**The Closing Hymn of the Ugaritic Baal Cycle (*KTU* 1.6 VI 42–54):**

**A Mesopotamian Background?**

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**Introduction**

The Baal Cycle, which tells of the conflicts between Baal and his two enemies, Yamm and Mot, has two endings: a narrative ending and a hymnic one. The first ending closes the story of Baal’s conflict with Mot by declaring: “Let them place Baal [on the seat] of his kingship, on [the resting place, the throne] of his dominion” (*KTU* 1.6 VI 33–35). By these words things are put back in order, as they were before the conflict with Mot had begun, when Baal was sitting in his palace (1.4 VII 27–42). Since the entire cycle deals with the question of authority among the gods, this declaration is also an appropriate conclusion to the work as a whole.

The text, however, does not end there. After half a dozen broken lines, a hymn is cited, thus serving as the actual conclusion of the work (*KTU* 1.6 VI 42–54). The subject of the hymn, surprisingly, is not Baal, the main protagonist of the Baal Cycle, but one of the minor characters in the cycle, namely – the sun goddess Šapš. While this goddess did assist in determining the victor of the final battle, she is immeasurably less significant than other figures in the plot, such as Baal and his loyal ally Anat, or even El, the father of the gods, in whose name Šapš rebuked Mot. Apart from that rebuke, which is cited almost verbatim in the first part of the cycle as well – in favor of Yamm;[[1]](#footnote-1) the role of Šapš including also the findings of Baal: once in the underworld by the order of Anat, and once in the field by the order of El. Concluding the Baal Cycle with a hymn to Šapš is therefore unexpected, not only because it adds nothing to the narrative, but mainly because instead of exalting Baal (or at least one of the central figures of the cycle), it praises a minor character.

Scholars have proposed several solutions to this riddle, none of them convincing. Some – as expected – found it difficult to assume that the closing hymn would not praise the chief protagonist of the work, and therefore took it as a hymn to Baal.[[2]](#footnote-2) As much as this could fit the broader context, no sign of the presence of Baal in the closing hymn exists. Others did interpret it as a hymn to Šapš, but were challenged to explain the reason for concluding the cycle with a hymn to the sun goddess, of all gods.[[3]](#footnote-4) The suggested explanations — e.g., a calendric context in which the hymn represents the restoration of peace to the universe, an exaggeration of Šapš’ importance in the plot as a whole, or alternatively a diminution of her importance in the hymn — do not fit the plain meaning of the text either.[[4]](#footnote-5) Another solution is thus required, one which will fit the content of the hymn on the one hand, and its location at the end of the cycle on the other.

**The Hymn to Šapš is an Independent Hymn**

A detailed examination of the closing hymn of the Baal Cycle, in relation to the plot that precedes it (which is most of *KTU* 1.1-1.6), reveals that this is an independent hymn — i.e., it was not written or edited initially in order to conclude the cycle, but rather was integrated from elsewhere in its complete form.[[5]](#footnote-6) This is evident by its characters and their descriptions — 1) the *Rpˀum*, 2) Koṯar-waḪasis, and 3) *ˀArš* and Tunnan; some of them are not mentioned at all in the Baal Cycle, while others contradict its plot.

1. ***The* Rpˀum**

The first four lines, which together constitute a quasi-quatrain, emphasize the netherworld aspect of Šapš, who is represented here as the leader of the *Rpˀum*, the dead and divinized heroes.[[6]](#footnote-8)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Šapš, the *Rpˀum* are your subordinates; | 1.6 VI 45*špš* 46*rpˀim tḥtk* |
| Šapš, your subordinates are the Divine ones. | 47*špš tḥtk ˀilnym* |
| Around you are the Divinities; | 48*ˁdk ˀdk* |
| Behold, the (divinized) Dead are around you. | 48*hn mtm* 49*ˁdk* |

The underground aspect of Šapš is known from additional texts, both Ugaritic and extra-Ugaritic, which view the sun god/dess who descends to the netherworld every night, as one of its highest-ranking inhabitants.[[7]](#footnote-9) This aspect of Šapš is found also in the Baal Cycle’s narrative, in recounting how Šapš found Baal in the netherworld, loading him onto Anat’s shoulders at the latter’s request (1.6 I 8–15).[[8]](#footnote-10) Another cliché that connects Šapš to Mot, the lord of the netherworld (occurring in 1.3 V 17–18; 1.4 VIII 22–23; 1.6 II 24), definitely stems from the same aspect, though its meaning is not fully understood.[[9]](#footnote-11)

The *Rpˀum*, like Mot, are permanent residents of the netherworld. They, however, are not mentioned in the Baal Cycle’s narrative at all – neither in the description of the road to the netherworld, nor within it (1.4 VIII 1–14; 1.5 V 11–17). It appears, thus, that the literary materials used by the author concerning the netherworld and Mot are different from the ones that were in the hands of the hymn’s author. The same holds true in regard to other Ugaritic texts: while Mot does not occur in any of the texts relating to the *Rpˀum*, the sun goddess **is** described with them, e.g., in the *Royal Funerary Liturgy* (*KTU* 1.161).

***2) Koṯar-waḪasis***

The four next lines of the hymn center on the relation between Šapš and Koṯar-waḪasis.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Koṯar is your companion,[[10]](#footnote-12) | 49*kṯrm ḥbrk* |
| And Ḫasis is your acquaintance. | 50*wḫss dˁtk* |
| In the sea (or: day) are *ˀArš* and Tunnan; | 51*bym ˀarš wtnn* |
| Koṯar-waḪasis banishes (them) | 52*kṯr wḫss yd* |
| Koṯar-waḪasis drives (them) out[[11]](#footnote-13) | 53*ytr kṯr wḫss* |

While Koṯar-waḪasis is entirely missing from the conflict between Baal and Mot, he is frequently mentioned in the first part of the cycle in his traditional role – known also from additional Ugaritic works – as the craftsman god.[[12]](#footnote-14) He builds palaces for Yamm and Baal, installs various gifts for Aṯirat, and produces magical weapons for Baal, by means of which the latter defeats Yamm. In the present hymn, on the other hand, Koṯar-waḪasis serves Šapš alone, without a single mention of his being a craftsman god.[[13]](#footnote-16)

***3)* ˀArš *and Tunnan***

The last three lines describe Koṯar-waḪasis as expelling *Arš* and Tunnan from the presence of Šapš.  *ˀArš* and Tunnan are named in the first part of the Baal Cycle only in the list of Baal’s enemies who were defeated by Anat (1.3 III 38–46). It is thus odd to find them, of all the hostile creatures, in the concluding hymn of the cycle, unless the hymn was originally an independent work. In addition, the term *bym* occurring here, can be understood either as “on the day of,” thus hinting at an event that is not described elsewhere in the Baal Cycle, or as “in the sea,” in which case it defines the sea as a force of nature in which *ˀArš* and Tunnan live, in contrast to the anthropomorphic Yamm who fights Baal in the first part of the cycle.[[14]](#footnote-17)

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The unique references to all these figures in the closing hymn to Šapš, in relation to the narrative part of the cycle, indicate that this is indeed an independent hymn that was added “as is” at the end of the cycle. With regard to its content, the occurrence of the *Rpˀum* implies that the hymn praises Šapš during her journey in the netherworld, after sunset.[[15]](#footnote-18) That Koṯar-waḪasis also occasionally visits this realm is evident from *KTU* 1.108, which describes his participation in the feast of Rapiu the King of Eternity (*rpˀu mlk ˁlm*), one of the *Rpˀum*.

While the conclusion that the hymn to Šapš was originally an independent source may explain its discrepancies with the narrative part of the Baal Cycle, it does not clarify the reason for its presence at the end of the cycle. The Baal Cycle, after all, embodied many sources and traditions, some of them – like the hymn to Šapš – contradicting the main plot.[[16]](#footnote-19) The question, therefore, must still be asked: why does the Baal Cycle conclude with a hymn at all, and why with a hymn that is dedicated to Šapš, of all gods.

A comparison with Ugaritic epics cannot help, as the ends of the very few epics in extant are probably missing.[[17]](#footnote-20) But Ugaritic literature did not spring up in a vacuum; its scribes trained by copying Mesopotamian literature, both Sumerian and Akkadian, as part of their vocational training[[18]](#footnote-21) Examination of the conclusions of Mesopotamian works might be thus helpful in proposing a new solution to the question of the closing hymn of the Baal Cycle.[[19]](#footnote-22)

**The Doxological Conclusion of Narrative and Mythological Texts from Mesopotamia: An Overview**

In his comprehensive article on Sumerian literature, Claus Wilcke devotes a section to the doxological formulas that ordinarily conclude Sumerian narrative and mythological works.[[20]](#footnote-23) The customary formulas are: “X be praised (zà-mí)” and “X, Your praise is sweet (zà-mí-zu du10-ga-àm),” where X, to whom the doxology is devoted, is the work’s protagonist. Two groups of compositions depart from this pattern, however. One is the disputation-poems, in which the subject of the doxology is not the victor in the disputation, but (generally) the divine judge, who is also mentioned in the last lines of the poem. We will return to this genre later. The other group is the texts describing a descent to the netherworld, like *Inana’s Descent to the Netherworld, Ningišzida's Journey to the Netherworld* and *The Death of Gilgameš*, all of which conclude with a doxology to Ereškigal, the queen of the netherworld.[[21]](#footnote-24)

Although many of the doxological formulas conclude works without a classification subscript, scholars agree that the doxologies do not serve in this role, but are an integral part of the work.[[22]](#footnote-25) According to Jeremy Black, the role of the concluding doxology lies in the performative realm, i.e., to mark the end of the work: “[The *textbezogen* doxologies are] a literary reflex of the performer-poet's termination of his performance… The implication of regarding the *textbezogen* doxologies as part of the text — part of its structure — is obviously that they would be included in a performance of the poem and would therefore function as a form of ‘flag’ to indicate the approaching end of the composition.”[[23]](#footnote-26)

Black, following Wilcke, correctly differentiates between doxologies that praise one of the characters in the main work and can therefore be considered as part of it (=*Textbezogendoxologie*), and formal doxologies – whose subject is the goddess Nisaba/Nidaba, the goddess of writing – which were added individually by a scribe/copyist at the end of literary and non-literary texts (=*Schreiberdoxologie*). While some of the doxologies devoted to Nisaba are still considered by scholars as *Textbezogendoxologie,* due to her occurrence in the last lines of a work (although she is not the work’s protagonist), these doxologies should be in fact regarded as an assimilation of *Schreiberdoxologie* with *Textbezogendoxologie*, and should not be exaggerated into a sophisticated literary interpretation.[[24]](#footnote-27)

The short *Textbezogendoxologie* formulas — “X be praised” or “X, your praise is sweet” — might originally have served as an invocation for a long, independent hymn to conclude the work during its performance.[[25]](#footnote-28) While this admittedly cannot be proven, it is true that the short doxological line occasionally attracts lengthier praises. Thus we find accumulations of praises and appellations that precede the short doxology in *Inana and An*,for example: “Because you are unmatched among the Great Princes, maiden Inana, your praise is magnificent (ki-sikil dinana zà-mí-zu maḫ-àm)” (ETCSL 1.3.5, 61–62).[[26]](#footnote-29) The conclusion of *Ninurta's Return to Nibru* provides an additional instance of this: “The warrior, whose heroism is manifest, Ninurta, the son of Enlil, has firmly grounded his greatness in Enlil's sanctuary. Lord who has destroyed the mountains, who has no rival, who butts angrily in that magnificent battle, great warrior who goes forth in his […] might, strong one, deluge of Enlil, Ninurta, magnificent child of E-kur, pride of the father who engendered him, it is sweet to praise you” (ETCSL 1.6.1, 199–207).

In other cases, instead of accumulations of praises, an independent hymn devoted to the work’s protagonist is integrated into the main work. This hymn is not connected — syntactically or thematically — to the doxological conclusion that follows it. The hymn devoted to Enlil at the end of *Enlil and Ninlil* is an example of this. An additional one is the hymn to Nisaba that was interpolated prior to the customary concluding doxology to Ninurta, the protagonist of *Ninurta’s Exploit*. Yet, sometimes the independent hymn itself serves as the conclusion of the work, without a doxological formula, as in *Nanna-Suen's Journey to Nibru*. In this composition, the work’s protagonists are actually those who are giving praise, not themselves being the subject of the hymn.[[27]](#footnote-31)

To summarize, the Sumerian narrative and mythological works constantly end with a doxological conclusion. Most of the conclusions are short, perhaps because they are only meant to flag a performance of an independent longer hymn. Long conclusions, however, including independent hymns, are also found in the extant literary texts. The widespread distribution of these doxologies testifies to their role (whether original or *post factum*) as marking the end of the work. An indirect continuation of this phenomenon is evident in the well-known Babylonian literary texts, such as *Atraḫasis*, *Enuma eliš*, and *Erra and Išum*, which end with a hymn that refers to the work’s protagonist — Enlil, Marduk, and Erra respectively. Here, however, the hymn was understood by the ancient authors to be the literary work that has just been recited. In other words, in their view, the work itself serves as a hymn devoted to the protagonist.[[28]](#footnote-32)

Back to the Ugaritic Baal Cycle; in light of the Mesopotamian works, its conclusion with a hymn is thus not exceptional at all. Rather, like these works – or perhaps even by their inspiration –the hymnic conclusion was integrated into the Baal Cycle in order to mark its end.[[29]](#footnote-33)

**The Hymn to Šapš in Light of the Mesopotamian Disputation-Poems**

As noted above, though most of the doxological conclusions are devoted to the work’s protagonist, two groups of Sumerian compositions differ significantly. One of them — the one relevant to our case — is the so-called disputation poems (Sumerian: a-da-mìn dug4-ga). To this group belong works that deal with a disputation between two inanimate objects, whose doxological conclusion is devoted to the god who adjudicates in favor of one of the litigants, and not to the victor in the disputation.[[30]](#footnote-34) We have Sumerian disputation-poems from the Old Babylonian period, some of them perhaps were composed during the Ur III period (and even earlier), and Akkadian disputation-poems from the Old Babylonian period and onward (which – again – may have been composed earlier). Although this is a distinctly scribal-school genre, archival evidence for the performance of such works, i.e, to its publicity, has been found.[[31]](#footnote-35)

During the Late Bronze Age, some of the Akkadian disputation-poems were copied by local scribes outside Babylonia (see below), while in later periods vernacular compositions of this kind were composed in Aramaic, Persian, Greek, and other local languages. In fact, the influence of the disputation-poem on vernacular texts can perhaps be seen already in two Egyptian compositions from the New Kingdom, contemporaneous with the Middle Babylonian/Late Bronze periods.[[32]](#footnote-36) All these testify to the distribution of this genre throughout the ancient Near Eastern cultures, or at least – their scribal class.

The structure of the Sumerian disputation-poems, the first of this genre to be written down, is threefold: (1) The prologue, sometimes cosmogonic, which presents the rivals and the background to the disputation. (2) The arguments, said by each rival. In most cases the arguments are cited in alternation, without narrative, but in at least one of the disputation-poems (*Bird and Fish*), they are accompanied by violent actions performed by the rivals against each other, in a format reminiscent of animal tales or fables.[[33]](#footnote-37) (3) The intervention of a high authority — usually at the invitation of one of the rivals, but sometimes at his own initiative, out of anger at one of the rivals (as in *Hoe and Plough*) — and his verdict in favor of the victor in the disputation. The text then ends with the conclusion: “In the disputation between X and Y (X Y a-da-mìn dug4-ga), X was superior to Y (X Y dirig-ga-ba); DN be praised (DN zà-mí).” Thus, for example, in *Ewe and Grain*, Enki intervenes and decides in favor of Ewe; the praise is offered to Enki. In *Winter and Summer*, Enlil decides in favor of Winter; the praise goes to Enlil. In *Bird and Fish*, Enki decides in favor of Fish; the praise goes to Enki.[[34]](#footnote-38)

The competition between Dumuzid and Enkimdu (representing respectively the shepherd and the farmer) for the heart of Inana also ends with a conclusion characteristic of the disputation-poems, including praise for the goddess who chose the shepherd: “The dispute between the shepherd and the farmer (sipad engar-da a-da-mìn dug4-ga); maiden Inana, your praise is sweet (ki-sikil dinana zà-mí-zu dùg-ga-àm)” (ETCSL 4.8.33, 88–89). Although this work differs in many respects from the classic disputation-poems, including its subscript as a *balbale*-song, it nonetheless follows this pattern.[[35]](#footnote-39) Two additional Sumerian works, belonging to the epic cycle of Uruk — *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta* and *Enmerkar and Ensuḫgirana* —are classified by their authors as disputation-poems (a-da-mìn), apparently on account of the competition between the kings for Inana’s favor. This definition seems to primarily influence the end of the composition, which bears the characteristic conclusion of a disputation-poem.[[36]](#footnote-40)

As noted, no Sumerian disputation-poems are dated later than the Old Babylonian period. Akkadian disputation-poems, on the other hand, continued to be composed in a variety of structures and content throughout the ages, some of them being found also outside of Mesopotamia. The oldest and the most widespread — *Tamarisk and Palm* — was unearthed in Emar.[[37]](#footnote-41) Fragments of a composition called *Series of the Fox*, a sort of combination of tale and disputation, were found at Ugarit.[[38]](#footnote-42) Unfortunately, the ends of most of the Akkadian disputation-poems are no longer extant, so the judgment scene or the identity of the authority who gave a verdict are in question.[[39]](#footnote-43) Nonetheless, in two compositions — the *Series of the Fox* mentioned above and *The Story of the Poor, Forlorn Wren*, whose first copies are dated to the Hellenistic period, but whose composition is apparently earlier[[40]](#footnote-44) — it is implied that the Akkadian sun god Šamaš is the judge between the rivals. *The Story of the Poor, Forlorn Wren* also ends with a hymn to this god, resembling the conclusions of the Sumerian works. It appears that Šamaš was chosen to adjudicate in these works (unlike the high-authority gods in the Sumerian equivalents, who were connected to creation) on account of his traditional role in Mesopotamia as the god of justice. The epithet “righteous judge (*dayyān ki*[*tti*]),” applied to him in *The Story of the Poor, Forlorn Wren* (l. 23), fits well with this role.[[41]](#footnote-45) Not only the choice of a different judge, but a comparison of the fragmentary Babylonian disputation-poems with their antecedents – the Sumerian ones – reveals a relatively-flexible pattern in favor of the Babylonian ones, including increased usage of narrative lines. In this respect, they are closer to the genre of tale or fable from which these poems were perhaps originally developed.[[42]](#footnote-46)

Having described this literary phenomenon, it is suggested here that the concluding section of the Ugaritic Baal Cycle – including the last battle, the intervention of the sun goddess, **and** the closing hymn devoted to her – has been inspired by the popular genre of the disputation-poems. In light of the dispersion of this genre in the Levant from the Late Bronze Age onward — first imported from Babylonia and later in original compositions — this may resemble the influence this genre had on the Sumerian epics that treat of competition between kings.

From a narrative perspective, the last battle between Baal and Mot, recounted toward the end of the cycle, reduplicates the resurrection of Baal after Anat’s victory over Mot, when he fights his enemies and sits on his throne (*KTU* 1.6 V 1–6). In fact, during the development of the Baal Cycle, the conflict between Baal and Mot might have concluded at this point exactly, similar to the end of the struggle between Baal and Yamm and the building of Baal’s temple; then too Baal went forth to fight his enemies and at the end sat down on his throne (*KTU* 1.4 VII 35–42).[[43]](#footnote-47) Nonetheless, the plot proceeds to an additional, final battle. Its beginning describes Mot’s return from the dead after seven years.[[44]](#footnote-48) Upon his return, Mot blames Baal for his death (which repeats the description of Anat’s acts against Mot [*KTU* 1.6 II 31–35]), and for feeding one of his brothers to him (as happened, in fact, to Baal himself when Mot ate him). This is the trigger for the beginning of the last struggle between the rivals, which takes place on Mount Zaphon, this time without the messengers and magical weapons that are so typical of the Baal Cycle.

In this face-to-face combat, the rivals hold on three times, but the fourth time, both of them fall, without a victor.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| They (=Baal and Mot) eye each other like annihilators,[[45]](#footnote-49)  Mot is strong, Baal is strong. | 1.6 VI 16*yˁtn k gmrm*  17*mt ˁz bˁl ˁz* |
| They butt each other like bulls,  Mot is strong, Baal is strong. | *yngḥn* 18*k rˀumm*  *mt ˁz bˁl* 19*ˁz* |
| They bite each other like snakes,  Mot is strong, Baal is strong. | *ynṯkn k bṯnm*  20*mt ˁz bˁl ˁz* |
| They trample[[46]](#footnote-50) each other like runners,[[47]](#footnote-51)  Mot falls, Baal falls. | *ymṣḫn* 21*k lsmm*  *mt ql* 22*bˁl ql* |

Then Šapš the sun goddess angrily intervenes:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Above, Šapš exclaims to Mot: | *ˁln špš* 23*tṣḥ lmt* |
| “Hear now, O Mot, son of El, | *šmˁ mˁ* 24*l bn ˀilm mt* |
| How can you fight with Mighty Baal? | *ik tmt*[*ḫ*]25*ṣ ˁ ˀ ˁ tn bˁl* |
| How, then, can hear you the bull, El, your father? | 26*ik ˀal yšm*[*ˁ*]*k ṯr* 27*ˀil ˀil* |
| Surely, he will remove the support of your throne, | *l ysˁ ˀalt* 28*ṯbtk* |
| Surely, he will overturn the seat of your kingship, | *l yhpk ksˀa mlkk* |
| Surely, he will break the scepter of your rule.” | 29*l yṯbr ḫṭ mṯpṭk* |

The fact that Šapš’ speech does not precisely match the situation (just like in *KTU* 1.2 III), shows this to be a common expression. It is not surprising, thus, to find parallels to this speech outside the Baal Cycle as well, as a curse against hostile kings.[[48]](#footnote-52) Mot’s response to Šapš’ speech likewise fails to be an appropriate conclusion to the final conflict, which broke out after Baal fed one of Mot’s brothers to him. Rather, it is an appropriate conclusion to the question of authority among the gods, around which developed the conflicts of Baal with Yamm and Mot:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Mot, son of El, is afraid, | 30*yrˀu bn ‘il mt* |
| The beloved of El, the warrior, is scared. | *ṯtˁ y*31*dd ˀil ġzr* |
| Mot becomes agitated at her voice,[[49]](#footnote-53) | *yˁr mt* 32*b qlh* |
| H[e raises his voice and exclaims?]: | *yš*[*ˀu gh w yṣḥ*?] |
| “Let them place Baal [on the seat] of his kingship, | 33*bˁl yṯṯbn* [*l ksˀi*]33*mlkh* |
| on [the resting place, the throne] of his dominion.” | *l* [*nḫt l kḥṯ*]35*drkth* […] |

With the words of Mot the last conflict comes to an end. After a few broken lines — which might be the ending of the narrative, or the beginning the hymn — the hymn to Šapš is quoted, and with that the work as a whole concludes.[[50]](#footnote-54)

Scholars tend to explain the act of Šapš here, deciding in favor of Baal in his conflict with Mot, in light of her role as a “royal messenger” or in comparison to the help given by the sun god to Gilgameš in his fight against Ḫumbaba.[[51]](#footnote-55) However, while the first explanation is based solely on the words of Šapš here, with no evidence for such a distinguished role elsewhere, the second explanation is based on a comparison of a single motif in two different narratives, making it difficult to accept. Considering nonetheless our suggestion of the influence of a common Mesopotamian genre on the final section of the Baal Cycle, the role of Šapš may as well be inspired by the well-known attribute of the Mesopotamian sun god as the god of justice, a feature mentioned also in Mesopotamian texts from Ugarit.[[52]](#footnote-56) Furthermore, as noted above, the Babylonian disputation-poems that do mention the identity of the judge depict Šamaš in this role.[[53]](#footnote-57) It may be, therefore, that not only the pattern of the Mesopotamian disputation-poems but also the role of Šapš as the one who decides the battle was inspired by Mesopotamian literature. Since this is not her traditional role at Ugarit, the words placed in Šapš’ mouth were actually the words of El — the one who in fact determines who shall rule over the gods throughout the Baal Cycle.

**Conclusion**

The hymn to Šapš – the sun goddess – that closes the Baal Cycle has primarily been studied in light of the work it concludes, and thus has raised difficulties among scholars. Some insist that the hymn is devoted to Baal, the protagonist of the work, despite his absence there, while others consider it to have originally been an independent hymn to Šapš but have trouble explaining its location at the end of the cycle. Given the lack of comparable Ugaritic parallels, it was suggested above to examine this hymn in light of Mesopotamian literature, which constituted a significant part of the Ugaritic scribes’ training. It turned out that, since mythological and narrative Sumerian works customarily end with a hymnic conclusion (and in some ways this is true also for the Akkadian texts), they can clarify the Ugaritic piece. According to scholars, such a conclusion was intended to mark the end of a Mesopotamian literary work; this is apparently also the formal role of the independent hymn that closes the Baal Cycle. The integration of a hymn devoted to Šapš, of all Ugaritic gods, was illuminated by the Mesopotamian genre of disputation-poems, which concludes as well with praise for the god who (like Šapš) decides in favor of one of the two rivals, and not to the victor in the conflict. While this genre may only imply the same literary phenomenon, it was suggested further that the final section of the Baal Cycle – from the final combat of Baal and Mot to the deciding of Šapš in favor of Baal, and the hymn devoted to her – took its final shape (or was even composed?) under the influence of the Mesopotamian disputation-poems that were known as well in the Levantine scribal-schools.

1. Cf. *KTU* 1.2 III. This fragment is not directly connected to any of the tablets of the Baal Cycle, while it repeats several of quotations from the other tablets. It is therefore difficult to use this fragment as evidence for the structure or content of the Baal Cycle. In fact, it seems that this fragment is secondary to the central plot and perhaps was not originally part of it. See Meier 1986; Smith 1994: 22; Ayali-Darshan 2016: 108–113. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Cf. Dijkstra 1974: 67–68; 1986; Margalit 1980: 195; del Olmo Lete 1981: 234–235; Coogan and Smith 2012: 152. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Cf. Caquot 1959: 100 (Caqout and Sznycer 1974: 269, call it a hymn to Šapš, but with a question mark); Lipiński 1972: 106–111; Watson 1977: 275–277; Gibson 1978: 18–19; Dietrich and Loretz 1980: 399–400; Smith 1986b: 339; Pardee 1997: 273. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Cf. Gaster 1936: 225–226; de-Moor 1971: 243–244; 1972: 7 (and cf. Marcus 1973: 590); Gibson 1978: 19; Smith 1986b: 339; Dijkstra 1986. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Cf. de-Moor 1971: 243–244; 1972: 7; Herr 1995: 53. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. For the *Rpˀum* (and their parallels: *ˀIlnym*, *ˀIlm*, *Mtm*) in Ugarit and its neighbors, see discussion and former bibliography in Rouillard 1999. These lines are preceded by an invitation to an unknown addressee to eat and drink resembling the introduction in *The Birth of the Gracious Gods* (*KTU* 1.24). On the liturgical context of this introduction, see Dijkstra 1986. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
7. Cf. Healey 1980; Lewis 1989: 35–46. For the Sun-goddess of the Earth in Anatolia, see Lorenz-Link 2009. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
8. While the motif of the search for the dead god and his finding in the netherworld appears in additional ancient Near Eastern literatures, Egyptian and Mesopotamian as well as Greek (cf. Gaster 1961: 213–214, 220; Smith 1986a: 313), only in Ugaritic is it related to the sun goddess. Perhaps this also influenced the parallel motif — unique to Ugaritic alone — of finding of the god in the “living land” after his resurrection; see Ayali-Darshan 2019: 5–6. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
9. *nrt ˀilm špš ṣrrt lˀa šmm b yd mdd ˀilm mt*. For interpretations of this difficult expression, see Rahmouni 2008: 271–274. For rejection of any connection with the netherworld, see Kutter 2008: 147–164. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
10. While most scholars explain the lemmas *ḥbr/dˁt* as “friendship, companionship,” a few interpret them as referring to witchcraft, similar to biblical חבר (Deut 18:11). Support for this might be found in the parallelism at *KTU* 1.169, relating to Horon: *ḥrn ḥbrm wġlm dˁtm*. See Dijkstra 1986: 150; Kutter 2008: 181–183. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
11. The verb *ytr* is explained (from the root *n-t-r*) and translated on the basis of the parallelism with the verb *yd* (from the root *y-d-y*) in the previous line; see Gibson, 1978: 81; Pardee 1997: 273. Other scholars translate both verbs to mean “traveling” (based on their resemblance to the Hebrew roots *n-d-d* and *t-w-r*), according to which Koṯar-waḪasis travels **in** the sea of *ˀArš* and Tunnan; see Caquot and Sznycer 1974: 270 and nn. n, o. For additional suggestions, see Wyatt 2002: 145 and n. 126. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
12. Although the division of the Baal Cycle into three parts has taken root among Ugaritologists, comparison with several versions of the story of the Storm God and the Sea reveals that the “second part” (*KTU* 1.3–1.4), i.e., the story of the building of the Baal’s palace and the feast that followed —originally concluded the combat between the Storm-god and the Sea, that is, the first part of the Baal Cycle. The second part of the cycle that tells of the confrontation between Baal and Mot, embodies completely different traditions. See Ayali-Darshan 2016: 127–138. For the features of Koṯar-waḪasis in Ugaritic literature and the references related to this god in Ugaritic and extra-Ugaritic texts, see, e.g., Pardee 1999. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
13. Cf. also Pardee 1997: 273, n. 280. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
14. On Yamm as an anthropomorphic being in the Baal Cycle, see Loewenstamm 1980: 346–61. For a comparison with other ancient Near Eastern literature and the secondary nature of the Ugaritic depiction, see Ayali-Darshan 2016: 281–282. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
15. Most of the scholars named in nn. 2–4 hold some variation of this perspective . [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
16. For a review of the contradictory traditions in the first part of the Baal Cycle, see Ayali-Darshan 2016: 97–150. For a review of some of the contradictory traditions in the second part of the cycle, see Ayali-Darshan 2019: 6–11. For a suggestion in regard to the development of the cycle, see Herr 1995. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
17. While the close of *Aqhat* is certainly broken, as for *Kirta*, opinions differ, although it is almost certainly broken as well. See, e.g., Parker 1989: 145, 203–205. Other Ugaritic compositions serve as historiola or ritual and are therefore not comparable. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
18. On the Mesopotamian curriculum of the scribal schools in Ugarit in particular and in Syria in general, see Van Soldt 1995; Fincke 2012; Viano 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
19. Watson 1977: 276 followed a similar path, especially in his assertion, “The use of a hymn to close a book or a large literary unit is not without parallels.” However, the comparison he set forth with biblical texts (see his n. 35) is problematic, since it deals with stratified texts to which concluding hymns were added – occasionally with other appendices – by later scribes. Nevertheless, some interesting examples in this context (which were not mentioned by Watson, and might show signs of anteriority) are the ends of the books of Genesis, Deuteronomy, Samuel, Proverbs, and perhaps even Habbakuk. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
20. Wilcke 1976: 246–248. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
21. However, in another version of *The Death of Gilgameš*, it is Gilgameš the protagonist who is praised at the end. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
22. In some cases, as Širku(g), Balbale and Širgida, the subscript does appear after the doxology (the genres of Balag and Eršema have no doxologies). For discussion and further bibliography, see Shehata 2009: 238–239. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
23. Black 1992: 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
24. Thus, for example, in *Hoe and Plough* (which were also influenced by *The Song of the Hoe*); cf. Vanstiphout 1984; 2014, 238–240. A similar phenomenon may occur in *Ninurta's Exploits* and *Enmerkar and Ensuḫgirana*; see below. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
25. Cf. Black 1992: 73. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
26. The English translations for the Sumerian works are cited from ETCSL, with modifications. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
27. The suggestion that this is an independent poem may gain support from *Ur-Namma D*, which cites a nearby passage; see Ferrara 1973: 155–156. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
28. For a different type of conclusion in Babylonian works, see Wasserman 2003: 166, 172. Watts (1992: 209) argues that the conclusion of Mesopotamian building and display inscriptions, as well as Assyrian annals, with a prayer to the divine, is also part of the same literary phenomenon. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
29. The question of whether the Baal Cycle was recited publicly or was written for another purpose cannot be answered due to the lack of external evidence. Its literary language and style may nevertheless indicate that it possibly was composed in order to be recited; see, e.g., Sasson 1981; Watson 1999. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
30. For this genre, see Alster 1990; Vanstiphout 1990; 1991; 1992; 2014; Vogelzang 1991; Ponchia 2007; Jiménez 2017; 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
31. Jiménez 2017: 15–16, with further bibliography therein. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
32. Jiménez 2017: 128–138, with further bibliography therein. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
33. Cf. Alster 1990: 12–13. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
34. According to several manuscripts Shulgi is invited to adjudicate, but apparently this is a later insertion; see Jiménez 2017: 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
35. On this work and its correspondence to the pattern of the disputation-poems, see Mittermayer 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
36. Thus in regard to *Enmerkar and Ensuḫgirana* (on the doxological conclusion to Nisaba there, see above). The end of *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta* has not survived, but the expression “adamin” appears in the so-called Spell of Nudimmud. See Ponchia 2007: 73–76. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
37. For the text and further bibliography, see Cohen 2013: 177–198. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
38. Arnaud 2007: no. 51 (RS 25.526A); cf. Jiménez 2017: 39–57, 383. This text is also known among scholars as *The Tale of Fox*. For its designation as “a hybrid of fable and disputation,” see Jiménez 2017: 51 and the bibliography there. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
39. The only endings that are still extant are those of *Nissaba and Wheat* and *Series of the Fox*, but neither ends with a decisive verdict for the one of rivals as the Sumerian examples do. According to Jiménez 2017: 72, the mention of Ereškigal in the last lines of *Nissaba and Wheat* demonstrate that she was the judge of the confrontation, whereas the hymn to Nissaba at the end shows that she was apparently the victor in the confrontation. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
40. Jiménez 2017: 353–354 dates its composition to the New Babylonian period or the Persian/Hellenistic period. Like the *Series of the Fox*, this composition too is a combination of fable and disputation. For an up-to-date edition of the two texts with commentary and bibliography, see Jiménez 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
41. Cf. Jiménez 2017: 94–96, 329. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
42. Cf. Alster 1990; Vogelzang 1990. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
43. On the limitations of the last segment, see also Herr 1995: 47–48. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
44. This theme, which seems anomalous regarding Mot, might be based on the parallel motif of Baal’s descent to the netherworld and his resurrection. For the seven-year-long absence of Baal, see also *KTU* 1.12, 44–45; 1.19 I 42–44; cf. Ayali-Darshan 2019: 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
45. Although the root *g-m-r* is common in Semitic languages, it is hard to find a rendition that fits the context here. A meaning close to the translation above, which also matches other Ugaritic contexts (as well as the biblical name גמריה and the verb גמר in Ps 57:3), was suggested by, e.g., Smith 1997: 162 (“fighters”); Pardee 1997: 272 (“finished [warriors]”); del Olmo Lete and Sanmartín 2013: 298 (“champions”). The problem with this translation is its lack of any simile, despite the preposition *k*  
    (“like”) that precedes the noun *gmrm*, while the following sentences, which are syntactically the same, do have similes. For this reason, some have suggested translating *gmr* here as “burning coals,” based on Aramaic and Arabic, as do, e.g., Gibson 1978: 80; Margalit 1980:188; Wyatt 2002: 142. Another proposal, that matches the context even better, although it lacks strong lexical support, is the rendition of *gmr* as a name of an animal. This would create a threefold parallelism (or even fourfold; see below) with the following lines. Thus, Caquot and Sznycer 1974: 268, n. b suggest translating it as “hippopotamus” on the basis of the Ethiopic languages, while Ginsberg 1969: 141 suggested “camel,” with the shift of the final *l* to *r*. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
46. The meaning of the root *m-ṣ-ḫ* is also uncertain. Since in Ugaritic it appears in contexts of struggle, and twice in combination with the adverbial phrase “to the ground (*l ˀarṣ*),” its meaning might be close to that of *m-ḫ-ṣ* (“to beat, crush”), with the specific meaning of causing one’s enemy to fall to the ground. See del Olmo Lete and Sanmartín 2013: 578; Margalit 1980: 189; Pardee 1997: 272, n. 268. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
47. Based on Akkadian, *lsmm* here is usually rendered as “swift.” In light of the preceding lines, it possibly refers to a swift animal like a horse (so, e.g., Margalit 1980: 188–189), or a hunting dog (so, e.g., Gibson 1978: 80); cf. also Pardee, 1997: 272 and n. 275. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
48. Cf. the curse in the Ahiram inscription against any king who would profane his sarcophagus (KAI 1:2): “May his staff of judgement be broken, may the seat of his kingship be overturned (תחתספ חטר משפטה תחתספ כסא מלכה)”; and the one in the epilogue of Hammurabi against any king who would erase his inscription: “May Anu deprive him of the sheen of royalty, may he break his scepter… May Šamaš overturn his kingship… May Sin deprive him of the crown and throne of kingship (*Anum… melimmī šarrūtim līṭeršu ḫaṭṭašu lišbir.. Šamaš…šarrūssu liskip… Sîn…agâm kussiam ša šarrūtim līṭeršu*).” This sort of curse was also used in ordinary life as is demonstrated by the expression in B. Git. 35a: “may they overturn his chair (ליהפכוה לכורסיה)”. For citations and bibliography, see Smith 1994: 252. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
49. Another rendition would be: “Mot becomes agitated in his fall”; see Del Olmo Lete and Sanmartín 2013: 687. Both “her voice” and “his fall” fit the Ugaritic *b qlh*. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
50. Of all hymns to Šapš (that may have existed), it is plausible to assume that this independent hymn was chosen due to the references to some figures from the Baal Cycle (Koṯar-waḪasis, ˀArš and Tunnan, and the netherworld aspect of Šaps), even though it contradicts the narrative. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
51. For the sun goddess as a royal messenger at Ugarit, see Wiggins 1996: 329, 336. For the comparison to *Gilgameš* (SB V, 137–143, in George 2003), see Smith 1994: 18; 1998: 294–295, following the suggestion of A. Westenholz (cf. Kutter 2008:176). Note, however, that the help of Šamaš to Gilgameš is mentioned already in the prayer of Ninsun prior to the battle. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
52. Cf. the fragmentary hymns to Šamaš RS 22.219 (Arnaud 2007: no. 29) and RS 20.231 // RS 25.443 (Arnaud 2007: no. 30); the composition *Hear the Advice* (Arnaud 2007: no. 49), ll. 38–45, which perhaps echoes the sentence from the *Series of the Fox* (cf. Cohen 2013: 106); a fragment of *Gilgameš* (RS 94.2083; Arnaud 1007: no. 45; George 2007: 250–235), where Ḫumbaba begs in tears specifically for the help of Šamaš, calling out, “You, be my lord (and) my judge ([*atta lū ša*]*rrī dayyānī*).” [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
53. Apart from the disputation-poems, cf. also, for example, the attribute of the sun god Utu in *Enki and the World Order*: “The judge who searches out verdicts for the gods” (ETCSL 1.1.3, 377). Kutter 2008: 176–177 compares this citation with the role of Šapš discussed here. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)