A Philological and Religious Analysis*, Ph.D. dissertation, The Hebrew University. Jerusalem.
- Galpin, F. W.
1937 *The Music of the Sumerians and Their Immediate Successors, the Babylonians and Assyrians*. Cambridge, England.
- Gelb, I. J.
1961 *Old Akkadian Writing and Grammar*, 2nd ed. Chicago.
- Geller, M. J.
1996 Jacobsen's "Harps" and the Keš Temple Hymn. *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und verwandte Gebiete* 86 68–79.
- George, A. R.
2003 *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic: Introduction, Critical Edition and Cuneiform Texts*. Oxford.
- Green, M. W.
1978 The Eridu Lament. *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 30: 127–167.
1984 The Uruk Lament. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 104: 253–279.

- Hartmann, H.
1960 *Die Musik der sumerischen Kultur*, Ph.D. dissertation, Goethe University. Frankfurt am Main.
- 𒄩 Lexical series HAR.ra = 𒄩bullu (= MSL 5–11)
- Hickmann, H.
1949 *Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire*. Cairo.
Horniman Museum
2006 [unpubl.] *Horniman Museum Catalogue of Musical Instruments*.
- ITT Inventaire des tablettes de Tello
- Jacobsen, Th.
1957 Early Political Development in Mesopotamia. *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und verwandte Gebiete* 18: 91–140.
- KAR E. Ebeling, Keilschrifttexte aus Assur religiösen Inhalts I/II
- Kilmer, A. D.
1977 Notes on Akkadian *uppu*. In: *Essays on the Ancient Near East in Memory of Jacob Joel Finkelstein*, ed. M. de Jong Ellis, Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, Memoir 19, 129–138. Hamden, Conn.
1995–1997 Musik, A. Philologisch. *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie* 8: 463–482.
2000 Continuity and Change in the Ancient Mesopotamian Terminology for Music and Musical Instruments. In: *Studien zur Musikarchäologie 2: Musikarchäologie früher Metallzeiten. Vorträge des 1. Symposiums der International Study Group on Music Archaeology im Kloster Michaelstein, 18.-24. Mai 1988*, ed. E. Hickmann, I. Laufs and R. Eichmann, 113–119. Rahden/Westf.
2004 Pauke und Trommel A. In Mesopotamien. *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie* 10: 367–371.
- Klein, J.
1981 *Three Šulgi Hymns*. Ramat-Gan.
1993 Additional Notes to ‘The Marriage of Martu.’ In: kinattūtu ša dārāti: *Raphael Kutscher Memorial Volume*, ed. A. F. Rainey, 93–106. Tel Aviv.
1997 The God Martu in Sumerian Literature. In: *Sumerian Gods and Their Representations*, ed. I. L. Finkel and M. J. Geller, Cuneiform Monographs 7, 99–116. Groningen.
- Kramer, S. N.
1990 The Marriage of Martu. In: *Bar-Ilan Studies in Assyriology, Dedicated to Pinhas Artzi*, ed. J. Klein and A. Skaist, 11–44. Ramat-Gan.
- Limet, H.
1960 *Le travail du métal au pays de Sumer: Au temps de la IIIe dynastie d’Ur*. Paris.
- Loding, D. M.
1976 Old Babylonian Texts from Ur, 1. *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 28: 233–242.
- Marcuse, S.
1975 *A Survey of Musical Instruments*. New York.

- Matthiae, P.
1987 Una stele paleosiriana arcaica da Ebla e la cultura figurativa della Siria attorno al 1800 ac. *Scienze dell'Antichità* 1: 447–495.
- Meier, G.
1937–1939 Ritual für das Reisen über Land. *Archiv für Orientforschung* 12: 141–144.
- Michalowski, P.
1989 *The Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur*. Winona Lake, Ind.
- Molina, M. et al.
2002 *Database of Neo-Sumerian Texts (BDTNS)*. Madrid. <<http://bdts.filol.csic.es/>>
- Moorey, P. R. S.
1994 *Ancient Mesopotamian Materials and Industries: The Archaeological Evidence*. Oxford.
- MSL Materialien zum sumerischen Lexikon; Materials for the Sumerian Lexicon
- MVN Materiali per il vocabolario neosumerico
- Nixdorff, H.
1971 *Zur Typologie und Geschichte der Rahmentrommeln*. Berlin.
- Norborg, Å.
1982 *Musical Instruments from Africa South of the Sahara*. Copenhagen.
- OECT Oxford Editions of Cuneiform Texts
- Picken, L.
1975 *Folk Musical Instruments of Turkey*. London.
- PSD The Sumerian Dictionary of the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania
- RA Revue d'Assyriologie et d'Archéologie Orientale
- Rashid, S. A.
1971 Zur Datierung der mesopotamischen Trommeln und Becken. *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und verwandte Gebiete* 61: 89–105.
1984 *Musikgeschichte in Bildern, Band 2: Musik des Altertums*. Lieferung 2. Mesopotamien. Leipzig.
- Reiner, E.
1958 *Šurpu: A Collection of Sumerian and Akkadian Incantations*, Archiv für Orientforschung Beiheft 11. Graz.
1969 Deux cryptogrammes akkadiens. *Revue d'Assyriologie et d'Archéologie Orientale* 63: 170–171.
- Reisman, D.
1970 *Two Neo-Sumerian Royal Hymns*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania. Philadelphia.
1973 Iddin-Dagan's Sacred Marriage Hymn. *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 25: 185–202.
- RIME The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods
- Rollinger, R.
1994 Aspekte des Sports im alten Sumer. *Nikephoros* 7: 7–64.
- Römer, W. H. Ph.
1989 Zur Sumerischen Dichtung "Heirat des Gottes Mardu." *Ugarit-Forschungen* 21: 319–334.
2004 *Die Klage über die Zerstörung von Ur*. Münster.

- Sabatini, L.
1974 Thèmes iconographiques sculptés de Tell Mardikh et de Karkémish: Étude comparative. *Syria* 51: 31–64.
- Sachs, C.
1940 *The History of Musical Instruments*. New York.
- Sallaberger, W.
1993 *Der Kultische Kalender der Ur III Zeit*. Berlin and New York.
- Schmidt-Colinet, C.
1981 *Die Musikinstrumente in der Kunst des Alten Orients*. Bonn.
- Selz, G. J.
1997 'The Holy Drum, the Spear, and the Harp': Towards an Understanding of the Problems of Deification in Third Millennium Mesopotamia. In: *Sumerian Gods and Their Representations*, ed. I. L. Finkel and M. J. Geller, Cuneiform Monographs 7, 67–209. Groningen.
- Shehata, D.
2006 Some Observations on the /alġarsur/. In: *Studien zur Musikarchäologie 5: Musikarchäologie im Kontext. Archäologische Befunde, historische Zusammenhänge, soziokulturelle Beziehungen. Vorträge des 4. Symposiums der Internationalen Studiengruppe Musikarchäologie im Kloster Michaelstein, 19.-26. September 2004*, ed. E. Hickmann, A. A. Both and R. Eichmann, 367–378. Rahden/Westf.
- Sigrist, M.
1981 Le Travail des Cuirs et Peaux à Umma. *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 33: 141–190.
- Simmons, S. D.
1960 Early Old Babylonian Tablets from Harmal and Elsewhere. *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 14: 75–87.
- Sjöberg, Å. W. and E. Bergmann
1969 The Collection of the Sumerian Temple Hymns. In: *The Collection of the Sumerian Temple Hymns*, ed. Å. W. Sjöberg, E. Bergmann and G. B. Gragg, Texts from Cuneiform Sources 3, 3–154. Locust Valley, N.Y.
- SKIZ W. Römer, Sumerische Königshymnen der Isin-Zeit (Leiden 1965)
- SLOB S. Lieberman, The Sumerian Loanwords in Old-Babylonian Akkadian (Missoula 1976)
- Spycket, A.
1972 La musique instrumentale mésopotamienne. *Journal des Savants* July–September: 153–209.
- Stauder, W.
1970 Die Musik der Sumerer, Babylonier und Assyrer. In: *Handbuch der Orientalistik. Ergänzungsband 4: Orientalische Musik*, 171–243. Leiden and Cologne.
- Steible, H.
1991 *Die neusumerischen Bau- und Weihinschriften*, Freiburger Altorientalische Studien 9. Stuttgart.
- Stol, M.
1981 Leder (industrie). *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie* 6: 527–543.

- Streck, M. P.
1998–2001 Ninurta/Ninĝirsu, A.I. In *Mesopotamien. Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie* 9: 515–522.
- Suter, C. E.
2000 *Gudea's Temple Building: The Representation of an Early Mesopotamian Ruler in Text and Image*, Cuneiform Monographs 17. Groningen.
- TCS Texts from Cuneiform Sources
- Tinney, S.
1996 *The Nippur Lament*, Occasional Papers of the Samuel Noah Kramer Fund 16. Philadelphia.
- Tukitani, T. and M. Ochi (trans. O. Yamaguti)
1996 Techniques of Making the Taiko (Drums). In: *Der "schöne" Klang: Studien zum historischen Musikinstrumentenbau in Deutschland und Japan unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des alten Nürnberg*, ed. D. Krickeberg, 278–287. Nuremberg.
- UET Ur Excavations Texts
- Van de Mieroop, M.
1992 *Society and Enterprise in Old Babylonian Ur*. Berlin.
- Vanstiphout, H. L. J.
1997 Sumerian Canonical Compositions: C. Individual Focus. 5. Disputations. In: *The Context of Scripture, 1: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World*, ed. W. W. Hallo, 575–588. Leiden, New York and Cologne.
- VAT Museum siglum of the Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin (Vorderasiatische Abteilung. Tontafeln)
- Veldhuis, N. C.
1997–1998 The Sur₉-Priest, the Instrument ^{gis}al-gar-sur₉, and the Form and Uses of a Rare Sign. *Archiv für Orientforschung* 24–25: 115–128.
- Villard, P.
1989 ARMT XXVI/2 no. 286: Une nouvelle attestation de l'alûm à Mari. *Nouvelles Assyriologiques Brèves et Utilitaires* 1989(2): 65–66.
- Volk, K.
1989 *Die Balaĝ-Komposition Úru Àm-ma-ir-ra-bi: Rekonstruktion und Bearbeitung der Tafeln 18 (19'ff.), 19, 20 und 21 der späten, kanonischen Version*, Freiburger Altorientalische Studien 18. Stuttgart.
- Wieschhoff, H.
1933 *Die Afrikanischen Trommeln und ihre ausserafrikanischen Beziehungen*, Studien zur Kulturkunde 2. Stuttgart.
- Ziegler, N.
2007 *Les Musiciens et la musique d'après les archives de Mari*, Florilegium Marianum 9, Mémoires de Nouvelles Assyriologiques Brèves et Utilitaires 10. Paris.

Yuval



Studies of the Jewish Music Research Centre

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem · Faculty of Humanities

Jewish Music Research Centre

In collaboration with the National Library of Israel

Academic Board of the Jewish Music Research Centre

Chairperson: Shalom Sabar

Haggai Ben-Shammai, Ruth HaCohen, Oded Irshai,

Eliyahu Schleifer, Rina Talgam, Eitan Wilf

Director: Edwin Seroussi

Volume VIII

Music in Antiquity

The Near East and the Mediterranean

Edited by Joan Goodnick Westenholz, Yossi Maurey
and Edwin Seroussi

DE GRUYTER
OLDENBOURG

MAGNES

ISBN 978-3-11-034026-6
e-ISBN 978-3-11-034029-7

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A CIP catalog record for this book has been applied for at the Library of Congress.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

© 2014 Walter de Gruyter GmbH, Berlin/Boston
& Hebrew University Magnes Press, Jerusalem

Cover image: Female figures with drums. Bichrome ware. Cyprus.

Cypro-Archaic I period, 750–600 BCE.

Courtesy of the Elie and Batya Borowski Foundation and the Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem.

Photographer: Moshe Caine

Typesetting: Michael Peschke, Berlin

Printing: Hubert & Co. GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen

☺ Gedruckt auf säurefreiem Papier

Printed in Germany

www.degruyter.com

www.magnespress.co.il