



Abzu

Abzû or **Apsû** (Sumerian: 𒀀布祖 abzû; Akkadian: 𒀀பּסָע apsû), also called *Engar* (Cuneiform: 𒂗, LAGAB×HAL; Sumerian: engar; Akkadian: engurru – lit. *ab* = 'water' *zû* = 'deep', recorded in Greek as Ἀπασών Apasón^[1]), is the name for fresh water from underground aquifers which was given a religious fertilising quality in ancient near eastern cosmology, including Sumerian and Akkadian mythology. It was believed that all lakes, springs, rivers, fountains, rain, and even the Flood, as described in Atrahasis, originated from the Abzû. In Mesopotamian cosmogony, it is referred to as the freshwater primordial ocean below and above the earth; indeed the Earth itself was regarded as a goddess *Ninhursag* that was conceived from the mating of male Abzu with female saltwater ocean *Tiamat*. Thus the divine Mother Earth – on her surface equipped with a bubble of breathable air – was surrounded by Abzû, and her interior harbours the realm of the dead (Irkalla).

Abzu
Genealogy
Consort <u>Tiamat</u>
Children <u>Kingu</u> (Babylonian religion), <u>Lahamu</u> , <u>Lahmu</u> , <u>Anu</u> (Sumerian religion)

In Sumerian culture

In the city of Eridu, Enki's temple was known as E₂-abzû (house of the deep waters) and was located at the edge of a swamp – an abzû.^[2] Certain tanks of holy water in Babylonian and Assyrian temple courtyards were also called abzû (apsû).^[3] Typical in religious washing, these tanks were similar to Judaism's mikvot, the washing pools of Islamic mosques, or the baptismal font in Christian churches.

In Sumerian cosmology

The Sumerian god Enki (Ea in the Akkadian language) was believed to have keen eyes and appeared out of the abzû since before human beings were created. His wife Damgalnuna, his mother Nammu, his advisor Isimud and a variety of subservient creatures, such as the gatekeeper Lahmu, also lived in the abzû.^{[4][5][6][7][8]}

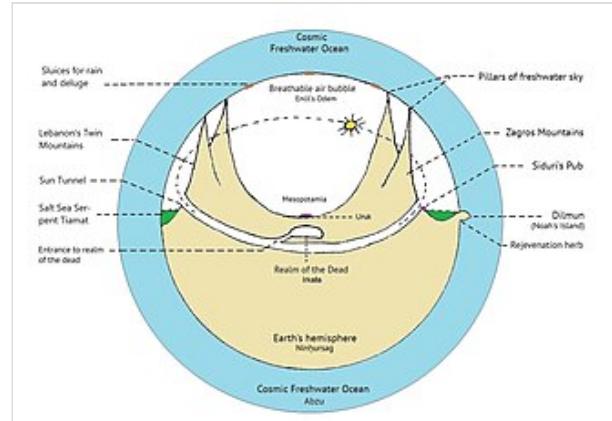
As a deity

Abzû (apsû) is depicted as a deity^[9] only in the Babylonian creation epic, the Enūma Eliš, taken from the library of Assurbanipal (c. 630 BCE) but which is about 500 years older. In this story, he was a primal being made of fresh water and a lover to another primal deity, Tiamat, a creature of salt water. The Enūma Eliš begins:

"When above the heavens (e-nu-ma e-liš) did not yet exist
 nor the earth below,
Apsû the freshwater ocean was there, the first, the begetter,
 and Tiamat, the saltwater sea, she who bore them all;

they were still mixing their waters,
and no pasture land had yet been formed,
nor even a reed marsh."

The act of procreation led to the birth of the younger gods: Enki, Enlil, and Anu. Anchored in the Tablet of Destinies, they founded an organisation to make Mesopotamia fertile through agriculture, but got into a dispute and consequently created the first humans as labour slaves, to peacefully resolve the conflict. The humans multiplied *en masse* and disturbed the gods around Enlil and Anu with their noise, so that they wanted to use the cosmic freshwater ocean to trigger the great flood and destroy the humans (cf. Athrahasis epic). Enraged by the devastation of earth, Tiamat gave birth to monsters whose bodies she filled with "poison instead of blood" and waged war against her traitorous children. Only Marduk, the founder of Babylon, was able to kill Tiamat and mould the final constitution of heaven and earth from her corpse.



The Sumerian Genesis describes how the cosmic freshwater ocean surrounds our planet (created in its midst) on all sides. Salt sea serpent Tiamat is indicated by the green areas, so the sketch shows the same as Babylon's world map, now in side view. A breathable air bubble clings to the Earth's surface, with the Abzû as a roof, like on Athrahasis' ("Noah's") lifeboat. Other details, such as "Noah's" island Dilmun, are taken from the Epic of Gilgamesh. An important technical detail are the gate sluices built into sky. Through them, the gods around Enlil, who knew very well how to construct irrigation systems, supplied their land Eden with rain, but also unleashed the great flood. It is not unlikely that Abzû, Tiamat, and the flood represent the source of Leviathan, a human-devouring cosmic sea monster.

In popular culture

Abzû is a 2016 adventure game that was influenced by Sumerian mythology of Abzû.^[10]

See also

- Abyzou – Name of a female demon
- Cosmic ocean – Mythological motif
- Firmament – Solid dome dividing the primal waters
- Nu – Ancient Egyptian personification of the primordial watery abyss
- Varuna – Hindu deity associated with water
- Apsara – Type of female spirit of the clouds and waters in Hindu and Buddhist culture
- Wuji – The primordial in Chinese philosophy

Notes

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AN

(Redirected from [An](#))

An, **AN**, **aN**, or **an** may refer to:

Businesses and organizations

- [Airlinair](#) (IATA airline code AN)
- [Alleanza Nazionale](#), a former political party in Italy
- [AnimeNEXT](#), an annual anime convention located in New Jersey
- [Anime North](#), a Canadian anime convention
- [Ansett Australia](#), a major Australian airline group that is now defunct (IATA designator AN)
- [Apalachicola Northern Railroad](#) (reporting mark AN) 1903–2002
 - [AN Railway](#), a successor company, 2002–present
- [Aryan Nations](#), a white supremacist religious organization
- [Australian National Railways Commission](#), an Australian rail operator from 1975 until 1987
- [Antonov](#), a Ukrainian (formerly Soviet) aircraft manufacturing and services company, as a model prefix

Entertainment and media

- [Antv](#), an Indonesian television network
- [Astronomische Nachrichten](#), or *Astronomical Notes*, an international astronomy journal
- [Avisa Nordland](#), a Norwegian newspaper
- [Sweet Bean](#) (あん), a 2015 Japanese film also known as *An*

Language

- [An](#), English indefinite article
- [Anglo-Norman language](#)
- [Aragonese language](#) (ISO 639-1:2002 language code AN)
- [Algemeen Nederlands](#) (meaning "Common Dutch"), the official Dutch language
- A variant of the prefix "in", used before vowels to convey the meaning "not" (for example: [aneuploid](#) means "not euploid")

Mathematics, science, and technology

- A_n , in mathematics, a [root system](#) and its Dynkin diagram
- A_n , in mathematics, conventional notation for the [alternating group](#)
- a_n , a generic label for a term of a [sequence](#)

- AN thread, Army and Navy thread - for bolts and tube fittings in 16th inch increments
- Acanthosis nigricans, a skin condition
- Acrylonitrile, an organic compound and monomer used in the manufacture of certain plastics
- Actinide (An), informal symbol for a series of chemical elements
- Ammonium nitrate (AN), a chemical compound
- Anode, in electronic schematics
- Anorexia nervosa, an eating disorder
- Application note (in engineering), most often seen as A.N.
- AttNewton (aN), an SI unit of force
- Anorthite, a feldspar mineral
- Adobe Animate, an Adobe animation software

Military

- A prefix used by the U.S. military for electronic equipment named under the Joint Electronics Type Designation System
- A US Navy hull classification symbol: Net laying ship (AN)
- Avtomat Nikonova used for the AN-94

Names

- Ahn (Korean name) (安)
- An (surname) (安), Chinese surname

Places

- An County, in Sichuan, China
- Agios Nikolaos (disambiguation), a common place name in Greece and Cyprus
- Province of Ancona, a province of Italy (ISO 3166-2:IT code AN)
- Andaman and Nicobar Islands, a territory in southeastern India (ISO 3166 code AN)
- Anderson County, Kansas (state county code AN)
- Andorra (FIPS, LOC MARC and obsolete NATO country code AN)
- Angola (World Meteorological Organization country code AN)
- Netherlands Antilles (ISO country code AN)

Religion

- An (Shintō), a small table or platform used during Shinto ceremonies
- Anu or An, a god in Sumerian and Babylonian mythology

Other uses

- Associate degree in nursing

- [Algebraic notation \(chess\)](#) (AN), the standard system for recording moves in chess

See also

- [Aan \(disambiguation\)](#)
- [Ann \(disambiguation\)](#)

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Enmesharra

Enmesharra (Sumerian: *𒂗𒈪𒊩 *Enmešarra, "Lord of all *mes*") was a Mesopotamian god associated with the underworld. He was regarded as a member of an old generation of deities, and as such was commonly described as a ghost or resident of the underworld. He is best known from various lists of primordial deities, such as the "theogony of Enlil," which lists many generations of ancestral deities.

Various fragmentary myths describe confrontations between him and deities such as Enlil, Ninurta or Marduk. The myth *Enlil and Namzitara* describes him as Enlil's paternal uncle, and alludes to a belief that he was the ruler of the universe in the distant past, possibly after usurping the position of his nephew. He has been compared with Anzu, who in the corresponding myth also steals Enlil's right to declare destinies for himself.

Texts commonly mention his children, usually identified as the "Seven sons of Enmesharra," analogous to the Sebitti. Specific deities who could be identified as his children or descendants were Shuzianna and Papsukkal, among others.

Character

Enmesharra's name means "lord of all *me* (essences)" in Sumerian.^{[10][11]} Henry W. F. Saggs assumes that he "had his origin in theological speculation rather than that he was an otiose deity of popular religion."^[12] Wilfred G. Lambert similarly concludes that he originated "solely from the theogony of Enlil,"^[6] a term he uses to refer to lists of Enlil's ancestors and other primordial deities.^[13]

Enmesharra is best attested as a primordial deity who was believed to be active long before the gods actively worshiped by the Mesopotamians.^[6] A prayer meant to be recited before the foundation of a temple refers to him as lord of the underworld.^[14] This title was also applied to other deities, including Ninazu, his son Ningishzida, Nergal and Nirah.^[15] A reference to Enmesharra residing in the underworld is known from the Old Babylonian myth *Death of Gilgamesh*, where he is mentioned alongside the various ancestors of Enlil.^[16] Early Assyriologists viewed Enmesharra as "Akkadian Pluto,"^[17] which lead to the incorrect notion that he was one and the same as Nergal.^[18]

Enmesharra



Primordial god, god of the underworld

Abode underworld

Genealogy

Consort Ninmesharra^{[7][8]}

Children Usually 7 sons analogous to the

Sebitti, named Zisummu, Adgirhaš, Šegbarimime, Urbaddumu, Urbadagubgubu, Gubagarae, and Abara-DU.DU^{[1][2]}

Up to eight^[3] or fifteen children total^[4]

Shuzianna^{[5][6]}

Papsukkal (sometimes)^[6]

Equivalents

Hurrian Namšara (possibly)^[9]

It is presumed that most sources referring to Enmesharra understand him as a deceased deity.^[19] For example, a text makes references to Enmesharra being burned and existing in the form of a ghost.^[16] One text from Nippur mentions that he was "laid to rest" after a confrontation between him and either Enlil or Ninurta occurred in Shuruppak.^[20] However, a single source states that Enmesharra himself avoided death, and his sons died instead: "Enmesharra (...) to save his own life, handed over his sons."^[21]

The myth *Enmesharra's Defeat* assigns a unique epithet to him, *zi-mu-ú* ("splendour"), and states that this quality was reassigned to Shamash after his defeat.^[22] Wilfred G. Lambert considers it a possibility that Enmesharra's association with light could have stemmed from the fact that Ninmesharra, the feminine equivalent of his name, was a title of Inanna, well known as a luminous deity due to her role as a representation of Venus.^[22] Inanna's luminous nature is described for example in a hymn which connects her various abilities, such as providing advice to humans or seemingly complementing evil with good with the light exuded by the corresponding celestial body.^[23] The name *Ninmesharra*, "lady of all *me*," is best known from a composition of Enheduanna, where it refers to Inanna, though it could also be applied as an epithet to Enlil's wife Ninlil.^[8] Occasional references to Ninmesharra as an independent figure, a companion of Enmesharra from lists of theogonic deities, are also known.^{[8][6]} In one case, Enmesharra and Ninmesharra are described as "father and mother of all the gods."^[4]

Frans Wiggermann initially assumed that Enmesharra might be understood as an abstract representation of the concept of kingship, based on a mythical episode where he passes the insignia of kingship on to Anu and Enlil.^[24] However, later he embraced the notion that being a primordial deity, he represented the "brainless old cosmos" predating the period of Enlil's "just rule."^[16]

One Babylonian text (CBS 6060), a compendium explaining which deities correspond to various building materials, associates Enmesharra with gold, though in another similar text, presumed to be older, this metal is instead associated with Enlil.^[25] A plant called *anameru* was associated with him in sources from the first millennium BCE,^[26] as were two birds, the cock and the šuššuru.^[21]

Iconography

On this basis of Enmesharra's apparent luminous character in the myth *Enmesharra's Defeat*, Wilfred G. Lambert proposed that some figures on cylinder seals with rays of light emanating on their shoulders might be depictions of Enmesharra, rather than the sun god Shamash.^[22] Additionally, he proposed that a unique relief depicting a god stabbing a cyclops with rays emanating from his head might depict his defeat.^[22] Other interpretations of the figures on this artifact, originally excavated in Khafajah (ancient Tubub) have been proposed too, including Marduk killing Tiamat and Ninurta killing Asag, though neither of these found widespread support, and art historian Anthony Green showed skepticism regarding them, noting art might preserve myths not known from textual record.^[27] According to Andrew R. George Akkadian omen texts from Susa and from the Sealand archives appears to indicate that one-eyed creatures were known as *igidalu*, *igidaru* or *igitelû*, possibly a loanword from Sumerian *igi dili* ("one eye").^[28] He remarks that the only god associated with them in available sources is Nergal, who in an omen text is identified as the slayer of an *igitelû*.^[29] There is also evidence that the birth of one-eyed animals was regarded as an omen connected to Nergal.^[29]

Frans Wiggermann proposes that the so-called "birdman" figure from cylinder seals might represent Enmesharra.^[26] Unlike the better known eagle-like Anzu, the "birdman" appears to have the lower body of a water bird.^[26] Wiggermann argues that the scenes involving this being might indicate he was imagined as challenging the divine authority. Since the same role belongs to Enmesharra in textual sources, he proposes that the two of them are one and the same, though he admits there is no indication in any known sources that the latter was ever regarded as bird-like.^[26]

Associations with other deities

Ancient commentaries at times equate Enmesharra with other, usually cosmogonic, figures: Lugalkugua, Anu, Qingu,^[4] Alala and otherwise largely unknown Ubnu.^[30]

Enmesharra belonged to the group of ancestral gods associated with Enlil, though he held a special status within it.^[31] Lists of ancestors of Enlil, who are matching *En-* and *Nin-* pairs much like Enlil and his wife Ninlil, could be followed by Enmesharra, listed without a spouse and not labeled as an ancestor directly.^[32] Enumerations of such figures start with the pair Enki-Ninki, and sometimes they were referred to simply as "Enkis and Ninkis," ^d*En-ki-e-ne* ^d*Nin-ki-e-ne*.^[33] Texts from Fara and Abu Salabikh from the Early Dynastic period already attest the existence of these pairs.^[34] References are also known from Ebla, where in one text Enki and Ninki are linked with roots of the tamarisk.^[35] While it is consistent that Enki and Ninki were the oldest generation of Enlil's ancestors, the rest of the family tree was not fixed, and various pairs of *En-* and *Nin-* deities appear in known sources.^[36] Enki, the ancestor of Enlil, is not to be confused with the god Enki/Ea, who is a distinct and unrelated figure.^[37] The ancestral Enki's name means "lord earth" while the meaning of the name of the god of Eridu is uncertain but not the same, as indicated by some writings including an amissable g.^[37]

Similar lists of ancestors of Anu are also known, but it is assumed that they were not of equal importance in Mesopotamian theology.^[38]

According to the myth *Enlil and Namzitara*, Enmesharra was Enlil's uncle,^[10] the brother of his father.^[6] Multiple traditions regarding Enlil's father are known, with Anu or Lugalkugua being particularly commonly listed.^[6] The latter could also be regarded as his grandfather.^[30] The god list An = Anum inserts him between Enmesharra and his seven sons.^[39] According to Wilfred G. Lambert, while it is likely that traditions where Enmesharra himself played this role also existed, direct statements confirming this are not presently known from any texts.^[6]

Lugalkugua could be associated both with Enmesharra and by extension with a group of defeated gods called "the seven conquered Enlils,"^[40] to which the latter belonged.^[6] His name points at his association with the *duku*, a cosmic mound from the theology of Nippur,^[41] which was sometimes also associated with Enmesharra according to Frans Wiggermann.^[10] The *duku* was the place where destinies were determined, and a primordial dwelling of the gods.^[42] The name Lugalkugua was independently also used as an epithet of Ea, but due to absence of evidence for the view that Ea was the father or grandfather of Enlil it is assumed that these two applications of it did not overlap.^[43]

Enmesharra was usually believed to have seven sons, though exceptions are known.^[4] A source from Kish mentions eight,^[3] while a single incantation references fifteen of them.^[4] In a neo-Babylonian inventory of divine statues, the Sebitti are identified as seven of the fifteen sons of Enmesharra.^[44] The seven sons and Sebitti often functioned as synonyms, though the latter were also equated with other

groups of seven deities, for example the so-called "Divine Seven of Elam," a Mesopotamian grouping of Elamite gods.^[44] Different identities of the Sebitti could be sometimes merged, for example the Elamite goddess Narunde, in Mesopotamia identified as a sister of the Divine Seven of Elam, in at least one ritual appears alongside Sebitti labeled as "sons of Enmesharra."^[44] This term could also denote the asakku demons, though they were called "sons of Anu" as well.^[3] While the suggestions that seven sons of Enmesharra can be identified as the seven apkallu were present in early scholarship, this theory is not considered credible today.^[45]

Frans Wiggermann proposes that a single text commenting on magical formulas meant to protect a house from supernatural invaders confuses Enmesharra with the goddess Išhara, as it identifies Sebitti as her children, an otherwise unknown genealogy.^[46]

Shuzianna, a goddess associated with Enlil sometimes identified as his concubine or as the nurse of his son Sin appears in enumerations of the seven children of Enmesharra.^[5] In this context she appears in a ritual text from Hellenistic Uruk.^[47]

A prayer to the messenger god Papsukkal calls him "supreme vizier, offspring of Enmesharra."^[6] In one case, Papsukkal is listed right behind Enmesharra in a list of defeated gods.^[48]

Alfonso Archi considers it possible that the name of Namšara, one of the so-called "primordial gods," divine ancestors inhabiting the underworld in Hurrian mythology, was derived from Enmesharra.^[9]

Mythology

The myth *Enlil and Namzitara* refers directly to confrontation between Enlil and Enmesharra,^[20] which is sometimes referred to as the "Enmesharra myth" in scholarship.^[49] It states that at one point Enmesharra took over "Enlilship" in order to "know the fates like a lord."^[10] Wilfred G. Lambert presumes that based on the wording used the myth refers to unlawful seizure of Enlil's right to declare destinies, denoted by the term "Enlilship."^[21] A few known copies of this text do not add the dingir sign, used to indicate divinity, to Enmesharra's name.^[50]

A brief mythical account present in an Akkadian incantation states that Enmesharra passed on the insignia of kingship to Anu and Enlil, though the wording used makes it impossible to determine if the action was voluntary.^[6] Frans Wiggermann notes that the text appears to allude to Enmesharra possessing "higher aspirations" despite being referred to as the lord of the underworld.^[16] He also assumes that the fact one of the objects in mention was a staff might be why Papsukkal was described on one occasion as "son of Anu, offspring of Enmesharra."^[51] A staff was commonly understood as a badge of office received from a higher power in Mesopotamian texts: kings were said to receive staffs from the head gods of the pantheon, like Enlil or Inanna, and sukkals (attendant deities), such as Ninshubur, Papsukkal or Nuska, were believed to carry staffs bestowed upon them by their masters, treated as their attribute.^[52]

Another fragment describes Enmesharra as imprisoned on the orders of Dagan (according to Wilfred G. Lambert treated as a synonym of Enlil in this context), and watched over by a group described as "standing gods," led by either Sin or Nabu.^[20]

The myth *Enmesharra's Defeat*, only known from a single, heavily damaged tablet from the Seleucid or Parthian period, based on the colophon assumed to only be the ending of the narrative, describes a conflict between Enmesharra and Marduk, as well as its aftermath.^[53] It also features Nergal as the warden of the eponymous antagonist and his seven sons, here identified as the Sebitti.^[53] In the surviving fragments, Enmesharra unsuccessfully pleads to be spared, and is subsequently escorted to Marduk's dwelling alongside the Sebitti.^[53] After reminding him of his unknown crime, Marduk deprives Enmesharra of his luminosity, which is subsequently given to Shamash, and presumably executes him, though the line clarifying his fate is not preserved.^[53] The rest of the narrative deals with assigning new domains to various gods,^[54] and in addition to Marduk and Nergal also features Nabu, Shamash,^[55] Zababa, Sin, Adad, Enlil, Urash^[56] and Erimbinatuku, possibly an otherwise unknown epithet of Pabilsag.^[57] Marduk, Nergal and Nabu end up sharing lordship over the universe, which seemingly originally belonged to Anu in this composition.^[58] Wilfred G. Lambert notes these gods were the 3 most prominent deities in the neo-Babylonian state pantheon,^[54] and that certain aspects of the work, like Marduk appearing in roles normally assigned to Enlil, might indicate it was a work of "Babylonian chauvinism" or that it was composed during a period of Nippur's irrelevance.^[59]

It has been proposed that an unknown myth about a battle between Marduk and an Enmesharra-like figure who unjustly seized the tablets of destiny was one of the sources used to form the narrative of *Enuma Elish*, especially the role Qingu plays in it.^[21] However, direct references to a conflict between Enmesharra and Marduk are rare, one exception (other than *Enmesharra's Defeat*) being the so-called *Bird Call Text*, which refers to Marduk under the variant name Tutu:

The cock is the bird of Enmešarra. Its cry is, "You sinned against Tutu."^[22]

Another myth dealing with the defeat of Enmesharra, of which only eighteen lines survive, has been tentatively titled *The Defeat of Enutila, Enmesharra and Qingu* by Wilfred G. Lambert.^[60] The surviving fragment describes the aftermath of a conflict between gods, which seemingly takes place in Babylon, with direct references to temples known from historical sources, such as Eturkalama.^[60] Due to the large number of deities involved (in addition to Enmesharra: his seven sons, Tiamat, Apsu, Nabu, Ninurta, Enutila, Ishtar of Babylon, Qingu, Marduk and Ninzginna) it is possible that the text was a scholarly compilation consisting of elements of formerly independent narratives, possibly including *Enuma Elish*, rather than a myth which arose organically.^[61] One of the surviving lines directly refers to Enmesharra being "taken by the sword."^[61] Enutila, mentioned in this myth, was another figure who like Enmesharra could be listed in texts dealing with theogony alongside ancestors of Enlil, but did not necessarily play the role of one of them.^[32]

Worship

The worship of Enmesharra is attested as early as in the Ur III period.^[10] He appears in a long list of offerings from Puzrish-Dagan, according to which a "grain-fed ox" was scarified to him in Nippur.^[62] He continued to be associated with Nippur through the second and first millennia BCE.^[6] In the Esagil temple complex in Babylon, a seat was dedicated jointly to him and Enbilulu.^[42] It bore the name *du₆.ki.sikil*, "mound, pure place."^[42]

Multiple references to mourning rites connected to Enmesharra are known.^[4] They took part in the month Tebetu.^[4] According to one text, they were believed to be originally established by the goddess Gula.^{[4][63]} Another mentions the mourning rites of Enmesharra, Lugalkuga and Tammuz side by side, stating that each of these festivals took place in a different month.^[64] A late theological commentary from Assur states that during a ritual the corpse of Enmesharra was transported in the chariot of Ninurta, drawn by the ghost of Anzu.^[10] The connection between Anzu and Enmesharra most likely developed due to both of them playing a similar role in mythology, namely challenging Enlil's rule by taking over his position as the god declaring the fates.^[10] Further associations between Enmesharra and chariots are known, for example another late Assyrian text states that his dwelling place was "the chariot house of Enlil,"^[6] according to Andrew R. George the name of a seat in the Esharra temple in Assur.^[65]

Another late explanatory text mentions a "taboo of Enmesharra" described as "waking up the sleeper."^[66] It has been proposed that it was a euphemism pertaining to disturbing the dead.^[66] However, it is also possible that it should be understood literally.^[67] In another case, cats are described as "taboo of Enmesharra," based on an unspecified connection with a mythical episode describing his defeat.^[20]

References

1. Lambert 2013, p. 213-214.
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KI

(Redirected from [Ki](#))

Ki or **KI** may refer to:

Music

- [Ki \(album\)](#), a 2009 album by Devin Townsend Project
- [Ki, a 1979 album by Kitarō](#)
- "Ki", a song from the album [Minecraft – Volume Beta](#) by C418

Businesses and organizations

- [Klaksvíkar Ítróttarfelag](#), a Faroese semi-professional football club
- [Karolinska Institute](#), Swedish university
- [Kenyon Institute](#), a British research institute in Jerusalem
- [Adam Air](#) (2002–2008), an Indonesian airline
- [Kiwanis International](#), service club

Language

- [Ki language](#), a Southern Bantoid language of Cameroon
- [Ki \(kana\)](#), a Japanese syllabic character
- [Ki \(cuneiform\)](#), a sign in cuneiform writing
- [Gikuyu language](#), ISO 639-1 code:ki

Names

- [Ki \(Korean surname\)](#), a Korean surname
- [Ki or Qi \(surname\)](#)
- [Ki or Ji \(surname\)](#)

Places

- [Kangaroo Island](#), South Australia
- [Ki Monastery](#), in India
- [Kiawah Island](#), South Carolina, United States
- [King Island \(Tasmania\)](#), Australia
- [Kings Island](#), Ohio, United States, amusement park owned by Cedar Fair Entertainment Company
- [Kiribati](#)

- .ki, the ISO 3166-1 alpha-2 country code top level domain for Kiribati
- Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation

Religion and metaphysics

- Ki (goddess)
- Qi, or ki in Japanese, a vital force according to Chinese culture that forms part of any living thing

Science and technology

Biology and chemistry

- Ti (plant), also called Kī
- K_i, an equilibrium constant for a chemical reaction or process "i":
 - dissociation constant applicable to process, abbreviated as "i".
 - a measure of the binding affinity of a ligand to a biomolecule
- Potassium iodide, chemical formula KI
- Gene knockin or Knock-in, a genetic engineering method
- Ki Database, a database of biochemical information

Computing

- Ki (prefix symbol), the prefix symbol of the binary unit prefix kibi
- Ki, International Electrotechnical Commission standard symbol for number 1024
- K-I algorithm, Kittler and Illingworth iterative algorithm for image segmentation thresholding
- Ki (or K_i), the unique cryptographic key of each cell phone's SIM card

Other uses

- Knowledge integration, in epistemology
- Grover C. Winn (1886–1943), nicknamed "Ki", American lawyer and politician

See also



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- KL (disambiguation)

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Nammu

Nammu (𒀭 ENGUR = ḫLAGAB×HAL; also read **Namma**^[1]) was a Mesopotamian goddess regarded as a creator deity in the local theology of Eridu. It is assumed that she was associated with water. She is also well attested in connection with incantations and apotropaic magic. She was regarded as the mother of Enki, and in a single inscription she appears as the wife of Anu, but it is assumed that she usually was not believed to have a spouse. From the Old Babylonian period onwards, she was considered to be the mother of An (Heaven) and Ki (Earth),^[2] as well as a representation of the primeval sea/ocean, an association that may have come from influence from the goddess Tiamat.^[3]

While Nammu is already attested in sources from the Early Dynastic period, such as the zame hymns and an inscription of Lugal-kisalsi, she was not commonly worshiped. A temple dedicated to her existed in Ur in the Old Babylonian period, she is also attested in texts from Nippur and Babylon. Theophoric names invoking her were rare, with that of king Ur-Nammu until recently being believed to be the only example.

In the Old Babylonian myth *Enki and Ninmah*, Nammu is one of the deities involved in the creation of mankind alongside the eponymous pair and a group of seven minor goddesses. Her presence differentiates this narrative from other texts dealing with the same motif, such as Atra-Hasis.

Name and epithets

Nammu's name was represented in cuneiform by the Sumerogram ENGUR (LAGAB×HAL).^[4] Lexical lists provide evidence for multiple readings, including Nammu, Namma and longer, reduplicated variants such as Namnamu and Nannama.^[1] A bilingual text from Tell Harmal treats the short and long forms of the name as if they were respectively the Akkadian and Sumerian versions of the same word.^[5] The name is conventionally translated as "creatrix."^{[4][6]} This interpretation depends on the theory that it is etymologically related to the element *imma* (SIG₇) in the name of the goddess Ninimma, which could be explained in Akkadian as *nabnītu* or *bunnannū*,^[7] two terms pertaining to creation.^[8] However, this proposal is not universally accepted.^[9] Another related possibility is to interpret it as a genitive compound, (*e*)*n* + *amma(k)*, "lady of the cosmic river,"^[10] but it is similarly not free of criticism, and it has been argued no clear evidence for the etymology for Nammu's name exists.^[11] Ancient authors secondarily etymologized it as *nig₂-nam-ma*, "creativity", "totality" or "everything".^[6]

The sign ENGUR could also be read as *engur*, a synonym of apsu, but when used in this context, it was not identical with the name of the goddess, and Nammu could be referred to as the creator of *engur*, which according to Frans Wiggermann confirms she and the mythical body of water were not identical.^[12]

Nammu	
Creator goddess	
Major cult center	<u>Eridu</u>
Genealogy	
Children	<u>Enki</u>

Nammu could be referred to with epithets such as "lady who is great and high in the sea" (*nin-ab-gal-an-na-u₅-a*),^[7] "mother who gave birth to heaven and earth" (*^dama-tu-an-ki*) or "first mother who gave birth to all (or senior) gods" (*ama-palil-u₃-tu-diḡir-šar-šar-ra-ke₄-ne*).^[13] The motherhood of Nammu to heaven and earth is attested in texts like the god-list TCL XV 10 and is related to the status attained from the Old Babylonian period onwards as the mother of An (Heaven) and Ki (Earth).^[2]

Character

Few sources providing information about Nammu's character are known.^[14] Most of them come from the Old Babylonian period.^[15] Based on indirect evidence it is assumed she was associated with water,^[16] though there is debate among researchers over whether sweet or saline.^[7] No explicit references to Nammu being identical with the sea are known,^[17] and Manuel Ceccarelli in a recent study suggests she might have represented groundwater.^[15] Jan Lisman, who views Nammu as having been a representation of the primordial ocean/sea from which the rest of the cosmos emerged, believes that Nammu's association with this body of water may have come from the influence of the goddess Tiamat.^[3]

In the local tradition of Eridu, Nammu was regarded as a creator deity.^[6] There is no indication in known texts that she had a spouse when portrayed as such.^[7] Julia M. Asher-Greve suggests that while generally treated as a goddess, Nammu can be considered asexual in this context.^[13] Joan Goodnick Westenholz assumed the process of creation she was involved in was imagined as comparable to parthenogenesis.^[6] While primordial figures were often considered to no longer be active by the ancient Mesopotamians, in contrast with other deities,^[18] Nammu was apparently believed to still exist as an active figure.^[19]

Nammu was also associated with incantations, apotropaic magic and tools and materials used in them.^[19] In a single incantation she is called *bēlet egubbē*, "mistress of the holy water basin", but this epithet was usually regarded as belonging to Ningirima, rather than her.^[12] In texts of this genre, she could be invoked in order to purify or consecrate something, or against demons, illness or scorpions.^[20]

Associations with other deities

Nammu was regarded as the mother of Enki (Ea), as indicated by the myth *Enki and Ninmah*, the god list An = Anum and a bilingual incantation.^[19] However, references to her being his sole parent are less common than the well attested tradition according to which he was one of the children of Anu.^[21] Julia Krul assumes that in the third millennium BCE Nammu was regarded as the spouse of the latter god.^[22] She is designated this way in an inscription of Lugal-kisalsi from the Early Dynastic period.^[14] However, this is the only known reference to the existence of such a tradition.^[19] Wilfred G. Lambert concluded that Nammu had no traditional spouse.^[23]

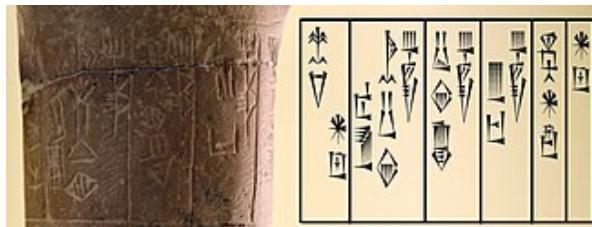
In incantations, Nammu could appear alongside deities such as Enki, Asalluhi and Nanshe.^[19] An early literary text known from a copy from Ebla mentions a grouping of deities presumed to share judiciary functions which includes Nammu, Shamash, Ishtaran and Idlurugu.^[24]

A single explanatory text equates Nammu with Apsu.^[25] It seemingly reinterprets her as a male deity and as the spouse of Nanshe.^[26] However, it most likely depends on traditions pertaining to *Enūma Eliš* and does not represent a separate independent tradition.^[17] As of 2017, no clear evidence for the belief in

personified Apsu predating the composition of this text was known.^[27] Additionally, while the presumed theogony focused on Nammu is the closest possible parallel to Tiamat's role in *Enūma Eliš*,^[28] according to Manuel Ceccarelli the two were not closely connected.^[27] In particular, there is no evidence Nammu was ever regarded as an antagonistic figure.^[15]

Worship

Evidence for the worship of Nammu is scarce in all periods it is attested in.^{[12][6]} She belonged to the local pantheon of Eridu,^[29] and could be referred to as the divine mother of this city.^[19] The only indication of an association with a local pantheon other than that of Eridu is the epithet assigned to her in the god list An = Anum (tablet I, line 27), "munus^agrig-zi-é-kur-(ra-)ke₄", "true housekeeper of Ekur", but it might have only been assigned to her due to confusion with similarly named Ninimma, who was a member of Enlil's court.^[19] The Early Dynastics zame hymns assign a separate settlement to her, but the reading of its name remains uncertain.^[30] Lugal-kisalsi, a king of Uruk, built a temple dedicated to her, but its ceremonial name is not known.^[31] An inscription dated to around 2400-2250 BCE commemorates this event:



𒀭namma / dam an-ra / lugal-kisal-si / lugal unu^{ki}-ga / lugal urim₅^{ki}-ma / e₂ damma / mu-du₃

"For Namma, the wife of An, Lugalkisalsi, king of Uruk and king of Ur, the temple of Namma he built."^[32]

In the Ur III period, Nammu is attested in various incantations invoking deities associated with Eridu.^[33] She received offerings in Ur in the Old Babylonian period, and texts from this location mention the existence of a temple and clergy (including *gudu*₄ priests) dedicated to her, as well as a field named after her.^[12] She also appears in the contemporary god list from Nippur as the 107th entry.^[34]

According to Frans Wiggermann, a *kudurru* (inscribed boundary stone) inscription indicates that a temple of Nammu existed in the Sealand at least since the reign of Gulkīšar, that it remained in use during the reign of Enlil-nadin-apli of the Second Dynasty of Isin, and that its staff included a *šangû* priest.^[12] The latter king also invoked her alongside Nanshe in a blessing formula.^[35] A dedicatory inscription from the Kassite period which mentions Nammu is also known, though its point of origin remains uncertain.^[36] Based on a document most likely written during the reign of Esarhaddon, Nammu was also worshiped in É-DÚR-gi-na, the temple of Lugal-asal in Bāṣ.^[12]

Shrines named *kius-Namma*, "footstep of Nammu", existed in Ekur in Nippur and in *Esagil* in Babylon.^[12] Andrew R. George suggests that the latter, attested in a source from the reign of *Nabonidus*, was named after the former.^[37]

It is assumed that Nammu was not a popular deity.^[23] As of 1998, the only known example of a theophoric name invoking Nammu was that of king *Ur-Nammu*.^[12] Further studies identified no other names invoking her in sources from the Ur III period.^[14] However, two further examples have been identified in a more recent survey of texts from Kassite Nippur.^[38]

Texts dealing with the study of calendars (hemerologies) indicate that the twenty seventh day of the month could be regarded as a festival of Nammu and Nergal, and prescribe royal offerings to these two deities during it.^[12]

Mythology

Nammu appears in the myth *Enki and Ninmah*.^[39] While the text comes from Old Babylonian period, it might reflect an older tradition from the Ur III period.^[40] Two complete copies most likely postdating the reign of *Samsu-iluna* are known, in addition to a bilingual Sumero-Akkadian version from the library of Ashurbanipal.^[41] In the beginning of the composition, Nammu wakes up her son Enki to inform him that other gods are complaining about the heavy tasks assigned to them. As a solution, he suggests the creation of mankind, and instructs Nammu how to form men from clay with the help of Ninmah and her assistants (*Ninimma*, *Shuzianna*, *Ninmada*, *Ninšar*, *Ninmug*, *Mumudu* and *Ninnigina* according to Wilfred G. Lambert's translation). After the task is finished, Enki prepares a banquet for Nammu and Ninmah, which other deities, such as *Anu*, *Enlil* and the seven assistants, also attend.^[42] Nammu's presence sets the account of creation of mankind in this myth from other compositions dealing with the same topic, such as *Atra-Hasis*.^[43]

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External links

- Ancient Mesopotamian Gods and Goddesses: Namma (goddess) (<http://oracc.museum.upe.nn.edu/amgg/listofdeities/namma/>)
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Enki

Enki (Sumerian: *EN-KI) is the Sumerian god of water, knowledge (*gestú*), crafts (*gašam*), and creation (*nudimmud*), and one of the Anunnaki. He was later known as **Ea** (Akkadian: *EA) or **Ae**^[5] in Akkadian (Assyrian-Babylonian) religion, and is identified by some scholars with **Ia** in Canaanite religion. The name was rendered **Aos** within Greek sources (e.g. Damascius).^[6]

He was originally the patron god of the city of Eridu, but later the influence of his cult spread throughout Mesopotamia and to the Canaanites, Hittites and Hurrians. He was associated with the southern band of constellations called *stars of Ea*, but also with the constellation **AŠ- IKU, the Field (Square of Pegasus)**.^[7] Beginning around the second millennium BCE, he was sometimes referred to in writing by the numeric ideogram for "40", occasionally referred to as his "sacred number".^{[8][9]} The planet Mercury, associated with Babylonian Nabu (the son of Marduk) was, in Sumerian times, identified with Enki,^[10] as was the star Canopus.^[11]

Many myths about Enki have been collected from various sites, stretching from Southern Iraq to the Levantine coast. He is mentioned in the earliest extant cuneiform inscriptions throughout the region and was prominent from the third millennium down to the Hellenistic period.

The names Enki and Ea

The meaning of the names Enki and Ea is uncertain. It is presumed that they were originally the names of separate deities^[12] that were syncretized at some point in the third millennium.^[13] Due to the lack of written evidence, it is impossible to clearly define the process of assimilation between Enki and Ea.^[14]



God of creation, intelligence, crafts, fertility, semen, magic, mischief



Detail of Enki from the Adda Seal, an ancient Akkadian cylinder seal dating to circa 2,300 BC^[1]

Symbol Goat, fish, goat-fish, chimera

Genealogy

Parents An and Nammu^[2]

Siblings Enlil

Consort Ninhursag, Damkina

Children Marduk, Dumuzid, Ninsar, Ninkurra, Utlu, Ninti

Equivalents

Greek Poseidon,^[3] Prometheus^[4]

Egyptian Ptah

Enki

The name Enki is usually translated as “Lord of the Earth” in sumerian.^[15] This explanation is not universally accepted.^[16] Several scholars argue that it does not seemingly fit the functions of the god.^{[17][18]} While they accept the translation “Lord of the Earth” for Enki, Samuel Noah Kramer and Thorkild Jacobsen have suggested that it was originally an epithet of the god that eventually replaced his original name. Kramer argued that this epithet was given to the god by the theologians of Eridu in order to elevate his position in the pantheon and make him a rival of Enlil.^[18] However, Jacobsen points out that there is no conclusive evidence of a rivalry between Enki and Enlil in Sumerian texts.^[19] Jacobsen interpreted Enki as a personification of the power of sweet waters. He explained his name “Lord (productive manager) of the Earth” as a reflection of the role of water in the fertilizing of the earth.^[20] He proposed that Enki’s original name was Abzû, later regarded as his under-earth sweet water domain and living place.^[21] However according to Peeter Espak there is no conclusive proof that Enki was regarded as an ancient personification of water in the available sources of the old sumerian period.^[22] Despite the similarity between their names, Enki of Eridu and the primordial god Enki were separate figures.^[23] Thorkild Jacobsen proposed that their names had slightly different meanings and he translated the name of the primordial god as “Lord Earth”.^[23] The forms of their names in the Emesal dialect are different; the name of Enki of Eridu is written Amanki, while the name of the primordial god is written Umunki.^[24]

Edmond Sollberger and Wilfred G. Lambert have proposed a different translation for the name of Enki of Eridu. It has been remarked that an omissible g appears at the end of the second element of his name, which does not appear in the name of the primordial god.^[25] For this reason they interpret this second element not as ki, “earth”, but as ki(g) of unknown meaning.^[26] Sollberger understood an element ki(g) meaning “favour, benevolence, love” in Sumerian. Therefore he translated Enki(g) as “Lord Love”,^[27] or “Lord Benevolence”.^[28] He argues that this translation reflects Enki’s well attested role in myths as a friend of mankind.^[27] However, this explanation is not generally accepted. It has been remarked that it is possible that the omissible g developed via dissimilation,^[29] though similar examples of dissimilation are so far not attested in Sumerian.^[30]

Ea

The name Ea first occurs in personal names from the Old Akkadian period. Earlier translations interpreting Ea as a sumerian name meaning “House of Water” or “House of the Moon, Moon station” are regarded as implausible by modern scholarship.^[31] In a few modern publications, the interpretation “House of Water” is sometimes presented as a scribal popular etymology. However, according to Lambert, there is no evidence for such a reinterpretation.^[16]

Due to the fact that the name appears associated with semitic elements in the sources of the Old Akkadian Period, it has been suggested that Ea is most likely a semitic name.^[32] It has been proposed that the etymology of the name is connected to the semitic root ḥyy, “to live”.^[33] Following this interpretation, a possible translation of the name would be “the Living one”. This explanation has not been proved with certainty, though it is considered the most convincing possibility as of 2006.^[34] It has been proposed that the name of the god Haya was originally an alternative spelling of Ea.^[35] Margaret W. Green proposes that the names Ea and Haya were both derived from the name of a pre Sumerian deity that was integrated into the pantheons of the sumerians and of the semitic peoples, and that Haya persisted as a separate deity after Ea was syncretized with Enki.^[36] Peeter Espak remarks that in the absence of written sources there is no conclusive evidence to prove or deny these theories.^[37]

Alternative names and epithets

Nudimmud

Nudimmud, one of the most frequently attested alternative names and epithets of Enki/Ea, was almost exclusively used in literary texts. In akkadian sources, it could also appear in royal inscriptions, prayers, and incantations.^[38] It already appears in the Zame Hymns under the form ^den-nu-te-mud.^[39] The standard writing was ^dnu-dím-mud. Alternative forms include ,for example, nu-te-me-nud from the Fāra period or nu-da-mud from the Ur III period. The verbal elements dím and mud in the standard orthography respectively mean “to build, create”, and “to bring forth”.^[40] The god list An=Anum ša ameli explains Nudimmud as Ea in his aspect as the god of creation.^[39] Thorkild Jacobsen interpreted the name as “Image fashioner”, “God of shaping”, reflecting Ea’s role as the god of crafts and as the god who creates figures from clay.^[41] It has been remarked that older spellings of Nudimmud do not feature the element dím.^[42] Antoine Cavigneaux and Manfred Krebernik conclude that the orthography with dím is likely due to a later etymological reinterpretation of the name.^[40] The meaning of Nudimmud in the older periods is unclear.^[42]

Nagbu

Nagbu, “Source, spring”,^[43] was an alternative name of Enki/Ea which reflected his role as the lord of the springs and subterranean waters. In this aspect he was not only connected to irrigation and fertility^[44], but he was also associated with the art of incantation, as subterranean water played an important role in Mesopotamian magic and incantation rituals.^[45] Nagbu is attested chiefly in sources from Babylonia, and in the Neo Babylonian period, the name often appears in incantation texts.^[46] It was written with the logogram ^dIDIM. This logogram already appears as a theophoric element in Akkadian and Neo Sumerian names.^[44] Starting from the second millennium BC it often appears in Babylonian personal names.^[46] In the god list An=Anum, Nagbu is equated with Ea. It is unclear whether Nagbu was originally an independent deity or an aspect of Ea.^[45]

Niššiku

Niššiku was an alternative name and epithet of Enki/Ea of uncertain meaning. It is first attested in literary texts of the Old Babylonian period.^[47] Wilfred G. Lambert and Alan R. Millard propose that the name was derived from the Semitic element *nasīku* ,”chieftain”, which reflects Enki’s sumerian epithet *nun*.^[48] Hannes D. Galter considers that a connection between an Old Babylonian expression and a loanword from Aramaic is implausible.^[47] Alternative spellings of the name include Naššiku and Ninšiku.^[49] Ninšiku is likely a later folk etymology from Sumerian. It is attested from the Middle Babylonian period onwards.^[47] One god list explains Ninšiku as Ea in his aspect as god of wisdom. In this interpretation, -šiku was likely equated with Sumerian *kù-zu*, “wise”.^[49]

DIŠ

The logogram DIŠ often designates Enki/Ea in Assyrian texts. In Neo Assyrian sources, it chiefly appears in royal inscriptions and incantation literature.^[50] It is sometimes attested as a theophoric element in personal names of the first millenium. In Neo Babylonian Uruk it designates Anu instead. The reading of

DIŠ in akkadian is unknown. Galter suggests that DIŠ was possibly a numeral symbolizing the number 60, a number associated with Anu, and that its use for Ea could have been a way to equate him with the supreme god of the pantheon.^[50]

Other names and epithets:

Enki/Ea had a variety of other names and epithets reflecting his different functions and his association with his abode, Abzû, and his cult center, Eridu.^[51] Galter remarks that the majority of other names of Ea are only documented from sources from the late second millennium, and therefore he presumes that they represent an effort to fully encompass and describe all of the aspects of the god.^[52] Craftsmanship deities such as Uttu and Ninagal could be regarded as alternative names of Ea in late sources.^[53]

The majority of akkadian epithets of Ea reflect his role as the god of wisdom.^[54] Such epithets include for example, *bēl nēmeqi* ("Lord of wisdom"), *bēl tašīmti* ("Lord of understanding")^[55], and *apkāl ilī* ("Sage of the gods").^[56] *Bēl nagbi*, ("Lord of the subterranean waters")^[57] was a frequently attested epithet of Ea in his aspect as a water god.^[46] He could be referred to as *bēl tenēšēti*, "Lord of mankind".^[58] His association to the arts of incantation was reflected in his epithets *mašmaš ilī*, "Exorcist of the gods",^[59] and *bēl išīputti* ("Lord of the purification rites").^[57]

Ea could be referred to as Ea-šarru in some akkadian texts.^[60] According to Galter, it is unclear whether Ea-šarru was simply an epithet of Ea or if a foreign deity was identified with Ea and -šarru, "king", was added to distinguish them. He remarks that the earliest attestations of this name occur outside of Mesopotamia, which could indicate that the name did not originate in the region.^[61]

A common epithet of Enki/Ea in literary texts was Enlil-banda, "the junior Enlil". An early attestation of this epithet dates to the Old Babylonian Period.^[62] Several possible interpretations of this name have been suggested by scholars. It could indicate that Ea was regarded as a younger brother of Enlil, it could have been a way to equate Ea with Enlil, it could have been a way to assert that he is "like Enlil" in his domain,^[63] or it could mean that he received his functions and abode from Enlil.^[64]

Enki's epithets king of the Abzû and king of Eridu are already attested in sumerian sources from the Early Dynastic Period.^[65] He could be referred to as Ibex of the Abzû (^d*dāra-abzu*).^[66] The ibex was associated with Enki in historical times.^[67] An early attestation of this byname is found in an Old Babylonian hymn. Several compound bynames of Enki/Ea formed with the element *dāra* appear in a later god list.^{[68][69]}

Worship

The main temple to Enki was called *E-abzu*, meaning "abzu temple" (also *E-en-gur-a*, meaning "house of the subterranean waters"), a ziggurat temple surrounded by Euphratean marshlands near the ancient Persian Gulf coastline at Eridu. It was the first temple known to have been built in Southern Iraq. Four separate excavations at the site of Eridu have demonstrated the existence of a shrine dating back to the earliest Ubaid period, more than 6,500 years ago. Over the following 4,500 years, the temple was expanded 18 times, until it was abandoned during the Persian period.^[70] On this basis Thorkild Jacobsen^[71] has hypothesized that the original deity of the temple was Abzu, with his attributes later being taken by Enki over time. P. Steinkeller believes that, during the earliest period, Enki had a

subordinate position to a goddess (possibly [Ninhursag](#)), taking the role of divine consort or high priest,^[72] later taking priority. The Enki temple had at its entrance a pool of fresh water, and excavation has found numerous carp bones, suggesting collective feasts. Carp are shown in the twin water flows running into the later God Enki, suggesting continuity of these features over a very long period. These features were found at all subsequent Sumerian temples, suggesting that this temple established the pattern for all subsequent Sumerian temples. "All rules laid down at Eridu were faithfully observed".^[73]

Iconography

Enki was the keeper of the divine powers called [Me](#), the gifts of [civilization](#). He is often shown with the horned crown of divinity.

On the Adda Seal, Enki is depicted with two streams of water flowing into each of his shoulders: one the Tigris, the other the Euphrates.^[74] Alongside him are two trees, symbolizing the male and female aspects of nature. He is shown wearing a flounced skirt and a cone-shaped hat. An eagle descends from above to land upon his outstretched right arm. This portrayal reflects Enki's role as the god of water, life, and replenishment.^[75]



The Adda Seal, an ancient Akkadian cylinder seal showing (from left to right) [Inanna](#), [Utu](#), [Enki](#), and [Isimud](#) (circa 2300 BC)^[1]

Considered the master shaper of the world, god of [wisdom](#) and of all [magic](#), Enki was characterized as the lord of the [Abzu](#) (Apsu in Akkadian), the freshwater sea or groundwater located within the [earth](#). In the later Babylonian epic *Enûma Eliš*, Abzu, the "begetter of the gods", is inert and sleepy but finds his peace disturbed by the younger gods, so sets out to destroy them. His grandson Enki, chosen to represent the younger gods, puts a spell on Abzu "casting him into a deep sleep", thereby confining him deep underground. Enki subsequently sets up his home "*in the depths of the Abzu*." Enki thus takes on all of the functions of the Abzu, including his fertilising powers as lord of the waters and lord of [semen](#).^[76]

Early royal inscriptions from the [third millennium BCE](#) mention "the reeds of Enki". [Reeds](#) were an important local building material, used for baskets and containers, and collected outside the city walls, where the dead or sick were often carried. This links Enki to the [Kur](#) or [underworld](#) of [Sumerian mythology](#). In another even older tradition, [Nammu](#), the goddess of the primeval creative matter and the mother-goddess portrayed as having "*given birth to the great gods*," was the mother of Enki, and as the watery creative force, was said to preexist Ea-Enki.^[77] Benito states "With Enki it is an interesting change of gender symbolism, the fertilising agent is also water, Sumerian "*a*" or "*Ab*" which also means "semen". In one evocative passage in a Sumerian hymn, Enki stands at the empty riverbeds and fills them with his 'water'".^[78]

Mythology

Creation of life and sickness

The cosmogenic myth common in Sumer was that of the hieros gamos, a sacred marriage where divine principles in the form of dualistic opposites came together as male and female to give birth to the cosmos. In the epic *Enki and Ninhursag*, Enki, as lord of *Ab* or fresh water, is living with his wife in the paradise of Dilmun where

The land of Dilmun is a pure place, the land of Dilmun is a clean place,
The land of Dilmun is a clean place, the land of Dilmun is a bright place;
He who is alone laid himself down in Dilmun,
The place, after Enki is clean, that place is bright.



Impression of a cylinder seal of the time of Akkadian King Sharkalisharri (c. 2200 BC), with central inscription: "The Divine Sharkalisharri Prince of Akkad, Ibni-Sharrum the Scribe his servant". Depiction of Ea with long-horned water buffalo. Circa 2217–2193 BC. Louvre Museum.^[79]^[80]^[81]

Despite being a place where "the raven uttered no cries" and "the lion killed not, the wolf snatched not the lamb, unknown was the kid-killing dog, unknown was the grain devouring boar", Dilmun had no water and Enki heard the cries of its goddess, Ninsikil, and orders the sun-god Utu to bring fresh water from the Earth for Dilmun. As a result,

Her City Drinks the Water of Abundance,
Dilmun Drinks the Water of Abundance,
Her wells of bitter water, behold they are become wells of good water,
Her fields and farms produced crops and grain,
Her city, behold it has become the house of the banks and quays of the land.

Dilmun was identified with Bahrain, whose name in Arabic means "two seas", where the fresh waters of the Arabian aquifer mingle with the salt waters of the Persian Gulf. This mingling of waters was known in Sumerian as Nammu, and was identified as the mother of Enki.

The subsequent tale, with similarities to the Biblical story of the forbidden fruit, repeats the story of how fresh water brings life to a barren land.^[82] Enki, the Water-Lord then "caused to flow the 'water of the heart'" and having fertilised his consort Ninhursag, also known as Ki or Earth, after "Nine days being her nine months, the months of 'womanhood'... like good butter, Nintu, the mother of the land, ...like good

butter, gave birth to Ninsar, (Lady Greenery)". When Ninhursag left him, as Water-Lord he came upon Ninsar (Lady Greenery). Not knowing her to be his daughter, and because she reminds him of his absent consort, Enki then seduces and has intercourse with her. Ninsar then gave birth to Ninkurra (Lady Fruitfulness or Lady Pasture), and leaves Enki alone again. A second time, Enki, in his loneliness finds and seduces Ninkurra, and from the union Ninkurra gave birth to Uttu (weaver or spider, the weaver of the web of life).

A third time Enki succumbs to temptation, and attempts seduction of Uttu. Upset about Enki's reputation, Uttu consults Ninhursag, who, upset at the promiscuous wayward nature of her spouse, advises Uttu to avoid the riverbanks, the places likely to be affected by flooding, the home of Enki. In another version of this myth, Ninhursag takes Enki's semen from Uttu's womb and plants it in the earth where eight plants rapidly germinate. With his two-faced servant and steward Isimud, "Enki, in the swampland, in the swampland lies stretched out, 'What is this (plant), what is this (plant).' His messenger Isimud, answers him; 'My king, this is the tree-plant', he says to him. He cuts it off for him and he (Enki) eats it". And so, despite warnings, Enki consumes the other seven fruit. Consuming his own semen, he falls pregnant (ill with swellings) in his jaw, his teeth, his mouth, his hip, his throat, his limbs, his side and his rib. The gods are at a loss to know what to do; chagrined they "sit in the dust". As Enki lacks a birth canal through which to give birth, he seems to be dying with swellings. The fox then asks Enlil, King of the Gods, "If I bring Ninhursag before thee, what shall be my reward?" Ninhursag's sacred fox then fetches the goddess.

Ninhursag relents and takes Enki's Ab (water, or semen) into her body, and gives birth to gods of healing of each part of the body: Abu for the jaw, Nanshe for the throat, Nintul for the hip, Ninsutu for the tooth, Ninkasi for the mouth, Dazimua for the side, Enshagag for the limbs. The last one, Ninti (Lady Rib), is also a pun on Lady Life, a title of Ninhursag herself. The story thus symbolically reflects the way in which life is brought forth through the addition of water to the land, and once it grows, water is required to bring plants to fruit. It also counsels balance and responsibility, nothing to excess.

Ninti, the title of Ninhursag, also means "the mother of all living", and was a title later given to the Hurrian goddess Kheba. This is also the title given in the Bible to Eve, the Hebrew and Aramaic Hawwah (הַוָּה), who was made from the rib of Adam, in a strange reflection of the Sumerian myth, in which Adam – not Enki – walks in the Garden of Paradise.^[83]

Making of man

After six generations of gods, in the Babylonian Enûma Eliš, in the seventh generation, (Akkadian "shapattu" or sabath), the younger Igigi gods, the sons and daughters of Enlil and Ninlil, go on strike and refuse their duties of keeping creation working. Abzu, god of fresh water, co-creator of the cosmos, threatens to destroy the world with his waters, and the gods gather in terror. Enki promises to help and puts Abzu to sleep, confining him in irrigation canals and places him in the Kur, beneath his city of Eridu. But the universe is still threatened, as Tiamat, angry at the imprisonment of Abzu and at the prompting of her son and vizier Kingu, decides to take back creation herself. The gods gather again in terror and turn to Enki for help, but Enki – who harnessed Abzu, Tiamat's consort, for irrigation – refuses to get involved. The gods then seek help elsewhere, and the patriarchal Enlil, their father, god of Nippur, promises to solve the problem if they make him King of the Gods. In the Babylonian tale, Enlil's role is taken by Marduk, Enki's son, and in the Assyrian version it is Ashur. After dispatching Tiamat with the "arrows of his winds" down her throat and constructing the heavens with the arch of her ribs, Enlil places her tail in the sky as the Milky Way, and her crying eyes become the source of the Tigris and Euphrates. But there is

still the problem of "who will keep the cosmos working". Enki, who might have otherwise come to their aid, is lying in a deep sleep and fails to hear their cries. His mother Nammu (creatrix also of Abzu and Tiamat) "brings the tears of the gods" before Enki and says

Oh my son, arise from thy bed, from thy (slumber), work what is wise,
Fashion servants for the Gods, may they produce their (bread?).

Enki then advises that they create a servant of the gods, humankind, out of clay and blood.^[84] Against Enki's wish, the gods decide to slay Kingu, and Enki finally consents to use Kingu's blood to make the first human, with whom Enki always later has a close relationship, the first of the seven sages, seven wise men or "*Abgallu*" (*ab* = water, *gal* = great, *lu* = man), also known as Adapa. Enki assembles a team of divinities to help him, creating a host of "good and princely fashioners". He tells his mother:

Oh my mother, the creature whose name thou has uttered, it exists,
Bind upon it the (will?) of the Gods;
Mix the heart of clay that is over the Abyss,
The good and princely fashioners will thicken the clay
Thou, do thou bring the limbs into existence;
Nimmah (Ninhursag, his wife and consort) will work above thee
(Nintu?) (goddess of birth) will stand by thy fashioning;
Oh my mother, decree thou its (the new born's) fate.

Adapa, the first man fashioned, later goes and acts as the advisor to the King of Eridu, when in the Sumerian King-List, the me of "kingship descends on Eridu".

Samuel Noah Kramer believes that behind this myth of Enki's confinement of Abzu lies an older one of the struggle between Enki and the Dragon Kur (the underworld).^[83]

The Atrahasis-Epos has it that Enlil requested from Nammu the creation of humans. And Nammu told him that with the help of Enki (her son) she can create humans in the image of gods.

Uniter of languages

In the Sumerian epic entitled *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*, in a speech of Enmerkar, an introductory spell appears, recounting Enki having had mankind communicate in one language (following Jay Crisostomo 2019); in other accounts, it is a hymn imploring Enki to do so. In either case, Enki "facilitated the debates between [the two kings] by allowing the world to speak one language," the presumed superior language of the tablet, i.e. Sumerian.^[note 1]

Jay Crisostomo's 2019 translation, based on the recent work of C. Mittermayer is:

At that time, as there was no snake, as there was no scorpion,
as there was no hyena, as there was no lion,
as there was no dog or wolf, as there was no fear or trembling
— as humans had no rival.

It was then that the lands of Subur [and] Hamazi,
the distinctly-tongued, Sumer, the great mountain, the essence of nobility,
Akkad, the land possessing the befitting,
and the land of Martu, lying in safety
— the totality of heaven and earth, the well-guarded people, [all] proclaimed Enlil in a single language.

Enki, the lord of abundance and true word,
the lord chosen in wisdom who watches over the land,
the expert of all the gods, the chosen in wisdom,
the lord of Eridu, [Enki] placed an alteration of the language in their mouths.

The speech of humanity is one.

S.N. Kramer's 1940 translation is as follows.^[note 2]

Once upon a time there was no snake, there was no scorpion,
There was no hyena, there was no lion,
There was no wild dog, no wolf,
There was no fear, no terror,
Man had no rival.

In those days, the lands of Subur (and) Hamazi,
Harmony-tongued Sumer, the great land of the decrees of princedom,
Uri, the land having all that is appropriate,
The land Martu, resting in security,
The whole universe, the people in unison
To Enlil in one tongue [spoke].

(Then) Enki, the lord of abundance (whose) commands are trustworthy,
The lord of wisdom, who understands the land,
The leader of the gods,
Endowed with wisdom, the lord of Eridu
Changed the speech in their mouths, [brought] contention into it,
Into the speech of man that (until then) had been one.

The deluge

In the Sumerian version of the flood myth, the causes of the flood and the reasons for the hero's survival are unknown due to the fact that the beginning of the tablet describing the story has been destroyed. Nonetheless, Kramer has stated that it can probably be reasonably inferred that the hero Ziusudra survives due to Enki's aid because that is what happens in the later Akkadian and Babylonian versions of the story.^{[83]:97–99}

In the later Legend of Atrahasis, Enlil, the King of the Gods, sets out to eliminate humanity, whose noise is disturbing his rest. He successively sends drought, famine and plague to eliminate humanity, but Enki thwarts his half-brother's plans by teaching Atrahasis how to counter these threats. Each time, Atrahasis asks the population to abandon worship of all gods except the one responsible for the calamity, and this seems to shame them into relenting. Humans, however, proliferate a fourth time. Enraged, Enlil convenes a Council of Deities and gets them to promise not to tell humankind that he plans their total annihilation. Enki does not tell Atrahasis directly, but speaks to him in secret via a reed wall. He instructs Atrahasis to build a boat in order to rescue his family and other living creatures from the coming deluge. After the seven-day deluge, the flood hero frees a swallow, a raven and a dove in an effort to find if the flood waters have receded. Upon landing, a sacrifice is made to the gods. Enlil is angry his will has been thwarted yet again, and Enki is named as the culprit. Enki explains that Enlil is unfair to punish the guiltless, and the gods institute measures to ensure that humanity does not become too populous in the future. This is one of the oldest of the surviving Middle Eastern deluge myths.

Enki and Inanna

The myth *Enki and Inanna*^{[89][90]} tells the story of how the young goddess of the É-anna temple of Uruk feasts with her father Enki.^[91] The two deities participate in a drinking competition; then, Enki, thoroughly inebriated, gives Inanna all of the mes. The next morning, when Enki awakes with a hangover, he asks his servant Isimud for the mes, only to be informed that he has given them to Inanna. Upset, he sends Galla to recover them. Inanna sails away in the boat of heaven and arrives safely back at the quay of Uruk. Eventually, Enki admits his defeat and accepts a peace treaty with Uruk.

Politically, this myth would seem to indicate events of an early period when political authority passed from Enki's city of Eridu to Inanna's city of Uruk.

In the myth of *Inanna's Descent*,^[90] Inanna, in order to console her grieving sister Ereshkigal, who is mourning the death of her husband Gugalana (*gu* 'bull', *gal* 'big', *ana* 'sky/heaven'), slain by Gilgamesh and Enkidu, sets out to visit her sister. Inanna tells her servant Ninshubur ('Lady Evening', a reference to Inanna's role as the evening star) to get help from Anu, Enlil or Enki if she does not return in three days. After Inanna has not come back, Ninshubur approaches Anu, only to be told that he knows the goddess's strength and her ability to take care of herself. While Enlil tells Ninshubur he is busy running the cosmos, Enki immediately expresses concern and dispatches his Galla (Galaturra or Kurgarra, sexless beings created from the dirt from beneath the god's finger-nails) to recover the young goddess. These beings may be the origin of the Greco-Roman Galli, androgynous beings of the third sex who played an important part in early religious ritual.^[92]

In the story *Inanna and Shukaletuda*,^[93] Shukaletuda, the gardener, set by Enki to care for the date palm he had created, finds Inanna sleeping under the palm tree and rapes the goddess in her sleep. Awaking, she discovers that she has been violated and seeks to punish the miscreant. Shukaletuda seeks protection from Enki, whom Bottéro believes to be his father.^[94] In classic Enkian fashion, the father advises Shukaletuda to hide in the city where Inanna will not be able to find him. Enki, as the protector of whoever comes to seek his help, and as the empowerer of Inanna, here challenges the young impetuous goddess to control her anger so as to be better able to function as a great judge.

Eventually, after cooling her anger, she too seeks the help of Enki, as spokesperson of the "assembly of the gods", the Igigi and the Anunnaki. After she presents her case, Enki sees that justice needs to be done and promises help, delivering knowledge of where the miscreant is hiding.

Influence

Enki and later Ea were apparently depicted, sometimes, as a man covered with the skin of a fish, and this representation, as likewise the name of his temple E-apsu, "house of the watery deep", points decidedly to his original character as a god of the waters (see [Oannes](#)). Around the excavation of the 18 shrines found on the spot, thousands of carp bones were found, consumed possibly in feasts to the god. Of his cult at Eridu, which goes back to the oldest period of Mesopotamian history, nothing definite is known except that his temple was also associated with Ninhursag's temple which was called *Esaggila*, "the lofty head house" (*E*, house, *sag*, head, *ila*, high; or Akkadian goddess = Ila), a name shared with Marduk's temple in Babylon, pointing to a staged tower or ziggurat (as with the temple of Enlil at Nippur, which was known as *E-kur* (*kur*, hill)), and that incantations, involving ceremonial rites in which water as a sacred element played a prominent part, formed a feature of his worship. This seems also implicated in the epic of the hieros gamos or sacred marriage of Enki and Ninhursag (above), which seems an etiological myth of the fertilisation of the dry ground by the coming of irrigation water (from Sumerian *a*, *ab*, water or semen). The early inscriptions of Urukagina in fact go so far as to suggest that the divine pair, Enki and Ninki, were the progenitors of seven pairs of gods, including Enki as god of Eridu, Enlil of Nippur, and Su'en (or Sin) of Ur, and were themselves the children of An (sky, heaven) and Ki (earth).^[70] The pool of the Abzu at the front of his temple was adopted also at the temple to Nanna (Akkadian Sin) the Moon, at Ur, and spread from there throughout the Middle East. It is believed to remain today as the sacred pool at Mosques, or as the holy water font in Catholic or Eastern Orthodox churches.^[94]



God Ea, a statue from Khorsabad, late 8th century BCE, Iraq, now in the Iraq Museum



God Ea, seated, holding a cup. From Nasiriyah, southern Iraq, 2004–1595 BCE. Iraq Museum

Whether Eridu at one time also played an important political role in Sumerian affairs is not certain, though not improbable. At all events the prominence of "Ea" led, as in the case of Nippur, to the survival of Eridu as a sacred city, long after it had ceased to have any significance as a political center. Myths in which Ea figures prominently have been found in Assurbanipal's library, and in the Hattusas archive in Hittite Anatolia. As Ea, Enki had a wide influence outside of Sumer, being equated with El (at Ugarit) and possibly Yah (at Ebla) in the Canaanite 'ilm pantheon. He is also found in Hurrian and Hittite mythology as a god of contracts, and is particularly favourable to humankind. It has been suggested that etymologically the name Ea comes from the term **hyy* (life), referring to Enki's waters as life-giving.^[95] Enki/Ea is essentially a god of civilization, wisdom, and culture. He was also the creator and protector of man, and of the world in general. Traces of this version of Ea appear in the Marduk epic celebrating the achievements of this god and the close connection between the Ea cult at Eridu and that of Marduk. The correlation between the two rises from two other important connections: (1) that the name of Marduk's sanctuary at Babylon

bears the same name, *Esaggila*, as that of a temple in Eridu, and (2) that Marduk is generally termed the son of Ea, who derives his powers from the voluntary abdication of the father in favour of his son. Accordingly, the incantations originally composed for the Ea cult were re-edited by the priests of Babylon and adapted to the worship of Marduk, and, similarly, the hymns to Marduk betray traces of the transfer to Marduk of attributes which originally belonged to Ea.

It is, however, as the third figure in the triad (the two other members of which were Anu and Enlil) that Ea acquires his permanent place in the pantheon. To him was assigned the control of the watery element, and in this capacity he becomes the *shar apsi*; i.e. king of the Apsu or "the abyss". The Apsu was figured as the abyss of water beneath the earth, and since the gathering place of the dead, known as Aralu, was situated near the confines of the Apsu, he was also designated as En -Ki; i.e. "lord of that which is below", in contrast to Anu, who was the lord of the "above" or the heavens. The cult of Ea extended throughout Babylonia and Assyria. We find temples and shrines erected in his honour, e.g. at Nippur, Girsu, Ur, Babylon, Sippar, and Nineveh, and the numerous epithets given to him, as well as the various forms under which the god appears, alike bear witness to the popularity which he enjoyed from the earliest to the latest period of Babylonian-Assyrian history. The consort of Ea, known as Ninhursag, Ki, Uriash Damkina, "lady of that which is below", or Damgalnunna, "big lady of the waters", originally was fully equal with Ea, but in more patriarchal Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian times plays a part merely in association with her lord. Generally, however, Enki seems to be a reflection of pre-patriarchal times, in which relations between the sexes were characterised by a situation of greater gender equality. In his character, he prefers persuasion to conflict, which he seeks to avoid if possible.

Ea and West Semitic deities

In 1964, a team of Italian archaeologists under the direction of Paolo Matthiae of the University of Rome La Sapienza performed a series of excavations of material from the third-millennium BCE city of Ebla. Much of the written material found in these digs was later translated by Giovanni Pettinato. Among other conclusions, he found a tendency among the inhabitants of Ebla, after the reign of Sargon of Akkad, to replace the name of El, king of the gods of the Canaanite pantheon (found in names such as Mikael and Ishmael), with Ia (Mikaia, Ishmaia).^[96]

Jean Bottéro (1952)^[97] and others^[98] suggested that *Ia* in this case is a West Semitic (Canaanite) way of pronouncing the Akkadian name *Ea*. Scholars largely reject the theory identifying this *Ia* with the Israelite theonym YHWH,^[99] while explaining how it might have been misinterpreted.^[100] *Ia* has also been compared by William Hallo with the Ugaritic god Yamm ("Sea"), (also called Judge Nahar, or Judge River) whose earlier name in at least one ancient source was Yaw or Ya'a.^[101]

Ea was also known as Dagon and Uanna (Grecised *Oannes*), the first of the Seven Sages.^[5]

See also

- Ancient Near East
- Azazel
- Barbar Temple, a Dilmun-era temple in Bahrain devoted to the worship of Enki
- Capricorn (astrology)

- [Capricornus](#)
- [Aquarius \(astrology\)](#)
- [Iah](#)
- [Jah](#)
- [Me \(mythology\)](#)
- [Mesopotamian mythology](#)
- [Ahura Mazda](#)
- [El \(deity\)](#)

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Notes

1. In the larger narrative Enmerkar is the king of Uruk (Sumer) and Aratta is a mythical eastern land. This episode is one of the most-argued in Assyriological literature.[\[85\]](#)[\[86\]](#)[\[87\]](#)
2. Another translation describes 'Hamazi, the many-tongued' and instead calls on Enki to change the languages of mankind into one.[\[88\]](#)

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External links

- Ancient Mesopotamian Gods and Goddesses: Enki/Ea (god) (<http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/amgg/listofdeities/enki/>)
- Enki and Ninhursag (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.1.1&charenc=j#>)
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Enlil

Enlil,^[a] later known as **Elil** and **Ellil**, is an ancient Mesopotamian god associated with wind, air, earth, and storms.^[4] He is first attested as the chief deity of the Sumerian pantheon,^[5] but he was later worshipped by the Akkadians, Babylonians, Assyrians, and Hurrians. Enlil's primary center of worship was the Ekur temple in the city of Nippur, which was believed to have been built by Enlil himself and was regarded as the "mooring-rope" of heaven and earth. He is also sometimes referred to in Sumerian texts as **Nunamnir**. According to one Sumerian hymn, Enlil himself was so holy that not even the other gods could look upon him. Enlil rose to prominence during the twenty-fourth century BC with the rise of Nippur. His cult fell into decline after Nippur was sacked by the Elamites in 1230 BC and he was eventually supplanted as the chief god of the Mesopotamian pantheon by the Babylonian national god Marduk.

Enlil plays a vital role in the ancient near eastern cosmology; he separates An (heaven) from Ki (earth), thus making the world habitable for humans. In the Sumerian flood myth Eridu Genesis, Enlil rewards Ziusudra with immortality for having survived the flood and, in the Babylonian flood myth, Enlil is the cause of the flood himself, having sent the flood to exterminate the human race, who made too much noise and prevented him from sleeping; the cuneiform tablets of Atra-Hasis report on this connections in a comparatively well-preserved state. The myth of Enlil and Ninlil is about Enlil's serial seduction of the goddess Ninlil in various guises, resulting in the conception of the moon-god Nanna and the Underworld deities Nergal, Ninazu, and Enbilulu. Enlil was regarded as the inventor of the mattock and the patron of agriculture. Enlil also features prominently in several myths involving his son Ninurta, including Anzû and the Tablet of Destinies and Lugale.

Enlil

God of the Wind, Air, the Earth, and Storms



Statuette of Enlil sitting on his throne from the site of Nippur, dated to 1800–1600 BC, now on display in the Iraq Museum

Cuneiform

Abode Nippur

Planet Jupiter

Symbol Horned crown

Genealogy

Parents An and Ki

Siblings Enki

Consort Ninlil, Ki

Children Ninurta, Nanna, Nergal, Ninazu, and Enbilulu

Equivalents

Canaanite El (Dagan), Baal

Greek Cronus

Etymology

Enlil's name comes from ancient Sumerian EN (𒂍), meaning "lord" and LÍL (𒉢), the meaning of which is contentious,^{[6][1][7]} and which has sometimes been interpreted as meaning winds as a weather phenomenon (making Enlil a weather and sky god, "Lord Wind" or "Lord Storm"),^{[8][2][3]} or alternatively as signifying a spirit or phantom whose presence may be felt as stirring of the air, or possibly as representing a partial Semitic loanword rather than a Sumerian word at all.^[9] Enlil's name is not a genitive construction,^[10] suggesting that Enlil was seen as the personification of LÍL rather than merely the cause of LÍL.^[10]

Piotr Steinkeller has written that the meaning of LÍL may not actually be a clue to a specific divine domain of Enlil's, whether storms, spirits, or otherwise, since Enlil may have been "a typical universal god [...] without any specific domain."^[11]

Piotr Steinkeller and Piotr Michalowski have doubts about the Sumerian origin of Enlil.^[12] They have questioned the true meaning of the name, and identified Enlil with the Eblaite word *I-li-lu*.^[12] As noted by Manfred Krebernik and M. P. Streck; Enlil being referred to as *Kur-gal* (the Great Mountain) in Sumerian texts suggests he might have originated in eastern Mesopotamia.^[12]

Worship

Enlil who sits broadly on the white dais, on the lofty dais, who perfects the decrees of power, lordship, and princedom, the earth-gods bow down in fear before him, the heaven-gods humble themselves before him...

—Sumerian hymn to Enlil, translated by
Samuel Noah Kramer^[13]

Enlil was the patron god of the Sumerian city-state of Nippur^[14] and his main center of worship was the Ekur temple located there.^[15] The name of the temple literally means "Mountain House" in ancient Sumerian.^[16] The Ekur was believed to have been built and established by Enlil himself.^[16] It was believed to be the "mooring-rope" of heaven and earth,^[16] meaning that it was seen as "a channel of communication between earth and heaven".^[17] A hymn written during the reign of Ur-Nammu, the founder of the Third Dynasty of Ur, describes the E-kur in great detail, stating that its gates were carved with scenes of Imdugud, a lesser deity sometimes shown as a giant bird, slaying a lion and an eagle snatching up a sinner.^[16]

Babylonian	Elil, <u>Marduk/Bel</u> (cultic roles and epithets)
Hurrian	Kumarbi
Akkadian	Ellil
Ugaritic	El



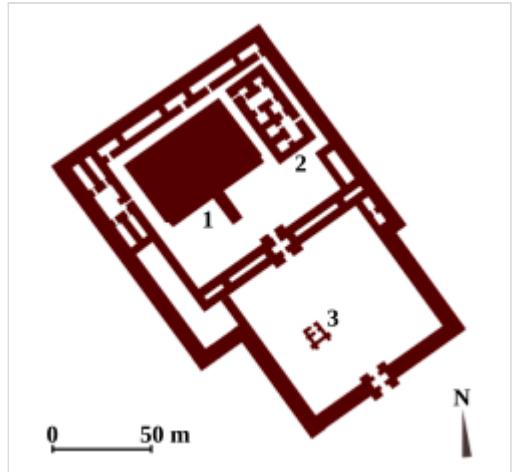
Modern photograph of the ruins of the Ekur temple at Nippur

The Sumerians believed that the sole purpose of humanity's existence was to serve the gods.^{[18][19]} They thought that a god's statue was a physical embodiment of the god himself.^{[20][21]} As such, cult statues were given constant care and attention^{[22][20]} and a set of priests were assigned to tend to them.^[23] People worshipped Enlil by offering food and other human necessities to him.^[18] The food, which was ritually laid out before the god's cult statue in the form of a feast,^{[22][20]} was believed to be Enlil's daily meal,^[18] but, after the ritual, it would be distributed among his priests.^[18] These priests were also responsible for changing the cult statue's clothing.^[21]

The Sumerians envisioned Enlil as a benevolent, fatherly deity, who watches over humanity and cares for their well-being.^[24] One Sumerian hymn describes Enlil as so glorious that even the other gods could not look upon him.^{[25][26]} The same hymn also states that, without Enlil, civilization could not exist.^[26] Enlil's epithets include titles such as "the Great Mountain" and "King of the Foreign Lands".^[25] Enlil is also sometimes described as a "raging storm", a "wild bull", and a "merchant".^[25] The Mesopotamians envisioned him as a creator, a father, a king, and the supreme lord of the universe.^{[25][27]} He was also known as "Nunamnir"^[25] and is referred to in at least one text as the "East Wind and North Wind".^[25]

Kings regarded Enlil as a model ruler and sought to emulate his example.^[28] Enlil was said to be supremely just^[13] and intolerant towards evil.^[13] Rulers from all over Sumer would travel to Enlil's temple in Nippur to be legitimized.^[29] They would return Enlil's favor by devoting lands and precious objects to his temple as offerings.^[30] Nippur was the only Sumerian city-state that never built a palace;^[18] this was intended to symbolize the city's importance as the center of the cult of Enlil by showing that Enlil himself was the city's king.^[18] Even during the Babylonian Period, when Marduk had superseded Enlil as the supreme god, Babylonian kings still traveled to the holy city of Nippur to seek recognition of their right to rule.^[30]

Enlil first rose to prominence during the twenty-fourth century BC, when the importance of the god An began to wane.^{[31][32]} During this time period, Enlil and An are frequently invoked together in inscriptions.^[31] Enlil remained the supreme god in Mesopotamia throughout the Amorite Period,^[33] with Amorite monarchs proclaiming Enlil as the source of their legitimacy.^[33] Enlil's importance began to wane after the Babylonian king Hammurabi conquered Sumer.^[34] The Babylonians worshipped Enlil under the name "Elil"^[4] and the Hurrians syncretized him with their own god Kumarbi.^[4] In one Hurrian ritual, Enlil and Apantu are invoked as "the father and mother of Išhara".^[35] Enlil is also invoked alongside Ninlil as a member of "the mighty and firmly established gods".^[35]



Floor plan of the Ekur temple in Nippur



Cuneiform inscription on a diorite mortar from Nippur stating that this was an offering from Gudea to Enlil (c. 2144–2124 BC)

During the Kassite Period (c. 1592–1155 BC), Nippur briefly managed to regain influence in the region and Enlil rose to prominence once again.^[34] From around 1300 BC onwards, Enlil was syncretized with the Assyrian national god Aššur,^[36] who was the most important deity in the Assyrian pantheon.^[37] Then, in 1230 BC, the Elamites attacked Nippur and the city fell into decline, taking the cult of Enlil along with it.^[34] Approximately one hundred years later, Enlil's role as the head of the pantheon was given to Marduk, the national god of the Babylonians.^[34]

Iconography

Enlil was represented by the symbol of a horned cap, which consisted of up to seven superimposed pairs of ox-horns.^[38] Such crowns were an important symbol of divinity;^{[39][40]} gods had been shown wearing them ever since the third millennium BC.^[39] The horned cap remained consistent in form and meaning from the earliest days of Sumerian prehistory up until the time of the Persian conquest and beyond.^{[39][21]}



Gudea dedication tablet to God Ningirsu:
"For Ningirsu, Enlil's mighty warrior, his
Master, Gudea, ensi of Lagash"

The Sumerians had a complex numerological system, in which certain numbers were believed to hold special ritual significance.^[41] Within this system, Enlil was associated with the number fifty, which was considered sacred to him.^[42] Enlil was part of a triad of deities, which also included An and Enki.^{[43][44][45][46]} These three deities together were the embodiment of all the fixed stars in the night sky.^{[47][45]} An was identified with all the stars of the equatorial sky, Enlil with those of the northern sky, and Enki with those of the southern sky.^{[47][45]} The path of Enlil's celestial orbit was a continuous, symmetrical circle around the north celestial pole,^[48] but those of An and Enki were believed to intersect at various points.^[49] Enlil was associated with the constellation Boötes.^[25]

Mythology

Origins myths

The main source of information about Sumerian creation mythology is the prologue to the epic poem *Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld* (ETCSL 1.8.1.4 (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/tr1814.htm>)),^[50] which briefly describes the process of creation: originally, there was only Nammu, the primeval sea.^[51] Then, Nammu gave birth to An, the sky, and Ki, the earth.^[51] An and Ki mated with each other, causing Ki to give birth to Enlil.^[51] Enlil separated An from Ki and carried off the earth as his domain, while An carried off the sky.^[52] Enlil marries his mother, Ki, and from this union all the plant and animal life on earth is produced.^[53]

Enlil and Ninlil (ETCSL 1.2.1 (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/tr121.htm>)) is a nearly complete 152-line Sumerian poem describing the affair between Enlil and the goddess Ninlil.^{[54][55]} First, Ninlil's mother Nunbarshegunu instructs Ninlil to go bathe in the river.^[56] Ninlil goes to the river, where Enlil

seduces her and impregnates her with their son, the moon-god Nanna.^[55] Because of this, Enlil is banished to Kur, the Sumerian underworld.^[55] Ninlil follows Enlil to the underworld, where he impersonates the "man of the gate".^[57] Ninlil demands to know where Enlil has gone, but Enlil, still impersonating the gatekeeper, refuses to answer.^[57] He then seduces Ninlil and impregnates her with Nergal, the god of death.^[58] The same scenario repeats, only this time Enlil instead impersonates the "man of the river of the nether world, the man-devouring river"; once again, he seduces Ninlil and impregnates her with the god Ninazu.^[59] Finally, Enlil impersonates the "man of the boat"; once again, he seduces Ninlil and impregnates her with Enbilulu, the "inspector of the canals".^[60]

The story of Enlil's courtship with Ninlil is primarily a genealogical myth invented to explain the origins of the moon-god Nanna, as well as the various gods of the Underworld,^[54] but it is also, to some extent, a coming-of-age story describing Enlil and Ninlil's emergence from adolescence into adulthood.^[61] The story also explains Ninlil's role as Enlil's consort; in the poem, Ninlil declares, "As Enlil is your master, so am I also your mistress!"^[62] The story is also historically significant because, if the current interpretation of it is correct, it is the oldest known myth in which a god changes shape.^[54]

Flood myth

In the Sumerian version of the flood story (ETCSL 1.7.4 (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.7.4#>)), the causes of the flood are unclear because the portion of the tablet recording the beginning of the story has been destroyed.^[63] Somehow, a mortal known as Ziusudra manages to survive the flood, likely through the help of the god Enki.^[64] The tablet begins in the middle of the description of the flood.^[64] The flood lasts for seven days and seven nights before it subsides.^[65] Then, Utu, the god of the Sun, emerges.^[65] Ziusudra opens a window in the side of the boat and falls down prostrate before the god.^[65] Next, he sacrifices an ox and a sheep in honor of Utu.^[65] At this point, the text breaks off again.^[65] When it picks back up, Enlil and An are in the midst of declaring Ziusudra immortal as an honor for having managed to survive the flood. The remaining portion of the tablet after this point is destroyed.^[65]

In the later Akkadian version of the flood story, recorded in the Epic of Gilgamesh, Enlil actually causes the flood,^[66] seeking to annihilate every living thing on earth because the humans, who are vastly overpopulated, make too much noise and prevent him from sleeping.^[67] In this version of the story, the hero is Utnapishtim,^[68] who is warned ahead of time by Ea, the Babylonian equivalent of Enki, that the flood is coming.^[69] The flood lasts for seven days; when it ends, Ishtar, who had mourned the destruction of humanity,^[70] promises Utnapishtim that Enlil will never cause a flood again.^[71] When Enlil sees that Utnapishtim and his family have survived, he is outraged,^[72] but his son Ninurta speaks up in favor of humanity, arguing that, instead of causing floods, Enlil should simply ensure that humans never become overpopulated by reducing their numbers using wild animals and famines.^[73] Enlil goes into the boat; Utnapishtim and his wife bow before him.^[73] Enlil, now appeased, grants Utnapishtim immortality as a reward for his loyalty to the gods.^[74]

Chief god and arbitrator

Plucks at the roots, tears at the crown, the pickax *spares* the... plants; the pickax, its fate is decreed by father Enlil, the pickax is exalted.

—Enlil's Invention of the Pickax, translated by Samuel Noah Kramer^[75]

A nearly complete 108-line poem from the Early Dynastic Period (c. 2900–2350 BC) describes Enlil's invention of the mattock,^{[76][77]} a key agricultural pick, hoe, ax, or digging tool of the Sumerians.^{[78][77]} In the poem, Enlil conjures the mattock into existence and decrees its fate.^[79] The mattock is described as gloriously beautiful; it is made of pure gold and its head is carved from lapis lazuli.^[79] Enlil gives the tool over to the humans, who use it to build cities,^[75] subjugate their people,^[75] and pull up weeds.^[75] Enlil was believed to aid in the growth of plants.^[78]

The Sumerian poem *Enlil Chooses the Farmer-God* (ETCSL 5.3.3 (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section5/tr533.htm>)) describes how Enlil, hoping "to establish abundance and prosperity", creates two gods Emesh and Enten, a shepherd and a farmer, respectively.^[80] The two gods argue and Emesh lays claim to Enten's position.^[81] They take the dispute before Enlil, who rules in favor of Enten;^[82] the two gods rejoice and reconcile.^[82]

Ninurta myths

In the Sumerian poem *Lugale* (ETCSL 1.6.2 (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.6.2#>)), Enlil gives advice to his son, the god Ninurta, advising him on a strategy to slay the demon Asag.^[83] This advice is relayed to Ninurta by way of Sharur, his enchanted talking mace, which had been sent by Ninurta to the realm of the gods to seek counsel from Enlil directly.^[83]

In the Old, Middle, and Late Babylonian myth of *Anzû and the Tablet of Destinies*, the Anzû, a giant, monstrous bird,^[84] betrays Enlil and steals the Tablet of Destinies,^[85] a sacred clay tablet belonging to Enlil that grants him his authority,^[86] while Enlil is preparing for a bath.^[87] The rivers dry up and the gods are stripped of their powers.^[87] The gods send Adad, Girra, and Shara to defeat the Anzû,^[87] but all of them fail.^[87] Finally, Ea proposes that the gods should send Ninurta, Enlil's son.^[87] Ninurta successfully defeats the Anzû and returns the Tablet of Destinies to his father.^[87] As a reward, Ninurta is granted a prominent seat on the council of the gods.^[87]



Ninurta with his thunderbolts pursues Anzû, who has stolen the Tablet of Destinies from Enlil's sanctuary (Austen Henry Layard *Monuments of Nineveh*, 2nd Series, 1853)

War of the gods

A badly damaged text from the Neo-Assyrian Period (911–612 BC) describes Marduk leading his army of Anunnaki into the sacred city of Nippur and causing a disturbance.^[88] The disturbance causes a flood,^[88] which forces the resident gods of Nippur under the leadership of Enlil to take shelter in the Eshumesha temple to Ninurta.^[88] Enlil is enraged at Marduk's transgression and orders the gods of Eshumesha to take Marduk and the other Anunnaki as prisoners.^[88] The Anunnaki are captured,^[88] but Marduk appoints his front-runner Mushteshirhablim to lead a revolt against the gods of Eshumesha^[89] and sends his messenger Neretagmil to alert Nabu, the god of literacy.^[89] When the Eshumesha gods hear Nabu speak, they come out of their temple to search for him.^[90] Marduk defeats the Eshumesha gods and takes 360 of them as prisoners of war, including Enlil himself.^[90] Enlil protests that the Eshumesha gods are

innocent,^[90] so Marduk puts them on trial before the Anunnaki.^[90] The text ends with a warning from Damkianna (another name for Ninhursag) to the gods and to humanity, pleading them not to repeat the war between the Anunnaki and the gods of Eshumesha.^[90]

See also



- [Ahriman](#)
- [Ancient Mesopotamian religion](#)
- [El \(deity\)](#)
- [Hymn to Enlil](#)
- [Kumarbi](#)
- [Shu \(Egyptian god\)](#)
- [Yahweh](#)

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Notes

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External links

- Ancient Mesopotamian Gods and Goddesses: Enlil/Ellil (god) (<http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/amgg/listofdeities/enlil/>)
- Gateway to Babylon: "Enlil and Ninlil", trans. Thorkild Jacobsen (<http://www.gatewaystobabylon.com/myths/texts/enlil/enlilninlil.htm>)
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Inanna

Inanna^[a] is the ancient Mesopotamian goddess of war, love, and fertility. She is also associated with political power, divine law, sensuality, and procreation. Originally worshipped in Sumer, she was known by the Akkadians, Babylonians, and Assyrians as **Ishtar**.^[b] Her primary title is "the Queen of Heaven".

She was the patron goddess of the **Eanna** temple at the city of **Uruk**, her early main religious center. In archaic Uruk, she was worshipped in three forms: morning Inanna (Inana-UD/hud), evening Inanna (Inanna sig), and princely Inanna (Inanna NUN), the former two reflecting the phases of her associated planet **Venus**.^{[5][6]} Her most prominent symbols include the **lion** and the **eight-pointed star**. Her husband is the god **Dumuzid** (later known as **Tammuz**), and her **sukkal** (attendant) is the goddess **Ninshubur**, later conflated with the male deities **Ilabrat** and **Papsukkal**.

Inanna was worshipped in Sumer as early as the **Uruk period** (c. 4000 – 3100 BCE), and her worship was relatively localized before the conquest of **Sargon of Akkad**. During the post-Sargonic era, she became one of the most widely venerated deities in the Sumerian pantheon,^{[7][8]} with temples across **Mesopotamia**. Adoration of Inanna/Ishtar was continued by the **East Semitic-speaking peoples** (Akkadians, Assyrians and Babylonians) who succeeded and absorbed the Sumerians in the region.

She was especially beloved by the **Assyrians**, who elevated her to become the highest deity in their pantheon, ranking above their own **national god Ashur**. Inanna/Ishtar is alluded to in the **Hebrew Bible**, and she greatly influenced the **Ugaritic goddess Ashtart** and later the **Phoenician** goddess **Astarte**, who in turn possibly influenced the development of the Greek goddess **Aphrodite**. Her worship continued to flourish until its gradual decline between the first and sixth centuries CE in the wake of **Christianity**.

Inanna

(Ishtar)

Queen of Heaven

Goddess of love, war, and fertility



Goddess Ishtar on an **Akkadian** seal, 2350–2150 BCE. She is equipped with weapons on her back, has a horned helmet, places her foot in a dominant posture upon a lion secured by a leash and is accompanied by the star of **Shamash**.

Major cult center **Uruk; Agade; Nineveh**

Abode **Heaven**

Planet **Venus**

Symbol hook-shaped knot of reeds, **six or eight-pointed star**, **lion**, **rose**, **dove**

Mount **Lion**

Genealogy

Parents Most common tradition: **Nanna** and **Ningal**^[1]

Sometimes **An** or **Enlil**
Enki more rarely^[2]

Inanna appears in more myths than any other Sumerian deity.^{[9][10][11]} She also has a uniquely high number of epithets and alternate names, comparable only to Nergal.^[12]

Many of her myths involve her taking over the domains of other deities. She is believed to have been given the *mes*, which represent all positive and negative aspects of civilization, by Enki, the god of wisdom. She is also believed to have taken over the Eanna temple from An, the god of the sky. Alongside her twin brother Utu (later known as Shamash), Inanna is the enforcer of divine justice; she destroyed Mount Ebih for having challenged her authority, unleashed her fury upon the gardener Shukaletuda after he raped her in her sleep, and tracked down the bandit woman Bilulu and killed her in divine retribution for having murdered Dumuzid. In the standard Akkadian version of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, Ishtar asks Gilgamesh to become her consort. When he disdainfully refuses, she unleashes the Bull of Heaven, resulting in the death of Enkidu and Gilgamesh's subsequent grapple with his own mortality.

Inanna's most famous myth is the story of her descent into and return from the ancient Mesopotamian underworld, ruled by her older sister Ereshkigal. After she reaches Ereshkigal's throne room, the seven judges of the underworld deem her guilty and strike her dead. Three days later, Ninshubur pleads with all the gods to bring Inanna back. All of them refuse her, except Enki, who sends two sexless beings to rescue Inanna.

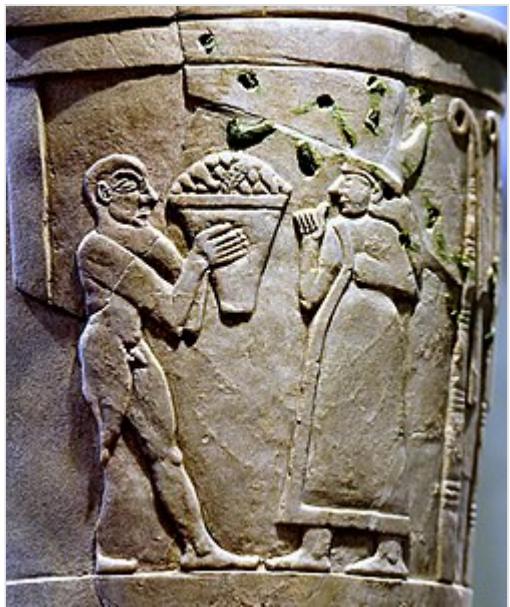
They escort Inanna out of the underworld but the *galla*, the guardians of the underworld, drag her husband Dumuzid down to the underworld as her replacement. Dumuzid is eventually permitted to return to heaven for half the year, while his sister Geshtinanna remains in the underworld for the other half, resulting in the cycle of the seasons.

Etymology

Scholars believe that Inanna and Ishtar were originally separate, unrelated deities,^[13] but were conflated with one another during the reign of Sargon of Akkad and came to be regarded as effectively the same goddess under two different names.^{[14][c]} Inanna's name may derive from the Sumerian phrase *nin-an-ak*, meaning "Lady of Heaven",^{[16][17]} but the cuneiform sign for *Inanna* (𒉢) is not a ligature of the signs *lady* (Sumerian: *nin*; cuneiform: 𒊩𒌆 SAL.TUG₂) and *sky* (Sumerian: *an*; cuneiform: 𒀭 AN).^{[17][16][18]} These difficulties led some early Assyriologists to suggest that Inanna may have originally been a Proto-Euphratean goddess, who was only later accepted into the Sumerian pantheon. This idea was supported by Inanna's youthfulness, as well as the fact that, unlike the other Sumerian divinities, she seems to have initially lacked a distinct sphere of responsibilities.^[17] The view that there was a Proto-Euphratean substrate language in Southern Iraq before Sumerian is not widely accepted by modern Assyriologists.^[19]

Siblings	Utu/Shamash (twin brother) Ereshkigal (older sister)
Consort	Dumuzid, Sargon of Akkad, Zababa
Children	Possibly Nanaya
Equivalents	
Canaanite	Astarte
Greek	Aphrodite
Roman	Venus
Elamite	Pinikir
Hurrian	Shaushka
Mandaean	Libat
Egyptian	Isis

The name *Ishtar* occurs as an element in personal names from both the pre-Sargonic and post-Sargonic eras in Akkad, Assyria, and Babylonia.^[20] It is of Semitic derivation^{[21][20]} and is probably etymologically related to the name of the West Semitic god *Attar*, who is mentioned in later inscriptions from Ugarit and southern Arabia.^{[21][20]} The morning star may have been conceived as a male deity who presided over the arts of war and the evening star may have been conceived as a female deity who presided over the arts of love.^[20] Among the Akkadians, Assyrians, and Babylonians, the name of the male god eventually supplanted the name of his female counterpart,^[22] but, due to extensive syncretism with Inanna, the deity remained as female, although her name was in the masculine form.^[22]



Inanna receiving offerings on the Uruk Vase, circa 3200–3000 BCE

Origins and development

Inanna has posed a problem for many scholars of ancient Sumer due to the fact that her sphere of power contained more distinct and contradictory aspects than that of any other deity.^[24] Two major theories regarding her origins have been proposed.^[25] The first explanation holds that Inanna is the result of a syncretism between several previously unrelated Sumerian deities with totally different domains.^{[25][26]} The second explanation holds that Inanna was originally a Semitic deity who entered the Sumerian pantheon after it was already fully structured, and who took on all the roles that had not yet been assigned to other deities.^[27]

As early as the Uruk period (c. 4000–3100 BCE), Inanna was already associated with the city of Uruk.^[28] During this period, the symbol of a ring-headed doorpost was closely associated with Inanna.^[28] The famous Uruk Vase (found in a deposit of cult objects of the Uruk III period) depicts a row of naked men carrying various objects, including bowls, vessels, and baskets of farm products,^[29] and bringing sheep and goats to a female figure facing the ruler.^[30] The female stands in front of Inanna's symbol of the two twisted reeds of the doorpost,^[30] while the male figure holds a box and stack of bowls, the later cuneiform sign signifying the *En*, or high priest of the temple.^[31]

Seal impressions from the Jemdet Nasr period (c. 3100–2900 BCE) show a fixed sequence of symbols representing various cities, including those of Ur, Larsa, Zabalam, Urum, Arina, and probably Kesh.^[32] This list probably reflects the report of contributions to Inanna at Uruk from cities supporting her cult.^[32] A large number of similar seals have been discovered



The Uruk Vase (Warka Vase), depicting votive offerings to Inanna (3200–3000 BCE).^[23]

from phase I of the Early Dynastic period (c. 2900–2350 BCE) at Ur, in a slightly different order, combined with the rosette symbol of Inanna.^[32] These seals were used to lock storerooms to preserve materials set aside for her cult.^[32]

Various inscriptions in the name of Inanna are known, such as a bead in the name of King Aga of Kish c. 2600 BCE, or a tablet by King Lugal-kisalsi c. 2400 BCE:



Tablet of Lugal-kisalsi

For An, king of all the lands, and for Inanna, his mistress,
Lugal-kisalsi, king of Kish, built the wall of the courtyard.

—Inscription of Lugal-kisalsi.^[33]

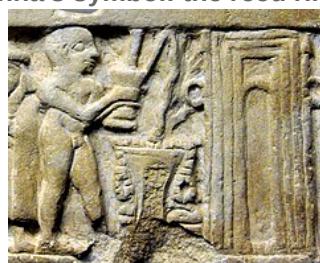
During the Akkadian period (c. 2334–2154 BCE), following the conquests of Sargon of Akkad, Inanna and originally independent Ishtar became so extensively syncretized that they became regarded as effectively the same.^{[34][22]} The Akkadian poet Enheduanna, the daughter of Sargon, wrote numerous hymns to Inanna, identifying her with Ishtar.^{[34][35]} As a result of this,^[34] the popularity of Inanna/Ishtar's cult skyrocketed.^{[34][28][36]} Alfonso Archi, who was involved in early excavations of Ebla, assumes Ishtar was originally a goddess venerated in the Euphrates valley, pointing out that an association between her and the desert poplar is attested in the most ancient texts from both Ebla and Mari. He considers her, a moon god (e.g., Sin) and a sun deity of varying gender (Shamash/Shapash) to be the only deities shared between various early Semitic peoples of Mesopotamia and ancient Syria, who otherwise had different not necessarily overlapping pantheons.^[37]

Worship

Inanna's symbol: the reed ring-post



Emblem of
goddess
Inanna, circa
3000 BCE.^[39]



Ring posts of Inanna on
each side of a temple door,
with naked devotee
offering libations.^[38]



On the
Warka
Vase



Cuneiform
logogram
"Inanna"

Inanna's symbol is a ring post made of reed, an ubiquitous building material in Sumer. It was often beribboned and positioned at the entrance of temples, and marked the limit between the profane and the sacred realms.^[38] The design of the emblem was simplified between 3000 and 2000 BCE to become the cuneiform logogram for Inanna:

Gwendolyn Leick assumes that during the Pre-Sargonic era, the cult of Inanna was rather limited,^[34] though other experts argue that she was already the most prominent deity in Uruk and a number of other political centers in the Uruk period.^[40] She had temples in Nippur, Lagash, Shuruppak, Zabalam, and Ur,^[34] but her main cult center was the Eanna temple in Uruk,^{[34][41][17][d]} whose name means "House of Heaven" (Sumerian: *e₂-an-na*; cuneiform:  * E₂.AN).^[e] Some research assumes that the original patron deity of this fourth-millennium BCE city was An.^[17] After its dedication to Inanna, the temple seems to have housed priestesses of the goddess.^[17] Next to Uruk, Zabalam was the most important early site of Inanna worship, as the name of the city was commonly written with the signs MUŠ₃ and UNUG, meaning respectively "Inanna" and "sanctuary".^[43] It is possible that the city goddess of Zabalam was originally a distinct deity, though one whose cult was absorbed by that of the Urukean goddess very early on.^[43] Joan Goodnick Westenholz proposed that a goddess identified by the name Nin-UM (reading and meaning uncertain), associated with Ishtaran in a *zame* hymn, was the original identity of Inanna of Zabalam.^[44]



Ancient Sumerian statuette of two *gala* priests, dating to c... 2450 BCE, found in the temple of Inanna at Mari

In the Old Akkadian period, Inanna merged with the Akkadian goddess Ishtar, associated with the city of Agade.^[45] A hymn from that period addresses the Akkadian Ishtar as "Inanna of the Ulmaš" alongside Inanna of Uruk and of Zabalam.^[45] The worship of Ishtar and syncretism between her and Inanna was encouraged by Sargon and his successors,^[45] and as a result she quickly became one of the most widely venerated deities in the Mesopotamian pantheon.^[34] In inscriptions of Sargon, Naram-Sin, and Shar-Kali-Sharri, Ishtar is the most frequently invoked deity.^[46]

In the Old Babylonian period, her main cult centers were Uruk, Zabalam, Agade, and Ilip.^[47] Her cult was also introduced from Uruk to Kish.^[48]

During later times, while her cult in Uruk continued to flourish,^[49] Ishtar also became particularly worshipped in the Upper Mesopotamian kingdom of Assyria (modern northern Iraq, northeast Syria, and southeast Turkey), especially in the cities of Nineveh, Aššur, and Arbela (modern Erbil).^[50] During the reign of the Assyrian king Assurbanipal, Ishtar rose to become the most important and widely venerated deity in the Assyrian pantheon, surpassing even the Assyrian national god Ashur.^[49] Votive objects found in her primary Assyrian temple indicate that she was a popular deity among women.^[51]

Individuals who went against the gender binary were heavily involved in the cult of Inanna.^[52] During Sumerian times, a set of priests known as *gala* worked in Inanna's temples, where they performed elegies and lamentations.^[53] Men who became *gala* sometimes adopted female names, and their songs were composed in the Sumerian *eme-sal* dialect, which, in literary texts, is normally reserved for the speech of female characters. Some Sumerian proverbs seem to suggest that *gala* had a reputation for engaging in anal sex with men.^[54] During the Akkadian Period, *kurgarrū* and *assinnu* were servants of Ishtar who dressed in female clothing and performed war dances in Ishtar's temples.^[55] Several Akkadian proverbs seem to suggest that they may have also had homosexual proclivities.^[55] Gwendolyn Leick, an

anthropologist known for her writings on Mesopotamia, has compared these individuals to the contemporary Indian *hijra*.^[56] In one Akkadian hymn, Ishtar is described as transforming men into women.^{[57][58]}

Throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, it was widely believed that the cult of Inanna involved a "sacred marriage" ritual, in which a king would establish his legitimacy by taking on the role of Dumuzid and engaging in ritual sexual intercourse with the high priestess of Inanna, who took on the role of the goddess.^{[59][60][61][62]} This view has been challenged, however, and scholars continue to debate whether the sacred marriage described in literary texts involved any kind of physical ritual enactment at all and, if so, whether this ritual enactment involved actual intercourse or merely the symbolic representation of intercourse.^{[63][62]} The scholar of the ancient Near East Louise M. Pryke states that most scholars now maintain, if the sacred marriage was a ritual that was actually acted out, then it involved only symbolic intercourse.^[64]

The cult of Ishtar was long thought to have involved sacred prostitution,^[65] but this is now rejected among many scholars.^[66] Hierodules known as *ishtaritum* are reported to have worked in Ishtar's temples,^[67] but it is unclear if such priestesses actually performed any sex acts,^[68] and several modern scholars have argued that they did not.^{[69][70]} Women across the ancient Near East worshipped Ishtar by dedicating to her cakes baked in ashes (known as *kamān tumri*).^[71] A dedication of this type is described in an Akkadian hymn.^[72] Several clay cake molds discovered at Mari are shaped like naked women with large hips who are clutching their breasts.^[72] Some scholars have suggested that the cakes made from these molds were intended as representations of Ishtar herself.^[73] In the Biblical book of Jeremiah, the prophet condemns Judean female refugees for worshipping the Queen of Heaven (a syncretism of Ishtar and Asherah) by baking cakes with the goddess's image upon them and pouring libations to her (Jer. Ch. 7 and 44). The women and their husbands defy him, and state that they will follow the practices of their ancestors, who performed these acts "in the towns of Judea and the streets of Jerusalem" (Jer. 44:15–19). In Ezekiel 8:14, the prophet has a vision of the women of Jerusalem weeping for Tammuz.

Iconography

Symbols

Inanna/Ishtar's most common symbol was the eight-pointed star,^[74] though the exact number of points sometimes varies;^[75] six-pointed stars also occur frequently, but their symbolic meaning is unknown.^[79] The eight-pointed star seems to have originally borne a general association with the heavens,^[80] but, by the Old Babylonian Period (c. 1830 – c. 1531 BCE), it had come to be specifically associated with the planet Venus, with which Ishtar was identified.^[80] Starting during this same period, the star of Ishtar was normally enclosed within a circular disc.^[79] During later Babylonian times, slaves who worked in Ishtar's temples were sometimes branded with the seal of the eight-pointed star.^{[79][81]} On boundary stones and cylinder seals, the eight-pointed star is sometimes shown alongside the crescent moon, which was the symbol of Sin (Sumerian Nanna) and the rayed solar disk, which was a symbol of Shamash (Sumerian Utu).^[75]

Inanna's cuneiform ideogram was a hook-shaped twisted knot of reeds, representing the doorpost of the storehouse, a common symbol of fertility and plenty.^[82] The rosette was another important symbol of Inanna, which continued to be used as a symbol of Ishtar after their syncretism.^[83] During the Neo-Assyrian Period (911 – 609 BCE), the rosette may have actually eclipsed the eight-pointed star and become Ishtar's primary symbol.^[84] The temple of Ishtar in the city of Aššur was adorned with numerous rosettes.^[83]



The eight-pointed star was Inanna/Ishtar's most common symbol.^{[74][75]} Here it is shown alongside the solar disk of her brother Shamash (Sumerian Utu) and the crescent moon of her father Sin (Sumerian Nanna) on a boundary stone of Meli-Shipak II, dating to the twelfth century BCE.

Inanna/Ishtar was associated with lions,^{[76][77]} which the ancient Mesopotamians regarded as a symbol of power.^[76] Her associations with lions began during Sumerian times;^[77] a chlorite bowl from the temple of Inanna at Nippur depicts a large feline battling a giant snake and a cuneiform inscription on the bowl reads "Inanna and the Serpent", indicating that the cat is supposed to represent the goddess.^[77] During the Akkadian Period, Ishtar was frequently depicted as a heavily armed warrior goddess with a lion as one of her attributes.^[85]

Doves were also prominent animal symbols associated with Inanna/Ishtar.^{[86][87]} Doves are shown on cultic objects associated with Inanna as early as the beginning of the third millennium BCE.^[87] Lead dove figurines were discovered in the temple of Ishtar at Aššur, dating to the thirteenth century BCE^[87] and a painted fresco from Mari, Syria shows a giant dove emerging from a palm tree in the temple of Ishtar,^[86] indicating that the goddess herself was sometimes believed to take the form of a dove.^[86]



Lions were one of Inanna/Ishtar's primary symbols.^{[76][77]} The lion above comes from the Ishtar Gate, the eighth gate to the inner city of Babylon, which was constructed in around 575 BCE under the orders of Nebuchadnezzar II.^[78]

As the planet Venus

Inanna was associated with the planet Venus, which is named after her Roman equivalent.^{[41][88][41]} Several hymns praise Inanna in her role as the goddess or personification of the planet Venus.^[89] Theology professor Jeffrey Cooley has argued that, in many myths, Inanna's movements may correspond with the movements of Venus across the sky.^[89] In *Inanna's Descent to the Underworld*, Inanna, unlike any other deity, is able to descend into the netherworld and return to the heavens. The planet Venus appears to make a similar descent, setting in the West and then rising again in the East.^[89] An introductory hymn describes Inanna leaving the heavens and heading for *Kur*, what could be presumed to be the mountains, replicating the rising and setting of Inanna to the West.^[89] In *Inanna and Shukaletuda*, Shukaletuda is described as scanning the heavens in search of Inanna, possibly searching the Eastern and Western horizons.^[90] In the same myth, while searching for her attacker, Inanna herself makes several movements that correspond with the movements of Venus in the sky.^[89]

Because the movements of Venus appear to be discontinuous (it disappears due to its proximity to the Sun, for many days at a time, and then reappears on the other horizon), some cultures did not recognize Venus as a single entity;^[89] instead, they assumed it to be two separate stars on each horizon: the morning and evening star.^[89] Nonetheless, a cylinder seal from the Jemdet Nasr period indicates that the ancient Sumerians knew that the morning and evening stars were the same celestial object.^[89] The discontinuous movements of Venus relate to both mythology as well as Inanna's dual nature.^[89]

Modern astrologers recognize the story of Inanna's descent into the underworld as a reference to an astronomical phenomenon associated with retrograde Venus. Seven days before retrograde Venus makes its inferior conjunction with the sun, it disappears from the evening sky. The seven day period between this disappearance and the conjunction itself is seen as the astronomical phenomenon on which the myth of descent was based. After the conjunction, seven more days elapse before Venus appears as the morning star, corresponding to the ascent from the underworld.^{[91][92]}

Inanna in her aspect as Anunītu was associated with the eastern fish of the zodiacal constellation, Pisces.^{[93][94]} Her consort Dumuzi was associated with the contiguous constellation, Aries.^[93]



Babylonian terracotta relief of Ishtar from Eshnunna (early second millennium BCE)

Life-sized statue of a goddess, probably Ishtar, holding a vase from Mari, Syria (eighteenth century BCE)

Terracotta relief of Ishtar with wings from Larsa (second millennium BCE)

Stele showing Ishtar holding a bow from Ennigaldi-Nanna's museum (eighth century BCE)

Hellenized bas-relief sculpture of Ishtar standing with her servant from Palmyra (third century CE)

Character

The Sumerians worshipped Inanna as the goddess of both warfare and love.^[28] Unlike other gods, whose roles were static and whose domains were limited, the stories of Inanna describe her as moving from conquest to conquest.^{[24][96]} She is portrayed as young and impetuous, constantly striving for more power than had been allotted to her.^{[24][96]}

While she was worshipped as the goddess of love, Inanna was not the goddess of marriage, nor was she ever viewed as a mother goddess.^{[97][98]} Andrew R. George goes as far as stating that "According to all mythology, Ištar was not [...] temperamentally disposed" towards such functions.^[99] Julia M. Asher-

Greve has even championed the significance of Inanna specifically because she is not a mother-goddess.^[100] As a love goddess, she was commonly invoked by Mesopotamians in incantations.^{[101][f]}

In *Inanna's Descent to the Underworld*, Inanna treats her lover Dumuzid in a very capricious manner.^[97] This aspect of Inanna's personality is emphasized in the later standard Akkadian version of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* in which Gilgamesh points out Ishtar's infamous ill-treatment of her lovers.^{[102][103]} However, according to assyriologist Dina Katz, the portrayal of Inanna's relationship with Dumuzi in the Descent myth is unusual.^{[104][105]}



Ancient Akkadian cylinder seal depicting Inanna resting her foot on the back of a lion while Ninshubur stands in front of her paying obeisance, c. 2334–2154 BCE^[95]

Inanna was also worshipped as one of the Sumerian war deities.^{[41][106]} One of the hymns dedicated to her declares: "She stirs confusion and chaos against those who are disobedient to her, speeding carnage and inciting the devastating flood, clothed in terrifying radiance. It is her game to speed conflict and battle, untiring, strapping on her sandals."^[107] Battle itself was occasionally referred to as the "Dance of Inanna".^[108] Epithets related to lions in particular were meant to highlight this aspect of her character.^[109] As a war goddess she was sometimes referred to with the name Irnina ("victory"),^[110] though this epithet could be applied to other deities as well,^{[111][112][113]} in addition to functioning as a distinct goddess linked to Ningishzida^[114] rather than to Ishtar. Another epithet highlighting this aspect of Ishtar's nature was Anunitu ("the martial one").^[115] Like Irnina, Anunitu could also be a separate deity,^[116] and as such she is first attested in documents from the Ur III period.^[117]

Assyrian royal curse-formulas invoked both of Ishtar's primary functions at once, invoking her to remove potency and martial valor alike.^[118] Mesopotamian texts indicate that traits perceived as heroic (such as a king's ability to lead his troops and to triumph over enemies) and sexual prowess were regarded as interconnected.^[119]

While generally classified as a goddess, Inanna/Ishtar could seem at times to have ambiguous gender.^[120] Gary Beckman states that "ambiguous gender identification" was a characteristic not just of Ishtar herself but of a category of deities he refers to as "Ishtar type" goddesses (such as Shaushka, Pinikir or Ninsianna).^[121] A late hymn contains the phrase "she [Ishtar] is Enlil, she is Ninil" which might be a reference to occasionally "dimorphic" character of Ishtar, in addition to serving as an exaltation.^[122] A hymn to Nanaya alludes to a male aspect of Ishtar from Babylon alongside a variety of more standard descriptions.^[123] However, Ilona Zsolnay only describes Ishtar as a "feminine figure who performed a masculine role" in certain contexts, for example as a war deity.^[124]

Family

Inanna's twin brother was Utu (known as Shamash in Akkadian), the god of the sun and justice.^{[126][127][128]} In Sumerian texts, Inanna and Utu are depicted as extremely close;^[129] some modern authors even perceive their relationship as bordering on incestuous.^{[129][130]} In the myth of her descent into the underworld, Inanna addresses Ereshkigal, the queen of the underworld, as her "older

sister,"^{[131][132]} yet the two goddesses almost never appear together elsewhere in Sumerian literature^[132] and were not placed in the same category in god lists.^[133] In some Neo-Assyrian sources, Ishtar is also associated with Adad, with the relationship mirroring that between Shaushka and her brother Teshub in Hurrian mythology.^[134]

The most common tradition regarded Nanna and his wife Ningal as her parents.^{[1][135]} Examples of it are present in sources as diverse as a god list from the Early Dynastic period,^[136] a hymn of Ishme-Dagan relaying how Enlil and Ninlil bestowed Inanna's powers upon her,^[137] a late syncretic hymn to Nanaya,^[138] and an Akkadian ritual from Hattusa.^[139] While some authors assert that in Uruk Inanna was usually regarded as the daughter of the sky god An,^{[28][140][141]} it is possible that references to him as her father are only referring to his status as an ancestor of Nanna and thus his daughter.^[135] In literary texts, Enlil or Enki may be addressed as her fathers^{[28][140][142]} but references to major gods being "fathers" can also be examples of the use of this word as an epithet indicating seniority.^[143]

Dumuzid (later known as Tammuz), the god of shepherds, is usually described as Inanna's husband,^[127] but according to some interpretations Inanna's loyalty to him is questionable;^[28] in the myth of her descent into the Underworld, she abandons Dumuzid and permits the galla demons to drag him down into the underworld as her replacement.^{[144][145]} In a different myth, *The Return of Dumuzid* Inanna instead mourns over Dumuzid's death and ultimately decrees that he will be allowed to return to Heaven to be with her for one half of the year.^{[146][145]} Dina Katz notes that the portrayal of their relationship in Inanna's Descent is unusual;^[105] it does not resemble the portrayal of their relationship in other myths about Dumuzi's death, which almost never pin the blame for it on Inanna, but rather on demons or even human bandits.^[104] A large corpus of love poetry describing encounters between Inanna and Dumuzi has been assembled by researchers.^[147] However, local manifestations of Inanna/Ishtar were not necessarily associated with Dumuzi.^[148] In Kish, the tutelary deity of the city, Zababa (a war god), was viewed as the consort of a local hypostasis of Ishtar,^[149] though after the Old Babylonian period Bau, introduced from Lagash, became his spouse (an example of a couple consisting of a warrior god and a medicine goddess, common in Mesopotamian mythology^[150]) and Ishtar of Kish started to instead be worshipped on her own.^[149]

Inanna is not usually described as having any offspring,^[28] however, in the myth of Lugalbanda, as well as in a single building inscription from the Third Dynasty of Ur (c. 2112 – c. 2004 BCE), the warrior god Shara is described as her son.^[151] She was also sometimes considered the mother of Lulal,^[152] who is described in other texts as the son of Ninsun.^[152] Wilfred G. Lambert described the relation between Inanna and Lulal as "close but unspecified" in the context of Inanna's Descent.^[153] There is also similarly scarce evidence for the love goddess Nanaya being regarded as her daughter, but it is possible all of these instances merely refer to an epithet indicating closeness between the deities and were not a statement about actual parentage.^[154]



An ancient Sumerian depiction of the marriage of Inanna and Dumuzid^[125]

Sukkal

Inanna's *sukkal* was the goddess Ninshubur,^[155] whose relationship with Inanna is one of mutual devotion.^[155] In some texts, Ninshubur is listed right after Dumuzi as a member of Inanna's circle, even before some of her relatives;^[156] in one text the phrase "Ninshubur, beloved vizier" appears.^[156] In another text Ninshubur is listed even before Nanaya, originally possibly a hypostasis of Inanna herself,^[157] in a list of deities from her entourage.^[158] In an Akkadian ritual text known from Hittite archives, Ishtar's *sukkal* is invoked alongside her family members Sin, Ningal, and Shamash.^[159]

Other members of Inanna's entourage frequently listed in god lists are the goddesses Nanaya, Kanisurra, Gazbaba, and Bizila, all of them also associated with each other in various configurations independently from this context.^{[158][160]}

Syncretism and influence on other deities

In addition to the full conflation of Inanna and Ishtar during the reign of Sargon and his successors,^[45] she was syncretised with a large number of deities^[161] to a varying degree. The oldest known syncretic hymn is dedicated to Inanna,^[162] and has been dated to the Early Dynastic period.^[163] Many god lists compiled by ancient scribes contained entire "Inanna group" sections enumerating similar goddesses,^[164] and tablet IV of the monumental god list *An-Anum* (7 tablets total) is known as the "Ishtar tablet" due to most of its contents being the names of Ishtar's equivalents, her titles and various attendants.^[165] Some modern researchers use the term *Ishtar-type* to define specific figures of this variety.^{[166][139]} Some texts contained references to "all the Ishtars" of a given area.^[167]

In later periods Ishtar's name was sometimes used as a generic term ("goddess") in Babylonia, while a logographic writing of Inanna was used to spell the title *Bēltu*, leading to further conflations.^[168] A possible example of such use of the name is also known from Elam, as a single Elamite inscription written in Akkadian refers to "Manzat-Ishtar", which might in this context mean "the goddess Manzat".^[169]

Specific examples

Ashtart

In cities like Mari and Ebla, the Eastern and Western Semitic forms of the name (Ishtar and Ashtart) were regarded as basically interchangeable.^[170] However, the western goddess evidently lacked the astral character of Mesopotamian Ishtar.^[171] Ugaritic god lists and ritual texts equate the local Ashtart with both Ishtar and Hurrian Ishara.^[172]

Ishara

Due to association with Ishtar,^[173] the Syrian goddess Ishara started to be regarded as a "lady of love" like her (and Nanaya) in Mesopotamia.^{[174][157]} However, in Hurro-Hittite context Ishara was associated with the underworld goddess Allani instead and additionally functioned as a goddess of oaths.^{[174][175]}

Nanaya

A goddess uniquely closely linked to Inanna, as according to assyriologist Frans Wiggermann her name was originally an epithet of Inanna (possibly serving as an appellative, "My Inanna!").^[157] Nanaya was associated with erotic love, but she eventually developed a warlike aspect of her own too ("Nanaya Euršaba").^[176] In Larsa Inanna's functions were effectively split between three separate figures and she was worshipped as

part of a trinity consisting out of herself, Nanaya (as a love goddess) and Ninsianna (as an astral goddess).^[177] Inanna/Ishtar and Nanaya were often accidentally or intentionally conflated in poetry.^[178]

Ninegal

While she was initially an independent figure, starting with Old Babylonian period in some texts "Ninegal" is used as a title of Inanna, and in god lists she was a part of the "Inanna group" usually alongside Ninsianna.^[179] An example of the usage of "Ninegal" as an epithet can be found in the text designated as Hymn to Inana as Ninegala (Inana D) (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section4/tr4074.htm>) in the ETCSL.

Ninisina

A special case of syncretism was that between the medicine goddess Ninisina and Inanna, which occurred for political reasons.^[180] Isin at one point lost control over Uruk and identification of its tutelary goddess with Inanna (complete with assigning a similar warlike character to her), who served as a source of royal power, was likely meant to serve as a theological solution of this problem.^[180] As a result, in a number of sources Ninisina was regarded as analogous to similarly named Ninsianna, treated as a manifestation of Inanna.^[180] It is also possible that a ceremony of "sacred marriage" between Ninisina and the king of Isin had been performed as a result.^[181]

Ninsianna

A Venus deity of varying gender.^[182] Ninsianna was referred to as male by Rim-Sin of Larsa (who specifically used the phrase "my king") and in texts from Sippar, Ur, and Girsu, but as "Ishtar of the stars" in god lists and astronomical texts, which also applied Ishtar's epithets related to her role as a personification of Venus to this deity.^[183] In some locations Ninsianna was also known as a female deity, in which case her name can be understood as "red queen of heaven".^[180]

Pinikir

Originally an Elamite goddess, recognised in Mesopotamia, and as a result among Hurrians and Hittites, as an equivalent of Ishtar due to similar functions. She was identified specifically as her astral aspect (Ninsianna) in god lists.^[184] In a Hittite ritual she was identified by the logogram ^dIŠSTAR and Shamash, Suen and Ningal were referred to as her family; Enki and Ishtar's sukkal were invoked in it as well.^[185] In Elam she was a goddess of love and sex^[186] and a heavenly deity ("mistress of heaven").^[187] Due to syncretism with Ishtar and Ninsianna Pinikir was referred to as both a female and male deity in Hurro-Hittite sources.^[188]

Šauška

Her name was frequently written with the logogram ^dIŠSTAR in Hurrian and Hittite sources, while Mesopotamian texts recognised her under the name "Ishtar of Subartu".^[189] Some elements peculiar to her were associated with the Assyrian hypostasis of Ishtar, Ishtar of Nineveh, in later times.^[190] Her handmaidens Ninatta and Kulitta were incorporated into the circle of deities believed to serve Ishtar in her temple in Ashur.^{[191][192]}

Sumerian texts

Origin myths

The poem *Enki and the World Order* (ETCSL 1.1.3 (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/tr113.htm>)) begins by describing the god Enki and his establishment of the cosmic organization of the universe.^[193] Towards the end of the poem, Inanna comes to Enki and complains that he has assigned a domain and

special powers to all of the other gods except for her.^[194] She declares that she has been treated unfairly.^[195] Enki responds by telling her that she already has a domain and that he does not need to assign her one.^[196]

The myth of "Inanna and the *Huluppu Tree*", found in the preamble to the epic of *Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld* (ETCSL 1.8.1.4 (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/tr1814.htm>)),^[197] centers around a young Inanna, not yet stable in her power.^{[198][199]} It begins with a *huluppu* tree, which Kramer identifies as possibly a *willow*,^[200] growing on the banks of the river *Euphrates*.^{[200][201]} Inanna moves the tree to her garden in *Uruk* with the intention to carve it into a throne once it is fully grown.^{[200][201]} The tree grows and matures, but the serpent "who knows no charm", the *Anzû*-bird, and *Lilitu* (Ki-Sikil-Lil-La-Ke in Sumerian),^[202] seen by some as the Sumerian forerunner to the *Lilith* of Jewish folklore, all take up residence within the tree, causing Inanna to cry with sorrow.^{[200][201]} The hero *Gilgamesh*, who, in this story, is portrayed as her brother, comes along and slays the serpent, causing the *Anzû*-bird and *Lilitu* to flee.^{[203][201]} Gilgamesh's companions chop down the tree and carve its wood into a bed and a throne, which they give to Inanna,^{[204][201]} who fashions a *pikku* and a *mikku* (probably a drum and drumsticks respectively, although the exact identifications are uncertain),^[205] which she gives to Gilgamesh as a reward for his heroism.^{[206][201]}



Original Sumerian tablet of the *Courtship of Inanna and Dumuzid*

The Sumerian hymn *Inanna and Utu* contains an *etiological myth* describing how Inanna became the goddess of sex.^[207] At the beginning of the hymn, Inanna knows nothing of sex,^[207] so she begs her brother Utu to take her to *Kur* (the Sumerian underworld),^[207] so that she may taste the fruit of a tree that grows there,^[207] which will reveal to her all the secrets of sex.^[207] Utu complies and, in *Kur*, Inanna tastes the fruit and becomes knowledgeable.^[207] The hymn employs the same *motif* found in the myth of *Enki and Ninhursag* and in the later Biblical story of *Adam and Eve*.^[207]

The poem *Inanna Prefers the Farmer* (ETCSL 4.0.8.3.3 (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section4/tr40833.htm>)) begins with a rather playful conversation between Inanna and Utu, who incrementally reveals to her that it is time for her to marry.^{[11][208]} She is courted by a farmer named *Enkimdu* and a shepherd named *Dumuzid*.^[11] At first, Inanna prefers the farmer,^[11] but Utu and Dumuzid gradually persuade her that Dumuzid is the better choice for a husband, arguing that, for every gift the farmer can give to her, the shepherd can give her something even better.^[209] In the end, Inanna marries Dumuzid.^[209] The shepherd and the farmer reconcile their differences, offering each other gifts.^[210] Samuel Noah Kramer compares the myth to the later Biblical story of *Cain and Abel* because both myths center around a farmer and a shepherd competing for divine favor and, in both stories, the deity in question ultimately chooses the shepherd.^[11]

Conquests and patronage

Inanna and Enki (ETCSL t.1.3.1 (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.3.1#>)) is a lengthy poem written in Sumerian, which may date to the Third Dynasty of Ur (c. 2112 BCE – c. 2004 BCE);^[212] it tells the story of how Inanna stole the sacred *mes* from *Enki*, the god of water and human culture.^[213]

In ancient Sumerian mythology, the *mes* were sacred powers or properties belonging to the gods that allowed human civilization to exist.^[214] Each *me* embodied one specific aspect of human culture.^[214] These aspects were very diverse and the *mes* listed in the poem include abstract concepts such as Truth, Victory, and Counsel, technologies such as writing and weaving, and also social constructs such as law, priestly offices, kingship, and prostitution. The *mes* were believed to grant power over all the aspects of civilization, both positive and negative.^[213]

In the myth, Inanna travels from her own city of Uruk to Enki's city of Eridu, where she visits his temple, the E-Abzu.^[215] Inanna is greeted by Enki's *sukkal*, Isimud, who offers her food and drink.^{[216][217]} Inanna starts up a drinking competition with Enki.^{[213][218]} Then, once Enki is thoroughly intoxicated, Inanna persuades him to give her the *mes*.^{[213][219]} Inanna flees from Eridu in the Boat of Heaven, taking the *mes* back with her to Uruk.^{[220][221]} Enki wakes up to discover that the *mes* are gone and asks Isimud what has happened to them.^{[220][222]} Isimud replies that Enki has given all of them to Inanna.^{[223][224]} Enki becomes infuriated and sends multiple sets of fierce monsters after Inanna to take back the *mes* before she reaches the city of Uruk.^{[225][226]} Inanna's *sukkal* Ninshubur fends off all of the monsters that Enki sends after them.^{[227][226][155]} Through Ninshubur's aid, Inanna successfully manages to take the *mes* back with her to the city of Uruk.^{[227][228]} After Inanna escapes, Enki reconciles with her and bids her a positive farewell.^[229] It is possible that this legend may represent a historic transfer of power from the city of Eridu to the city of Uruk.^{[17][230]} It is also possible that this legend may be a symbolic representation of Inanna's maturity and her readiness to become the Queen of Heaven.^[231]

The poem *Inanna Takes Command of Heaven* is an extremely fragmentary, but important, account of Inanna's conquest of the Eanna temple in Uruk.^[17] It begins with a conversation between Inanna and her brother Utu in which Inanna laments that the Eanna temple is not within their domain and resolves to claim it as her own.^[17] The text becomes increasingly fragmentary at this point in the narrative,^[17] but appears to describe her difficult passage through a marshland to reach the temple while a fisherman instructs her on which route is best to take.^[17] Ultimately, Inanna reaches her father An, who is shocked by her arrogance, but nevertheless concedes that she has succeeded and that the temple is now her domain.^[17] The text ends with a hymn expounding Inanna's greatness.^[17] This myth may represent an eclipse in the authority of the priests of An in Uruk and a transfer of power to the priests of Inanna.^[17] Beside the epic text, the descent of the Eanna from heaven is mentioned in the story of *Gilgameš and Akka* (line 31) as well as the Sumerian *Temple hymns* and the bilingual text *The Exaltation of Inanna/Ištar*.

Inanna briefly appears at the beginning and end of the epic poem *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta* (ETCSL 1.8.2.3 (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/tr1823.htm>)). The epic deals with a rivalry between the cities of Uruk and Aratta. Enmerkar, the king of Uruk, wishes to adorn his city with jewels and precious metals, but cannot do so because such minerals are only found in Aratta and, since trade does not yet exist, the resources are not available to him.^[232] Inanna, who is the patron goddess of both cities,^[233] appears to Enmerkar at the beginning of the poem^[234] and tells him that she favors Uruk over Aratta.^[235] She instructs Enmerkar to send a messenger to the lord of Aratta to ask for the resources Uruk needs.^[233]



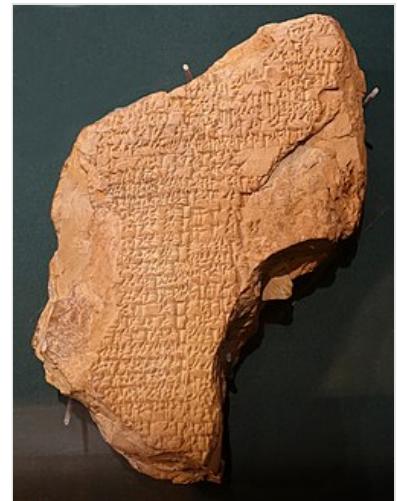
Akkadian cylinder seal from c. 2300 BCE or thereabouts depicting the deities Inanna, Utu, Enki, and Isimud^[211]

The majority of the epic revolves around a great contest between the two kings over Inanna's favor.^[236] Inanna reappears at the end of the poem to resolve the conflict by telling Enmerkar to establish trade between his city and Aratta.^[237]

Justice myths

Inanna and her brother Utu were regarded as the dispensers of divine justice,^[129] a role which Inanna exemplifies in several of her myths.^[238] *Inanna and Ebih* (ETCSL 1.3.2 (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/tr132.htm>)), otherwise known as *Goddess of the Fearsome Divine Powers*, is a 184-line poem written by the Akkadian poet Enheduanna describing Inanna's confrontation with Mount Ebih, a mountain in the Zagros mountain range.^[239] The poem begins with an introductory hymn praising Inanna.^[240] The goddess journeys all over the entire world, until she comes across Mount Ebih and becomes infuriated by its glorious might and natural beauty,^[241] considering its very existence as an outright affront to her own authority.^{[242][239]} She rails at Mount Ebih, shouting:

Mountain, because of your elevation, because of your height,
Because of your goodness, because of your beauty,
Because you wore a holy garment,
Because An organized(?) you,
Because you did not bring (your) nose close to the ground,
Because you did not press (your) lips in the dust.^[243]



The original Sumerian clay tablet of *Inanna and Ebih*, which is currently housed in the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago

Inanna petitions to An, the Sumerian god of the heavens, to allow her to destroy Mount Ebih.^[241] An warns Inanna not to attack the mountain,^[241] but she ignores his warning and proceeds to attack and destroy Mount Ebih regardless.^[241] In the conclusion of the myth, she explains to Mount Ebih why she attacked it.^[243] In Sumerian poetry, the phrase "destroyer of Kur" is occasionally used as one of Inanna's epithets.^[244] According to Annette Zgoll, in this text Inanna represents the expansive conquest policy of the Akkadian empire, while the reluctant behaviour of the god An represents the perspective of the land of Sumer and its inhabitants, who had to suffer under the Sargonid invasions.^[245] The rebellion of the mountain of Ebih and its destruction by Inanna is also mentioned in the hymn *Innin ša gura* ("Mistress of the Great Heart"), which is ascribed to the high priestess En-hedu-ana.

The poem *Inanna and Shukaletuda* (ETCSL 1.3.3 (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/tr133.htm>)) begins with a hymn to Inanna, praising her as the planet Venus.^[246] It then introduces Shukaletuda, a gardener who is terrible at his job. All of his plants die, except for one poplar tree.^[246] Shukaletuda prays to the gods for guidance in his work. To his surprise, the goddess Inanna sees his one poplar tree and decides to rest under the shade of its branches.^[246] Shukaletuda removes her clothes and rapes Inanna while she sleeps.^[246] When the goddess wakes up and realizes she has been violated, she becomes furious and determines to bring her attacker to justice.^[246] In a fit of rage, Inanna unleashes horrible plagues upon the Earth, turning water into blood.^[246] Shukaletuda, terrified for his life, pleads his father for advice on how to escape Inanna's wrath.^[246] His father tells him to hide in the city, amongst the hordes of people, where he will hopefully blend in.^[246] Inanna searches the mountains of the East for her attacker,^[246] but is not

able to find him.^[246] She then releases a series of storms and closes all roads to the city, but is still unable to find Shukaletuda,^[246] so she asks Enki to help her find him, threatening to leave her temple in Uruk if he does not.^[246] Enki consents and Inanna flies "across the sky like a rainbow".^[246] Inanna finally locates Shukaletuda, who vainly attempts to invent excuses for his crime against her. Inanna rejects these excuses and kills him.^[247] Theology professor Jeffrey Cooley has cited the story of Shukaletuda as a Sumerian astral myth, arguing that the movements of Inanna in the story correspond with the movements of the planet Venus.^[89] He has also stated that, while Shukaletuda was praying to the goddess, he may have been looking toward Venus on the horizon.^[247]

The text of the poem *Inanna and Bilulu* (ETCSL 1.4.4 (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/tr144.htm>)), discovered at Nippur, is badly mutilated^[248] and scholars have interpreted it in a number of different ways.^[248] The beginning of the poem is mostly destroyed,^[248] but seems to be a lament.^[248] The intelligible part of the poem describes Inanna pining after her husband Dumuzid, who is in the steppe watching his flocks.^{[248][249]} Inanna sets out to find him.^[248] After this, a large portion of the text is missing.^[248] When the story resumes, Inanna is being told that Dumuzid has been murdered.^[248] Inanna discovers that the old bandit woman Bilulu and her son Girgire are responsible.^{[250][249]} She travels along the road to Edenlila and stops at an inn, where she finds the two murderers.^[248] Inanna stands on top of a stool^[248] and transforms Bilulu into "the waterskin that men carry in the desert",^[251] forcing her to pour the funerary libations for Dumuzid.^{[248][249]}

Descent into the underworld

Two different versions of the story of Inanna/Ishtar's descent into the underworld have survived:^{[252][253]} a Sumerian version dating to the Third Dynasty of Ur (circa 2112 BCE – 2004 BCE) (ETCSL 1.4.1 (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/tr141.htm>))^{[252][253]} and a clearly derivative Akkadian version from the early second millennium BCE.^{[252][253][g]} The Sumerian version of the story is nearly three times the length of the later Akkadian version and contains much greater detail.^[255]

Various other texts refer to the myth of Inanna's descent as well, including the tale of *Inanna and Šukaletuda*. Already in the first cuneiform texts of late 4th millennium Uruk period, the divine name *Inanna-kur* "Inanna (of the) netherworld" is attested, which probably refers to the underworld passage and thus makes it probably the oldest reliably attested myth of mankind.^[256]

Sumerian version

In Sumerian religion, the *Kur* or underworld was ruled by the goddess *Ereshkigal*, the "sister" of Inanna.^[131] The text itself does not explicitly state the motivation of Inanna's descent. However, hylistic myth research could show that at least one variant of the myth processed in the text relates to Inanna demanding the *me* (divine powers/rituals) of the netherworld, in which she finally succeeds.^[257]

Before leaving, Inanna instructs her minister and servant *Ninshubur* to plead with the deities *Enlil*, *Nanna*, *An*, and *Enki* to rescue her if she does not return after three days.^{[258][259]} The laws of the underworld dictate that, with the exception of appointed messengers, those who enter it may never leave.^[258] Inanna dresses elaborately for the visit; she wears a turban, wig, *lapis lazuli* necklace, beads upon her breast, the '*pala* dress' (the ladyship garment), mascara, a pectoral, and golden ring, and holds a *lapis lazuli* measuring rod.^{[260][261]} Each garment is a representation of a powerful *me* she possesses.^[262]

Inanna pounds on the gates of the underworld, demanding to be let in.^{[263][264][259]} The gatekeeper Neti asks her why she has come^{[263][265]} and Inanna replies that she wishes to attend the funeral rites of Gugalanna, the "husband of my elder sister Ereshkigal".^{[131][263][265]} Neti reports this to Ereshkigal,^{[266][267]} who tells him: "Bolt the seven gates of the underworld. Then, one by one, open each gate a crack. Let Inanna enter. As she enters, remove her royal garments."^[268] Perhaps Inanna's garments, unsuitable for a funeral, along with Inanna's haughty behavior, make Ereshkigal suspicious.^[269] Following Ereshkigal's instructions, Neti tells Inanna she may enter the first gate of the underworld, but she must hand over her lapis lazuli measuring rod. She asks why, and is told, "It is just the ways of the underworld." She obliges and passes through. Inanna passes through a total of seven gates, at each one removing a piece of clothing or jewelry she had been wearing at the start of her journey,^[270] thus stripping her of her power.^{[271][259]} When she arrives in front of her sister, she is naked:^{[271][259]}

After she had crouched down and had her clothes removed, they were carried away. Then she made her sister Erec-ki-gala rise from her throne, and instead she sat on her throne. The Anna, the seven judges, rendered their decision against her. They looked at her – it was the look of death. They spoke to her – it was the speech of anger. They shouted at her – it was the shout of heavy guilt. The afflicted woman was turned into a corpse. And the corpse was hung on a hook.^[272]



Copy of the Akkadian version of *Ishtar's Descent into the Underworld* from the Library of Assurbanipal, currently held in the British Museum in London, England

Depiction of Inanna/Ishtar from the Ishtar Vase, dating to the early second millennium BCE (Mesopotamian, Terracotta with cut, moulded, and painted decoration, from Larsa)

Three days and three nights pass, and Ninshubur, following instructions, goes to the temples of Enlil, Nanna, An, and Enki, and pleads with each of them to rescue Inanna.^{[273][274][275]} The first three deities refuse, saying Inanna's fate is her own fault,^{[273][276][277]} but Enki is deeply troubled and agrees to help.^{[278][279][277]} He creates two sexless figures named *gala-tura* and the *kur-jara* from the dirt under the fingernails of two of his fingers.^{[278][280][277]} He instructs them to appease Ereshkigal^{[278][280]} and, when she asks them what they want, ask for the corpse of Inanna, which they must sprinkle with the food and water of life.^{[278][280]} When they come before Ereshkigal, she is in agony like a woman giving birth.^[281] She offers them whatever they want, including life-giving rivers of water and fields of grain, if they can relieve her,^[282] but they refuse all of her offers and ask only for Inanna's corpse.^[281] The *gala-tura* and the *kur-jara* sprinkle Inanna's corpse with the food and water of life and revive her.^{[283][284][277]}

The Sumerian text connects the myth of Inanna's descent with one variant of the myth concerning the death of Dumuzi: *Galla* demons sent by Ereshkigal follow Inanna out of the underworld, insisting that someone else must be taken to the underworld as Inanna's replacement.^{[285][286][277]} They first come upon Ninshubur and attempt to take her,^{[285][286][277]} but Inanna stops them, insisting that Ninshubur is her loyal servant and that she had rightfully mourned for her while she was in the underworld.^{[285][286][277]} They next come upon Shara, Inanna's beautician, who is still in mourning.^{[287][288][277]} The demons attempt to take him, but Inanna insists that they may not, because he had also mourned for her.^{[289][290][277]} The third person they come upon is Lulal, who is also in mourning.^{[289][291][277]} The demons try to take him, but Inanna stops them once again.^{[289][291][277]}

Finally, they come upon Dumuzi, Inanna's husband.^{[292][277]} Despite Inanna's fate, and in contrast to the other individuals who were properly mourning her, Dumuzi is lavishly clothed and resting beneath a tree, or upon her throne, entertained by slave-girls. Inanna, displeased, decrees that the *galla* shall take him.^{[292][277][293]} The *galla* then drag Dumuzi down to the underworld.^{[292][277]}

Another text known as *Dumuzi's Dream* (ETCSL 1.4.3 (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/tr143.htm>))

describes Dumuzi's repeated attempts to evade capture by the *galla* demons, an effort in which he is aided by the sun-god Utu.^{[294][295][h]} In the Sumerian poem *The Return of Dumuzid*, which begins where *The Dream of Dumuzid* ends, Dumuzid's sister *Geshtinanna* laments continually for days and nights over Dumuzid's death, joined by Inanna, who has apparently experienced a change of heart, and *Sirtur*, Dumuzid's mother.^[296] The three goddesses mourn continually until a fly reveals to Inanna the location of her husband.^[297] Together, Inanna and Geshtinanna go to the place where the fly has told them they will find Dumuzid.^[298] They find him there and Inanna decrees that, from that point onwards, Dumuzid will spend half of the year with her sister Ereshkigal in the underworld and the other half of the year in Heaven with her, while his sister Geshtinanna takes his place in the underworld.^{[299][277][300]}



Ancient Sumerian cylinder seal impression showing *Dumuzid* being tortured in the underworld by the *galla* demons

Akkadian version

This version had two manuscripts found in the Library of Ashurbanipal and a third was found in Asshur, all dating from the first half of the first millennium before the common era.^[301] Of the Ninevite version, the first cuneiform version was published in 1873 by François Lenormant, and the transliterated version was published by Peter Jensen in 1901.^[301] Its title in Akkadian is *Ana Kurnugê, qaqqari la târi*.^[301]

The Akkadian version begins with Ishtar approaching the gates of the underworld and demanding the gatekeeper to let her in:

If you do not open the gate for me to come in,
I shall smash the door and shatter the bolt,
I shall smash the doorpost and overturn the doors,
I shall raise up the dead and they shall eat the living:
And the dead shall outnumber the living!^{[302][303]}

The gatekeeper (whose name is not given in the Akkadian version^[302]) hurries to tell Ereshkigal of Ishtar's arrival. Ereshkigal orders him to let Ishtar enter, but tells him to "treat her according to the ancient rites".^[304] The gatekeeper lets Ishtar into the underworld, opening one gate at a time.^[304] At each gate, Ishtar is forced to shed one article of clothing. When she finally passes the seventh gate, she is naked.^[305] In a rage, Ishtar throws herself at Ereshkigal, but Ereshkigal orders her servant Namtar to imprison Ishtar and unleash sixty diseases against her.^[306]

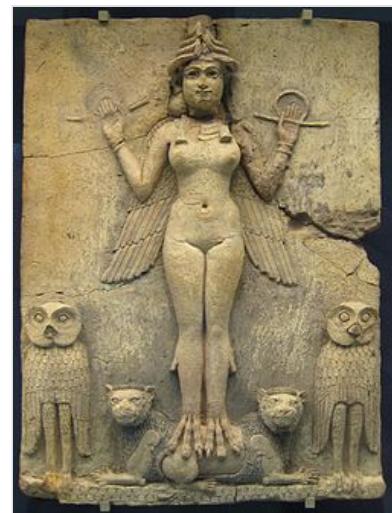
After Ishtar descends to the underworld, all sexual activity ceases on earth.^{[307][308]} The god Papsukkal, the Akkadian counterpart to Ninshubur,^[309] reports the situation to Ea, the god of wisdom and culture.^[307] Ea creates an androgynous being called Asu-shu-namir and sends them to Ereshkigal, telling them to invoke "the name of the great gods" against her and to ask for the bag containing the waters of life. Ereshkigal becomes enraged when she hears Asu-shu-namir's demand, but she is forced to give them the water of life. Asu-shu-namir sprinkles Ishtar with this water, reviving her. Then, Ishtar passes back through the seven gates, receiving one article of clothing back at each gate, and exiting the final gate fully clothed.^[307] But Ištar must provide a substitute for her return to the world of the living, namely her husband Dumuzi. His sister Belili, however, takes part of the punishment upon herself, so that from now on they take turns in the underworld. Together with Dumuzi, the other dead are now allowed to leave the underworld on certain days as well – thus Ištar's descent into the underworld has created an opportunity for people to make contact with the dead, thus founding a religious holiday.

Interpretations in modern assyriology

Dina Katz, an authority on Sumerian afterlife beliefs and funerary customs, considers the narrative of Inanna's descent to be a combination of two distinct preexisting traditions rooted in broader context of Mesopotamian religion.

In one tradition, Inanna was only able to leave the underworld with the help of Enki's trick, with no mention of the possibility of finding a substitute.^[310] This part of the myth belongs to the genre of myths about deities struggling to obtain power, glory etc. (such as Lugal-e or Enuma Elish),^[310] and possibly served as a representation of Inanna's character as a personification of a periodically vanishing astral body.^[311] According to Katz, the fact that Inanna's instructions to Ninshubur contain a correct prediction of her eventual fate, including the exact means of her rescue, show that the purpose of this composition was simply highlighting Inanna's ability to traverse both the heavens and the underworld, much like how Venus was able to rise over and over again.^[311] She also points out Inanna's return has parallels in some Udug-hul incantations.^[311]

Another was simply one of the many myths about the death of Dumuzi (such as *Dumuzi's Dream* or *Inana and Bilulu*; in these myths Inanna is not to blame for his death),^[312] tied to his role as an embodiment of vegetation. She considers it possible that the connection between the two parts of the narrative was meant to mirror some well attested healing rituals which required a symbolic substitute of the person being treated.^[105]



The "Burney Relief", which is speculated to represent either Ishtar or her older sister Ereshkigal (c. 19th or 18th century BCE)

Katz also notes that the Sumerian version of the myth is not concerned with matters of fertility, and points out any references to it (e.g. to nature being infertile while Ishtar is dead) were only added in later Akkadian translations;^[313] so was the description of Tammuz's funeral.^[313] The purpose of these changes was likely to make the myth closer to cultic traditions linked to Tammuz, namely the annual mourning of his death followed by celebration of a temporary return.^[314] According to Katz it is notable that known many copies of the later versions of the myth come from Assyrian cities which were known for their veneration of Tammuz, such as Ashur and Nineveh.^[313]

Other interpretations

A number of less scholarly interpretations of the myth arose through the 20th century, many of them rooted in the tradition of Jungian analysis rather than assyriology. Some authors draw comparisons to the Greek myth of the abduction of Persephone as well.^[315]

Monica Ottermann performed a feminist interpretation of the myth, questioning its interpretation as related to the cycle of nature,^[316] claiming that the narratives represent that Inanna's powers were being restricted by the Mesopotamian patriarchy, due to the fact that, according to her, the region was not conducive to fertility.^[317] Brandão questions this idea in part, for although Inanna's power is at stake in the Sumerian text, in the Akkadian text the goddess' relationship to fertility and fertilization is at stake. Furthermore, in the Sumerian text Inanna's power is not limited by a man, but by another equally powerful goddess, Ereskigal.^[317]

Later myths

Epic of Gilgamesh

In the Akkadian *Epic of Gilgamesh*, Ishtar appears to Gilgamesh after he and his companion Enkidu have returned to Uruk from defeating the ogre Humbaba and demands Gilgamesh to become her consort.^{[319][i]} Gilgamesh refuses her, pointing out that all of her previous lovers have suffered:^[319]

Listen to me while I tell the tale of your lovers. There was Tammuz, the lover of your youth, for him you decreed wailing, year after year. You loved the many-coloured Lilac-breasted Roller, but still you struck and broke his wing [...] You have loved the lion tremendous in strength: seven pits you dug for him, and seven. You have loved the stallion magnificent in battle, and for him you decreed the whip and spur and a thong [...] You have loved the shepherd of the flock; he made meal-cake for you day after day, he killed kids for your sake. You struck and turned him into a wolf; now his own herd-boys chase him away, his own hounds worry his flanks.^[102]

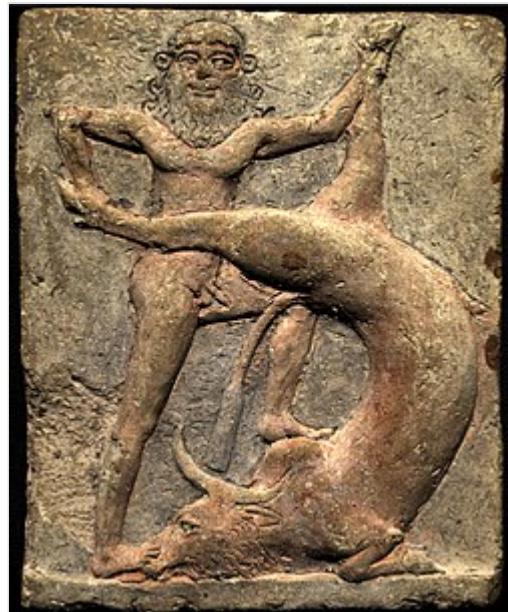
Infuriated by Gilgamesh's refusal,^[319] Ishtar goes to heaven and tells her father Anu that Gilgamesh has insulted her.^[319] Anu asks her why she is complaining to him instead of confronting Gilgamesh herself.^[319] Ishtar demands that Anu give her the Bull of Heaven^[319] and swears that if he does not give it to her, she will "break in the doors of hell and smash the bolts; there will be confusion [i.e., mixing] of people, those above with those from the lower depths. I shall bring up the dead to eat food like the living; and the hosts of the dead will outnumber the living."^[321]

Anu gives Ishtar the Bull of Heaven, and Ishtar sends it to attack Gilgamesh and his friend Enkidu.^{[318][322]} Gilgamesh and Enkidu kill the Bull and offer its heart to the sun-god Shamash.^{[323][322]} While Gilgamesh and Enkidu are resting, Ishtar stands up on the walls of Uruk and curses Gilgamesh.^{[323][324]} Enkidu tears off the Bull's right thigh and throws it in Ishtar's face,^{[323][324]} saying, "If I could lay my hands on you, it is this I should do to you, and lash your entrails to your side."^[325] (Enkidu later dies for this impiety.)^[324] Ishtar calls together "the crimped courtesans, prostitutes and harlots"^[323] and orders them to mourn for the Bull of Heaven.^{[323][324]} Meanwhile, Gilgamesh holds a celebration over the Bull of Heaven's defeat.^{[326][324]}

Later in the epic, Utnapishtim tells Gilgamesh the story of the Great Flood,^[327] which was sent by the god Enlil to annihilate all life on earth because the humans, who were vastly overpopulated, made too much noise and prevented him from sleeping.^[328] Utnapishtim tells how, when the flood came, Ishtar wept and mourned over the destruction of humanity, alongside the Anunnaki.^[329] Later, after the flood subsides, Utnapishtim makes an offering to the gods.^[330] Ishtar appears to Utnapishtim wearing a lapis lazuli necklace with beads shaped like flies and tells him that Enlil never discussed the flood with any of the other gods.^[331] She swears him that she will never allow Enlil to cause another flood^[331] and declares her lapis lazuli necklace a sign of her oath.^[331] Ishtar invites all the gods except for Enlil to gather around the offering and enjoy.^[332]

Song of Agushaya

The *Song of Agushaya*,^[333] an Akkadian text presumably from the time of Hammurabi, tells a myth mixed with hymnic passages: the war goddess Ishtar is filled with constant wrath and plagues the earth with war and battle. With her roar, she finally even threatens the wise god Ea in Apsû. He appears before the assembly of gods and decides (similar to Enkidu in the Epic of Gilgameš) to create an equal opponent for Ishtar. From the dirt of his fingernails he forms the powerful goddess Šaltum ("fight, quarrel"), whom he instructs to confront Ishtar disrespectfully and plague her day and night with her roar. The text section with the confrontation of both goddesses is not preserved, but it is followed by a scene in which Ishtar demands from Ea to call Šaltum back, which he does. Subsequently, Ea establishes a festival in which henceforth a "whirl dance" (*gūštû*) is to be performed annually in commemoration of the events. The text ends with the statement that Ishtar's heart has calmed down.



Ancient Mesopotamian terracotta relief showing Gilgamesh slaying the Bull of Heaven, sent by Ishtar in Tablet VI of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* after he spurns her amorous advances^[318]



Original Akkadian Tablet XI (the "Deluge Tablet") of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*

Other tales

A myth about the childhood of the god Ishum, viewed as a son of Shamash, describes Ishtar seemingly temporarily taking care of him, and possibly expressing annoyance at that situation.^[334]

In a pseudepigraphical Neo-Assyrian text written in the seventh century BCE, but which claims to be the autobiography of Sargon of Akkad,^[335] Ishtar is claimed to have appeared to Sargon "surrounded by a cloud of doves" while he was working as a gardener for Akki, the drawer of the water.^[335] Ishtar then proclaimed Sargon her lover and allowed him to become the ruler of Sumer and Akkad.^[335]

In Hurro-Hittite texts the logogram ^dISHTAR denotes the goddess Šauška, who was identified with Ishtar in god lists and similar documents as well and influenced the development of the late Assyrian cult of Ishtar of Nineveh according to hittitologist Gary Beckman.^[189] She plays a prominent role in the Hurrian myths of the Kumarbi cycle.^[336]

Later influence

In antiquity

The cult of Inanna/Ishtar may have been introduced to the Kingdom of Judah during the reign of King Manasseh^[337] and, although Inanna herself is not directly mentioned in the Bible by name,^[338] the Old Testament contains numerous allusions to her cult.^[339] Jeremiah 7:18 and Jeremiah 44:15–19 mention "the Queen of Heaven," who is probably a syncretism of Inanna/Ishtar and the West Semitic goddess Astarte.^{[337][340][341][71]} Jeremiah states that the Queen of Heaven was worshipped by women who baked cakes for her.^[73]

The Song of Songs bears strong similarities to the Sumerian love poems involving Inanna and Dumuzid,^[342] particularly in its usage of natural symbolism to represent the lovers' physicality.^[342] Song of Songs 6:10 Ezekiel 8:14 mentions Inanna's husband Dumuzid under his later East Semitic name Tammuz,^{[343][344][345]} and describes a group of women mourning Tammuz's death while sitting near the north gate of the Temple in Jerusalem.^{[344][345]} Marina Warner (a literary critic rather than Assyriologist) claims that early Christians in the Middle East assimilated elements of Ishtar into the cult of the Virgin Mary.^[346] She argues that the Syrian writers Jacob of Serugh and Romanos the Melodist both wrote laments in which the Virgin Mary describes her compassion for her son at the foot of the cross in deeply personal terms closely resembling Ishtar's laments over the death of Tammuz.^[347] However, broad comparisons between Tammuz and other dying gods are rooted in the work of James George Frazer and are regarded as a relic of less rigorous early 20th century Assyriology by more recent publications.^[348]



Phoenician figure dating to the seventh century BCE representing a goddess, probably Astarte, called the "Lady of Galera" (National Archaeological Museum of Spain)

The cult of Inanna/Ishtar also heavily influenced the cult of the Phoenician goddess Astarte.^[349] The Phoenicians introduced Astarte to the Greek islands of Cyprus and Cythera,^{[340][350]} where she either gave rise to or at least heavily influenced the Greek goddess Aphrodite.^{[351][350][352][349]} Aphrodite took on Inanna/Ishtar's associations with sexuality and procreation.^{[353][354]} Furthermore, Aphrodite was known as Ourania (Οὐρανία), meaning "heavenly,"^{[355][354]} corresponding to Inanna's role as the Queen of Heaven.^{[355][354]}

Early artistic and literary portrayals of Aphrodite are extremely similar to Inanna/Ishtar.^{[353][354]} Aphrodite was also a warrior goddess;^{[353][350][358]} the second-century AD Greek geographer Pausanias records that, in Sparta, Aphrodite was worshipped as *Aphrodite Areia*, which means "warlike."^{[359][360]} He also mentions that Aphrodite's most ancient cult statues in Sparta and on Cythera showed her bearing arms.^[361] Modern scholars note that Aphrodite's warrior-goddess aspects appear in the oldest strata of her worship^[362] and see it as an indication of her Near Eastern origins.^{[362][358]} Aphrodite also absorbed Ishtar's association with doves,^{[86][358]} which were sacrificed to her alone.^[358] The Greek word for "dove" was *peristerá*,^{[86][87]} which may be derived from the Semitic phrase *peraḥ Ištar*, meaning "bird of Ishtar."^[87] The myth of Aphrodite and Adonis is derived from the story of Inanna and Dumuzid.^{[356][357]}

Classical scholar Charles Penglase has written that Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom and war, resembles Inanna's role as a "terrifying warrior goddess."^[363] Others have noted that the birth of Athena from the head of her father Zeus could be derived from Inanna's descent into and return from the Underworld.^[364] However, as noted by Gary Beckman, a rather direct parallel to Athena's birth is found in the Hurrian Kumarbi cycle, where Teshub is born from the surgically split skull of Kumarbi,^[365] rather than in any Inanna myths.

In Mandaean cosmology, one of the names for Venus is *Stira*, which is derived from the name Ishtar.^[366]

Anthropologist Kevin Tuite argues that the Georgian goddess Dali was also influenced by Inanna,^[367] noting that both Dali and Inanna were associated with the morning star,^[368] both were characteristically depicted nude,^[369] (but Assyriologists assume the "naked goddess" motif in Mesopotamian art in most cases cannot be Ishtar,^[370] and the goddess most consistently depicted as naked was Shala, a weather goddess unrelated to Ishtar^[371]) both were associated with gold jewelry,^[369] both sexually preyed on mortal men,^[372] both were associated with human and animal fertility,^[373] (note however that Assyriologist Dina Katz pointed out the references to fertility are more likely to be connected to Dumuzi than Inanna/Ishtar in at least some cases^[314]) and both had ambiguous natures as sexually attractive, but dangerous, women.^[374]



Altar from the Greek city of Taras in Magna Graecia, dating to c. 400 – c. 375 BCE, depicting Aphrodite and Adonis, whose myth is derived from the Mesopotamian myth of Inanna and Dumuzid^{[356][357]}

Traditional Mesopotamian religion gradually began to decline between the third and fifth centuries AD as ethnic Assyrians converted to Christianity. Nonetheless, the cult of Ishtar and Tammuz managed to survive in parts of Upper Mesopotamia.^[345] In the tenth century AD, an Arab traveler wrote that "All the Sabaeans of our time, those of Babylonia as well as those of Harran, lament and weep to this day over Tammuz at a festival which they, more particularly the women, hold in the month of the same name."^[345]

Worship of Venus deities possibly connected to Inanna/Ishtar was known in Pre-Islamic Arabia right up until the Islamic period. Isaac of Antioch (d. 406 AD) said that the Arabs worshipped 'the Star' (*kawkabta*), also known as *Al-Uzza*, which many identify with Venus.^[375] Isaac also mentions an Arabian deity named *Baltis*, which according to Jan Retsö most likely was another designation for Ishtar.^[376] In pre-Islamic Arabian inscriptions themselves, it appears that the deity known as *Allat* was also a Venusian deity.^[377] Attar, a male god whose name is a cognate of Ishtar's, is a plausible candidate for the role of Arabian Venus deity too on the account of both his name and his epithet "eastern and western".^[378]

Modern relevance

In his 1853 pamphlet *The Two Babylons*, as part of his argument that Roman Catholicism is actually Babylonian paganism in disguise, Alexander Hislop, a Protestant minister in the Free Church of Scotland, incorrectly argued that the modern English word *Easter* must be derived from *Ishtar* due to the phonetic similarity of the two words.^[380] Modern scholars have unanimously rejected Hislop's arguments as erroneous and based on a flawed understanding of Babylonian religion.^{[381][382][383]} Nonetheless, Hislop's book is still popular among some groups of evangelical Protestants^[381] and the ideas promoted in it have become widely circulated, especially through the Internet, due to a number of popular Internet memes.^[383]

Ishtar had a major appearance in *Ishtar and Izdubar*,^[384] a book-length poem written in 1884 by Leonidas Le Cenci Hamilton, an American lawyer and businessman, loosely based on the recently translated *Epic of Gilgamesh*.^[384] *Ishtar and Izdubar* expanded the original roughly 3,000 lines of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* to roughly 6,000 lines of rhyming couplets grouped into forty-eight cantos.^[379] Hamilton significantly altered most of the characters and introduced entirely new episodes not found in the original epic.^[379] Significantly influenced by Edward FitzGerald's *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* and Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia*,^[379] Hamilton's characters dress more like nineteenth-century Turks than ancient Babylonians.^[385] In the poem, Izdubar (the earlier misreading for the name "Gilgamesh") falls in love with Ishtar,^[386] but, then, "with hot and balmy breath, and trembling form aglow", she attempts to seduce him, leading Izdubar to reject her advances.^[386] Several "columns" of the book are devoted to an account of Ishtar's descent into the Underworld.^[385] At the conclusion of the book, Izdubar, now a god, is reconciled with Ishtar in Heaven.^[387] In 1887, the composer Vincent d'Indy wrote *Symphony Ishtar, variations symphonique, Op. 42*, a symphony inspired by the Assyrian monuments in the British Museum.^[388]



Illustration of *Ishtar's Midnight Courtship* from Leonidas Le Cenci Hamilton's 1884 book-length poem *Ishtar and Izdubar*, loosely based on George Smith's recent translation of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*^[379]

Inanna has become an important figure in modern feminist theory because she appears in the male-dominated Sumerian pantheon,^[389] but is equally as powerful, if not more powerful than, the male deities she appears alongside.^[389] Simone de Beauvoir, in her book *The Second Sex* (1949), argues that Inanna, along with other powerful female deities from antiquity, have been marginalized by modern culture in favor of male deities.^[388] Tikva Frymer-Kensky has argued that Inanna was a "marginal figure" in Sumerian religion who embodies the "socially unacceptable" archetype of the "undomesticated, unattached woman".^[388] Feminist author Johanna Stuckey has argued against this idea, pointing out Inanna's centrality in Sumerian religion and her broad diversity of powers, neither of which seem to fit the idea that she was in any way regarded as "marginal".^[388] Assyriologist Julia M. Asher-Greve, who specializes in the study of position of women in antiquity, criticizes Frymer-Kensky's studies of Mesopotamian religion as a whole, highlighting the problems with her focus on fertility, the small selection of sources her works relied on, her view that position of goddesses in the pantheon reflected that of ordinary women in society (so-called "mirror theory"), as well as the fact her works do not accurately reflect the complexity of changes of roles of goddesses in religions of ancient Mesopotamia.^[390] Ilona Zsolnay regards Frymer-Kensky's methodology as faulty.^[391]

Inanna is also an important figure in BDSM culture. The portrayal of Inanna in the Inanna and Ebih myth is cited as a precursor example of the dominatrix archetype, characterizing her as a powerful woman who forces gods and men to submit to her.^[392] In mythology, Inanna's submissives danced in rituals while being whipped by her to satisfy her. When submissives asked for "mercy", Inanna ended the flagellation, making such an action the pioneer of the BDSM safeword concept.^[392]

In Neopaganism and Sumerian reconstructionism

Inanna is the primary ancient source for Aleister Crowley's Babalon, a principal goddess in the religion Thelema. Inanna's name is also used to refer to the Goddess in modern Neopaganism and Wicca.^[393] Her name occurs in the refrain of the "Burning Times Chant,"^[394] one of the most widely used Wiccan liturgies.^[394] *Inanna's Descent into the Underworld* was the inspiration for the "Descent of the Goddess,"^[395] one of the most popular texts of Gardnerian Wicca.^[395]

In popular culture

Ishtar is a key figure in the novel *The Ship of Ishtar* by A. Merritt.

Inanna is the protagonist of *Star Dancer* (1993), a fantasy novel by Fay Sampson.^[396]

In the Kurdish feature film, *Where is Gilgamesh?* (2024) based on the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, Innana appears as a rival of Gilgamesh and a protector of an ancient hidden secret written on a Sumerian tablet.^[397]



A modern illustration depicting Inanna-Ishtar's descent into the Underworld taken from Lewis Spence's *Myths and Legends of Babylonia and Assyria* (1916)

Dates (approximate)

Historical sources		
Time	Period	Source
c. 5300–4100 BCE	Ubaid period	
c. 4100–2900 BCE	Uruk period	<i>Uruk vase</i> ^[29]
c. 2900–2334 BCE	Early Dynastic period	writings by <i>Enheduanna</i> : ^{[34][35]} <i>Nin-me-šara</i> , "The Exaltation of Inanna" <i>In-nin ša-gur-ra</i> , "A Hymn to Inanna (Inana C)" <i>In-nin me-huš-a</i> , "Inanna and Ebih" <i>The Temple Hymns</i> <i>Hymn to Nanna</i> , "The Exaltation of Inanna"
c. 2334–2218 BCE	Akkadian Empire	
c. 2218–2047 BCE	Gutian Period	<i>Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta</i>
c. 2047–1940 BCE	Ur III Period	<i>Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld</i> <i>Inanna and Enki</i> ^[212] <i>Inanna's Descent into the Underworld</i>

See also

- [Gala](#)
- [Nana \(Bactrian goddess\)](#)
- [Star of Ishtar](#)
- [Descent of Inanna into the Underworld](#)

Notes

- a. /ɪ'na:nə/; Sumerian:  , romanized: *DINANA* vocalized as: *Inanak*, also   , *Dnin-an-na*^{[3][4]}
- b. /iʃta:r/; Sumerian:  , romanized: *Dištar*,^[3]
- c. With exception of *Ana Kurnugê*, *qaqqari la târi* and *Sha naqba īmuru* who use the name Ishtar, all others texts use the name/are about Inanna.^[15]
- d. modern-day Warka, Biblical Erech
- e. é-an-na means 'sanctuary' ('house' + 'Heaven' [An] + genitive)^[42]
- f. "According to Graham Cunningham (1997: p. 171) incantations are connected with 'forms of symbolic identification', and it seems obvious that symbolic identification with some goddesses relates to their divine function or domain, e.g. ... sex and love related matters with Inana and Nanaya" — J.M. Asher-Greve (2013, p. 242)^[101]

- g. Brandão 2019 disagrees that the Akkadian poem only summarizes or distorts the Sumerian poem, although there is no doubt of the intertextual relations.^[254]
- h. *Dumuzid's Dream* is attested in seventy-five known sources, fifty-five of which come from Nippur, nine from Ur, three probably from the region around Sippar, one each from Uruk, Kish, Shaduppum, and Susa.^[293]
- i. Abush proposes the thesis that Ishtar's proposal would be for Gilgamesh to become a worker in the world of the dead.^[320]

References

1. Asher-Greve & Westenholz (2013), p. 230.
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Nanna

Nanna may refer to:

- [Grandmother](#)

Mythology

- [Sin \(mythology\)](#), god of the moon in Sumerian mythology, also called Nanna
- [Nanna \(Norse deity\)](#), goddess associated with the god Baldr in Norse mythology

People

- [Nanna Bryndís Hilmarsdóttir](#) (born 1989), Icelandic singer
- [Nanna Egedius](#) (1913–1986), Norwegian figure skater
- [Nanna Gotfredsen](#) (born 1969), Danish politician
- [Nanna Hoffman](#) (1846–1920), Swedish entrepreneur
- [Nanna Lüders Jensen](#) (born 1963), Danish singer, stage name Nanna
- [Nanna Stenersen](#) (1914–1977), Norwegian actress
- [Bob Nanna](#) (born 1975), American singer and guitarist

Science

- [1203 Nanna](#), an asteroid
- [Nanna \(moth\)](#), a genus of moth
- [Nanna \(fly\)](#), a genus of fly

Other uses

- [Nanna \(serial\)](#), a Telugu television serial
- [Nanna \(album\)](#), a 2015 album by Xavier Rudd and the United Nations
- [Nanna, North 24 Parganas](#), an outgrowth of Kanchrapara, West Bengal, India

See also

- [Inanna](#)
- [Nana \(disambiguation\)](#)
- [Nanha](#) (died 1986), stage name of Pakistani film actor and comedian Rafi Khawar
- [Naana](#), feminine given name



Ninhursag

Ninhursag (Sumerian: *𒉿𒀭𒊩𒌆𒈠 Ninharsang; *D.NIN-HAR.SAĜ*, sometimes transcribed **Ninursag**,^[3] **Ninbarsag**,^{[4][5][6][7][8]} or **Ninbarsaga**,^[9] also known as **Damgalnuna** or **Ninmah**, was the ancient Sumerian mother goddess of the mountains, and one of the seven great deities of Sumer. She is known earliest as a nurturing or fertility goddess. Temple hymn sources identify her as the "true and great lady of heaven" (possibly in relation to her standing on the mountain) and kings of Lagash were "nourished by Ninhursag's milk". She is the tutelary deity to several Sumerian leaders.

Her best-known myths are *Enki and Ninhursag* describing her dealings with Enki resulting from his sexual exploits, and *Enki and Ninmah* a creation myth wherein the two deities compete to create humans. She is referenced or makes brief appearances in others as well, most notably as the mother of Ninurta in the Anzû Epic.

Name

Ninhursag means "lady of the sacred mountain" from Sumerian NIN "lady" and HAR.SAĜ "sacred mountain, foothill",^[10] possibly a reference to the site of her temple, the E-Kur (House of mountain deeps) at Eridu. She had many names including Ninmah ("Great Queen");^[10] Nintu ("Lady of Birth");^[10] Mamma or Mami (mother);^[10] Aruru (Sumerian: *𒉿𒋳𒂏)^[10] and Belet-Ili (mistress of the gods, Akkadian).^[10]

According to the 'Ninurta's Exploits' myth, her name was changed from Ninmah to Ninhursag by her son Ninurta.^[11] As Ninmena, according to a Babylonian investiture ritual, she placed the golden crown on the king in the *Eanna* temple.^[12]

Possibly included among the original mother goddesses was *Damgalnuna/Digirmah* (great wife of the prince) or *Damkina* (Sumerian: *𒉿𒀭𒂺𒁈),

<p style="text-align: center;">Ninhursag </p>	
	Mother goddess, goddess of fertility, mountains, and rulers
	
	Akkadian cylinder seal impression depicting a vegetation goddess, possibly Ninhursag, sitting on a throne surrounded by worshippers (circa 2350–2150 BC)
Symbol	Omega-like symbol
Genealogy	
Siblings	<u>Enlil</u> , ^[1] <u>Enki</u> , ^[2] <u>Adad</u> ^[2]
Consort	<u>Šulpae</u>
	<u>Enlil</u> (only in <u>Lagash</u> and other early traditions)
	<u>Enki</u> (only in <i>Enki and Ninhursag</i> through syncretism with <u>Damgalnuna</u>)
Children	<u>Ashgi</u> , <u>Panicingarra</u> , <u>Lisin</u> , <u>Egime</u> , and <u>Lillu</u> (with <u>Šulpae</u>)
	fifteen other children, consisting of <u>Atugula</u> , <u>Aturur</u> , <u>Ninšar</u> , <u>NIG-gumahā</u> , <u>Burukaš</u> , <u>Zarzaru</u> , <u>Zurmuzarmu</u> , <u>Nin-BUR.SAL</u> , <u>Šazumahā</u> , <u>Ušumšasu</u> , <u>Nağaršaga</u> , <u>Anmea</u> , <u>Amaea</u> , <u>UR-guru</u> , <u>Urra</u> , and <u>Amaniranna</u>
	<u>Ninurta</u> (only in <u>Lagash</u> and other early traditions)
Equivalents	
Elamite	<u>Kiririsha</u>
Syrian	<u>Shalash</u>
Hittite	<u>Hannahanna</u>

"true wife"), the consort of the god Enki.^[13]

Ugaritic Athirat

Nintur was another name assigned to Ninhursag as a birth goddess, though sometimes she was a separate goddess entirely.^[14]

The mother goddess had many epithets including *shassuru* or 'womb goddess', *tabsut ili* 'midwife of the gods', 'mother of all children' and 'mother of the gods'. In this role she is identified with Ki in the Enuma Elish. She had shrines in both Eridu and Kish. It has also been speculated that she was worshipped under the name Belet-Nagar in Mari.^[15] However, it has also been proposed that the name Ninhursag in documents from Mari should be understood as a logographic writing of the name Shalash, the wife of Dagan,^[16] who was the goddess of Bitin near Alalakh rather than Nagar (modern Tell Brak) in the Khabur Triangle.^[17] Belet Nagar has alternatively been identified with Hurrian deities: Shaushka (though this proposal was met with criticism)^[18] or Nabarbi.^[19]

Diğirmah

Dingirmah ("great goddess") was a very common epithet of Ninhursag. In older literature, the name was transcribed as ^dMah, but the correct reading was confirmed through the existence of a syllabically written Emesal form, Dimmermah.^{[20][21]}

Although she was originally an epithet of Ninhursag, Dingirmah eventually developed into a separate goddess at the end of the Early Dynastic period.^[22] In the Nippur god list, Dingirmah was one of the nine goddesses of birth enumerated after Šulpae, and the Isin god list similarly included her as one of six birth goddesses. Dingirmah was also present in the An = Anum god list, which listed her alongside Ninhursag, Ninmah, Aruru and Nintur. It is uncertain whether these were all regarded as variant names for the same goddess or different goddesses with similar functions.^[23]

A temple dedicated to Dingirmah, the E-mah, was built in Adab by a local ruler.^[24] Another temple was built at Malgium by King Ipiq-Ištar.^[25]

Ninmah

Ninmah ("great lady") was one of the most common epithets of Ninhursag alongside Dingirmah. The name was already attested in Fara and pre-Sargonian Lagash, and primarily occurred in liturgical and literary texts.^[26] An Akkadian form, Ereshmah (written syllabically as *e-re-eš-ma-aḥ*), was attested at Ugarit, and was either a variant or the correctly written form of the name.^[27]

Like Dingirmah, Ninmah was initially an epithet of Ninhursag who later developed into a separate goddess at the end of the Early Dynastic period. In Lagash, King Entemena built a temple that was at first dedicated to Ninhursag, and then rededicated to Ninmah.^[22]

In a text known as *Archive of Mystic Heptads*, Ninmah was labeled separately from Ninhursag as the "Bēlet-ilī of the Emah temple" in an enumeration of seven goddesses of birth.^[28]

Function

As evidenced by the large number of names, epithets, and areas of worship associated with her cult, Ninhursag's function in religion had many different aspects and shifted notably over time. Ninhursag was not the tutelary goddess of any major city, her cult presence being attested first in smaller towns and villages.^[22] It is possible that she was viewed originally more as a nurturing than a birth goddess.^[29] Another theory posits that, along with the goddess Nintur, she was the birth goddess of wild and domesticated animals.^[22] Her connection to the biological process of childbirth in worship is suspected to have developed later, as she began to be syncretized with other 'birth-goddesses', and took on her *Bēlet-ilī* name.^[30] In this birth aspect, she is called by the kings of Lagash as "the midwife who suckled them".^[22] From the third Early Dynastic Period and onward, the most common Ninhursag epithets emphasize her as the supreme "mother of the world".^[31] This term of mother, Julia Asher-Greve and Joan Westenholz argue, was analogous to the generic 'father' used for gods such as Anu and Enki, and therefore transcends the biological concept of motherhood.^[31] Later in the Neo-Sumerian Period she became more associated with the physical process of birth. (i.e. her offerings including umbilical cord cutters).^[32] In the Old Babylonian Period some posit a decline in her worship, as she loses her high status as part of the four supreme deities of the pantheon.^[32] However Westenholz posits that her cult continued to be relevant but shifted function, as she became *Bēlet-ilī*.^[30]

She had a documented role in Sumerian kingship ideology.^[14] The first known royal votive gift, recovered from Kiš, was donated by a king referring to himself as 'beloved son of Ninhursaga'.^[33] Votive objects dedicated to her *Diğirmaḥ* name were recovered in Adab, dating to the Early Dynastic Period.^[33]

She could also be understood not simply as affiliated with mountains, but as a personification of mountain (or earth) as well.^[34] One text in Sumerian, the *Disputation between Summer and Winter*, describes the creation of the seasons as a result of the copulation of Ninhursag (the earth) and Enlil.^[34] Another temple hymn from Gudea praising Ningirsu (epithet of Ninurta) describes him as having been born by a mountain range.^[35] She had a connection to the wild animals, particularly deer, who dwell on or around the mountains.^[36] Stags appear in façade on the walls of her temples, as well as in works containing the lion headed eagle, a symbol of Ninurta.^[37] One composition, a dedication of Ninhursag's Kes temple, mentions deer, bison, and wild goats in connection to the building.^[38]

She and her other names could also appear in ritual incantations for a variety of functions, some of which include Damgalnunna to protect from evil demons, and Ninhursaga and Nintur in birth related incantation.^[39] As Ninmah she has appeared occasionally in medical texts, such as one from Sultantepe^[40] which describes a ritual and offerings to be performed for the goddess in order to cure bedwetting.^[41] It is suggested that her role in performing healing connects to that of her healing Enki in *Enki and Ninhursag*.^[40]

Association with other deities

Family

Ninhursag's parentage and ancestry is not described in any known texts.^[2] In the *Hymn of Adad*, the eponymous storm god is referred to as Bēlet-ilī's brother.^{[2][42]}

Consorts and children

Ninhursag's most well attested consort was Šulpae,^{[10][43]} who could be described as her "beloved spouse".^[44] They were attested as consorts in sources from Kesh,^[45] such as the *Kesh Temple Hymn*,^[44] and Nippur.^[22]

Deities who were regarded as the children of Ninhursag and Šulpae include Ashgi,^[46] Paniğin̄arra,^[47] Lisin,^[48] Egime,^[49] and Lillu, who was possibly identical with Ashgi.^[50] Marcos Such-Gutiérrez suggests that Ashgi was initially Ninhursag's husband in *Adab* due to Šulpae being sparsely attested in sources from this city from the third millennium BCE, and was only viewed as her son in later periods.^[46] Paniğin̄arra could appear alongside his mother in sources such as greeting formulas in letters.^[47] Although Ninhursag was generally identified as Lisin's mother, at least one text equated them with each other instead.^[48] According to the god list *An = Anum*, Lisin (who here had swapped genders) was a son of Belet-Ili.^[48] Egime resided at her mother's Emaḫ temple in Adab,^[51] and appeared alongside Ninhursag in the lament *Lulil and his sister*, in which the two mourned the death of Ashgi (referred to in the text as Lulil, meaning "man-spirit").^[52]

In the *An = Anum* god list, Ninhursag was assigned sixteen additional children besides Paniğin̄arra, Lillu, Ashgi, and Lisin, named Atugula, Atutur, NIN.LA₂, NIG-gumaḥa, Burukaš, Zarzaru, Zurmuzarmu, Nin-BUR.SAL, Šazumah, Ušumšasu, Nağaršaga, Anmea, Amaea, UR-guru, Urra, and Amaniranna.^[53] NIN.LA₂ is generally accepted to be the same goddess as Egime, because NIN was glossed as *e-gi*, while the sign LA₂ (☱) is believed to have been derived from ME (☱).^{[54][55]}

In Lagash, she was associated with Enlil as his wife, and the mother of Ningirsu^[22] (Assimilated with Ninurta.^[10]) She is Ninurta's mother as Bēlet-ilī/Mami in *Anzū* and other myths as well.^[56] Some Sumerian sources identify her as both Enlil's wife and sister, likely to rectify earlier traditions where she was Enlil's spouse, before later traditions had the goddess *Ninlil* as his wife instead.^[1] After this change Ninhursag was reassigned as Enlil's elder sister.^[1]

Enki was portrayed as Ninhursag's consort in the myth *Enki and Ninhursag*, in which the eponymous goddess is treated as the same deity as Damgalnuna, Enki's usual wife.^[57] However, Dina Katz points out that the goddesses were usually separate.^[43] In *Enki and Ninmah*, Enki instead refers to Ninmah as his sister.^{[58][59][2]}

Attendants

In the *An = Anum* god list, Dingirmah was assigned a *sukkal* ("divine vizier") named Ekigara.^{[60][61]}

Her chief herald was the god Urumaš, and four additional deities who served as heralds were included in her entourage. Saparnuna was the herald of Kesh, Engal-DU.DU and Nimgir-Kurra were the heralds of the underworld, and Lugaligipirig was the herald of Adab. Six deities named Sağšutašubšuba, KA.NI-šu-KID.DU.DU, Adgigi, Gudub, Ekurabsa, and Nin-Aruru (not to be confused with Aruru) were designated as her *gud-balag* ("bull lyres").^[62] Additionally, Šulpaedara, Šulpaeamaš, and Tuduga served as the "standing gods" of her E-maḫ temple in Adab.^[63]

Ninhursag in her mother/birth aspects was also likely affiliated with a group of seven minor goddesses known as the Šassūrātu, "wombs", who were assistants of mother goddesses.^[64] These seven appear in *Enki and Ninmah* to assist in fashioning humankind from clay alongside their mistress, and are listed as Ninimma, Shuzianna, Ninmada, Ninšar, Ninmug, Mumudu, and Ninniginna.^[65]

Syncretism

Ninhursag was considered to be similar to the Elamite goddess Kiririsha,^[66] who was also regarded as the "mother of the gods".^[67] Frédéric Grillot considered them to be equivalent to one another, but partially based his conclusion on an assumed parallel between the presumed union of Ninhursag and Enki with that of Kiririsha and Napirisha.^[66]

In Old Babylonian Mari the logographic writing ^dNIN.HUR.SAG.GA was used to represent the name of Shalash, the wife of Dagan.^[16]

In Hittite sources, the logographic writings DINGIR.MAH and ^dNIN.TU were used to render the name of the Hittite mother goddess Hannahanna.^[68]

In a bilingual Akkadian-Amorite lexical list from the Old Babylonian period which presumably originated in southern Mesopotamia,^[69] DIĞIR.MAH (Bēlet-ilī) was equated with an Amorite deity named ?Aṭeratum (*a-še-ra-tum*), but according to Andrew R. George and Manfred Krebernik in this context the name designated Athirat, the goddess also known from Ugarit, rather than the Mesopotamian goddess Ašratum.^[70]

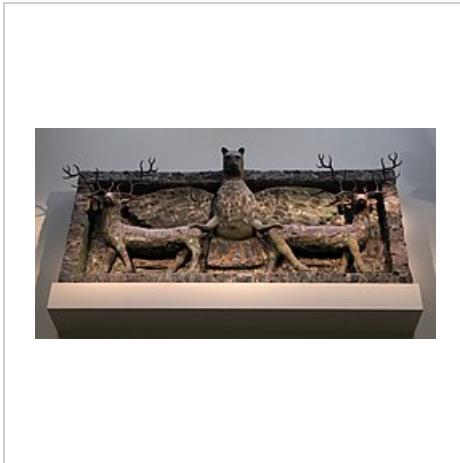
Iconography

Ninhursag was commonly depicted seated upon or near mountains,^[71] her hair sometimes in an omega shape and at times wearing a horned head-dress and tiered skirt. In a rectangular framed plaque from pre-Sargonic Girsu, the goddess seated upon "scale like" mountains is determined to be Ninhursag.^[71] Here she wears a crown that is more flat without horns, and has hair in an omega like shape.^[71] In another depiction, she is seated upon mountains and also has a mountain on her horned crown.^[72] Here she wears a tiered robe.^[72] She was identified as the female figure standing behind her son Ninurta on a fragment of the Stele of the Vultures.^[73]

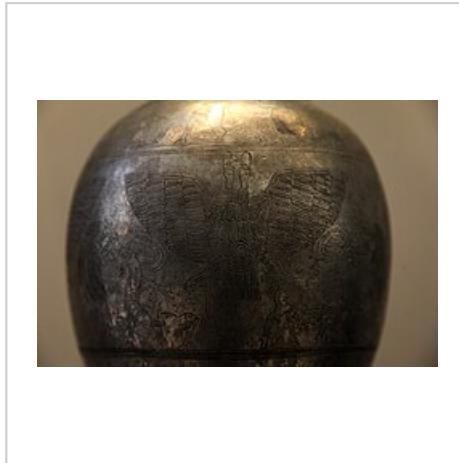
Another symbol of hers was Deer, both male and female.^[71] Studies on a plaque from Mari have identified the stone as being a representation of her.^{[74][33]} The stone likely represents both a face and the naked female form.^[75] A notable feature of the plaque is the area below the 'nose area' where ten stags stand eating plants on opposite sides of the face.^[76] There is another group of five animals under the nose, which are suspected to be birds.^[77] In a frieze recovered from the same Mari temple, two stags

flank an Igmud-eagle, the symbol of her son Ninurta.^[37] There are a number of other images with this eagle as well (such as the vase in the gallery below), where deer, ibexes or gazelles are present to represent Ninhursag.^[37]

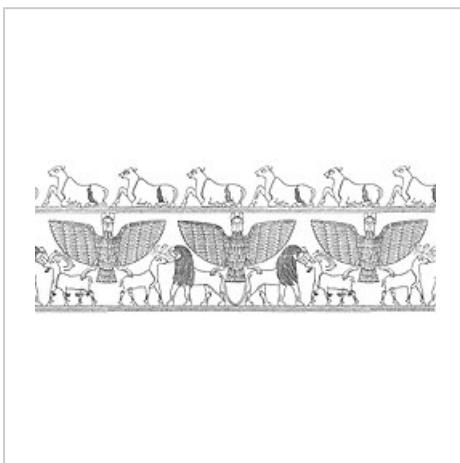
According to Johanna Stuckey, her symbol, resembling the Greek letter *omega* Ω, has been depicted in art from approximately 3000 BC, although more generally from the early second millennium BC. It appears on some boundary stones (*kudurru*) on the upper tier, indicating her importance. The omega symbol is associated with the Egyptian cow goddess Hathor, and may represent a stylized womb.^[78] Joan Goodnick Westenholz and Julia M. Asher-Greve argue that the symbol should be interpreted as a schematic representation of a woman's hair rather than the shape of an uterus.^[79] They tentatively propose an identification with Nanaya rather than Ninhursag as well.^[79]



Mari temple frieze: containing symbols of Ninhursag and her son Ninurta.



The Silver vase of En-temena, which was dedicated to Ningirsu.



Detail on the En-temena vase - the stags here likely represent Ninhursag, with the lions greeting them in a friendly way by licking their cheeks, rather than attacking them.^[73]



This is the fragment of the Vulture Stele that (likely) contains Ninhursag.

Mythology

Enki and Ninhursag

Two full copies of *Enki and Ninhursag* have been uncovered. One is from Nippur^[80]^[81] which contains the complete text (although some passages on the tablet are broken), and another from Ur, found in the house of a priest of Enki, where half of the text is missing.^[81] This second tablet contains fewer lines, and hence it is considered a truncated version.^[81] There exists also an excerpt, covering the incestuous couplings, which differs from the Nippur version's events.^[81]

In *Enki and Ninhursag*, the goddess complains to Enki that the city of Dilmun is lacking in water.^[82] As a result, Enki makes the land rich, and Dilmun becomes a prosperous wetland.^[82] Afterwards, he and Ninhursag sleep together, resulting in a daughter, Ninsar^[83] (called *Ninnisig* in the ETC SL translation,^[84] *Ninmu* by Kramer^[85]). Ninsar matures quickly, and after Enki spots her walking along the bank, sleeps with her, resulting in a daughter, Ninkurra.^[83]^[84] Enki spots her and sleeps with her as well, resulting in Uttu.^[86] (In alternate versions the order is Ninkura, Ninima, then Uttu.^[87]) After Enki has intercourse with Uttu, Ninhursag removes the semen from her womb and plants it in the earth, causing eight plants to spring up.^[86] As a result of his actions, Ninhursag curses Enki by casting her "life giving eye" away from him.^[86]^[84] Enki then becomes gravely ill.^[86] A fox then makes an offer to Enlil that he will bring Ninhursag back to cure him; in exchange Enlil promises to erect two birch trees^[84] for the fox in his city, and to give the creature fame.^[86] The fox is able to retrieve Ninhursag, and she then cures Enki, giving birth to eight minor deities from his ailing body parts.^[88]

Comparisons between this myth and that of Genesis are common. As suggested by Samuel Kramer and W. F. Albright, Enki's eating of the eight plants and the consequences following his actions can be compared to the consumption of the fruit of knowledge by Adam and Eve.^[89]

Enki and Ninmah

The text containing this myth has been recovered on tablets from varying locations. The primary two making up the translation are from the Old Babylonian period and were recovered from Nippur.^[90] A third tablet from this period was also found containing an extract of the middle of the myth as well.^[90] There was also a bilingual (Sumerian and Akkadian) version in the library of Assurbanipal, and one very fragmented tablet from the Middle Assyrian period that may contain the myth, but deviates from the bilingual version in the creation portion of the myth.^[90]

Enki and Ninmah as a narrative can be separated into two distinct parts, the first being the birth of mankind, and the second a competition between the two spouses. The first half of this text recounts Enki creating the first humans at the behest of Namma, referred to here as his mother.^[58] He receives help forming the body of men and women from Ninmah as well as her seven servants, the birth goddesses.^[65] Once man is finished the group has a banquet, where Enki and Ninmah drink beer and the other gods praise Enki's greatness.^[65] In the second half, Ninmah creates seven humans with illnesses and disabilities, for whom Enki finds places in society.^[90] Enki then creates an individual so damaged that Ninmah cannot find a place for them, resulting in her losing the competition.^[90] She then complains that

Enki has driven her away from her home.^[90] The ending of the text is not well understood (due to damage on the tablet), but is likely Enki consoling Ninmah and possibly finding a place for the human he made.^[90]

Others

Ninhursag appears in the text *Creator of the Hoe*, where she is referred to as "the mother of the gods".^[91]

In the *Anzû* epic, Ninhursag under the name Bēlet-ilī or Mami speaks in support of Ninurta her son, and is given the epithet "The Mistress of All Gods".^[56] In another myth involving her son, *Ninurta's Exploits*, the titular god goes out to conquer the mountain land to the north of Babylonia, and piles the bodies of its stony kings into a great burial mound.^[1] He then dedicates this mountain to his mother, once Ninmah, now renamed Ninhursag after the mound.^[1]

Damkina is the mother of Marduk in *Enūma Eliš*.^[92]

Worship

Theories posit that, in earlier times, Ninhursag was the highest ranking female deity, but was later displaced from that status by Ninlil, before the Old Babylonian period where she was syncretized with other birthing goddesses.^[33]

As Ninhursaga, she had temples in Nippur (Ur III period), and Mari.^[93] In Adab, she was worshipped under her Diğirmah̄ epithet. Under her Ninmah epithet, she had temples in Adab, Babylon, and Girsu, known as 'E-mah̄' or the 'majestic house'.^[93]

A temple of hers from Ur's Early Dynastic Period (Mesopotamia) was excavated by Sir Leonard Woolley^{[94][93]} during his series of excavations at various sites around the city, built presumably by a King A'annepada, as per the temple dedication: "Aanepada King of Ur, son of Mesanepada King of Ur, has built this for his lady Ninkhursag."^[94] In Early Dynastic Lagash, a temple was dedicated to Ninhursag, then later to Ninmah.^[22]

An inscribed door socket was found at an unexcavated mound on the Adaim river near where it meets the Tigris river, Khara'ib Ghdairife. It read "Manistusu, king of Kis, builder of the temple of the goddess Ninhursaga in HA.A KI. Whoever removes this tablet, may Ninhursaga and Samas uproot his seed and destroy his progeny."^[95]

See also

- Ereshkigal
- Eve
- Inanna

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External links

- *Enki and Ninhursag* (<https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.1.1#>) in the Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature
- *Enki and Ninmah* (<https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.1.2#>) in the Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature
- Ancient Mesopotamian Gods and Goddesses: Mother Goddess (Ninmah, Nintud/r, Belet-ili) (<http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/amgg/listofdeities/mothergoddess/>)
- Temple of Ninmah in ancient Babylon (https://madainproject.com/ninmah_temple)



Shamash

(Redirected from Utu)

Shamash ([Akkadian](#): šamas^[a]), also known as **Utu** ([Sumerian](#): ^dutu ☀ "Sun"^[2]) was the [ancient Mesopotamian sun god](#). He was believed to see everything that happened in the world every day, and was therefore responsible for justice and protection of travelers. As a divine judge, he could be associated with the [underworld](#). Additionally, he could serve as the god of [divination](#), typically alongside the weather god [Adad](#). While he was universally regarded as one of the primary gods, he was particularly venerated in [Sippar](#) and [Larsa](#). The [moon god](#) [Nanna](#) (Sin) and his wife [Ningal](#) were regarded as his parents, while his twin sister was [Inanna](#) (Ishtar). Occasionally other goddesses, such as [Manzat](#) and [Pinikir](#), could be regarded as his sisters too. The dawn goddess [Aya](#) (Sherida) was his wife, and multiple texts describe their daily reunions taking place on a mountain where the sun was believed to set. Among their children were [Kittum](#), the personification of truth, dream deities such as [Mamu](#), as well as the god [Ishum](#). Utu's name could be used to write the names of many foreign solar deities logographically. The connection between him and the [Hurrian](#) solar god [Shimige](#) is particularly well attested, and the latter could be associated with Aya as well.

While no myths focusing on Utu are known, he often appears as an ally of other figures in both Sumerian and Akkadian compositions. According to narratives about [Dumuzi](#)'s death, he helped protect him when the [galla](#) demons tried to drag him to the underworld. In various versions of the [Epic of Gilgamesh](#) and in earlier [Gilgamesh](#) myths, he helps this hero defeat the monstrous [Humbaba](#). In the myth [Inanna and An](#), he helps his sister acquire the temple [Eanna](#). In [How Grain Came to Sumer](#), he is invoked to advise [Ninazu](#) and [Ninnada](#).

Shamash



God of the sun and justice



Representation of Shamash from the [Tablet of Shamash](#) (c. 888 – 855 BC), showing him sitting on his throne dispensing justice while clutching a [rod-and-ring symbol](#)

Other names	Utu, Amna
Major cult center	Sippar , Larsa
Abode	Heaven
Planet	Sun
Symbol	saw, rays of light, solar disc , winged sun
Number	20
Mount	Sun chariot
Genealogy	
Parents	Nanna and Ningal

Name

The two most common names of the sun god used in Mesopotamian texts are Sumerian Utu and Akkadian Shamash.^[3] A further relatively commonly attested name is Amna, whose origin is uncertain.^[4] The most common writing of the sun god's name was the logogram $d\bar{U}T\bar{U}$, which could be read as Utu, Shamash, or, as attested in the god list An = Anum, as Amna.^[4] Syllabic spellings of all three of these names are also known.^[4] A further logographic spelling used the numeral 20, which was associated with him.^[4]

Etymology

The name Shamash is a cognate of Akkadian terms $\mathfrak{šamšu}$ ("sun")^[5] and $\mathfrak{šamšatu}$ ("solar disc"), as well as the words referring to sun in other Semitic languages,^[2] such as Arabic $\mathfrak{šams}$ and Hebrew $\mathfrak{šemeš}$.^[6] The linguistic connection between the name of the god and the corresponding celestial body has been compared to that between Adad (and Syrian Hadad) and the word addu, "storm."^[5] The Amorite form of the name is Samsu, as attested for example in the theophoric name Samsu-iluna ("Samsu is our god").^[7] The ancient Aramaic form of the name was most likely Šameš, though many variant syllabic spellings are attested.^[7] Additionally, the name for the sun in Mandaean cosmology, Shamish (Mandaic language: $\alpha\mu\gamma\omega\alpha\mu\gamma$), is derived from Akkadian Shamash.^[8]

Grammatical gender

Utu was understood as a masculine deity.^[3] According to Manfred Krebernik, this most likely also resulted in his Akkadian counterpart being viewed as such, even though in the majority of Semitic languages both the word referring to the sun itself and names of solar deities are grammatically feminine.^[3] Julia M. Asher-Greve considers this the oldest attested example of a Mesopotamian deity's gender being impacted by syncretism.^[9] However, not all researchers agree with the assumption that the name Shamash was ever understood as referring to a female deity in Akkadian-speaking areas.^[10] Christopher Woods argues that the only available evidence are early ambiguous theophoric names, which according to him do not necessarily point at the existence of female Shamash, and might omit prepositions necessary to identify the gender of the deity invoked in them.^[10] Manfred Krebernik notes that a well known example of a female deity in what he deems the "cuneiform cultural sphere" is Shapash.^[3] At the same time, both the Amorites and the Arameans viewed the solar deity as male, like Sumerians and Akkadians.^[7]

Siblings	Inanna/Ishtar (twin sister) Manzat (in a single <u>Maqlû</u> incantation)
	Pinikir (through syncretism with Ishtar)
Consort	Aya/Sherida
Children	Mamu, Kittum, Sisig, Zaqr, Šumugan, Ishum
Equivalents	
Hurrian	Šimige
Ugaritic	Shapash
Hittite	Sun goddess of Arinna, Sun goddess of the Earth, Sun god of Heaven
Luwian	Tiwat
Elamite	Nahhunte

Secondary names and epithets

According to Manfred Krebernik, the name Amna, attested as a synonym of Utu in the god list *An = Anum* and used to refer to the sun god in an inscription of Nabonidus, might be either connected to the toponym Sippar-Amnanum or to a root attested in Northwest Semitic languages, '-m-n, which can be translated as "to be reliable" or "to be firm."^[4]

Dozens of other variant names, epithets or possibly minor deities who came to be seen as synonymous with Utu are attested in god lists.^[11] Examples include Karkara (possibly related to Ninkar, one of the names of his wife Aya), Nimindu (possibly related to the name of the goddess Nimintabba), Si'e ("who shines forth"), Salam (possibly a name referring to a winged sun symbol) and U'e ("sunrise").^[12]

Character

The sun god was one of the principal deities of the Mesopotamian pantheon.^[13] In the Early Dynastic god list from Fara, he is the sixth among the deities listed, after Anu, Enlil, Inanna, Enki and Nanna.^[14] In later god lists, for example in An = Anum, he and his circle appears between Nanna (Sin) and Ishkur (Adad).^[14] The Old Babylonian Nippur god list instead places him between Ishkur and Ninurta.^[14] Despite Utu's typical high status, it is agreed that the role of the sun and deities representing it in Mesopotamian religion was not comparable to that known from ancient Egyptian religion.^[3] Based on the attestations of theophoric names such as Shamash-bel-ili (Akkadian: "Shamash is the lord of the gods"), Shamash-Enlil-ili ("Shamash is the Enlil of the gods") and Shamash-ashared-ili ("Shamash is the foremost of the gods"), Wilfred G. Lambert proposed that a tradition in which he was the supreme god of the pantheon did exist, but never found official support and its spread was limited to the clergy in Sippar and to a smaller degree Larsa.^[15]

Common epithets characterize Utu as a "youth" (Sumerian šul, Akkadian *eṭlu*) and "hero" (Sumerian ursaĝ, Akkadian *qarrādu*).^[16] As a representation of the sun, he was believed to travel every day through the sky from east to west, and at night in the opposite direction through AN.ŠAG₄, a "nether sky" located directly above the underworld,^[17] though the notion of a night journey only developed later, and in sources from the third millennium BCE Utu usually rests at night.^[18] A reference to the latter tradition is also known from the "Standard Babylonian" version of the Epic of Gilgamesh, where Shamash meets with his wife Aya after sunset.^[19] Utu's vehicle was a solar chariot,^[20] which was pulled by four animals bearing the Sumerian names Uhegalanna ("the abundant light of heaven"), Uhushgalanna ("the terrifying great light of heaven"), Usurmurgicalanna ("the dreadful great light of heaven") and Unirgalanna ("the noble light of heaven").^[21] Their species is not entirely consistent, though in most cases the sun chariot is apparently associated with equids: "choice steeds" (*niskum*) in an inscription of Gudea, horses in various prayers and incantations, and mules in the Epic of Gilgamesh.^[22] Manfred Krebernik argues that in early sources, his chariot was drawn by lions,^[16] but this has been questioned by Marco Bonechi.^[23] Nathan Wasserman in his translation of a fragment of a hymn to Utu mentioning the animals only refers to them as "beasts."^[24] Sunrise and sunset were described as the sun god passing through cosmic gates situated on twin mountains on the opposite ends of the world.^[25] It was believed that his daily journey let him see everything happening on earth.^[26] He was also responsible for protection of travelers.^[27] Formulas common in both prayers and literary compositions indicate that he was likely often invoked outside temples, presumably as an astral body.^[28] Early morning was likely regarded as the most appropriate time for imploring him for help.^[29]

Utu was also the primary god of justice,^[30] presumably because due to traveling through the sky every day he was believed to see everything that happened in the world.^[26] He could be assisted in this role by his father Nanna, his sister Inanna, and various minor judge deities.^[31] At least in the third millennium BCE, Ishtaran was regarded as a divine judge equal in rank to Utu,^[32] and a fragment of a myth from Ebla mentions a divine tribunal in which they both partake alongside Idlurugu (^dÍD),^[33] a river god also known for his association with justice and judgment who represented ordeal by water.^[32] A hymn to Utu states that Idlurugu cannot give judgment without his presence.^[34] As an extension of his role as a divine judge, Utu could be associated with the underworld,^{[35][36]} though this connection is not attested before the Old Babylonian period.^[37] In exorcisms, he could be implored to help with bringing restless ghosts to the land of the dead.^[38] In this capacity he could be associated with the deified legendary king Gilgamesh, commonly portrayed in a similar role.^[39]

Shamash and Adad were jointly regarded as gods of divination, especially extispicy.^[40] The connection between the sun god and the weather god is well attested in Mesopotamian sources^[40] and goes back to the Old Babylonian period.^[41] Its origin is uncertain, but since in the earliest Sumerian sources Ishkur, who was analogous to Adad, was not associated with divination, it is possible that it was based on the association between Hadad and the solar deity in Ebla and possibly elsewhere in Syria and Upper Mesopotamia.^[41] According to a late ritual text, Shamash and Adad were responsible for teaching divination to the mythical king Enmeduranki.^[42] Subsequently, he taught it to the people of Sippar, Nippur and Babylon.^[42]

Iconography

Whether referred to as Utu or Shamash, the sun god had identical iconography.^[43] Due to distinct attributes, he is considered one of the few Mesopotamian deities who can be identified in art with certainty.^[44] Depictions of him are known from many sites, for example Eshnunna, Tell al-Rimah, Sippar, Ur and Susa.^[45] His best attested attributes are a large saw (šaššaru)^[46] and rays of light^[43] emanating from his shoulders.^[47] The reasons behind associating him with the former are poorly understood, and various interpretations have been proposed, for example that it was a representation of the first ray of sunshine of the day, that it was associated with judgment,^[48] perhaps as a weapon used to behead criminals, or that the sun god used it to break through the mountains during his daily journey.^[49] Christopher Woods points out that both in Sumerian and Akkadian, judgments had to be "cut" (kud/parāsum), and therefore considers the association with judgment to be most likely.^[49] The saw's presence is often used to identify depictions of gods as Utu.^[50] He could also be depicted holding the rod-and-ring symbol, commonly associated with major deities.^[50] In some cases he is shown handing them to human rulers.^[51]



Fired clay statue of a seated god, probably Shamash. From Ur, Iraq. Old-Babylonian period, 2000-1750 BCE. British Museum

Utu was commonly depicted on cylinder seals as early as in the third millennium BCE.^[52] Multiple motifs recur on them, some not known from textual sources.^[45] On seals from the Sargonic period, he could be depicted climbing over two mountains,^[53] which has been interpreted as a representation of sunrise.^[45] He was also commonly depicted traveling in a boat.^[54] This motif is the single best attested type of cylinder seal image from the third millennium BCE, with over fifty examples presently known.^[54] Another recurring image is a depiction of Utu, sometimes accompanied by another god, partaking in a battle between deities.^[45] The attendant deity is sometimes interpreted as Bunene.^[55] In some cases Inanna is shown watching the battle or partaking in it on Utu's side.^[55] It has been suggested that it is a symbolic representation of a conflict between day and night,^[45] or that the deities confronted by Utu and his allies are rebellious mountain gods.^[55] Wilfred G. Lambert suggested that in some cases figures from battle scenes with rays emanating from their shoulders might be representations of Enmesharra rather than the sun god, as in a tradition known from a late myth, Enmesharra's Defeat, he was their original owner.^[56]

In the second millennium BCE, Utu was typically portrayed in front of worshipers, either standing or seated on a throne.^[50] One well known example of such an image is a stele of Hammurabi of Babylon, inscribed with his legal code.^[50]

Anna Kurmangaliev points out that only a single depiction of the sun god in anthropomorphic form has been identified among works of art from Babylonia from the first millennium BCE, the so-called Sun God Tablet.^[50] It is commonly discussed in scholarship, and has been described as "one of the masterpieces of ancient Near Eastern art."^[57] It was discovered by Hormuzd Rassam in December 1880 during his excavations in Abu Habbah in modern Iraq.^[58] Its discovery subsequently made it possible to identify this site with Sippar.^[59] It dates to the Neo-Babylonian period,^[60] but its style has been described as "archaizing,"^[61] and most likely was inspired by motifs found in presentation scenes from the Ur III period.^[62] It shows three individuals, an intercessory minor goddess (*lamma*) and two men, possibly the king Nabu-apla-iddina and the priest Nabu-nadin-shumi, facing Shamash.^[62] While other anthropomorphic depictions of the sun god are known from Assyria from the same period, in Babylonia he came to be usually portrayed in the form of a symbol instead.^[50]

The symbolic representation of Utu was the sun disc,^[50] typically represented as a four-pointed star with wavy lines placed between the points.^[63] It is attested as early as in the Sargonic period, and continued to be represented in art through the rest of history of ancient Mesopotamia.^[50] It is well known from kudurru (boundary stones), where it is typically depicted in the first row of symbols, next to the eight-pointed star representing Inanna (Ishtar) and the crescent representing Nanna (Sin).^[64] Additionally the symbol of a winged sun came to be associated with the sun god in Assyria in the first millennium BCE.^[65] Some depictions of it add a bird tail as well.^[48] It only arrived in Babylonia during the reign of Nabonidus.^[48]



Detail of a cylinder seal from Sippar (2300 BC) depicting Shamash with rays rising from his shoulders and holding a saw-toothed knife with which he cuts his way through the mountains of the east at dawn (British Museum)



A stele of Hammurabi depicting Shamash (right)



Old Babylonian cylinder seal impression depicting Shamash surrounded by worshippers (c. 1850-1598 BC)



Mesopotamian limestone cylinder seal and impression showing people worshipping Shamash (Louvre)



Male figure in an Assyrian winged sun emblem (Northwest Palace of Nimrud, 9th century BC).



Star of Shamash



The solar symbol of Shamash (right) on a kudurru, with the star of Ishtar on the left and a crescent of Sin.



The star symbol of Shamash with wavy rays used as a symbol of the Assyrian people in the Assyrian flag.



A modern use in the emblem of Iraq 1959-1965, avoiding pan-Arab symbolism, merging the star of Shamash and the star of Ishtar.

Associations with other deities

Family

The sun god was traditionally viewed as a son of the moon god in Mesopotamian religion, both in Sumerian and Akkadian texts.^[3] They are already attested as father and son in the Early Dynastic god list from Fara.^[14] The relation between them could be illustrated by matching epithets, for example in the god list An = Anum Utu is the "small boat of heaven" (Mabanda-anna), while his father Nanna - the "great boat of heaven" (Magula-anna).^[3] Ningal was regarded as Utu's mother,^{[26][66]} and Inanna as his sister.^[32] Hymn to the Queen of Nippur refers to them as twins.^[67] Due to her identification with Ishtar (Inanna) the Hurrian and Elamite goddess Pinikir is referred to as a twin sister of Shamash and daughter of Sin (Nanna) and Ningal in a text written in Akkadian but found in a corpus of Hurro-Hittite rituals.^[68] In a single Maqlû incantation, the rainbow goddess Manzat is referred to as Shamash's sister and as a daughter of Sin and Ningal.^[69]

The sun god's wife was invariably the goddess of dawn and light, usually known under the name Aya, though the forms Ninkar, Sudağ, Sherida and Sudgan are also well attested.^[70] Typically they were worshiped together, though sometimes Shamash shared his temples with other gods instead.^[42] Utu/Shamash and Aya are the single most common divine couple in cylinder seal inscriptions from Sippar, with only the number of dedications to Ishkur and Shala being comparably high.^[71] Aya was believed to intercede with her husband on behalf of worshipers,^[72] which is a function also well attested for other divine spouses, such as Ninmug and Shala.^[73] It has also been pointed out that in the case of Inanna, her sukkal Ninshubur fulfilled a similar role.^[73] In legal texts from Sippar, the sun god and his wife commonly appear as divine witnesses.^[74] The only other divine couple attested in this role in this city are Mamu and Bunene.^[74] Buduhudug, a mythical mountain where the sun was believed to set, was regarded as "the entrance of Shamash to Aya" (*nēreb dŠamaš <ana> dAya*), the place where they were able to reunite each day after he finished his journey through the sky.^{[75][76]}

The deities counted among Utu's children include the dream goddess Mamu^[77] (as well as two other, male, dream deities, Sisig and Zaqar),^[70] Šumugan, a god associated with animals,^[78] Niggina (Kittum), the deified concept of truth, according to Jacob Klein regarded as his principal daughter,^[79] and Ishum.^[80]

In myths both about himself^[81] and about Lugalbanda, the legendary king Enmerkar was referred to as a son of Utu.^[82] However, in the Sumerian King List Utu is instead his grandfather, and his father is a human ruler, Meškiāgašer.^[81] Unlike other legendary kings of Uruk, namely Lugalbanda and Gilgamesh, Enmerkar was not deified, despite the existence of a tradition attributing divine ancestry to him.^[83] In various sources, Utu seems to serve as a special protector to several of Uruk's other kings.^[84]

^dAMAR.UD, an early writing of Marduk's name, can be translated as "bull calf of Utu," as long as it is assumed that the sign UD should be understood as a writing of Utu's name without the divine determinative (a cuneiform sign preceding names of deities), which is also attested in some theophoric names from the Early Dynastic period.^[85] However, no evidence exists that Marduk was ever viewed as a member of the family of any sun deity in Sippar, Larsa or any other location in Mesopotamia, which lead Wilfred G. Lambert to suggest this etymology is not plausible on theological grounds.^[85]

Court

Multiple deities who could be regarded as the sukkal (attendant deity) of Utu are known, and more than one could appear in this role at a time.^[20] Bunene, also known under the name Papnunna,^[86] was considered his chariot driver.^[87] Frans Wiggermann notes that his name and character (as well as these of other well attested sukkals of major city gods: Ninshubur, Alammush, Nuska and Isimud) do not appear to show direct connection with these of his master, which means that he cannot be considered the personification of the effect of the corresponding major deity's actions (unlike such deities as Nabium, deified flame and sukkal of the fire god Girra or Nimgir, deified lightning and sukkal of the weather god Ishkur) or a divine personifications of specific commands (unlike such deities as Eturammi, "do not slacken," the sukkal of Birtum).^[88] Ninpirig was referred to as Utu's sukkalmah ("great sukkal").^[89] It has been proposed that his name might hint at a connection with light.^[88] He is attested in multiple theophoric names, chiefly from Sippar.^[90] Some researchers, including Antoine Cavigneaux and Manfred Krebernik, consider the reading of the second element of his name to be uncertain due to variable orthography, and transcribe it as Nin-PIRIG.^[91] The pair Nigzida and Nigsisa, whose names mean "law" and "order," respectively,^[92] are identified as the "vizier of the left" and "vizier of the right" in the god list An = Anum.^[20] Nigsisa alone is mentioned by Ninsun as Shamash's sukkal in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*.^[19] Nigzida could be equated with Niggina, another goddess regarded as the sun god's sukkal, though the latter deity's role varies between that of a servant and oldest daughter in known copies of the god list An = Anum.^[93] Her Akkadian counterpart was Kittum, whose name has the same meaning, "truth."^[93] In An = Anum Kittum is instead male and a brother of Niggina.^[93] She had a sukkal of her own, Iqbi-damiq.^{[93][70]}

None of Utu's sukkals known from other sources are present in documents from the archive of the First Sealand dynasty.^[94] Odette Boivin proposes that in local tradition, this role was instead fulfilled by the deities Lugal-namtarra and ^dSUKKAL, who frequently appear alongside the sun god, and that the former functioned as his sukkal during his nightly journey through the underworld, while the latter fulfilled the same role during the day.^[95] Lugal-namtarra is otherwise sparsely attested and might be analogous to Namtar.^[94] Boivin speculates that ^dSUKKAL developed from the male version of Ninshubur, and assumes it is plausible a connection between the latter and the sun god developed during the reign of Rim-Sîn I, a king of Larsa well known for his devotion to Ninshubur.^[94]

Many deities belonging to the court of Utu were regarded as divine judges.^[30] They could be grouped together, and collective labels such as "Eleven Standing Gods of Ebabbar" or "Six Judges of Shamash" are known from various sources.^[96] One well known example of such a deity is Ishmekarab,^[96] who could also be associated with Inshushinak and Lagamal.^[97]

Kusarikku (bull-men, or, as argued by Frans Wiggermann, bison-men^[98]) were frequently associated with Utu, and especially through the second millennium BCE were commonly depicted as members of his court, for example as standard bearers.^[53] Similarly, the human-headed bull (*alima*) could accompany the solar disc in art,^[99] and a reference to its head serving as an emblem of Utu is known.^[100] It is possible that the association between bison-like mythical beings and the sun god was based on their shared connection to eastern mountains.^[101] A further type of apotropaic creature associated with Utu was the girtablullu ("scorpion man").^[102] In the Standard Babylonian *Epic of Gilgamesh*, a scorpion man and a scorpion woman guard the mountain of sunrise.^[25]

According to Christopher Woods, it is possible that in a single case the minor serpentine god Nirah is attested as a member of the court of Shamash.^[103] He proposes that it was a result of the well attested association between the sun god and Ishtaran, whose servant Nirah usually was.^[104]

Foreign deities

The name of the Eblaite sun deity was represented with the logogram d^{UTU} .^[14] Manfred Krebernik assumes that it should be read as Shamash, that the deity was male, and that the goddess Ninkar also attested in texts from Ebla was his spouse.^[14] Alfonso Archi instead concludes that the deity was primarily female based on lexical evidence, but points out that the Eblaites were definitely aware of the male eastern sun god, and seemingly adopted him into their pantheon as a secondary hypostasis.^[105] Occasionally the sun deity's gender had to be indicated directly, and both $d^{\text{UTU}}\text{-}murus$ (female) and $d^{\text{UTU}}\text{-}nita$ (male) are attested.^[105] Joan Goodnick Westenholz proposed that Ninkar in Eblaite texts should be interpreted as Ninkarrak rather than the phonetically similar but more obscure Mesopotamian Ninkar.^[106] Occasional shortening of Ninkarrak's name to "Ninkar" is known from Mesopotamian sources as well.^[107] This theory is also accepted by Archi, who notes it makes the widespread worship of Ninkar easier to explain.^[105]

The Hurrian sun god, Shimige, is already represented by the logogram d^{UTU} in an inscription of Atalshen, an early king of Urkesh.^[108] It is the oldest known reference to him.^[109] He is directly equated with Utu in the trilingual Sumero-Hurro-Ugaritic version of the Weidner god list from Ugarit.^[110] It has been argued that his character was influenced at least in part by his Mesopotamian counterpart.^{[109][111]} Gary Beckman goes as far as suggesting that at least in Hittite texts, he "cannot (yet?) be distinguished sufficiently" from the latter.^[112] Due to this association, Aya was regarded as his spouse in Hurrian tradition, as attested in sources from Hattusa and Ugarit.^[109] In the trilingual god list, Bunene (transcribed as $d^{\text{wu-u-un-ni-nu-wa-an}}$) appears in association with Shimige.^[109] Shimige is additionally equated with Lugalbanda in it, most likely because the Hurrian pantheon was smaller than that enumerated in Mesopotamian lists, creating the need to have a single Hurrian deity correspond to multiple Mesopotamian ones.^[110] The same list also attests the equivalence between Utu, Shimige and the Ugaritic sun goddess Šapšu.^[113] Apparently to avoid the implications that Shapash had a wife, the scribes interpreted the name of Aya, present in the Sumerian original, as an unconventional writing of Ea.^[114] Instead of the Hurrian spelling of Aya, the name Eyan corresponds to him in the Hurrian column and Ugaritic one lists the local craftsman god Kothar-wa-Khasis.^[114]



A relief of the Hurrian sun god Shimige (left) in Yazılıkaya.

The logogram d^{UTU} is well attested in Hittite texts.^[115] In addition to Utu himself and his Akkadian counterpart, the deities represented by it were the Sun goddess of Arinna ($d^{\text{UTU}} \text{ } uruArinna$), the Sun goddess of the Earth ($taknaš d^{\text{UTU}}$), the male Sun god of Heaven ($nepišaš d^{\text{UTU}}$, $d^{\text{UTU}} \text{ AN}^E$, $d^{\text{UTU}} \text{ ŠAME}$), as well as Luwian Tiwat, Palaic Tiyaz and Hurrian Shimige.^[116] Gary Beckman notes that the Hittite conception of solar deities does not show any Indo-European influence, and instead was largely similar to that known from Mesopotamia.^[117] He points out even the fact that the Sun god of Heaven was

believed to travel in a quadriga drawn by horses, similar to Greek Helios, is not necessarily an example of the former, as deities traveling in chariots are already depicted on Mesopotamian seals from the Sargonic period.^[118]

The logogram ^dUTU also designated the sun deity or deities in Emar in the late Bronze Age.^[119] According to Gary Beckman, the Mesopotamian, West Semitic, Hurrian and Hittite sun deities might all be potentially represented by it in texts from this city.^[119] Eduardo Torrecilla notes in a more recent publication that the logogram commonly designates Shamash in the middle Euphrates area, and syllabic writings of his name are uncommon there, though he also states that Shimige cannot be ruled out as a possible reading in some cases.^[120]

In texts from Susa, Haft Tepe and Malamir in Elam the name of the sun god was usually written logographically as ^dUTU and it is uncertain when it refers to the Mesopotamian deity, and when to local Nahnunte.^[121] It is possible that in legal texts, when ^dUTU occurs next to Elamite deities Inshushinak, Ruhurater or Simut, the latter option is correct.^[122] While the god list An=Anum does mention Nahnunte, he is not explicitly labeled as a counterpart of Utu, and only appears as a member of a group called the "Divine Seven of Elam," associated with the goddess Narundi.^[123] A Mesopotamian commentary on a birth incantation erroneously identifies him as a moon god and Narundi as a sun deity, explaining their names as, respectively, Sin and Shamash.^[123]

Worship

The main cult centers of the sun god were Larsa and Sippar,^[16] specifically Sippar-Ahrurum (Abu Habbah).^[124] The latter city was regarded as older in Mesopotamian tradition, and in lists of temples tends to be mentioned before Larsa.^[125] In both cities, the main temple dedicated to Utu and his spouse Aya was known as Ebabbar.^[126] Less important temples dedicated to him, located in Girsu and Assur, bore the same name.^[127] It means "shining white house" in Sumerian.^[124]

The oldest attested votive objects dedicated to Utu (or Shamash) are a mace head from Ur offered by a king named Anbu or Anunbu, and a statuette from Sippar from the reign of Ikun-Shamash of Mari.^[128] Both predate the Sargonic period.^[128] Evidence for the worship of Shamash in the third millennium BCE is available from the entire Akkadian-speaking area, from Mari and western Mesopotamian cities like Sippar, through Agade, to the Diyala area.^[129]

Celebrations related to the sun god took place on the eighth, fifteenth, twentieth and possibly first day of each month.^[16]



Votive figure of Ikun-Shamash from Sippar. British Museum.

Sippar

In the Early Dynastic period kings of Mari most likely visited the Ebabbar in Sippar to pay homage to its deity.^[129] In later periods, it was renovated by multiple rulers, including Naram-Sin of Akkad (who installed his daughter Šumšani as ēntum-priestess), Sabium of Babylon,^[130] Samsu-iluna of Babylon, who called himself "beloved of Shamash and Aya,"^[131] one of the Kassite rulers bearing the name Kurigalzu (Kurigalzu I or Kurigalzu II), Ashurbanipal, Shamash-shum-ukin, Nebuchadnezzar II and Nabonidus.^[130] Many other kings are known to have patronized or visited it at some point, including Manishtushu, Apil-Sin, Hammurabi, Abi-Eshuh, Ammi-Ditana, Ammi-Saduqa, Samsu-Ditana, Simbar-shipak and Nabu-apla-iddina.^[130] In addition to Ebabbar, a ziggurat dedicated to the city's tutelary god also existed in Sippar.^[132] It was known as Ekunankuga (Sumerian: "house, pure stairway to heaven").^[132] It was rebuilt by Samsu-iluna, Ammi-Saduqa, Neriglissar and Nabonidus.^[132] The position of Sippar and its tutelary god has been compared to that of Nippur and Enlil - while both of these gods were high-ranking members of the pantheon, and their cities were centers of religious and scholarly activity, they never constituted major political powers in their own right.^[133]

It has been suggested that the Ebabbar in Sippar served as a treasury housing particularly rare objects, as excavations of the Neo-Babylonian level of the structure revealed a number of vases from the Early Dynastic and Sargonic periods, some with signs of repair, as well as the votive statue of Ikun-Shamash, a fragment of a monolith of Manishtushu, a macehead of Shar-Kali-Sharri, a whetstone of Tukulti-Mer of Hana, and other objects from earlier periods of Mesopotamian history.^[134]

A special group connected to Shamash in Sippar were women referred to as nadītu.^[135] Their existence is particularly well attested in the Old Babylonian period,^[136] and it has been argued that the institution first developed around 1880 BCE, during the reign of Sumu-la-El of Babylon.^[137] Nadītu lived in a building referred to as *gagûm*, conventionally translated as "cloister,"^[136] and Tonia Sharlach notes they can be compared to medieval Christian nuns.^[138] They are sometimes described as "priestesses" in modern literature, but while it is well attested that they were considered to be dedicated to a specific deity, there is little evidence for their involvement in religious activities other than personal prayer. It is not impossible they were understood as a fully separate social class.^[139] Family background of individual nadītu varied, though they came predominantly from the higher strata of society.^[140] While many came from families of craftsmen, scribes or military officials, a number of them were daughters or sisters of kings.^[138] Both Zimri-Lim of Mari and Hammurabi of Babylon had nadītu of Shamash among their female family members.^[138]

A ceremony called *lubuštu* was established in Sippar by Nabu-apla-iddina.^[141] It involved providing the statues of Shamash, Aya and Bunene with new garments at specific dates throughout the year.^[141] Records indicate it was still celebrated in the Achaemenid period, during the reign of Darius I.^[141]

Larsa

The Ebabbar in Larsa is mentioned for the first time in a text from the reign Eannatum.^[130] It was rebuilt, expanded or repaired by Ur-Nammu of Ur, Zabaya, Sin-Iddinam, Hammurabi, one of the two rulers bearing the name Kadashman-Enlil (Kadashman-Enlil I or Kadashman-Enlil II), Burnaburiash I, Nebuchadnezzar II and Nabonidus.^[130] Other rulers who have patronized it at some point include Gungunum, Abisare, Sumuel, Nur-Adad, Sin-Iqisham, Kudur-Mabuk, Warad-Sin and Rim-Sîn I.^[130]

Odette Boivin notes that the deities of Larsa were apparently well represented in the pantheon of the First Sealand dynasty.^[142] She suggests that those kings might have associated their position both with Larsa and with its tutelary god.^[143]

The Larsean form of the sun god was also worshiped in Uruk^[144] and a close connection between these two cities is well documented.^[145] At an unknown point in time after Larsa's loss of status, possibly in the Kassite period, Uruk most likely gained influence over it,^[146] and in the Neo-Babylonian period, the Ebabbar was functionally a subordinate temple of Eanna.^[147] Multiple letters attest that the latter was responsible for providing commodities required for the performance of various rites in the former, for example sacrificial animals or wool for garments of divine statues of Shamash and Belet Larsa ("Lady of Larsa," most likely a title of Aya).^[148] Craftsmen employed by the Eanna were also responsible for repairing the paraphernalia of the deities of Ebabbar.^[147] Such a situation is otherwise unknown, as each temple usually maintained its own workshop.^[149] A treasury of Shamash and Aya, distinct from that of the Eanna, is nonetheless attested.^[146] Ebabbar most likely remained under control of the temple administration from Uruk in the Hellenistic period, though known names of the city's inhabitants from this period are predominantly Greek, rather than Mesopotamian.^[144]

Other cities

Utu was among the deities worshiped in the territory of Lagash in the Early Dynastic period.^[150] A dais dedicated to him existed in Namnuda-kigarra.^[151] It was originally erected by Eannatum, then destroyed by Ur-Lumma of Umma, and finally rebuilt by Entemena.^[151] It is possible that these events took place during a border conflict between Umma and Lagash.^[152] Theophoric names invoking Utu are well attested in texts from this area.^[153] Examples include Shubur-Utu, Utu-amu and Utu-kiag.^[152]

A temple of Utu, Ehili ("house of luxuriance") also existed in Ur.^[154] It was rebuilt by Enannatumma, the daughter of Ishme-Dagan, whose inscriptions refer to it as the god's "pure storeroom."^[154] A town located near this city, most likely somewhere between it and Larsa, bore the name Kar-Shamash,^[142] KAR.^dUTU^{ki}.^[155] Most likely a temple dedicated to the eponymous god existed there as well.^[155]

In Babylon, Shamash was worshiped in the temple Edikukalamma ("house of the judge of the land"), first attested in the Old Babylonian period and still mentioned in inscriptions from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II.^[156] He was also one of the many gods worshiped in the Esagil temple complex, where his seat was the E-ešbaranki ("house of decisions of heaven and the underworld").^[157] A socle dedicated to him called Edikugal ("house of the great judge") was also present in Erabri, most likely the temple bearing this name located in Babylon^[156] which was dedicated to Mandanu.^[158]

In Assur, a temple of Shamash was refounded by king Arik-den-ili, though as no name is given in sources mentioning this event it is uncertain if it was identical with Ebabbar of Assur mentioned in a later topographical text.^[159] Additionally, Ehulhuldirdirra ("house of surpassing joys"), while primarily dedicated to Sin, was also associated with Shamash, as attested in building inscriptions of Ashur-nirari I, Tukulti-Ninurta I and Ashurnasirpal II.^[160]

A sanctuary in Nippur known in Akkadian as *bīt dalīlī*, "house of fame," was jointly dedicated to Nisaba, Kusu, Ningal, Shamash and Bēl-āliya.^[156]

In the Old Babylonian period, Shamash was worshiped in Susa in Elam, where the local pantheon consisted out of both Elamite deities, such as Inshushinak and Simut, and Mesopotamian ones.^[161] He appears in oath formulas and theophoric names.^[161]

In Mari, Shamash was worshiped in a temple named Egirzalanki ("house of the joy of heaven and the underworld"), built by Yahdun-Lim.^[162]

An inscription of Nebuchadnezzar II might indicate that the sun god's manifestation from Larsa was also worshiped in Ekarra ("house of the quay"), a temple located in Dilmun, on the Failaka Island, which was dedicated to the local deities Inzak and Meskilak.^[163]

The *Canonical Temple List*, which dates to the Kassite period,^[164] mentions further temples, whose location is left unspecified: Eantasurra ("house which twinkles from heaven;" not to be confused with an identically named temple of Ningirsu built by Akurgal somewhere near Girsu),^[165] Ekukina ("pure house, bechamber"),^[132] Enamtarkalamma ("house of the destinies of the land")^[166] and Enugalanna (reading and translation uncertain, possibly "house of the great light of heaven").^[167]

In the Parthian period, Hatra came to be seen as a cult center of the sun god, and according to Manfred Krebernik its importance can be compared to Sippar and Larsa in earlier times.^[16]



Shamash depicted on bronze coin struck in Hatra (c. 117-138 AD)

Mythology

While no myths focused on Utu are presently known, he appears in a supporting role in many well known compositions.^[14] Commonly other figures appeal to him,^[168] especially when faced with problems connected with locations far away from urban centers, such as steppes or mountains.^[169]

In multiple accounts of Dumuzi's death, he pleads with Utu to save him from the galla demons sent after him.^[168] This motif is attested in *Inanna's Descent*, *Dumuzi's Death*, and other works.^[28] In *Dumuzi and Geshtinanna*, Utu is specifically invoked as a judge.^[168] In all cases, the circumstances leading to it are the same: Dumuzi is already pursued, and his life is in danger.^[28] In both *Dumuzi's Death* and *Inanna's Descent*, he argues Utu should help him because he is his brother-in-law.^[170] Some copies of the latter narrative also include a couplet in which he also states that he paid respect to Utu's and Inanna's mother, Ningal.^[170] While Utu fulfills Dumuzi's request in all known myths about his death, in none of them this is enough to save him, and the most the sun god can accomplish is a delay of his death.^[171]

In the myth *How Grain Came to Sumer*, Ninmada advises Ninazu to ask Utu for help with bringing barley from a distant land.^[172] Since the rest of the narrative is not preserved, it is unknown in which way he helped them accomplish this goal.^[172]

In the myth *Inanna and An*, Utu aids his sister with bringing the Eanna temple down from heaven.^[173] It is possible that it served as a mythical explanation of the origin of Mesopotamian temples.^[174]

A myth involving the sun god and other deities is known from Ebla.^[175] It might have been imported from Kish, and the language it was written in has been described as "an archaic Akkadian dialect."^[176] Due to many uncertainties translation and interpretation of this text are considered difficult.^[177] It has been argued that it might be a description of a meeting between Enki and Utu during the latter's journey through the Abzu.^[54]

Shamash is mentioned in a myth which deals with the origin of the god Ishum, which is only known from a single fragment from the Old Babylonian period.^[178] Ishum is described as a son of Ninlil and the sun god who was abandoned in the streets.^[178] It is assumed that this story represents a relic of the association between the goddess Sud, who came to be identified with Ninlil, and Sudağ, one of the names of the wife of Utu.^[80] Ishum was usually regarded as the son of this couple instead.^[80] Manfred Krebernik considers the composition to be the result of confusion between the names Sud and Sudağ, and thus between Ninlil and Ishum's mother, rather than syncretism.^[179]

In the myth Enmesharra's Defeat, which is only known from a single poorly preserved copy from either the Seleucid or Parthian period,^[180] Shamash's radiance was bestowed upon him by Marduk after the imprisonment of the eponymous being, who was its original owner.^[181] The term used to describe it is zīmū (zi-mu-ú), which can refer to a halo and possibly to the rays of the sun.^[56] Wilfred G. Lambert assumed that this scene might be an echo of some of the depictions of fights between gods from Sargonic cylinder seals.^[56]

Gilgamesh myths

In the Sumerian myth Gilgamesh and Humbaba, Enkidu tells Gilgamesh that he should ask Utu for permission before they embark on the journey to Humbaba's dwelling.^[182] After learning that Gilgamesh wants to acquire fame because he knows he will not live forever, Utu grants him seven constellations (described as zoomorphic creatures^[183]) meant to guide him to his destination safely.^[182] Humbaba later tries pleading with Utu when he is about to die, but his prayer is unsuccessful.^[184] It is possible that in a slightly divergent version of the myth he was spared, though this remains uncertain as its ending is not preserved.^[185]

In another early Gilgamesh narrative, Gilgamesh, Enkidu and the Netherworld, Utu is first referenced by Inanna, who asks Gilgamesh to help her with getting rid of creatures infesting a tree she planted on the bank of the Euphrates.^[186] She states that Utu refused to intervene.^[187] The reasoning behind his decision is not explained.^[188] Later, when Enkidu is confined in the underworld, Gilgamesh petitions Enki for help.^[186] The latter tells Utu to bring Enkidu's shade with him when he rises, which lets the heroes temporarily reunite.^[186] A retelling of this episode is also known from the final tablet of the "Standard Babylonian" Epic of Gilgamesh, which has no direct connection to the rest of this version of the story.^[189] An old erroneous view was that the god acting on Ea's (Enki's) command in this version is Nergal rather than Shamash.^[190]



A depiction of Humbaba. Sulaymaniyah Museum.

In the Old Babylonian version of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, Gilgamesh prays to Shamash after deciding to venture to the Cedar Forest to vanquish Humbaba.^[191] Later the elders of Uruk tell him to dig wells to be able to make libations to the sun god and Lugalbanda (in this version functioning as his personal god^[192]) while traveling westwards.^[193] On the way, shortly before reaching the land of Ebla, Gilgamesh has a dream which Enkidu interprets as a sign that Shamash (or, in a variant from Tell Harmal, Shamash and Lugalbanda^[194]) views his efforts favorably.^[195] It is possible that in one of the variants of the Old Babylonian version, only known from Tell Harmal, Humbaba says that he was informed by Shamash in a dream that he will be vanquished, though the state of preservation of the tablet makes it impossible to determine this with certainty.^[196] According to a tablet presumed to originate in Sippar, Gilgamesh later encounters Shamash while wandering in the steppe mourning Enkidu's death.^[197] The sun god warns him about the futility of the quest for eternal life.^[197] This passage is not present in any later versions,^[197] but Shamash's advice closely parallels another unique scene from the same version, namely the advice given by the anonymous alewife^[198] who corresponds to Šiduri from the Standard Babylonian version.^[199]

In the Standard Babylonian version of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* Shamash is portrayed as Gilgamesh's divine patron.^[200] He is still invoked to protect him on the way to Humbaba's forest, but the hero does not pray to him on his own.^[29] Instead his mother, the goddess Ninsun, invokes the sun god on the roof of her own temple.^[29] She blames Shamash for Gilgamesh's desire to venture into distant lands, and asks his wife Aya to intercede on her son's behalf to guarantee his safety.^[201] During the confrontation with Humbaba, Shamash intervenes by sending thirteen winds to incapacitate the monster, which lets Gilgamesh strike the decisive blow.^[202] Andrew R. George notes that since this version describes Humbaba as *mimma lemnu*, a term which can be translated as "everything evil" or "an evil thing," often found in exorcistic literature where it refers to hostile forces, it is natural for Shamash, who was the god of justice, to oppose him.^[203] In an earlier interpretation, Jeffrey Tigay argued that Shamash outright becomes the instigator of the quest, which according to him was the "final and logical development of his role."^[204] However, according to George Shamash's participation in the slaying of Humbaba is the realization of the requests from Ninsun's prayer.^[205] In the same version of the composition, after the defeat of the Bull of Heaven Gilgamesh and Enkidu offer the animal's heart to Shamash,^[206] which might be a reference to a custom also mentioned in one of the myths about Lugalbanda, in which he offers the heart of a mundane wild bull to Utu after a successful hunt.^[207] After celebrations of their victory, Enkidu has a dream vision of an argument between gods during which Shamash protests Enlil's decision that one of the heroes has to die as punishment for the slaying of Humbaba and the Bull of Heaven.^[208] After waking up he laments that they dedicated a door made from the cedar wood from Humbaba's forest to Enlil rather than Shamash.^[208]

In the flood myth which became part of the standard version of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, Shamash is responsible for announcing the beginning of the flood when he rises in the morning, which according to Nathan Wasserman represents a relatively young tradition, as in most of the other versions the cataclysm starts in the middle of the night.^[209] He suggests that most likely the compiler of the text found this to be suitable given the sun god's role as humanity's helper through the story.^[209]

See also

- Solar myths

Notes

- a. Akkadian *šamaš* "Sun" was cognate to Phoenician:  šmš, Classical Syriac:  šemša, Hebrew: שֶׁמֶשׁ šemeš, Arabic: شَمْسٌ šams, Ashurian Aramaic:  šameš(ā)^[1]

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42. Krebernik 2011, p. 605.
43. Kurmangaliev 2011, p. 616.
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46. Woods 2009, pp. 217–218.
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48. Kurmangaliev 2011, p. 619.
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Dumuzid

(Redirected from [Dumuzid the Shepherd](#))

Dumuzid or **Dumuzi** or **Tammuz** (Sumerian: romanized: *Dumuzid*; Akkadian: *Du'uzu*, *Dūzu*; Hebrew: תָּמֹׁׂעַז, romanized: *Tammūz*),^{[a][b]} known to the Sumerians as **Dumuzid the Shepherd** (Sumerian: romanized: *Dumuzid sipad*)^[3] and to the Canaanites as **Adon** (Phoenician: 𐤀𐤃𐤍; Proto-Hebrew: 𐤀𐤃𐤍), is an ancient Mesopotamian and Levantine deity associated with agriculture and shepherds, who was also the first and primary consort of the goddess Inanna (later known as Ishtar). In Sumerian mythology, Dumuzid's sister was Geshtinanna, the goddess of agriculture, fertility, and dream interpretation. In the *Sumerian King List*, Dumuzid is listed as an antediluvian king of the city of Bad-tibira and also an early king of the city of Uruk.

In *Inanna's Descent into the Underworld*, Inanna perceives that Dumuzid has failed to properly mourn her death and, when she returns from the Underworld, allows the galla demons to drag him down to the Underworld as her replacement. Inanna later regrets this decision and decrees that Dumuzid will spend half of the year in the Underworld, but the other half of the year with her, while his sister Geshtinanna stays in the Underworld in his place, thus resulting in the cycle of the seasons. In the Sumerian poem *Inanna Prefers the Farmer*, Dumuzid competes against the farmer Enkimdu for Inanna's hand in marriage.

Gilgamesh references Tammuz in Tablet VI of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* as the love of Ishtar's youth, who was turned into an allalu bird with a broken wing. Dumuzid was associated with fertility and vegetation and the hot, dry summers of Mesopotamia were believed to be caused by Dumuzid's yearly death. During the month in midsummer bearing his name, people all across Mesopotamia would engage in public, ritual mourning for him. The cult of Dumuzid later spread to the Levant and to Greece, where he became known under the West Semitic name Adonis.

The cult of Ishtar and Tammuz continued to thrive until the eleventh century AD and survived in parts of Mesopotamia as late as the eighteenth century. Tammuz is mentioned by name in the *Book of Ezekiel* (e.g., *Ezek. 8:14–15*) and possibly alluded to in other passages from the *Hebrew Bible*. In late nineteenth and early twentieth century scholarship of religion, Tammuz was widely seen as a prime example of the archetypal dying-and-rising god, but the discovery of the full Sumerian text of *Inanna's Descent* in the mid-twentieth century appeared to disprove the previous scholarly assumption that the narrative ended with Dumuzid's resurrection and instead revealed that it ended with Dumuzid's death. However, the rescue of Dumuzid from the underworld was later found in the text *Return of Dumuzid*, translated in 1963.

Worship

God of milk and shepherds

The Assyriologists Jeremy Black and Anthony Green describe the early history of Dumuzid's cult as "complex and bewildering".^[4] According to the *Sumerian King List* (ETCSL 2.1.1 (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section2/tr211.htm>)), Dumuzid was the fifth antediluvian king of the city of Bad-tibira.^[4] Dumuzid was also listed as an early king of Uruk,^[4] where he was said to have come from the nearby village of Kuara^[4] and to have been the consort of the goddess Inanna.^[4] As *Dumuzid sipad* ("Dumuzid the Shepherd"), Dumuzid was believed to be the provider of milk,^[5] which was a rare, seasonal commodity in ancient Sumer due to the fact that it could not easily be stored without spoiling.^[6]

Dumuzid

God of shepherds and fertility



Ancient Sumerian depiction of the marriage of Inanna and Dumuzid^[1]

Abode Heaven (for half the year); Kur (for the other half)

Genealogy

Parents Enki and Duttur

Siblings Geshtinanna (sister), Amashilama (not usually, but in some texts said to be his sister)

Consort Inanna (later known as Ishtar)

Equivalents

Greek Adonis

East Tammuz

Semitic

Levantine Tammuz/Adonis

Plant-growing deity

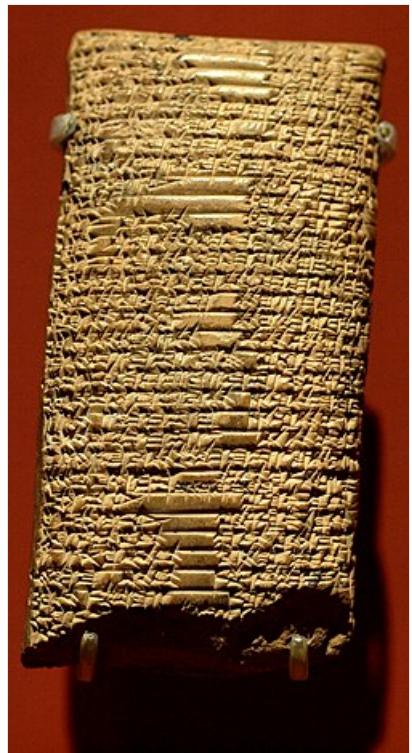
In addition to being the god of shepherds, Dumuzid was also an agricultural deity associated with the growth of plants.^{[7][8]} Ancient Near Eastern peoples associated Dumuzid with the springtime, when the land was fertile and abundant,^{[7][9]} but, during the summer months, when the land was dry and barren, it was thought that Dumuzid had "died".^{[7][10]} During the month of Dumuzid, which fell in the middle of summer, people all across Sumer would mourn over his death.^{[11][12]} This seems to have been the primary aspect of his cult.^[11] In Lagash, the month of Dumuzid was the sixth month of the year.^[11] This month and the holiday associated with it was later transmitted from the Sumerians to Babylonians and other East Semitic peoples,^[11] with its name transcribed into those languages as *Tammuz*.^[11] A ritual associated with the *Ekur* temple in Nippur equates Dumuzid with the snake-god *Ištaran*, who in that ritual, is described as having died.^[13]



A bull man fighting four quadrupeds. Inscription "Ama-Ushumgal" (𒀭 ama-ušumgal), namesake of the mythical king or shepherd Dumuzi. Early Dynastic II, circa 2600 BC. Royal Museums of Art and History - Brussels

Association with date palms

Dumuzid was also identified with the god Ama-ušumgal-ana (𒀭 ama-ušumgal-an-na),^[4] who was originally a local god worshipped in the city of Lagash.^[14] In some texts, Ama-ušumgal-ana is described as a heroic warrior.^[11] As Ama-ušumgal-ana, Dumuzid is associated with the date palm and its fruits.^[15] This aspect of Dumuzid's cult was always joyful in character^[5] and had no associations with the darker stories involving his death.^[5] To ancient Mesopotamian peoples, the date palm represented stability,^[5] because it was one of the few crops that could be harvested all year, even during the dry season.^[5] In some Sumerian poems, Dumuzid is referred to as "my Damu", which means "my son".^{[16][17]} This name is usually applied to him in his role as the personification of the power that causes the sap to rise in trees and plants.^[18] Damu is the name most closely associated with Dumuzid's return in autumn after the dry season has ended.^[19] This aspect of his cult emphasized the fear and exhaustion of the community after surviving the devastating summer.^[19]



Ancient Mesopotamian clay tablet dating to the Amorite Period (c. 2000-1600 BC), containing a lamentation over the death of Dumuzid, currently held in the Louvre Museum in Paris

Exchange with other near east religions

Dumuzid had virtually no power outside of his distinct realm of responsibilities.^[20] Very few prayers addressed to him are extant^[21] and, of those that are, almost all of them are simply requests for him to provide more milk, more grain, more cattle, etc.^[21] The sole exception to this rule is a single Assyrian inscription in which a man requests Tammuz that, when he descends to the Underworld, he should take with him a troublesome ghost who has been haunting him.^[22] The cult of Tammuz was particularly associated with women, who were the ones responsible for mourning his death.^[7]

The custom of planting miniature gardens with fast-growing plants such as lettuce and fennel, which would then be placed out in the hot sun to sprout before withering in the heat, was a well-attested custom in ancient Greece associated with the festival of Adonia in honor of Adonis, the Greek version of Tammuz;^{[23][24][25]} some scholars have argued based on references in the Hebrew Bible that this custom may have been a continuation of an earlier oriental practice.^[25] The same women who mourned the death of Tammuz also prepared cakes for his consort Ishtar, the Queen of Heaven.^[26] These cakes would be baked in ashes^[26] and several clay cake molds discovered at Mari, Syria reveal that they were also at least sometimes shaped like naked women.^[26]

Role in sacred marriage

According to the scholar Samuel Noah Kramer, towards the end of the third millennium BC, kings of Uruk may have established their legitimacy by taking on the role of Dumuzid as part of a "sacred marriage" ceremony.^[27] This ritual lasted for one night on the tenth day of the Akitu,^{[27][28]} the Sumerian new year festival,^[28] which was celebrated annually at the spring equinox.^[27] As part of the ritual, it was thought that the king would engage in ritualized sexual intercourse with the high priestess of Inanna, who took on

the role of the goddess.^[27]^[28] In the late twentieth century, the historicity of the sacred marriage ritual was treated by scholars as more-or-less an established fact,^[29] but in recent years, largely due to the writings of Pirjo Lapinkivi, some scholars have rejected the notion of an actual sex ritual, instead seeing "sacred marriage" as a symbolic rather than a physical union.^[29]

Mythology

Sumerian

Marriage to Inanna

The poem "Inanna Prefers the Farmer" (ETCSL 4.0.8.3.3 (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section4/tr40833.htm>)) begins with a rather playful conversation between Inanna and her brother Utu, who incrementally reveals to her that it is time for her to marry.^[30]^[31] Dumuzid comes to court her, along with a farmer named Enkimdu.^[30] At first, Inanna prefers the farmer,^[30] but Utu and Dumuzid gradually persuade her that Dumuzid is the better choice for a husband, arguing that, for every gift the farmer can give to her, the shepherd can give her something even better.^[32] In the end, Inanna marries Dumuzid.^[32] The shepherd and the farmer reconcile their differences, offering each other gifts.^[33] Samuel Noah Kramer compares the myth to the Biblical story of Cain and Abel because both accounts center around a farmer and a shepherd competing for divine favor and, in both stories, the deity in question ultimately chooses the shepherd.^[30]

A vast number of erotic love poems celebrating the consummation of Inanna and Dumuzid have survived.^[34]^[35] Two excerpts from a representative example are translated below:



Original Sumerian tablet of the *Courtship of Inanna and Dumuzid*



Erotic terracotta votive plaque dating to the Old Babylonian Period (c. 1830 BC — c. 1531). Representations of this type were once interpreted as evidence for a "sacred marriage" ritual in which the king would take on the role of Dumuzid and engage in sexual intercourse with the priestess of Inanna.^[27]^[36]^[28]^[37] This interpretation is now generally seen as a misinterpretation of Sumerian literary texts.^[29]

Transliterated Sumerian text (ETCSL 4.08.16 (http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.4.08.16#))	English translation by <u>Samuel Noah Kramer</u> and <u>Diane Wolkstein</u>
<p> <i>gal₄-la jar-ra?</i> ne-en GAG X [...] <i>si-gin₇ jic</i> mar gal-e /kece₂/ [...] <i>ma₂ an-na ne-en ec₂ la₂</i> [...] <i>ud-sakar gibil-gin₇ hi-li /gur3-[ru-ju₁₀]</i> <i>kislah ne-en edin-na cub?-...</i> <i>a-cag₄? uz^{mucen} ne-en uz^{mucen} dur₂-[ra]-/ju₁₀\</i> <i>a-cag₄ an-na ne-en a ma-ra-ju₁₀</i> <i>ma-a gal₄-la-ju₁₀ du₆ du₈-du₈-a a ma-«a»-ra</i> <i>ki-sikil-jen a-ba-a ur₁₁-ru-a-bi</i> <i>gal₄-la-ju₁₀ ki duru₅ a ma-ra</i> <i>ga-ca-an-jen gud a-ba-a bi₂-ib₂-gub-be₂</i> ... <i>ga sig₇-a-ma-ab mu-ud-na-ju₁₀ ga sig₇-al-[ma-ab]</i> <i>mu-ud-na-ju₁₀ me-e ga de₃-e-da-/na₈-[na₈]</i> <i>am ^d dumu-zid ga sig₇-a-ma-/ab\</i> <i>mu-ud-na-ju₁₀ me-e ga de₃-e-dal-[na₈-na₈]</i> <i>ga ud₅-da-ke₄ amac [...]</i> <i>nin car₂-ra dugcakir kug-ja₂ sug₄-...</i> <i>^d dumu-zid ga am-si-har-ra-/an\-[na ...]</i> </p>	<p> <i>My vulva, the horn, The Boat of Heaven, Is full of eagerness like the young moon. My untilled land lies fallow.</i> <i>As for me, Inanna, Who will plow my vulva? Who will plow my high field? Who will plow my wet ground? As for me, the young woman, Who will plow my vulva? Who will station the ox there? Who will plow my vulva?</i>^[38] ... <i>Make your milk sweet and thick, my bridegroom. My shepherd, I will drink your fresh milk. Wild bull, Dumuzi, make your milk sweet and thick. I will drink your fresh milk. Let the milk of the goat flow in my sheepfold. Fill my holy churn with honey cheese. Lord Dumuzi, I will drink your fresh milk.</i>^[39] </p>

Death

Main narrative

Towards the end of the epic poem *Inanna's Descent into the Underworld* (ETCSL 1.4.1 (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/tr141.htm>)), Dumuzid's wife Inanna escapes from the Underworld,^[40] but is pursued by a horde of *galla* demons, who insist that someone else must take her place in the Underworld.^[40] They first come upon Inanna's *sukkal* Ninshubur and attempt to take her,^{[41][42]} but Inanna stops them, insisting that Ninshubur is her loyal servant and that she had rightfully mourned for her while she was in the Underworld.^{[41][42]} They next come upon Shara, Inanna's beautician, who is still in mourning.^{[43][44]} The demons attempt to take him, but Inanna insists that they may not, because he had also mourned for her.^{[45][46]} The third person they come upon is Lulal, who is also in mourning.^{[45][47]} The demons try to take him, but Inanna stops them once again.^{[45][47]} Finally, they come upon Dumuzid, who is lavishly clothed and resting beneath a tree, or sitting on Inanna's throne, entertained by slave-girls.^[48] Inanna, displeased, decrees that the demons shall take him, using language which echoes the speech Ereshkigal gave while condemning her.^[48] The demons then drag Dumuzid down to the Underworld.^[48]



Ancient Sumerian cylinder seal impression showing Dumuzid being tortured in the Underworld by the *galla* demons

The Sumerian poem *The Dream of Dumuzid* (ETCSL 1.4.3 (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/tr143.htm>)) begins with Dumuzid telling Geshtinanna about a frightening dream he has experienced.^{[49][c]} Then the *galla* demons arrive to drag Dumuzid down into the Underworld as Inanna's replacement. Dumuzid flees and hides. The *galla* demons brutally torture Geshtinanna in an attempt to force her to tell them where Dumuzid is hiding. Geshtinanna, however, refuses to tell them where her brother has gone. The *galla* go to Dumuzid's unnamed "friend", who betrays Dumuzid, telling the *galla* exactly where Dumuzid is hiding. The *galla* capture Dumuzid, but Utu, the god of the Sun, who is also Inanna's brother, rescues Dumuzid by transforming him into a *gazelle*.^[51] Eventually, the *galla* recapture Dumuzid and drag him down into the Underworld.^{[50][52]}

In the Sumerian poem *The Return of Dumuzid*, which begins where *The Dream of Dumuzid* ends, Geshtinanna laments continually for days and nights over Dumuzid's death, joined by Inanna, who has apparently experienced a change of heart, and *Sirtur*, Dumuzid's mother.^[53] The three goddesses mourn continually until a *fly* reveals to Inanna the location of her husband.^[54] Together,

Inanna and Geshtinanna go to the place where the fly has told them they will find Dumuzid.^[55] They find him there and Inanna decrees that, from that point onwards, Dumuzid will spend half of the year with her sister Ereshkigal in the Underworld and the other half of the year in Heaven with her, while Geshtinanna takes his place in the Underworld.^{[56][57][58]}

Other versions

Other texts describe different and contradictory accounts of Dumuzid's death.^[59] The text of the poem *Inanna and Bilulu* (ETCSL 1.4.4 (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/tr144.htm>)), discovered at Nippur, is badly mutilated^[60] and scholars have interpreted it in a number of different ways.^[60] The beginning of the poem is mostly destroyed,^[60] but seems to be a lament.^[60] The intelligible part of the poem describes Inanna pining after her husband Dumuzid, who is in the steppe watching his flocks.^[60] Inanna sets out to find him.^[60] After this, a large portion of the text is missing.^[60] When the story resumes, Inanna is told that Dumuzid has been murdered.^[60] Inanna discovers that the old bandit woman Bilulu and her son Girgire are responsible.^[61] She travels along the road to Edenlila and stops at an inn, where she finds the two murderers.^[60] Inanna stands on top of a stool^[60] and transforms Bilulu into "the waterskin that men carry in the desert",^{[60][62][61]} forcing her to pour the funerary libations for Dumuzid.^[60]



Terracotta plaque dating to the Amorite Period (c. 2000-1600 BC) showing a dead god (probably Dumuzid) resting in his coffin

Dumuzid and Geshtinanna begins with demons encouraging Inanna to conquer the Underworld.^[63] Instead, she hands Dumuzid over to them.^[63] They put Dumuzid's feet, hands, and neck in the stocks^[59] and torture him using hot pokers.^[64] They strip him naked, do "evil" to him, and cover his face with his own garment.^[64] Finally, Dumuzid prays to Utu for help.^[64] Utu transforms Dumuzid into a creature that is part eagle and part snake, allowing him to escape back to Geshtinanna.^[64] In the text known as *The Most Bitter Cry*, Dumuzid is chased by the "seven evil deputies of the netherworld"^[64] and, as he is running, he falls into a river.^[64] Near an apple tree on the other bank, he is dragged into the Underworld,^[64] where everything simultaneously "exists" and "does not exist", perhaps indicating that they exist in insubstantial or immaterial forms.^[64]

A collection of laments for Dumuzid entitled *In the Desert by the Early Grass* describes Damu, the "dead anointed one", being dragged down to the Underworld by demons,^[64] who blindfold him, tie him up, and forbid him from sleeping.^[64] Damu's mother tries to follow him into the Underworld,^[64] but Damu is now a disembodied spirit, "lying in" the winds, "in the lightnings and in tornadoes".^[64] Damu's mother is also unable to eat the food or drink the water in the Underworld, because it is "bad".^[64] Damu travels along the road of the Underworld and encounters various spirits.^[64] He meets the ghost of a small child, who tells him that it is lost;^[64] the ghost of a singer agrees to accompany the child.^[66] Damu asks the spirits to send a message to his mother, but they cannot because they are dead and the living cannot hear the dead's voices.^[67] Damu, however, manages to tell his mother to dig up his blood and chop it into pieces.^[67] Damu's mother gives the congealed blood to Damu's sister Amashilama, who is a leech.^[67] Amashilama mixes the congealed blood into a brew of beer, which Damu must drink in order to be restored to life.^[67] Damu, however, realizes that he is dead and declares that he is not in the "grass which shall grow for his mother again", nor in the "waters which will rise".^[67] Damu's mother blesses him^[67] and Amashilama dies to join him in the Underworld.^[67] She tells him that "the day that dawns for you will also dawn for me; the day you see, I shall also see",^[67] referring to the fact that day in the world above is night in the Underworld.^[67]



Akkadian cylinder seal impression from Girsu (c. 2340 - 2150 BC) showing a mythological scene.^[65] The figure in the center appears to be a god, perhaps Gilgamesh, who is bending the trunk of a tree into a curve as he chops it down.^[65] Underneath the tree, a god ascending from the Underworld, possibly Dumuzid, hands a mace-like object to a goddess,^[65] possibly Inanna or one of Dumuzid's female relatives.

Akkadian

In the myth of Adapa, Dumuzid and Ningishzida are the two doorkeepers of Anu, the god of the heavens,^{[71][4][72]} who speak out in favor of Adapa, the priest of Ea, as he stands trial before Anu.^{[71][72]} In Tablet VI of the standard Akkadian *Epic of Gilgamesh*, Ishtar (Inanna) attempts to seduce the hero Gilgamesh,^{[69][73]} but he rebuffs her, reminding her that she had struck Tammuz (Dumuzid), "the lover of [her] youth", decreeing that he should "keep weeping year after year".^{[69][73]} Gilgamesh describes Tammuz as a colorful

allalu bird (possibly a European or Indian roller),^{[69][70]} whose wing has been broken and now spends all his time "in the woods crying 'My wing!'" (Tablet VI, section ii, lines 11–15).^[74] Gilgamesh may be referring to an alternative account of Dumuzid's death, different from the ones recorded in extant texts.^[73]

Anton Moortgat has interpreted Dumuzid as the antithesis of Gilgamesh:^[75] Gilgamesh refuses Ishtar's demand for him to become her lover, seeks immortality, and fails to find it;^[75] Dumuzid, by contrast, accepts Ishtar's offer and, as a result of her love, is able to spend half the year in Heaven, even though he is condemned to the Underworld for the other half.^[75] Mehmet-Ali Ataç further argues that the "Tammuz model" of immortality was far more prevalent in the ancient Near East than the "Gilgamesh model".^[75] In a chart of antediluvian generations in Babylonian and Biblical traditions, William Wolfgang Hallo associates Dumuzid with the composite half-man, half-fish counselor or culture hero (Apkallu) An-Enlilda, and suggests an equivalence between Dumuzid and Enoch in the Sethite Genealogy given in Genesis chapter 5.^[76]



In the Akkadian *Epic of Gilgamesh*, Tammuz is described as a "colorful *allalu* bird".^[68] possibly a European roller.^{[69][70]}

Later worship

In the Bible

The cult of Ishtar and Tammuz may have been introduced to the Kingdom of Judah during the reign of King Manasseh^[80] and the Old Testament contains numerous allusions to them.^[81] Ezekiel 8:14 mentions Tammuz by name:^{[82][77][78][79]} "Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the Lord's house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz. Then said he unto me, 'Hast thou seen this, O son of man? turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these.'"^[77]

Ezekiel's testimony is the only direct mention of Tammuz in the Hebrew Bible,^{[83][84]} but the cult of Tammuz may also be alluded to in Isaiah 17:10–11:^{[83][84]}

Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the rock of thy strength, therefore shalt thou plant pleasant plants, and shalt set it with strange slips: In the day shalt thou make thy plant to grow, and in the morning shalt thou make thy seed to flourish: but the harvest shall be a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow.^[85]



In Ezekiel 8:14, the prophet Ezekiel, shown here in this illustration from 1866 by Gustave Doré, witnesses women mourning the death of Tammuz outside the Temple in Jerusalem.^{[77][78][79]}

This passage may be describing the miniature gardens that women would plant in honor of Tammuz during his festival.^[25] Isaiah 1:29–30, Isaiah 65:3, and Isaiah 66:17 all denounce sacrifices made "in the gardens", which may also be connected to the cult of Tammuz.^[25] Another possible allusion to Tammuz occurs in Daniel 11:37:^{[83][25][84]} "Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all." The subject of this passage is Antiochus IV Epiphanes^[25] and some scholars have interpreted the reference to the "one desired by women" in this passage as an indication that Antiochus may have persecuted the cult of Tammuz.^[25] There is no external evidence to support this reading, however,^[25] and it is much more probable that this epithet is merely a jibe at Antiochus's notorious cruelty towards all the women who fell in love with him.^[25]

The Hebrew Bible also contains references to Tammuz's consort Inanna-Ishtar.^[80] Jeremiah 7:18 and Jeremiah 44:15–19 mention "the Queen of Heaven", who is probably a syncretism of Inanna-Ishtar and the West Semitic goddess Astarte.^{[80][86][83][87]} The Song of Songs bears strong similarities to the Sumerian love poems involving Inanna and Dumuzid,^[88] particularly in its usage of natural symbolism to represent the lovers' physicality.^[88] Song of Songs 6:10 ("Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?") is almost certainly a reference to Inanna-Ishtar.^[89]

Classical antiquity

The myth of Inanna and Dumuzid later became the basis for the Greek myth of Aphrodite and Adonis.^{[90][91][23]} The Greek name Ἀδωνίς (*Adōnis*, Greek pronunciation: [ádɔːnɪs]) is derived from the Canaanite word 'adōn, meaning "lord".^{[92][23]} The earliest known Greek reference to Adonis comes from a fragment of a poem by the Lesbian poet Sappho, dating to the seventh century BC,^[93] in which a chorus of young girls asks Aphrodite what they can do to mourn Adonis's death.^[93] Aphrodite replies that they must beat their breasts and tear their tunics.^[93] Later recensions of the Adonis legend reveal that he was believed to have been slain by a wild boar during a hunting trip.^{[94][95]} According to Lucian's *De Dea Syria*,^[96] each year during the festival of Adonis, the Adonis River located in what is now Lebanon (renamed the Abraham River) ran red with blood.^[94]

In Greece, the myth of Adonis was associated with the festival of the Adonia, which was celebrated by Greek women every year in midsummer.^{[23][97]} The festival, which was evidently already celebrated in Lesbos by Sappho's time,^[23] seems to have first become popular in Athens in the mid-fifth century BC.^[23] At the start of the festival, the women would plant a "garden of Adonis",^[23] a small garden planted inside a small basket or a shallow piece of broken pottery containing a variety of quick-growing plants, such as lettuce and fennel, or even quick-sprouting grains such as wheat and barley.^{[23][24]} The women would then climb ladders to the roofs of their houses,^[23] where they would place the gardens out under the heat of the summer sun.^[23] The plants would sprout in the sunlight,^[23] but wither quickly in the heat.^[98] Then the women would mourn and lament loudly over the death of Adonis,^[99] tearing their clothes and beating their breasts in a public display of grief.^[99] The third century BC poet Euphorion of Chalcis remarked in his Hyacinth that "Only Cocytus washed the wounds of Adonis".^[d]



Fragment of an Attic red-figure wedding vase (c. 430-420 BC), showing women climbing ladders up to the roofs of their houses carrying "gardens of Adonis"

Survival into the Christian Era

The Church Father Jerome records in a letter dated to the year 395 AD that "Bethlehem... belonging now to us... was overshadowed by a grove of Tammuz, that is to say, Adonis, and in the cave where once the infant Christ cried, the lover of Venus was lamented."^[100] This same cave later became the site of the Church of the Nativity.^[100] The church historian Eusebius, however, does not mention pagans having ever worshipped in the cave,^[100] nor do any other early Christian writers.^[100] Peter Welten has argued that the cave was never dedicated to Tammuz^[100] and that Jerome misinterpreted Christian mourning over the Massacre of the Innocents as a pagan ritual over Tammuz's death.^[100] Joan E. Taylor has countered this contention by arguing that Jerome, as an educated man, could not have been so naïve as to mistake Christian mourning over the Massacre of the Innocents as a pagan ritual for Tammuz.^[101]

During the sixth century AD, some early Christians in the Middle East borrowed elements from poems of Ishtar mourning over the death of Tammuz into their own retellings of the Virgin Mary mourning over the death of her son Jesus.^{[102][89]} The Syrian writers Jacob of Serugh and Romanos the Melodist both wrote laments in which the Virgin Mary describes her compassion for her son at the foot of the cross in deeply personal terms closely resembling Ishtar's laments over the death of Tammuz.^[103]

Tammuz is the month of July in Iraqi Arabic and Levantine Arabic (see Arabic names of calendar months), as well as in the Assyrian calendar and Jewish calendar,^[104] and references to Tammuz appear in Arabic literature from the 9th to 11th centuries AD.^[105] In what purports to be a translation of an ancient Nabataean text by Qūthāmā the Babylonian, Ibn Wahshiyya (c. 9th-10th century AD), adds information on his own efforts to ascertain the identity of Tammuz, and his discovery of the full details of the legend of Tammuz in another Nabataean book: "How he summoned the king to worship the seven (planets) and the twelve (signs) and how the king put him to death several times in a cruel manner Tammuz coming to life again after each time, until at last he died; and behold! it was identical to the legend of St. George".^[106] Ibn Wahshiyya also adds that Tammuz lived in Babylonia before the coming of the Chaldeans and belonged to an ancient Mesopotamian tribe called Ganbān.^[105] On rituals related to Tammuz in his time, he adds that the Sabaeans in Harran and Babylonia still lamented the loss of Tammuz every July, but that the origin of the worship had been lost.^[105] Ibn Wahshiyya's version of the Tammuz myth is also cited by Maimonides in his Guide for the Perplexed.^[107]



The Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. According to Jerome, the site had temporarily been "overshadowed by a grove of Tammuz".^[100]

In the tenth century AD, the Arab traveler Al-Nadim wrote in his *Kitab al-Fehrest* that "All the Sabaean of our time, those of Babylonia as well as those of Harran, lament and weep to this day over Tammuz at a festival which they, more particularly the women, hold in the month of the same name."^[78] Drawing from a work on Syriac calendar feast days, Al-Nadim describes a Tâ'ûz festival that took place in the middle of the month of Tammuz.^[105] Women bewailed the death of Tammuz at the hands of his master who was said to have "ground his bones in a mill and scattered them to the wind."^[105] Consequently, women would forgo the eating of ground foods during the festival time.^[105] The same festival is mentioned in the eleventh century by Ibn Athir, who recounts that it still took place every year at the appointed time along the banks of the Tigris river.^[105] Tammuz is still the name for the month of July in Iraqi Arabic.^[11]

As a dying-and-rising god

The late nineteenth-century Scottish anthropologist Sir James George Frazer wrote extensively about Tammuz in his monumental study of comparative religion *The Golden Bough* (the first edition of which was published in 1890)^{[108][111]} as well as in later works.^[112] Frazer claimed that Tammuz was just one example of the archetype of a "dying-and-rising god" found throughout all cultures.^{[109][108][113]} Frazer and others also saw Tammuz's Greek equivalent Adonis as a "dying-and-rising god".^{[109][108][113]} Origen discusses Adonis, whom he associates with Tammuz, in his *Selecta in Ezechielem* ("Comments on Ezekiel"), noting that "they say that for a long time certain rites of initiation are conducted: first, that they weep for him, since he has died; second, that they rejoice for him because he has risen from the dead (*apo nekrôn anastanti*)."^[e]

Tammuz's categorization as a "dying-and-rising god" was based on the abbreviated Akkadian redaction of *Inanna's Descent into the Underworld*, which was missing the ending.^{[114][115]} Since numerous lamentations over the death of Dumuzid had already been translated, scholars filled in the missing ending by assuming that the reason for Ishtar's descent was because she was going to resurrect Dumuzid and that the text could therefore be assumed to end with Tammuz's resurrection.^[114] Then, in the middle of the twentieth century, the complete, unabridged, original Sumerian text of *Inanna's Descent* was finally translated,^{[114][115]} revealing that, instead of ending with Dumuzid's resurrection as had long been assumed, the text actually ended with Dumuzid's death.^{[114][115]}



Photograph of Sir James George Frazer, the anthropologist who is most directly responsible for promoting the concept of a "dying and rising god" archetype^{[108][109][110]}

The rescue of Dumuzid from the underworld was later found in the text *Return of Dumuzid*, translated in 1963. Biblical scholars Paul Eddy and Greg Boyd argued in 2007 that this text does not describe a triumph over death because Dumuzid must be replaced in the underworld by his sister, thus reinforcing the "inalterable power of the realm of the dead".^[114] However, other scholars have cited this as an example of a god who was previously dead and risen again.^{[116][117]}

Literary references

The references to the cult of Tammuz preserved in the Bible and in Greco-Roman literature brought the story to the attention of western European writers.^[119] The story was popular in Early Modern England and appeared in a variety of works, including Sir Walter Raleigh's *History of the World* (1614), George Sandys's *Dictionarium Relation of a Journey* (1615), and Charles Stephanus's *Dictionarium Historicum* (1553).^[119] These have all been suggested as sources for Tammuz's most famous appearance in English literature as a demon in Book I of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, lines 446–457:^[118]

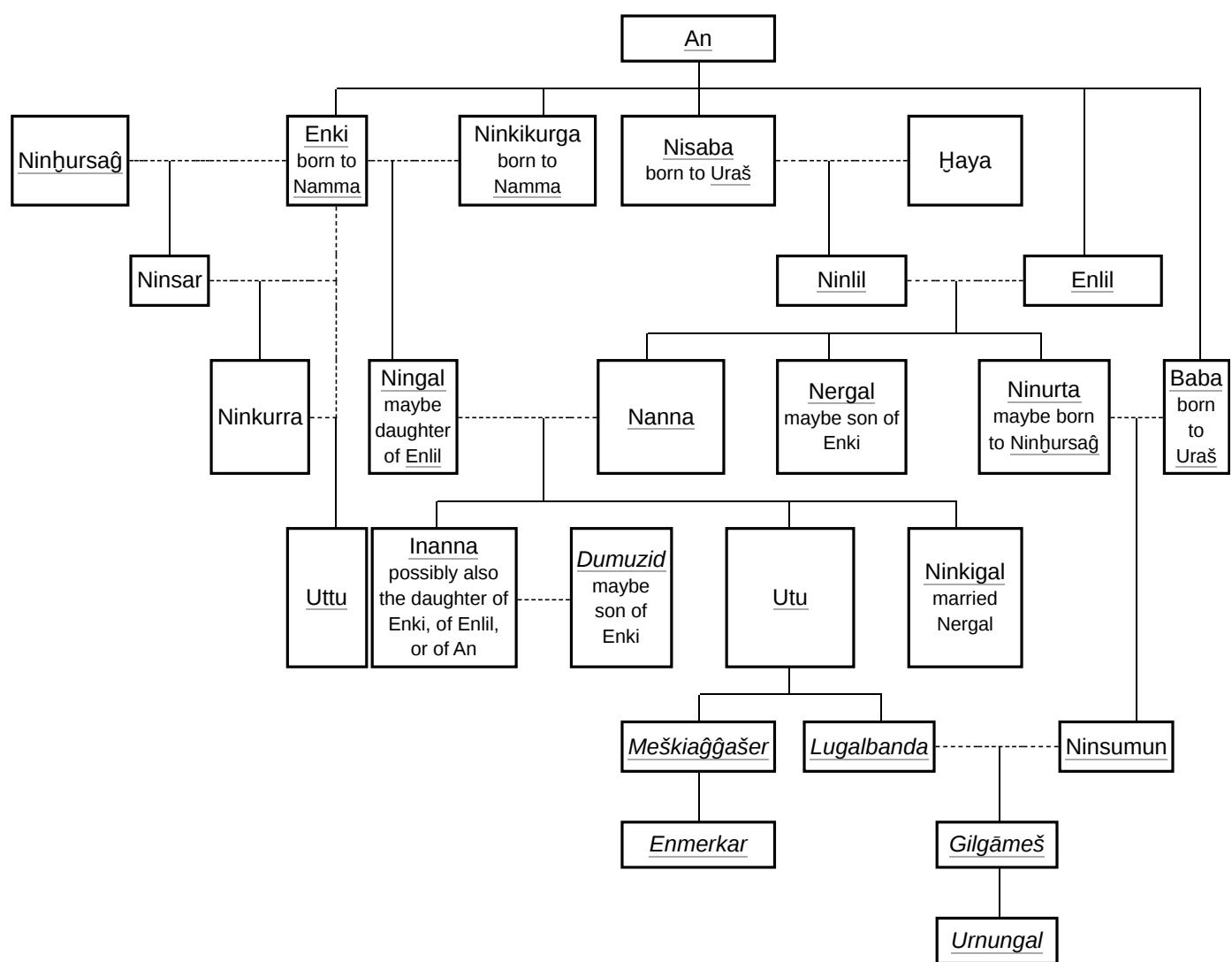
THAMMUZ came next behind,
Whose annual wound in LEBANON allur'd
The SYRIAN Damsels to lament his fate
In amorous ditties all a Summers day,
While smooth ADONIS from his native Rock
Ran purple to the Sea, suppos'd with blood
Of THAMMUZ yearly wounded: the Love-tale
Infected SION'S daughters with like heat,
Whose wanton passions in the sacred Porch
EZEKIEL saw, when by the Vision led
His eye survey'd the dark Idolatries
Of alienated JUDAH.

▪ Oscar Wilde, "Charmides"

And then each pigeon spread its milky van,
 The bright car soared into the dawning sky
 And like a cloud the aerial caravan
 Passed over the Ægean silently,
 Till the faint air was troubled with the song
 From the wan mouths that call on bleeding Thammuz all night
 long



Family tree



See also

	Mythology portal
	Asia portal

- [History of Sumer](#)
- [Mesopotamian mythology](#)
- [Descent of Inanna into the Underworld](#)

Notes

- a. Derived from the Sumerian words meaning "faithful son".^[2]
- b. Syriac: تَمْوِيز; Arabic: تموز *Tammūz*
- c. *Dumuzid's Dream* is attested in seventy-five known sources, fifty-five of which come from Nippur, nine from Ur, three probably from the region around Sippar, one each from Uruk, Kish, Shaduppum, and Susa.^[50]
- d. Remarked upon in passing by Photius, *Biblioteca* 190 (on-line translation (http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/photius_copright/photius_05bibliotheca.htm)).
- e. cf. J.-P. Migne, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Series Graeca*, **13:800**

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8. Jacobsen 2008, pp. 87–88.
9. Jacobsen 2008, pp. 83–84.
10. Jacobsen 2008, pp. 83–87.
11. Black & Green 1992, p. 73.
12. Jacobsen 2008, pp. 74–84.
13. Simons 2017, p. 86.
14. Black & Green 1992, pp. 72–73.
15. Jacobsen 2008, pp. 73–74.
16. Black & Green 1992, pp. 57, 73.
17. Jacobsen 2008, pp. 73, 89.
18. Jacobsen 2008, p. 73.
19. Jacobsen 2008, p. 89.
20. Jacobsen 2008, pp. 74–76.
21. Jacobsen 2008, pp. 75–76.
22. Jacobsen 2008, p. 76.
23. Cyrino 2010, p. 97.
24. Detienne 1977.
25. van der Toorn, Becking & Willem 1999, p. 9.
26. Ackerman 2006, pp. 115–117.
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28. Nemet-Nejat 1998, p. 196.
29. Pryke 2017, p. 128.
30. Kramer 1961, p. 101.
31. Wolkstein & Kramer 1983, pp. 30–49.

32. Kramer 1961, pp. 102–103.
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34. Wolkstein & Kramer 1983, pp. 150–155.
35. Leick 2013, pp. 64–79, 90–96.
36. Black & Green 1992, pp. 157–158.
37. Pryke 2017, pp. 127–128.
38. Wolkstein & Kramer 1983, p. 37.
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40. Kramer 1961, pp. 94–95.
41. Kramer 1961, p. 95.
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43. Kramer 1961, pp. 95–96.
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45. Kramer 1961, p. 96.
46. Wolkstein & Kramer 1983, pp. 70.
47. Wolkstein & Kramer 1983, pp. 70–71.
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62. Black & Green 1992, p. 109.
63. Shushan 2009, p. 77.
64. Shushan 2009, p. 78.
65. Kramer 1961, pp. 32–33.
66. Shushan 2009, pp. 78–79.
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External links

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Ereshkigal

In [Mesopotamian mythology](#), **Ereshkigal** (Sumerian: *𒉢𒊭𒂵, [D]EREŠ.KI.GAL]), lit. "Queen of the Great Earth")^{[1][2][a]} was the goddess of [Kur](#), the land of the dead or [underworld](#) in [Sumerian mythology](#). In later myths, she was said to rule [Irkalla](#) alongside her husband [Nergal](#). Sometimes her name is given as [Irkalla](#), similar to the way the name [Hades](#) was used in [Greek mythology](#) for both the underworld and its ruler, and sometimes it is given as [Ninkigal](#), lit. "Lady of the Great Earth".

Ereshkigal was only one of multiple deities regarded as rulers of the underworld in Mesopotamia.^{[4][5]} The main temple dedicated to her was located in [Kutha](#),^[6] a city originally associated with Nergal,^[7] and her cult had a very limited scope.^{[8][9]} No personal names with "Ereshkigal" as a theophoric element are known.^[10]

In the ancient Sumerian poem *Inanna's Descent to the Underworld*, Ereshkigal is described as [Inanna](#)'s older sister.^[11] However, this is a cultural artifact since the Sumerians used terms such as sister as a way to place each other on the same level in hierarchy.^[2]

The two main myths involving Ereshkigal are the story of Inanna's descent into the Underworld and the story of Ereshkigal's marriage to the god [Nergal](#). Other myths also associate her with gods such as [Ninazu](#), originally regarded as her husband but later as a son, and [Ningishzida](#).^[4]

Mythology

In Sumerian mythology, Ereshkigal was the queen of the [underworld](#). Some researchers believe that Ninazu originally fulfilled this function, with Ereshkigal only becoming a significant ruler of the land of the dead in Sumerian imagination at a later point in time.^[12]

However, beliefs related to this sphere were somewhat amorphous, and it is possible there was initially no single universally-agreed-upon version of relevant mythical and cultic concepts, with various deities, both male and female, ruling over the underworld in the belief systems of various areas and time periods.^[5]

Ereshkigal

Queen of the Underworld



The "Queen of Night Relief", which dates to the Old Babylonian Period and might represent either Ereshkigal or Ishtar

Abode [Kur](#) or [Irkalla](#)

Genealogy

Parents [Ki](#) and [Anu](#) (implicitly, following the most common genealogy of Inanna)

Consort [Ninazu](#), [Gugalana](#), later [Nergal](#)

Children [Nungal](#), [Ninazu](#), [Namtar](#) (in only one text)

Equivalents

Greek [Hecate](#) (only in a late magical papyrus)

Hurrian [Allani](#)

Hittite [Sun goddess of the Earth](#)

Hattian [Lelwani](#)

In later Babylonian god lists, Ereshkigal held a senior status among the underworld deities, ruling over the category of so-called "transtigridian snake gods" (such as Ninazu, Tishpak, Ishtaran, and the Elamite god Inshushinak, in Mesopotamia known almost exclusively in the afterlife context),^[13] while Nergal, who fulfilled analogous functions in the north in Sumerian times, had an entourage of minor war gods and disease demons instead.^[9] The idea of Nergal and Ereshkigal as a couple likely developed out of a need to reconcile the two traditions.^[14]

Ereshkigal's sukkal (vizier or messenger) was Namtar.^[15]

While obscure in cultic texts, Ereshkigal was prominent in mythical literature. Examples of myths where she plays an important role include:

Inanna's Descent into the underworld

In this poem, the goddess Inanna descends into the underworld, apparently seeking to extend her powers there. Ereshkigal is described as being Inanna's older sister. When Neti, the gatekeeper of the underworld, informs Ereshkigal that Inanna is at the gates and demanding to be let in, Ereshkigal responds by ordering Neti to bolt the seven gates of the underworld and to open each separately, but only after Inanna has removed one article of clothing.

Inanna proceeds through each gate, removing one article of clothing at each gate, and also loses her magic items to a nymph over the course of the journey. Finally, once she has gone through all seven gates, she finds herself naked and powerless, standing before the throne of Ereshkigal. The seven judges of the underworld judge Inanna and declare her to be guilty. Inanna is struck dead and her corpse is hung on a hook in the underworld for everyone to see.

Inanna's minister, Ninshubur, however, pleads with various gods and finally Enki agrees to rescue Inanna from the underworld. Enki sends two sexless beings down to the underworld to revive Inanna with the food and water of life. These beings escort Inanna up from the underworld, but a horde of angry demons follow Inanna, demanding to take someone else down to the underworld as Inanna's replacement. They initially want it to be Ninshubur, but Inanna rebukes this order, stating that she would not hand over a loyal subordinate to them. However, when she discovers that her husband, Dumuzid, has not mourned her death, she becomes ireful towards him and orders the demons to take him as her replacement.^[11]

Diane Wolkstein argued that Inanna and Ereshkigal represent polar opposites: Inanna is the queen of heaven, but Ereshkigal is the queen of Irkalla.^[16]

Marriage to Nergal

This myth tells the story of the origin of Ereshkigal's marriage to Nergal. Two versions are known,^[14] though they differ only in details related to the motivation of the deities involved and both the plot structure and ultimate outcome are the same.

Once, the gods held a banquet that Ereshkigal, as queen of the underworld, could not come up to attend. Kaka, one of the messengers of Anu (analogous to Papsukkal or Ninshubur) invited her to send a messenger, and she sent her vizier Namtar in her place. He was treated well by most, the exception being

Nergal, who treated Namtar with disrespect. As a result of this, Ereshkigal demanded Nergal to be sent to the underworld to atone. In one version, she planned to kill Nergal upon arrival in the underworld, but this detail is absent from the other versions.^[b]

Nergal travels under the advice of Ea, who warns him not to sit, eat, drink or wash while in the underworld, as well as not to have sex with Ereshkigal. At his advice Nergal travels to the underworld along with 14 demons. When he arrives, the gatekeeper Neti gets orders from Ereshkigal to allow him through the seven gates, stripping him of everything before arriving in the throne room, but at each gate, Nergal posts two demons.

Although Nergal has no problem with respecting all the other warnings, the god succumbs to the temptation and lies with the goddess for six days. At the seventh, he escapes back to the upper world, which makes Ereshkigal upset. Namtar is then sent to bring Nergal back, but Ea disguises Nergal as a lesser god and Namtar is fooled. Ereshkigal ultimately realizes the deception and demands Nergal to return again, threatening to open the gates of the underworld and allow the spirits of the dead to swarm the world of the living if her demands are ignored. The gods agree to hand Nergal over to her again.

In the same version in which Ereshkigal planned to kill Nergal, when he gets to the throne he knocks over Namtar and drags Ereshkigal to the floor. He is about to kill her with his ax when she pleads for her life; she promises to be his wife and to share her power with him. He consents. However, Nergal must still leave the underworld for six months, so Ereshkigal gives him back his demons and allows him to traverse the upper world for that time, after which he returns to her.^{[18][19]}

In the other version, known from two copies, the myth has a less violent ending: according to Assyriologist Alhena Gadotti, "the two deities seem to reunite and live happily ever after," and the myth concludes with the line "they impetuously entered the bedchamber."^[20]

In both versions, Nergal ends up becoming a king of the underworld, ruling alongside Ereshkigal.

Ningishzida's journey to the nether world

Ereshkigal is mentioned near the end of this composition. The vegetation god Ningishzida presumably has to descend to her kingdom each year.^[21]

The underworld vision of an Assyrian prince

Ereshkigal is listed alongside other underworld deities. Nergal is described as her husband in this text.^[22]

Family

In some versions of the myths, Ereshkigal rules the Underworld by herself, but in other versions of the myths, she rules alongside a husband subordinate to her named Gugalana. Gugalana had no fixed identity. In Inanna's descent he dies before the events of the myth; in some inscriptions he is the father of Ninazu;^[23] eventually this name became a title of Nergal as well.

In Sumerian mythology, Ereshkigal is the mother of the goddess Nungal.^[24] In a fragmentary text translated by Jeremiah Peterson, Nungal appears alongside Ereshkigal and the healing goddess Nintinugga.^[25]

In one late magical text her son with Enlil was her vizier Namtar.^[15]

Syncretism

The Hurrian underworld goddess Allani was conflated with Ereshkigal in Mesopotamia, and with the Sun goddess of the Earth among the Hittites and Luwians.^{[26][27]} While Allani was originally introduced in Mesopotamia as an independent figure,^[28] receiving offerings in Ur during Shulgi's reign under the name Allatum (alongside other foreign deities such as Ishara and Belet Nagar),^[29] she gradually became little more than a title of Ereshkigal.^[30]

The Hattian death god Lelwani, originally described as a male deity with the masculine title of *katte* (king), started to be viewed as a goddess instead due to conflation with Allani and Ereshkigal.^{[31][32]}

Ereshkigal's name in Greek magical texts

In later times, the Greeks appear to have applied the name Ereshkigal (Ἐρεσκίγαλ) to their own goddess Hecate.^[33] In the heading of a spell in the Michigan Magical Papyrus, which has been dated to the late third or early fourth century A.D. (and as such was written after the art of reading cuneiform texts was lost), Hecate is referred to as "Hecate Ereshkigal" and is invoked using magical words and gestures to alleviate the caster's fear of punishment in the afterlife.^[34] Further study of Greek texts which mention the name of Ereshkigal revealed that none feature motifs of Mesopotamian origin in any meaningful capacity, the symbols used are ones associated with Hecate rather than Ereshkigal, the use of Ereshkigal's name served no purpose other than "furnishing the Greek Netherworld goddess with a mysterious-sounding, foreign name,"^[35] and that the people who "composed, transmitted and used these texts had either little interest in or little knowledge of (or both) the Mesopotamian traditions associated with Ereškigal."^[35]

Obsolete theories

In his 1944 book, *Sumerian Mythology: A Study of Spiritual and Literary Achievement in the Third Millennium B.C.* Samuel Noah Kramer proposed that, according to the introductory passage of the ancient Sumerian epic poem, "Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld," Ereshkigal was forcibly abducted, taken down to the Underworld by the Kur, and was forced to become queen of the Underworld against her will. In order to avenge the abduction of Ereshkigal, Enki, the god of water, set out in a boat to slay the Kur. The Kur defends itself by pelting Enki with rocks of many sizes and by sending the waves beneath Enki's boat to attack Enki. The poem never actually explains who the ultimate victor of the battle is, but it is implied that Enki wins. Samuel Noah Kramer relates this myth to the ancient Greek myth of the abduction of Persephone, asserting that the Greek story is probably derived from the ancient Sumerian story.^[36]

This view, and even the idea of Kur being a single well-defined monster rather than a vague term referring to mountains, foreign lands or the underworld,^[37] are not supported by modern scholars. The passage mentioned is interpreted as Enlil and Anu assigning a dowry to Ereshkigal.^[c]

See also

- [Allani](#)
- [Ghosts in Mesopotamian religions](#)
- [Lelwani](#)
- [Sun goddess of the Earth](#)
- [Descent of Inanna into the Underworld](#)

Notes

- a. An alternate reading is "Lady of the Great Place", understood to mean a euphemism to refer to the land of the dead.^[3]
- b. "Upon hearing about this, Ereškigal demands, and ultimately obtains, that the renegade god be sent to her so that she may kill him (Amarna version)"^[17]
- c. Gadotti notes that "there is nothing ambiguous about the meaning of sağ-rig₇, nor are its Akkadian translations particularly open to interpretation"^[20]

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6. "Ereshkigal", Encyclopædia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite DVD, 2003.
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External links

- Ancient Mesopotamian Gods and Goddesses: Ereškigal (goddess) (<http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/amgg/listofdeities/erekigal/>)
 - "Inana's descent to the nether world" (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.4.1&display=Crit&charenc=gcirc#>) - from *The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature* by the Oriental Institute of the [University of Oxford](#)
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Ištaran

(Redirected from Ishtaran)

Ištaran (**Ishtaran**; Sumerian: was a Mesopotamian god who was the tutelary deity of the city of Der, a city-state located east of the Tigris, in the proximity of the borders of Elam. It is known that he was a divine judge, and his position in the Mesopotamian pantheon was most likely high, but much about his character remains uncertain. He was associated with snakes, especially with the snake god Nirah, and it is possible that he could be depicted in a partially or fully serpentine form himself. He is first attested in the Early Dynastic period in royal inscriptions and theophoric names. He appears in sources from the reign of many later dynasties as well. When Der attained independence after the Ur III period, local rulers were considered representatives of Ištaran. In later times, he retained his position in Der, and multiple times his statue was carried away by Assyrians to secure the loyalty of the population of the city.

Name

Ištaran's name could be written in cuneiform as $\text{d}KA.DI$ or $\text{d}MUŠ$.^[1] In the case of the first of these logograms, the reading Ištaran has been established as correct by Wilfred G. Lambert in 1969.^[2] Other, now obsolete, proposals included Sataran, Satran,^[3] Gusilim,^[4] and Eatrana.^[5] Also attested are a variant form, Iltaran, and an Emesal one, Ezeran (or Ezzeran).^[4] The latter logogram could also designate the messenger (*šipru*) of Ištaran,^[1] Nirah,^[6] as well as the tutelary god of Susa, Inshushinak,^[7] the tutelary god of Eshnunna, Tishpak,^[8] and the primordial river deity Irjan.^[1] With a different determinative, $\text{mul}MUŠ$, it referred to the constellation Hydra, which could be associated with Ištaran.^[9] Sometimes $\text{d}DI.KU$ was used to render the name Ištaran as well, though these signs were also used to designate other judge deities, such as Mandanu and Diku (the deification of the Sumerian word "judge").^[10]

It is commonly assumed that Ištaran's name originated in a Semitic language.^[11] It has been proposed that it was etymologically related to Ishtar.^[12] Christopher Woods suggests that the suffix *-an* should be understood as plural, and translates the name as "the two Ishtars", which he assumes might have been a

Ištaran

God of justice



Snake god Nirah, a symbol (or messenger) of Ištaran, on upper edge of kudurru. The snake symbol is often found on the edge of a kudurru, "enclosing" the stone document.

Major cult center Der

Symbol snake (Nirah)

Genealogy

Spouse Šarrat-Deri or Manzat

Children Nirah (sometimes)

Zīzānu (possibly)

way to refer to the morning and evening star.^[6] He suggests that Ištaran was formed through syncretism of an Ishtar-like deity and a local snake god.^[6] However, the linguistic association between the names Ištaran and Ishtar is not universally accepted.^[13] Richard L. Litke instead assumed that Ištaran's name was Elamite in origin due to the location of Der, and that it was difficult to render for Mesopotamian scribes as a result.^[5]

Ištaran could also be called Anu Rabû or AN.GAL, "Great Anu".^[1] In Elamite sources, the signs AN.GAL instead designate the god Napirisha, in the past incorrectly believed to be the same deity as Humban.^[14] Wouter Henkelman proposes a connection between these two deities based on this similarity, as well as their shared affinity with snakes and the fact that Der was located close to Elam.^[15]

Character and iconography

Ištaran's character is poorly understood,^[16] even though he belonged to a "very high level in the pantheon".^[4] It is known that he was primarily viewed as a divine judge.^[17] His just character was regarded as proverbial,^[16] and kings such as Gudea of Lagash and Shulgi of Ur compared themselves to him in inscriptions to present themselves as equally just.^[17] An Old Babylonian *adab* song makes a similar comparison with Nergal in place of a king.^[18]

Based on Ištaran's placement in the proximity of Ereshkigal in the god list An = Anum it has been suggested that he was associated with the underworld.^[19] It is also known that he could be viewed as one of the Dumuzi-like mourned "dying gods", as attested in Sumerian litanies and in a late ritual from Assur, according to which his death took place in the summer.^[16] The latter text states that his corpse was beaten and the blood reached the underworld.^[16] In a single text, he and Dumuzi are outright equated with each other.^[20] Irene Sibbing-Plantholt argues he could also be associated with healing.^[21] She notes that in a text from Malgium the theophoric name Ištarān-asû occurs,^[22] asû being a term translated either as "physician" or more broadly "healer".^[23] Based on Ištaran's alternate name, Anu Rabû, it has also been proposed that he was associated with the sky.^[24] It has been argued that in art his possible celestial aspect might have been represented by rays coming out of his shoulders.^[25] In one of the Temple Hymns, he is referred to as *lugal dubur anna*, "lord of the base of heaven".^[26]

According to Wilfred G. Lambert, Ištaran's face was regarded as beautiful.^[4] A lament refers to him as "bright-eyed".^[27] He was also associated with snakes.^[16] In the Temple Hymns, the entrance to his temple is said to be decorated with an image of intertwined mušhušu and horned viper (*muš-šag₄-tur₃*).^[28] It is also possible that depictions of snakes on kudurru (boundary stones) represented Ištaran as a judge deity resolving conflicts over land.^[29] Frans Wiggermann additionally assumes that a god depicted with the upper body of a human and the lower body of a snake, known from cylinder seals from the Sargonic period, might be Ištaran.^[12] Christopher Woods instead proposes that this figure is Nirah.^[6] Wiggermann argues this is implausible, as Nirah was a servant deity, while the snake god according to him is depicted as an "independent lord".^[12] He also notes a similar figure, though seated on a serpent throne rather than directly partially serpentine himself, is also present on seals from Susa, and might represent Inshushinak.^[30] He argues that both of these gods, as well as other deities, such as Ninazu, Ningishzida, Tishpak and the so-called boat god belonged to a group he refers to as "transfigridian snake gods" due to their similar character and iconography and the location of their cult centers.^[31] He assumes all of them developed on the boundary between Mesopotamian and Elamite culture.^[19]

Associations with other deities

Family and court

Ištaran could be viewed as a son of Anu and Urash, and as a result the Old Babylonian Nippur god list associates him with Uruk.^[32] Marten Stol assumes that both Ištaran and Inshushinak were regarded as sons of Tishpak by the compiler of the god list *An = Anum*.^[33] A list of city gods from Ur groups them together.^[19] A late ritual known from Assur addresses Ishtar as Ištaran's sister.^[16]

In *An = Anum*, Ištaran appears without a wife, but in an inscription of Esarhaddon this role is assigned to the goddess Šarrat-Deri, "Queen of Der". or Deritum, "she of Der".^[4] There is also some evidence that Manzat, a goddess regarded as the divine representation of the rainbow, was viewed as his wife.^[6] Irene Sibbing-Plantholt notes that based on the reference to this tradition in a syncretistic hymn to Nanaya it can be assumed that she was worshiped in Der alongside him in either the late second millennium BCE or in the first millennium BCE.^[25]

Nirah was the messenger (*šipru*) of Ištaran.^[6] He could also be viewed as his son.^[6] The god Zīzānu was either another son of Ištaran or a son of Qudma,^[34] his sukkal (attendant deity).^[10] Further members of his court include the deities Rāsu, Turma and Itūr-mātiššu.^[4]

Foreign equivalents and syncretism

In an Old Babylonian bilingual Akkadian-Amorite god list, Ištaran's counterpart in the Amorite column is aš-ti-ul-ḥa-al-ti.^[35] Andrew R. George and Manfred Krebernik note that this name might have an Elamite origin, and that the presence of such a deity in the Amorite pantheon is not impossible, as they inhabited the area of Emutbalum close to Der and Elam, and the well known Amorite leader Kudur-Mabuk and his father Simti-Šilḥak both bore Elamite names.^[36]

A bilingual Hurro-Akkadian version of the Weidner god list from Emar seemingly regards Ištaran, misspelled as ^dKA.DI.DI (possibly an example of dittography, an error involving reduplication of a sign) and Kumarbi (usually associated with Enlil or Syrian Dagan) as equivalents.^[37] Frank Simons assumes that this connection might be based on their shared association with the underworld, on shared perception as the "Father of Gods" (a prayer to Nisaba refers to ^dMUŠ as "father of the gods," though direct references to Ištaran in such a role are not known), or possibly on an unknown myth about Ištaran which resembled the Hurrian myths pertaining to Kumarbi's dethroning.^[20]

It is possible that in the late first millennium, attempts at syncretising Ištaran and Anu were made during a period of cooperation between the theologians from Uruk, Nippur and Der, but direct evidence is presently lacking.^[38]

A late god list equating various deities with Marduk mentions Anu Rabû among them, but the translation of the explanatory line is uncertain.^[39]

In tablet III of the "Epic of Anzû," Ištaran is listed as one of the names of Ninurta along with other names of deities that are claimed to be equivalents of him in this composition, namely Zababa, Pabilsag, Inshushinak (described as *bēl pirišti*, "lord of secrets"),^[40] Ninazu, Panigara (an alternate spelling of the

name Panigingarra),^[41] Hurabtil (labeled as an Elamite god), Lugal-Marada, and even Lugalbanda (a legendary king of Uruk) and Papsukkal (a messenger god, sukkal of Zababa).^[40] Andrew R. George suggests that based on their placement in documents such as the *Canonical Temple List*, it is possible that some of these gods - Ištaran, Inshushinak, Zababa and Lugal-Marada - could be seen as "local manifestations" of Ninurta by the ancient theologians responsible for compilation of such texts.^[42] Michael P. Streck emphasizes that such associations would be typical mostly for late theology.^[40]

Worship

Ištaran was the tutelary god of Der.^[32] His temple located there was known under the ceremonial Sumerian name Edimgalkalamma, "House, Great Bond of the Land".^[43] A library was attached to it, and it is known the scribes of Der were in contact with those from Uruk and Babylon.^[44] However, as of 2010, only seven tablets whose colophons state they originate in Der are known.^[44]

Oldest attestations of Ištaran are royal inscriptions from the Early Dynastic period from Lagash and Umma, and one of such texts attributed to Entemena relays how Mesalim of Kish at the command of Ištaran demarcated the border between these two states,^[4] represented by their gods Ningirsu and Shara.^[45] It has been proposed that Ištaran was understood as a neutral party, similarly to how Dagan was portrayed in similar texts from contemporary Syria, and as such as a suitable deity to ask for resolution of such conflicts.^[46] Another Early Dynastic ruler, Lugalzagesi, called himself a "beloved friend of Ištaran".^[47] Theophoric names invoking Ištaran also first appear in sources from the Early Dynastic period.^[4]

Evidence for the worship of Ishtaran in the Sargonic period includes a mace head dedicated to him by Naram-Sin of Akkad, found in Ur,^[48] and theophoric names from Adab, such as Ur-Ištaran.^[11] Gudea, who reigned after the fall of the Akkadian Empire, in an inscription compared himself to Ištaran, asserting that like him he would declare just judgments not only for Sumerians and Akkadians, but even for "a brute from Gutium".^[49] In the following Ur III period, king Shulgi patronized the Edimgalkalamma.^[43] A Sumerian text from the third millennium BCE found in Susa, where it was presumably brought in the aftermath of an Elamite raid, also mentions work undertaken in his temple in Der, might predate his dynasty, but the name of the ruler responsible for it is lost.^[50] One of Shulgi's daughters bore the name ME-Ištaran (reading of the first element uncertain), as attested in documents from the Garšana archive, which detail matters related to her estate located there and mention her marriage to a certain Shu-Kabta, a man who was apparently both a physician and a military official.^[51]

The formula "favorite of Ištaran, beloved of Inanna" (*migir Ištaran, naram Inanna*) was used by the viceroys of Der Ilum-muttabil (also read Anum-muttabil),^[52] Nidnuša,^[53] and a third holder of this office whose name is not preserved.^[54] They reigned during Der's period of independence after the fall of the Third Dynasty of Ur.^[55] In this period the rulers of Der were considered representatives of Ištaran on earth, which is presumed to parallel the development of similar models of rulership in Eshnunna and Assur, where the local rulers similarly were believed to act as governors on behalf of Tishpak and Ashur, respectively.^[56] An inscription of Ilum-Muttabil indicates that he dedicated a new construction project to Ištaran too, but it is unknown if it refers to a temple.^[57] Eckhart Frahm notes that it is not impossible repairs of Edimgalkalamma are described in it, though he due to their poor preservation of the text cannot be established with certainty.^[50]

In a royal inscription preserved on a clay cylinder found in Ur, Sin-Iddinam of Larsa recorded that after defeating and taking captive an enemy ruler, Warassa, he entrusted him to Ištaran and released his imprisoned troops, and states that the king declared he took these actions "In order that my name is mentioned in Der in remote (days)".^[58] Warassa might have ruled over either Der itself, much like his namesake known from sources contemporary with the reign of Hammurabi of Babylon, or nearby Malgium; the third proposed location he might have hailed from, Eshnunna, is considered unlikely, as Sin-Iddinam refers to him as *lugal*, rather than *ensi*₂, the typical title of Eshnunnean rulers.^[59] An inscription of the Assyrian king Ilu-šūma mentions Ištaran and his city in passing.^[60] This text is the oldest known reference to cities other than Assur in Assyrian royal inscriptions.^[61] In the Old Babylonian period, a man bearing the theophoric name Ištaran-nasir was a merchant active in Carchemish and was in contact with Zimri-Lim, the king of Mari, informing him about events such as a festival of Nubandag and the death of king Aplahanda.^[62]

In the Kassite period, Edimgalkalamma was rebuilt during the reign of one of the two kings bearing the Kurigalzu (Kurigalzu I or Kurigalzu II).^[43] The 1920 discovery of a text documenting this event contributed towards identifying its findspot, Tell Aqar, as the location of Der.^[50] He is also referenced in an inscription from Susa from the reign of one of the Kurigalzua, and possibly in another from Babylon also attributed to one of them.^[63] Furthermore, he appears in eleven theophoric names from Nippur from the Kassite period, with further five invoking "Anu Rabû".^[64] He is also one of the few Mesopotamian gods attested in linguistically Kassite theophoric names, which usually invoked Kassite deities rather than Mesopotamian ones.^[65] Multiple people bearing theophoric names invoking Ištaran (^dKA.DI or AN.GAL) are also attested in the documents of the First Sealand dynasty, and Ran Zadok proposes that these individuals originally came from Der.^[66] He is also invoked in the Elamite name Kuk-Ištaran, "protection of Ištaran".^[67]

An inscription of king Marduk-nadin-ahhe of the Second Dynasty of Isin mentions Anu Rabû as the last god in a long sequence of deities, immediately after Išjara.^[68]

In later periods Ištaran was worshiped in the treasury of the Ešarra temple in Assur.^[69] Assyrians also intervened a number of times in the religious affairs of Der, and repeatedly carried off and returned the statue of Ištaran in order to ensure the loyalty of local inhabitants.^[70] During the reign of Shamshi-Adad V, statues of the deities of Der, including Ištaran, as well as Šarrat-Deri, Mār-bīti, Urkitum, Sağkud of Bubē and others, were seized by the Assyrian army which attacked the city, as documented in a letter of this king addressed to the god Ashur.^[71] They were later returned by Adad-nirari III.^[72] The city god was however subsequently taken away once more on the orders of Sennacherib to punish the local population for their earlier support of the Elamite king Hallušu-Inšušinak, who campaigned in Mesopotamia against Aššur-nādin-šumi, the Assyrian ruler's son and governor of Babylonia.^[73] However, he was once again returned when Esarhaddon ascended to the throne, which was a part of a broader process of reversal of his predecessor's policy towards southern cities.^[74] He also renovated the Edmigalkalamma, which was damaged in an Elamite invasion during the reign of Enlil-nadin-šumi.^[43] Esarhaddon's efforts were subsequently continued by his son Ashurbanipal, as documented in three texts from Nineveh.^[75] Most likely the work in Der was stretched over the course of multiple years, starting before 652 BCE and concluding at some point between 647 and 645 BCE.^[70] A text from Ashurbanipal's reign also mentions Ištaran (under the name *Anu Rabû*) as one of the deities who aided this king during a campaign against Elam (653 BCE) alongside Ashur, Lugal-asal, Marduk, Nabu and Shamash.^[76]

Ištaran most likely continued to be worshiped in Der until the city was deserted in either the Seleucid or Parthian period.^[4] While in the past it was assumed that theophoric names invoking him stopped being used after the Kassite period,^[4] more recent research shows that scribes from Der still bore such names in the late first millennium BCE.^[9]

Mythology

A fragmentary text known Abu Salabikh^[77] and Ebla mentions a group consisting of Shamash, Ištaran, the river god dÍD^[78] and Nammu.^[77] The connection between Ištaran and Shamash was based on their shared association with justice, and later recurs for example in inscriptions of Gudea.^[79] Like them, dÍD was a divine judge, and Nammu's presence might be the result of association between him and this goddess attested elsewhere.^[77]

The *Hymn to Nanshe* mentions Ištaran in his role of a divine judge, possibly in association with Ningishzida.^[17]

Ištaran is also mentioned in the *Epic of Erra*, where he forsakes the inhabitants of Der after they start acting violently.^[80] He is also the only deity to resist Erra's destructive rampage.^[81]

A Neo-Assyrian copy of a lament originally dealing only with the death of Damu contains the names of nine deities who met the same fate,^[82] including Ištaran.^[83]

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External links

- Ancient Mesopotamian Gods and Goddesses: Ištaran (god) (<http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/amgg/listofdeities/itaran/>)

Retrieved from "<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Ištaran&oldid=1292003830>"



Nergal

Nergal (Sumerian: [1] *dKIŠ.UNU* or *dGIR.UNU.GAL*; [2] Hebrew: נֶרְגָּל, Modern: *Nerəgal*, Tiberian: *Nērəgal*; Aramaic: [3] Latin: *Nirgal*) was a Mesopotamian god worshiped through all periods of Mesopotamian history, from Early Dynastic to Neo-Babylonian times, with a few attestations indicating that his cult survived into the period of Achaemenid domination. He was primarily associated with war, death, and disease, and has been described as the "god of inflicted death". [4] He reigned over Kur, the Mesopotamian underworld, depending on the myth either on behalf of his parents Enlil and Ninlil, or in later periods as a result of his marriage with the goddess Ereshkigal. Originally either Mammitum, a goddess possibly connected to frost, or Laš, sometimes assumed to be a minor medicine goddess, were regarded as his wife, though other traditions existed, too.

His primary cult center was Kutha, located in the north of historical Babylonia. His main temple bore the ceremonial name E-Meslam and he was also known by the name Meslamtaea, "he who comes out of Meslam". Initially he was only worshiped in the north, with a notable exception being Girsu during the reign of Gudea of Lagash, but starting with the Ur III period he became a major deity in the south too. He remained prominent in both Babylonia and Assyria in later periods, and in the Neo-Babylonian state pantheon he was regarded as the third most important god, after Marduk and Nabu.

Nergal was associated with a large number of local or foreign deities. The Akkadian god Erra was syncretised with him at an early date, and especially in literary texts they functioned as synonyms of each other. Other major deities frequently compared to or syncretised with him include the western god Resheph, best attested in Ebla and Ugarit, who was also a god of war, plague and death, and Elamite Simut, who was likely a warrior god and shared Nergal's association with the planet Mars. It has also been proposed that his name

Nergal	
God of war, disease, and death	
	Nergal holding his attributes—a lion-headed mace and a sword—on a cylinder seal from Larsa
Major cult center	<u>Kutha</u>
Abode	<u>Kur</u> (the Mesopotamian underworld)
Planet	<u>Mars</u>
Symbol	lion-headed mace, sword, lion, bull, possibly chameleon
Number	14
Genealogy	
Parents	<u>Enlil</u> and <u>Ninlil</u>
Siblings	<u>Nanna</u> , <u>Ninazu</u> , <u>Enbilulu</u> (in the myth <u>Enlil</u> and <u>Ninlil</u>)
Consort	<u>Laš</u> (most commonly) <u>Mammitum</u> (in <u>Nippur</u> and in <i>Epic of Erra</i>) <u>Admu</u> (in <u>Mari</u>) <u>Ereshkigal</u> (in the myth <i>Nergal and Ereshkigal</i>)

was used to represent a Hurrian god, possibly Kumarbi or Aštabi, in early inscriptions from Urkesh, but there is also evidence that he was worshiped by the Hurrians under his own name as one of the Mesopotamian deities they incorporated into their own pantheon.

Two well known myths focus on Nergal, *Nergal and Ereshkigal* and *Epic of Erra*. The former describes the circumstances of his marriage of Ereshkigal, the Mesopotamian goddess of the dead, while the latter describes his rampages and efforts of his sukkal (attendant deity) Ishum to stop them. He also appears in a number of other, less well-preserved compositions.

Children	<u>Ninshubur</u> (in <u>Girsu</u> in the third millennium BCE)
Equivalents	
Southern	<u>Ninazu</u>
Mesopotamian	
Akkadian	<u>Erra</u>
Eblaite and Ugaritic	<u>Resheph</u>
Elamite	<u>Simut</u>
Mandaean	<u>Nirig</u>

Names and epithets

Nergal's name can be translated from Sumerian as "lord of the big city",^[2] a euphemistic way to refer to him as a ruler of the underworld.^[5] The earliest attested spelling is ^dKIŠ.UNU, with its standard derivative ^dKIŠ.UNU.GAL first attested in the Old Akkadian period.^[2] Since in the Old Babylonian period the cuneiform signs KIŠ and GÌR coalesced, transliterations using the latter in place of the former can also be found in literature.^[3] The variant ^dNIN.KIŠ.UNU, attested in an inscription of Naram-Sin of Akkad,^[5] resulted from the use of a derivative of Nergal's name, KIŠ.UNU, as an early logographic writing of the name of Kutha, his cult center.^[2]

Phonetic spellings of Nergal's name are attested in cuneiform (^dné-ri-ig-lá in Old Assyrian Tell Leilan, ^dné-ri-ig-la in Nuzi), as well as in Aramaic (*nrgl*, *nyrgl*) and Hebrew (*nér^egal* in the Masoretic Text).^[3]

Meslamtaea and related logograms

Meslamtaea, "he who has come out of Meslam", was originally used as an alternative name of Nergal in the southern part of Lower Mesopotamia up to the Ur III period.^[3] It has been proposed that it was euphemistic and reflected the fact that Nergal initially could not be recognized as a ruler of the underworld in the south due to the existence of Ninazu (sometimes assumed to be the earliest Mesopotamian god of death^[6]) and Ereshkigal, and perhaps only served as a war deity.^[5] Meslamtaea with time also came to be used as the name of a separate deity.^[3] As attested for the first time in a hymn from the reign of Ibbi-Sin, he formed a pair with Lugalirra.^[7] Due to the connection between Nergal and these two gods, who could be regarded as a pair of twins, his own name could be represented by the logogram ^dMAŠ.TAB.BA and its variant ^dMAŠ.MAŠ,^[8] both of them originally meaning "(divine) twins".^[9] ^dMAŠ.MAŠ is attested in Neo-Assyrian theophoric names as a spelling of Nergal's name, though only uncommonly.^[3] However, the god designated by this logogram in one of the Amarna letters, written by the king of Alashiya, is most likely Resheph instead.^[10]

Erra

From the Old Babylonian period onward the name Erra, derived from the Semitic root ḥRR, and thus etymologically related to the Akkadian verb erēru, "to scorch", could be applied to Nergal, though it originally referred to a distinct god.^[5] The two of them started to be associated in the Old Babylonian period, were equated in the Weidner and An = Anum god lists, and appear to be synonyms of each other in literary texts (including the Epic of Erra and Nergal and Ereshkigal), where both names can occur side by side as designations of the same figure.^[5] However, while in other similar cases (Inanna and Ishtar, Enki and Ea) the Akkadian name eventually started to predominate over Sumerian, Erra was the less commonly used one, and there are also examples of late bilingual texts using Nergal's name in the Akkadian version and Erra's in the Sumerian translation, indicating it was viewed as antiquated and was not in common use.^[5] Theophoric names invoking Erra are only attested from Old Akkadian to Old Babylonian period, with most of the examples being Akkadian, though uncommonly Sumerian ones occur too.^[5] Despite his origin, he is absent from the inscriptions of rulers of the Akkadian Empire.^[5]

The similarity between the names of Erra and Lugal-irra is presumed to be accidental, and the element - irra in the latter is Sumerian and is conventionally translated as "mighty".^[11]

U.GUR

The logogram ^dU.GUR is the most commonly attested writing of Nergal's name from the Middle Babylonian period onward.^[2] This name initially belonged to Nergal's attendant deity (sukkal, and might be derived from the imperative form of Akkadian nāqaru, "destroy!").^[12] It has been noted that Ugur was replaced in his role by Ishum contemporarily with the spread of the use of ^dU.GUR as a writing of Nergal's name.^[3]

IGI.DU

^dIGI.DU is attested as a logographic representation of Nergal's name in Neo-Babylonian sources, with the reading confirmed by the alternation between it and ^dU.GUR in theophoric names.^[13] However, in a number of Assyrian texts ^dU.GUR and ^dIGI.DU appear as designations of two different deities, with the former being Nergal and the latter remaining unidentified.^[13] Authors such as Frans Wiggermann and Julia Krul argue it had the Akkadian reading Pālil.^{[3][14]} However, Manfred Krebernik states this remains unconfirmed.^[13] A deity designated by the logogram ^dIGI.DU was also worshiped in Uruk, with the earliest references coming from the reign of Sennacherib and the most recent from the Seleucid period,^[15] and according to Krul should be interpreted as "a form of Nergal".^[14] Paul-Alain Beaulieu instead argues that it is impossible to identify him as Nergal, as both of them appear alongside Ninurta as a trio of distinct deities in Neo-Babylonian sources.^[15] According to the god list An = Anum ^dIGI.DU could also be used as a logographic writing of the names of Ninurta (tablet VI, line 192; however, a variant lists the sumerogram ^dGÉSTU instead of ^dIGI.DU) and the Elamite deity Igišta (tablet VI, line 182; also attested in Elamite theophoric names).^[13] It could also be used to represent the names of Lugal-irra and Meslamta-ea.^[2] Beaulieu points out that in the Neo-Babylonian period two different deities whose names were rendered as ^dIGI.DU were worshiped in Udannu, and proposed a relation with Lugal-irra and Meslamta-ea.^[16] The single attestation of ^dIGI.DU as a representation of the name of Alammuš is an astronomical text is presumed to be the result of confusion between him and Ningublagga, the "Little Twins", with Lugal-Irra and Meslamtaea, the "Great Twins".^[13]

Other names and epithets

Nergal also had a large number of other names and epithets, according to Frans Wiggermann comparable only to a handful of other very popular deities (especially Inanna), with around 50 known from the Old Babylonian period, and about twice as many from the later god list *An = Anum*, including many compounds with the word *lugal*, "lord".^[3] For instance, he could be referred to as "Lugal-silimma", lord of peace.^[17] A few of Nergal's titles point at occasional association with vegetation and agriculture, namely *Lugal-asal*, "lord (of the) poplar"; *Lugal-gišimmar*, "Lord (of the) date palm" (also a title of Ninurta); *Lugal-šinig*, "Lord (of the) tamarisk"; *Lugal-zulumma*, "Lord (of the) dates".^[18] However, Dina Katz stresses that these names were only applied to Nergal in late sources, and it cannot be assumed that this necessarily reflected an aspect of his character already extant earlier on.^[19] A frequently attested earlier epithet is *Guanungia*, "bull whose great strength cannot be repulsed", already in use in the Early Dynastic period.^[20] An alternate name of Nergal listed in the Babylonian recension of the god list *Anšar = Anum, ^de-eb-ri*, reflects the Hurrian word *ewri*, "lord".^[21]

Character

Nergal's role as a god of the underworld is the already attested in an Early Dynastic Zame Hymns, specifically in the hymn dedicated to Kutha, where he is additionally associated with the so-called "Enki-Ninki deities", a group regarded as ancestors of Enlil believed to reside in the underworld.^[22] According to a hymn from the reign of Ishme-Dagan, dominion over the land of the dead was bestowed upon Nergal by his parents, Enlil and Ninlil.^[23] He was believed to decide fates of the dead the same way as Enlil did for the living.^[24] In one Old Babylonian *adab* song Nergal is described as "Enlil of the homeland (*kalam*) and the underworld (*kur*)".^[25] He was also occasionally referred to as Enlil-banda, "junior Enlil",^[22] though this title also functioned as an epithet of the god Enki.^[26]

In addition to being a god of the underworld, Nergal was also a war god, believed to accompany rulers on campaigns, but also to guarantee peace due to his fearsome nature serving as a deterrent.^[27] In that capacity he was known as Lugal-silimma, "lord of peace".^[17] He was also associated with disease.^[27] As summed up by Frans Wiggermann, his various domains make him the god of "inflicted death".^[4] He also played an important role in apotropaic rituals, in which he was commonly invoked to protect houses from evil.^[17] Fragments of tablets containing the Epic of Erra, a text detailing his exploits, were used as amulets.^[28]

Astral role

Nergal was associated with Mars.^[17] Like him, this planet was linked with disease (especially kidney disease) in Mesopotamian beliefs.^[29] However, Mars was also associated with other deities: Ninazu (under the name "the Elam star"),^[30] Nintinugga,^[31] and especially Simut, in origin an Elamite god.^[32] The name of the last of these figures in Mesopotamian sources could outright refer to the planet (*"mulSi-mu-ut*, "the star Simut").^[33]

A number of scholars in the early 20th century, for example Emil Kraeling, assumed that Nergal was in part a solar deity, and as such was sometimes identified with Shamash.^[34] Kraeling argued that Nergal was representative of a certain phase of the sun, specifically the sun of noontime and of the summer

solstice that brings destruction, high summer being the dead season in the Mesopotamian annual cycle.^[34] This view is no longer present in modern scholarship. While some authors, for example Nikita Artemov, refer to Nergal as a deity of "quasi-solar" character, primary sources show a connection between him and sunset rather than noon.^[35] For instance, an Old Babylonian *adab* song contains a description of Nergal serving as a judge at sunset,^[25] while another composition calls him the "king of sunset".^[23] This association is also present in rituals meant to compel ghosts to return to the underworld through the gates to sunset.^[36]

Iconography

Nergal's role as a war god was exemplified by some of his attributes: mace, dagger and bow.^[17] A mace with three lion-shaped heads and a scimitar adorned with leonine decorations often appear as Nergal's weapons on cylinder seals.^[38] He was also often depicted in a type of flat cap commonly, but not exclusively, worn by underworld deities in Mesopotamian glyptic art.^[38]



A symbol of Nergal on Old-Babylonian fired clay plaque from Nippur, Southern Mesopotamian, Iraq



A bull-eared deity, possibly a courtier of Nergal^[37]

Bulls and lions were associated with Nergal.^[37] On the basis of this connection it has been proposed that minor deities with bull-like ears on Old Babylonian terracotta plaques and cylinder seals might have been depictions of unspecified members of Nergal's entourage.^[37] An entry in the explanatory god list *An = Anu ša amēli* seemingly associates Nergal with chameleons, as his title *Bar-MUŠEN-na*, explained as "Nergal of rage" (*ša uzzi*) is like a scribal mistake for *bar-gun₃-(gun₃)-na* ("the one with a colorful exterior"), presumed to be the Akkadian term for chameleon; Ryan D. Winters suggests that the animal's color changing might have been associated with mood swings or choleric temperament, and additionally that it was perceived as a "chthonic" being.^[39]

War standards could serve as a symbolic representation of Nergal too, and the Assyrians armies in particular were often accompanied by such devotional objects during campaigns.^[40] A similar symbol also represented Nergal on *kudurru*, inscribed boundary stones.^[41]

Associations with other deities

The god most closely associated with Nergal was Erra, whose name was Akkadian rather than Sumerian and can be understood as "scorching".^[5] Two gods with names similar to Erra who were also associated with Nergal were Errakal and Erragal.^[42] It is assumed that they had a distinct origin from Erra.^[20]

Ninazu was seemingly already associated with Nergal in the Early Dynastic period, as a document from Shuruppak refers to him as "Nergal of Enegi", his main cult center.^[30] The city itself was sometimes called "Kutha of Sumer".^[43] In later times, especially in Eshnunna, he started to be viewed as a son of Enlil and Ninlil and a warrior god, similar to Nergal.^[44]

Many minor gods were associated or equated with Nergal. The god Shulmanu, known exclusively from Assyria, was associated with Nergal and even equated with him in god lists.^[20] Lagamar (Akkadian: "no mercy"^[45]), son of Urash (the male tutelary god of Dilbat) known both from lower Mesopotamian sources and from Mari and Susa^[46] is glossed as "Nergal" in the god list An = Anum.^[47] Lagamar, Shubula and a number of other deities are also equated with Nergal in the Weidner god list.^[48] Luhusha (Sumerian: "angry man"), worshiped in Kish, was referred to as "Nergal of Kish".^[49] Emu, a god from Suhum located on the Euphrates near Mari, was also regarded as Nergal-like.^[20] He is directly identified as "Nergal of Sūhi" in the god list Anšar = Anum, and might be either the same deity as the poorly attested Āmûm (*a-mu*, *a-mu-um* or *a-mi-im*) known from Mari, or alternatively a local derivative of the sea god Yam, possibly introduced to this area by people migrating from further west; Ryan D. Winters notes in the latter case the association would presumably reflect Nergal's epithet lugala'abba,^[50] "king of the sea".^[51]

Nergal was on occasion associated with Ishtaran, and in this capacity he could be portrayed as a divine judge.^[25] However, as noted by Jeremiah Peterson, this association is unusual as Nergal was believed to act as a judge in locations where the sun sets in mythological texts, while on the account of Der's location Ishtaran was usually associated with the east, where the sun rises.^[26]

Parents and siblings

Enlil and Ninlil are attested as Nergal's parents in the overwhelming majority of sources, and while in the myth Nergal and Ereshkigal he addresses Ea as "father", this might merely be a honorific, as no other evidence for such an association exists.^[22]

In the myth Enlil and Ninlil Nergal's brothers are Ninazu (usually instead a brother of Ninmada), Nanna and Enbilulu.^[44] In a single text, a Neo-Babylonian letter from Marad, his brothers are instead Nabu and Lugal-Marada, the tutelary god of this city.^[52] However, this reference is most likely an example of captatio benevolentiae, a rhetorical device meant to secure the goodwill of the reader, rather than a statement about genealogy of deities.^[53]

Wives and children

Multiple goddesses are attested as Nergal's wife in various time periods and locations, but most of them are poorly defined in known documents.^[54] While Frans Wiggermann assumes that all of them were understood as goddesses connected to the earth,^[55] this assumption is not shared by other assyriologists.^{[56][57]}

Laṣ, first attested in an offering list from the Ur III period mentioning various deities from Kutha, was the goddess most commonly regarded as Nergal's spouse,^[55] especially from the Kassite and middle Assyrian periods onward.^[58] She received offerings from neo-Babylonian kings alongside Nergal in Kutha.^[59] Her name is assumed to have its origin in a Semitic language, but both its meaning and Laṣ' character are unknown.^[58] Based on the Weidner god list, Wilfred G. Lambert proposes that she was a medicine goddess.^[56] Couples consisting of a warrior god and a medicine goddess (such as Pabilsag and Ninisina or Zababa and Bau) were common in Mesopotamian mythology.^[60]

Another goddess often viewed as the wife of Nergal was Mammitum.^{[56][55]} Her name is homophonous with Mami, a goddess of birth known for example from the Nippur god list,^[61] leading some researchers to conflate them.^[55] However, it is generally accepted that they were separate deities,^[61] and they are kept apart in Mesopotamian god lists.^[57] Multiple meanings have been proposed for her name, including "oath" and "frost" (based on a similar Akkadian word, *mammû*, meaning "ice" or "frost").^[57] It is possible she was introduced in Kutha alongside Era.^[55] In at least one text, a description of a New Year ritual from Babylon during which the gods of Kish, Kutha and Borsippa were believed to visit Marduk (at the time not yet a major god), both she and Laš appear side by side as two separate goddesses.^[62] In the Nippur god list Laš occurs separately from Nergal,^[56] while Mammitum is present right behind him, which along with receiving offerings alongside him in Ekur in the same city in the Old Babylonian lead researches to conclude a spousal relation existed between them.^[63] She is also the wife of Erra/Nergal in the *Epic of Erra*.^[64] The Middle Babylonian god list *An = Anum* mentions both Laš and Mamitum, equating them with each other, and additionally calls the goddess Admu ("earth") Nergal's wife.^[55] She is otherwise only known from personal names and a single offering list from Old Babylonian Mari.^[65]

In third millennium BCE in Girsu, the spouse of Nergal (Meslamtaea) was Inanna's sukkal Ninshubur,^[66] otherwise seemingly viewed as unmarried.^[67] Attestations of Ninshubur as Nergal's sukkal are also known, though they are infrequent.^[55]

According to the myth *Nergal and Ereshkigal* he was married to Ereshkigal, the goddess of the dead.^[55] In god lists, however, they do not appear as husband and wife,^[20] though there is evidence that their entourages started to be combined as early as in the Ur III period.^[68] Ereshkigal's importance in Mesopotamia was largely limited to literary, rather than cultic, texts.^[55]

Nergal's daughter was Tadmushtum,^[55] a minor underworld goddess first attested in Drehem in the Ur III period.^[69] In an offering list she appears alongside Laš.^[69] Her name has Akkadian origin, possibly being derived from the words *dāmasu* ("to humble") or *dāmašu* (connected to the word "hidden"), though more distant cognates were also proposed, including Ge'ez *damasu* ("to abolish", "to destroy", or alternatively "to hide").^[69] It has also been proposed that a linguistic connection existed between her and the Ugaritic goddess Tadmish (or Dadmish, *ddmš* in the alphabetic script), who in some of the Ugaritic texts occurs alongside Resheph, though a copy of the Weidner god list from Ugarit however equates Tadmish with Shuzianna rather than Tadmushtum.^[69] In Neo-Babylonian lists of so-called "Divine Daughters", pairs of minor goddesses associated with specific temples likely viewed as daughters of their head gods, the "Daughters of E-Meslam" from Kutha are Dadamushda (Tadmushtum^[69]) and Belet-Ili.^[70]

While Frans Wiggermann^[55] and Piotr Michalowski^[71] additionally regard the god Shubula as Nergal's son, it is actually difficult to determine if such a relation existed between these two deities due to the poor preservation of the tablet of the god list *An = Anum* where Shubula's position in the pantheon was specified.^[63] Shubula might have been a son of Ishum rather than Nergal.^[63] He was an underworld god and is mostly known from personal names from the Ur III and Isin-Larsa periods.^[71] His name is most likely derived from the Akkadian word *abālu* ("dry").^[63] There is also clear evidence that he was regarded as Tadmushtum's husband.^{[69][71]}

Servants

Nergal's sukkal (attendant deity) was initially the god Ugur, possibly the personification of his sword.^[12] After the Old Babylonian period he was replaced in this role by Ishum.^[55] Sporadically Inanna's sukkal Ninshubur^[55] or Ereshkigal's sukkal Namtar were said to fulfill this role in the court of Nergal instead.^[72] His other courtiers included umum, so-called "day demons", who possibly represented points in time regarded as inauspicious; various minor deities associated with diseases; the minor warrior gods known as Sebitti; and a number of figures at times associated with Ereshkigal and gods such as Ninazu and Ningishzida as well, for example Namtar's wife Hushbisha, their daughter Hedimmeku, and the deified heroes Gilgamesh and Etana (understood as judges of the dead in this context).^[73] In some texts the connection between Gilgamesh in his underworld role and Nergal seems to be particularly close, with the hero being referred to as "Nergal's little brother".^[74]

Foreign deities

Resheph, a western god of war and plague, was already associated with Nergal in Ebla in the third millennium BCE, though the connection was not exclusive, as he also occurs in contexts which seem to indicate a relation with Ea (known in Ebla as Hayya) instead.^[77] Furthermore, the Eblaite scribes never used Nergal's name as a logographic representation of Resheph's.^[77] According to Alfonso Archi, it is difficult to further speculate about the nature of Resheph and his relation to other deities in Eblaite religion due to lack of information about his individual characteristics.^[77] The equivalence between Nergal and the same western gods is also known from Ugarit,^[20] where Resheph was additionally associated with the planet Mars, much like Nergal in Mesopotamia.^[78] Documents from Emar on the Euphrates mention a god called "Nergal of the KI.LAM" (seemingly a term designating a market), commonly identified with Resheph by researchers.^[79] Additionally, "Lugal-Rasap" functioned as a title of Nergal in Mesopotamia according to god lists.^[20]



It has been proposed that in Urkesh, a Hurrian city in northern Syria, Nergal's name was used to represent a local deity of Hurrian origin logographically.^[80] Two possible explanations have been proposed: Aštabi and Kumarbi.^[80] The former was a god of Eblaite origin,^[81] later associated with Ninurta rather than Nergal,^[82] while the latter was the Hurrian "father of the gods", usually associated with Enlil^[83] and Dagan.^[82] Gernot Wilhelm concludes in a recent publication that the identification of Nergal in the early Urkesh inscriptions as Kumarbi is not implausible, but at the same remains impossible to conclusively prove.^[84] He points out that it is also not impossible that Kumarbi only developed as a distinct deity at a later point in time.^[84] Alfonso Archi notes that it also possible the god meant is Nergal himself, as he is attested in other Hurrian sources as an actively worshiped deity.^[80]

In the Yazılıkaya sanctuary, Nergal's name was apparently applied to a so-called "sword god" depicted on one of the reliefs, most likely a presently unidentified local god of death.^[75]

The Elamite god Simut was frequently associated with Nergal, shared his association with the planet Mars and possibly his warlike character,^[33] though unlike his Mesopotamian counterpart he was not an underworld deity.^[85] In one case he appears alongside Laṣ.^[56] Wouter Henkelman additionally proposes that "Nergal of Hubshal (or Hubshan)" known from Assyrian sources was Simut.^[33] However, other identities of the deity identified by this moniker have been proposed as well, with Volkert Haas instead identifying him as Ugur.^[86] Yet another possibility is that Emu was the deity meant.^[20]

Based on lexical lists, two Kassite gods were identified with Nergal, Shugab and Dur.^[20]

In a Middle Assyrian god list, "Kammush" appears among the epithets of Nergal.^[87] According to Wilfred G. Lambert it cannot be established whether this indicates an equation with either the third millennium BCE god Kamish known from the Ebla texts, or the Iron Age god Chemosh from Moab.^[87]

In late, Hellenistic sources from Palmyra, Hatra and Tarsus Heracles served as the *interpretatio graeca* of Nergal.^[20] Heracles and Nergal were also both (at different points in time) associated with the Anatolian god Sandas.^[88]

Worship

Nergal's main cult center was Kutha, where his temple E-Meslam was located.^{[56][89]} Andrew R. George proposes the translation "house, warrior of the netherworld" for its name.^[90] A secondary name of the E-Meslam was E-ḥuškia, "fearsome house of the underworld".^[91] It is already attested in documents from the reign of Shulgi, don whose orders repair work was undertaken there.^[92] Later monarchs who also rebuilt it include Apil-Sin, Hammurabi, Ashurbanipal and Nebuchadnezzar II.^[90] It continued to function as late as in the Seleucid period.^[90] In addition to Kutha, Apak (Apiak)^[93] is well attested as a major cult center of Nergal,^[94] already attested in documents from the Sargonic period.^[93] Its precise location is not known, but it has been established that it was to the west of Marad.^[93] In this city, he could be referred to as Lugal-Apiak.^[93] While absent from Assyria in the Akkadian period, later he rose to the status of one of the most major gods there.^[17] Tarbishu was a particularly important Assyrian cult center of both Nergal and his wife Laṣ.^[58] His temple in this city, originally built by Sennacherib, also bore the name E-Meslam.^[95] A third temple named E-Meslam was located in Mashkan-shapir according to documents from the reign of Hammurabi, and it is possible it was dedicated to Nergal too.^[95] The veneration of Nergal in this city is well documented.^[17]



Fragments of a vessel dedicated to the temple of Nergal in Nineveh, showing Shalmaneser III kneeling before Nergal, currently held in the British Museum in London

Naram-Sin of Akkad was particularly devoted to Nergal, describing him as his "caretaker" (*rābisu*) and himself as a "comrade" (*rū'um*) of the god.^[5] At the same time, worship of Nergal in the southernmost cities of Mesopotamia was uncommon in the third millennium BCE, one exception being the presence of "Meslamtaea" in Lagash in Gudea's times.^[25] This changed during the reign of Shulgi, the second king from the Third Dynasty of Ur.^[25] Theological texts from this period indicate that Nergal was viewed as one of the major gods and as king of the underworld.^[96] Tonia Sharlach proposes that "Nergal of

TIN.TIR^{ki}" known from this period should be understood as the original tutelary god of Babylon.^[97] This interpretation is not supported by Andrew R. George, who notes that Nergal of TIN.TIR^{ki} is usually mentioned alongside Geshtinanna of KI.AN^{ki}, Ninhursag of KA.AM.RI^{ki}, and other deities worshiped in settlements located in the proximity of Umma, and on this basis he argues that this place name should be read phonetically as Tintir and refers to a small town administered directly from said city, and not to Babylon, whose name could be written logographically as TIN.TIR^{ki} in later periods.^[98] Other authors agree that the worship of Nergal is well attested in the area around Umma.^[17] George additionally points out that there is no indication that Babylon was regarded as a major cult center of Nergal in any time period.^[98]

In the Old Babylonian period Nergal continued to be worshiped as a god of the dead, as indicated for example by an elegy in which he appears alongside Ningishzida, Etana and Bidu, the gatekeeper of the underworld.^[99] He appears for the first time in documents from Uruk in this period.^[100] Anam of Uruk built a temple dedicated to him in nearby Uzurpara during the reign of Sîn-gâmil.^[101] It is possible that it bore the name E-dimgalanna, "house, great bond of heaven".^[101] Multiple temples of other deities (Sud, Aya and Nanna) bearing the same name are attested from other locations as well.^[101] Damiq-ilishu of Isin also built a temple of Nergal in this location, the E-kitušbidu, "house whose abode is pleasant".^[102] In Uruk itself, Nergal had a small sanctuary, possibly known as E-meteirra, "house worthy of the mighty one".^[103] A temple bearing this name was rebuilt by Kudur-Mabuk at one point.^[104] Nergal continued to be worshiped in Uruk as late as in early Achaemenid times, and he is mentioned in a source from the 29th year of the reign of Darius I.^[100] One late document mentions an oath taken in the presence of a priest (*sanga*) of Nergal during the sale of a prebend in which Nergal and Ereshkigal were invoked as divine witnesses.^[103]

Ancient lists of temples indicate that a temple of Nergal bearing the name E-šahulla, "house of the happy heart", was located in Mê-Turan.^[105] It was identified during excavations based on brick inscriptions and votive offerings dedicated to Nergal.^[106] It shared its name with a temple of Nanaya located in Kazallu.^[107] According to Andrew R. George, its name was most likely a reference to the occasional association between Nergal and joy.^[108] For example, a street named "the thoroughfare of Nergal of Joy" (Akkadian: *mūtaq Nergal ša hadē*) existed in Babylon, while the god list *An = Anum ša amēli* mentions "Nergal of jubilation" (^dU.GUR ša *rišati*).^[109]

In Lagaba, Nergal was worshiped under the name Išar-kidiššu.^[110] He could also be referred to as the tutelary god of Marad, though this city was chiefly associated with Lugal-Marada.^[53] Offerings or other forms of worship are also attested from Dilbat, Isin, Larsa, Nippur and Ur.^[111] It is possible that a temple of Nergal bearing the name E-erimhašhaš, "house which smites the wicked", which was at one point rebuilt by Rim-Sîn I, was located in the last of these cities.^[112] Temples dedicated to him also existed in both Isin and Nippur, but their names are not known.^[113]

In the Neo-Babylonian period Nergal was regarded as the third most important god in the Babylonian state pantheon after Marduk and Nabu.^[114] These three gods often appear together in royal inscriptions.^[89] Based on a cylinder of Neriglissar providing for E-Meslam in Kutha was regarded as a royal duty, similar as in the case of Marduk's and Nabu's main temples (respectively E-Sagil in Babylon and E-Zida in Borsippa).^[59] However, administrative documents indicate that Nergal and his wife Laš received fewer offerings than Marduk or Nabu.^[59] In some families it was seemingly customary to give the third son a theophoric name invoking Nergal, in accordance with his position in the state pantheon.^[115]

14th and 28th days of the month were regarded as sacred to Nergal,^[17]^[116] as was the number 14 itself, though it was also associated with Sakkan.^[17]

Unlike other Mesopotamian deities associated with the underworld (for example Ereshkigal), Nergal is well attested in theophoric names.^[117]

Hurrian reception

Nergal was also incorporated into the pantheon of the Hurrians,^[118] and it has been argued he was among the earliest foreign gods they have adopted.^[119] He is one of the gods considered to be "pan-Hurrian" by modern researchers, a category also encompassing the likes of Teshub, Shaushka or Nupatik.^[120] He is already attested in the inscriptions of two early Hurrian kings of Urkesh,^[119] Tish-atal and Atal-shen.^[80] An inscription of the former is the oldest known text in Hurrian:

Tish-atal, *endan* of Urkesh, has built a temple of Nergal. May the god Lubadaga protect this temple. Who destroys it, [him] may Lubadaga destroy. May the weather god not hear his prayer. May the mistress of Nagar, the sun-god, and the weather-god [...] him who destroys it.^[121]



Foundation tablet of Atal-shen, king of Urkesh and Nawar, Habur Bassin, circa 2000 BCE. Louvre Museum AO 5678.

The sun god and the weather god in this inscription are most likely Hurrian Shimige and Teshub.^[122]

Atal-shen referred to Nergal as the lord of a location known as Hawalum:^[119]

Of Nergal the lord of Hawalum, Atal-shen, the caring shepherd, the king of Urkesh and Nawar, the son of Sadar-mat the king, is the builder of the temple of Nergal, the one who overcomes opposition. Let Shamash and Ishtar destroy the seeds of whoever removes this tablet. Shaum-shen is the craftsman.^[123]

Giorgio Buccellati in his translation quoted above renders the names of the other deities invoked as Shamash and Ishtar, but according to Alfonso Archi the logograms ^dUTU and ^dINANNA should be read as Shimige and Shaushka in this case.^[80]

The worship of Nergal is also well attested in the eastern Hurrian settlements.^[119] These include Arrapha, referred to as the "City of the Gods", which was located near modern Kirkuk, as well as Hilamani, Tilla^[124] and Ulamme, where an *entu* priestess dedicated to him resided.^[125] In the last three of these cities, he was associated with a goddess referred to as "^dIŠTAR Ḫumella", the reading and meaning of whose name are unclear.^{[126][124]}

Mythology

Nergal and Ereshkigal

Two versions of the myth *Nergal and Ereshkigal* are known, one from a single Middle Babylonian copy found in Amarna, seemingly copied by a scribe whose native language was not Akkadian^[127] and another known from Sultantepe and from Uruk, with copies dated to the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian periods, respectively.^[128] The time of original composition is uncertain, with proposed dates varying from Old Babylonian to Middle Babylonian times.^[129] Whether a Sumerian original existed is unknown, and the surviving copies are all written in Akkadian.^[129]

After Nergal fails to pay respect to Ereshkigal's sukkal Namtar during a feast where he acts as a proxy of his mistress, who cannot leave the underworld to attend, she demands to have him sent to the underworld to answer for it. The El Amarna version states that she planned to kill Nergal, but this detail is absent from the other two copies.^[129]

Nergal descends to the underworld, but he's able to avoid many of its dangers thanks to advice given to him by Ea.^[129] However, he ignores one of them, and has sex with Ereshkigal. After six days he decides to leave while Ereshkigal is asleep. After noticing this she dispatches Namtar, and demands the other gods to convince Nergal to return again, threatening to open the gates of the underworld if she does not get what she asks for. Nergal is handed over to her again.^[130]

In the Amarna version, where Ereshkigal initially planned to kill Nergal, he defeats Namtar and prepares to kill Ereshkigal. To save herself, she suggests that they can get married and share the underworld.^[130] The other two known copies give the myth a happy ending: as noted by assyriologist Alhena Gadotti, "the two deities seem to reunite and live happily ever after", and the myth concludes with the line "they impetuously entered the bedchamber".^[130]

According to assyriologists such as Stephanie Dalley the purpose of this narrative was most likely to find a way to reconcile two different views of the underworld,^[127] one from the north centered on Nergal, and another from the south centered on Ereshkigal.^[131] Tikva Frymer-Kensky's attempt at interpreting it as evidence of "marginalization of goddesses"^[132] is regarded as erroneous.^[133] According to Alhena Gadotti the idea that Ereshkigal was supposed to share kingship over the underworld with her spouse is also known from the Old Babylonian composition *Gilgamesh, Enkidu and the Underworld*, in which Anu and Enlil give the underworld to her "as a dowry, her portion of the paternal estate's inheritance, which she controlled until she married".^[134] It is however impossible to tell which of the three gods regarded as Ereshkigal's husbands in various sources was implicitly meant to be the recipient of the dowry in this composition—Gugalanna, Nergal, or Ninazu.^[135]

Epic of Erra

The oldest surviving copies of the *Epic of Erra* come from the Assyrian city of Nineveh and have been dated to the seventh century BCE, but it has been argued that the composition is between 100 and 400 years older than that based on possible allusions to historical events which occurred during a period of

calamity which Babylonia experienced roughly between eleventh and eighth centuries BCE.^[136] A colophon indicates that it was compiled by a certain Kabti-ilani-Marduk, which constitutes an uncommon example of a direct statement of authorship of an ancient Mesopotamian text.^[137]

Nergal (the names Nergal and Erra are both used to refer to the protagonist of the narrative^[137]) desires to wage war to counter a state of inertia he found himself in.^[28] His weapons (the Sebitti^[55]) urge him to take action, while his sukkal Ishum, who according to Andrew R. George appears to play the role of Nergal's conscience in this myth,^[138] attempts to stop him.^[139] Nergal dismisses the latter, noting that it is necessary to regain respect in the eyes of humans, and embarks on a campaign.^[140]

His first goal is Babylon. Through trickery he manages to convince Marduk (portrayed as a ruler past his prime, rather than as a dynamic hero, in contrast with other compositions^[141]) to leave his temple. However, Marduk returns too soon for Nergal to successfully start his campaign, and as a result in a long speech he promises to give other gods a reason to remember him. As a result of his declaration (or perhaps because of Marduk's temporary absence), the world seemingly finds itself in a state of cosmic chaos.^[142]

Ishum once again attempts to convince Nergal to stop, but his pleading does not accomplish its goal. Nergal's acts keep escalating and soon Marduk is forced to leave his dwelling again, fully leaving the world at Nergal's mercy. A number of graphic descriptions of the horrors of war focused on nameless humans suffering because of Nergal's reign of terror follow. This is still not enough, and he declares his next goal is to destroy the remaining voices of moderation, and the cosmic order as a whole.^[143]

However, Ishum eventually manages to bring an end to the bloodshed. He does so by waging a war himself, targeting the inhabitants of Mount Sharshar, seemingly a site associated with the origin of the aforementioned period of chaos in the history of late second and early first millennium BCE Babylonia. Ishum's war is described in very different terms to Nergal's, and with its end the period of instability comes to a close.^[144] Nergal is seemingly content with the actions of his sukkal and with hearing the other gods acknowledge the power of his rage. The narrative ends with Nergal instructing Ishum to spread the tale of his rampage, but also to make it clear that only thanks to his calming presence the world was spared.^[145]

Other myths

A poorly preserved Middle Assyrian composition, regarded as similar to the Labbu myth, seemingly describes a battle between Nergal (possibly acting on behalf of his father Enlil or the sky god Anu) and a monstrous serpent born in the sea.^[146]

The myth Enmesharra's Defeat, only known from a single, heavily damaged copy from the Seleucid or Parthian period, casts Nergal as the warden of the eponymous antagonist and his seven sons, the Sebitti,^[147] presumably imprisoned in the underworld.^[148] In the surviving fragments Enmesharra unsuccessfully pleads with him to be released to avoid being put to death for his crimes at the orders of Marduk.^[147] In the aftermath of the ordeal, the universe is reorganized and Marduk shares lordship over it, which seemingly originally belonged to Anu in this composition, with Nergal and Nabu.^[149] Wilfred G. Lambert notes these gods were the 3 most prominent deities in the neo-Babylonian state pantheon.^[62] Curiously, Erra makes a brief appearance as a god distinct from Nergal, with his former sphere of influence reassigned to the latter.^[62]

Andrew R. George proposes that a myth presently unknown from textual records dealt with Nergal's combat with a one-eyed monster, the *igitelû*.^[150] He notes that Akkadian omen texts from Susa and from the Sealand archives appears to indicate that one-eyed creatures were known as *igidalu*, *igidaru* or *igitelû*, possibly a loanword from Sumerian *igi.dili* ("one eye"),^[151] and that the only god associated with them was Nergal, who in one such omen texts is identified as the slayer of an *igitelû*.^[150] There is also evidence that birth of one-eyed animals was regarded as an omen connected to Nergal.^[150] He proposes that a relief originally excavated in Khafajah (ancient Tubub) depicting a god stabbing a one-eyed monster with rays of light emanating from his head might be a pictorial representation of this hypothetical myth,^[151] though other interpretations have been proposed too, including Marduk killing Tiamat and Ninurta killing Asag.^[152] However, neither of these found widespread support, and art historian Anthony Green in particular showed skepticism regarding them, noting art might preserve myths not known from textual record.^[152] Wilfred G. Lambert suggested that the cyclops in mention might instead be a depiction of Enmesharra, based on his description as a luminous deity in Enmesharra's Defeat.^[148]

Later relevance

Nergal is mentioned in the Book of Kings as the deity of the city of Cuth (Kutha): "And the men of Babylon made Succoth-benoth, and the men of Cuth made Nergal" (2 Kings, 17:30). According to the rabbinic tradition, he was associated with the image of a foot or a rooster.^[153]

In Mandaean cosmology, the name for Mars is *Nirig* (ܢܵܪିܵ), a derivative of Nergal, which is a part of a recurrent pattern of Mandaean names of celestial bodies being derived from names of Mesopotamian deities.^[154]

Victorian lexicographer E. Cobham Brewer asserted that the name of Nergal, who he identified as "the most common idol of ancient Phoenicians, Indians and Persians", meant "dunghill cock".^[155] This translation is incorrect in the light of modern research, as Nergal's name most likely was understood as "Lord of the big city",^[2] his emblematic animals were bulls and lions,^[37] while chickens were unknown in Mesopotamia prior to the ninth century BCE based on archeological data, and left behind no trace in cuneiform sources.^[156]

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Nisaba

Nisaba was the Mesopotamian goddess of writing and grain. She is one of the oldest Sumerian deities attested in writing,^[7] and remained prominent through many periods of Mesopotamian history. She was commonly worshiped by scribes, and numerous Sumerian texts end with the doxology "praise to Nisaba" as a result. She declined after the Old Babylonian period due to the rise of the new scribe god, Nabu, though she did not fully vanish from Mesopotamian religion and attestations from as late as the neo-Babylonian period are known.

In myths and god lists, she was a part of the circle of Enlil, alongside her husband Haya. In the myth *Enlil and Sud* she plays an important role due to being the mother of the eponymous deity. Enlil seeks her permission to marry Sud with the help of his sukkal (attendant deity) Nuska. Both this narrative and other sources attest that she and her daughter were regarded as very close.

Outside Mesopotamia her name was used to logographically represent these of other gods, not necessarily similar to her in character, including Syrian Dagan, Hurrian Kumarbi and Hittite Halki.

Name

The origin of Nisaba's name is unknown.^[7] The widely accepted reading, Nisaba, has been confirmed by Akkadian lexical texts spelling the name syllabically as *ni-sa-ba*.^[8] The reading Nidaba, originally favored by some Assyriologists, for example Miguel Civil, now regarded as implausible, as the evidence is very scant, and might simply constitute recurring scribal errors.^[9] The name Nisaba was originally written using a combination of the cuneiform sign > (NAGA), called NAGA, accompanied by the dingir, * (sheaf), so-called "divine determinative" preceding names of deities.^[1] The NAGA sign is assumed to be a pictogram representing a plant, possibly later interpreted as a sheaf of

Nisaba

Goddess of writing, accounting, surveying and grain^[1]



Fragment of a vase, likely from Girsu, with a depiction of a goddess often identified as Nisaba in modern scholarship^[2]

Other names Nanibgal, Nunbarshegunu^[3]

Affiliation The court of Enlil

Major cult center Eresh, later Nippur^[4]

Symbol lapis lazuli tablet,^[3] golden stylus^[5]

Genealogy

Parents Urash and Anu

Urash and Ea (identified with Irhan)

Enlil (and an unknown mother)

Consort Haya^[6]

Children Sud (Ninlil)

Equivalents

Babylonian Nabu

barley.^[1] The same sign, though with a different determinative added, was also used to write the name of Nisaba's main cult center, Eresh.^[4] While the true etymology of Nisaba's name is generally considered impossible to determine,^[7] Wilfred G. Lambert proposed that it was derived from a hypothetical form *nin.sab(a).ak*, "Lady of Saba," but as no such a place name is attested in Sumerian sources this is regarded as implausible.^[4] Another proposal explains it as *nin-še-ba-ak*, "lady of grain rations."^[4]

It has been proposed that a variant form of the name, Nišpa, was used in Mari,^[10] perhaps as a syllabic rather than logographic spelling.^[11] However, it has also been argued that this deity, attested only in a single Amorite personal name, Ḫabdu-Nišpa, instead corresponds to Nišba rather than Nisaba.^[11] Nišba was most likely a deified mountain, and appears in inscriptions of Iddin-Sin of Simurrum and Anubanini of Lullubum.^[12] It has also been argued that the mountain was regarded as holy by the Gutians.^[12] Furthermore, a certain KA-Nišba was the ruler of Simurrum during the reign of the Gutian king Erridupizir.^[12] The mountain corresponding to Nišba is assumed to lie northeast of modern Sulaymaniyah, though there is no agreement which landmark bore this name.^[12]

An alternate name of Nisaba was Nanibgal (Sumerian:  *DAN.NAGA*; later  *DAN.ŠE.NAGA*),^[13] though this name also functioned as a name of a distinct goddess.^[13] Yet another name applied to her was Nunbarshegunu.^[14]

Epithets

Nisaba's epithets include "lady of wisdom," "professor of great wisdom" (*geštu₂ diri tuku-e*)^[15] "unsurpassed overseer" (*ugulu-nu-dirī*; *ugula* is an office known for example from Eshnunna, conventionally translated as "overseer"),^[16] and "opener of the mouth of the great gods."^[17] Names of a number of distinct goddesses could also serve as epithets of Nisaba, including Aruru,^[18] Ezina-Kusu and Kusu (in this context meaning "goddess filled with purity"), without necessarily implying identification of the deities with each other.^[19]

Functions

Piotr Michalowski describes Nisaba as "the goddess of grain and the scribal arts in the widest sense of this word, including writing, accounting and surveying."^[1] She was also associated with literature and songs.^[20] It is commonly assumed that she was an agricultural deity in origin, but started to be associated with writing after its invention.^[1] However, it is agreed that in Sumerian texts the latter association is regarded as primary.^[1] In the texts forming the curriculum of scribal schools she is the deity most commonly associated with literacy, numeracy and related implements.^[21]

Due to her primary function Wilfred G. Lambert regarded her gender as unusual, noting that "female scribes were very rare" in historical records.^[22] However, as proven by Eleanor Robson, it was not uncommon for goddesses to be regarded as literate in Sumerian mythology, and individual goddesses are regarded as such twice as often as individual gods in texts from the Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature.^[23] Various compositions include references to many other goddesses writing, using measuring tools or performing other tasks associated with literacy and numeracy, including Inanna, Manungal, Geshtinanna, Ninisina,^[24] Ninshubur^[25] (counted by Robson as male, but usually regarded as primarily female^[26]) and even a minor *lamma* goddess serving Bau.^[24]

As a goddess of wisdom Nisaba was believed to bestow it upon rulers,^[27] as attested in compositions associated with Lipit-Ishtar and Enlil-bani.^[28] Scribes' right to teach others their craft was likewise believed to be bestowed upon them by her.^[29]

The *Curse of Agade* lists her among the most prominent deities, alongside Sin, Enki, Inanna, Ninurta, Ishkur and Nuska.^[30] This grouping is regarded as unusual by researchers.^[20]

In late texts Nisaba commonly appears simply as the deification of grain,^[31] though there are exceptions. A prayer known from a compilation of texts about goddesses from neo-Assyrian Kalhu still refers to her as the "queen of wisdom."^[32] It also appears that in the first millennium BCE she acquired an association with exorcisms.^[33]

Iconography

It has been proposed that some depictions of so-called "vegetation deities" known from the art of the Early Dynastic and Akkadian periods are representations of Nisaba.^{[34][35]} For example, it is commonly assumed that the goddess with stalks of vegetation decorating her crown, depicted on a fragment of a stone vase, likely from Girsu (presently in the Pergamon Museum), is Nisaba.^[2] Kathleen R. Maxwell-Hyslop points out that she is however not mentioned in the accompanying inscription, and other identifications are possible, including Bau.^[2]

Association with other deities

As a grain deity, Nisaba was sometimes regarded as synonymous with the goddess Ashnan, though most primary sources, including god lists and offering lists, present them as fully separate.^[4] It has also been proposed that she was the same goddess as Ezina and Kusu, but all three of them appear separately in offering lists from Lagash.^[19] Syncretic associations possibly present in ancient scholarship did not necessarily translate into cultic practice.^[17]

The goddess Ninimma, regarded as the personal scribe of Enlil,^[36] was sometimes associated with^[37] and possibly acquired some of the characteristics of Nisaba^[36] due to fulfilling a similar role in the pantheon of Nippur.^[38] In god lists she often follows the latter and her spouse.^[36]

Family and court

Nisaba's husband was Haia,^[4] possibly regarded as a god of seals.^[39] He was a deity of relatively low rank.^[15] Compared to other divine couples (Shamash and Aya, Ishkur and Shala, Ninsianna and Kabta, Enki and Damkina, Lugalbanda and Ninsun and others) they are invoked together extremely rarely in seal inscriptions, with only one example presently known.^[40] In one explanatory text, Haya is described as "Nisaba of prosperity" (*Nisaba ša mašrē*).^[41]

Their daughter was Sud, the city goddess of Shuruppak, in later periods fully conflated with Enlil's wife Ninlil.^[42]

According to the god list An = Anum, Nisaba had two sukkals (attendant deities), Ungasaga and Hamunana.^[3]

In god lists, she usually appears in the section dedicated to relatives and servants of Enlil.^[3]

Multiple traditions regarding Nisaba's origin are known,^[4] and her parentage is not regarded as fixed in ancient tradition.^[43] She was described either as the firstborn daughter of Enlil,^[4] as his mother in law,^[4] or possibly as his twin sister.^[44] Her mother is usually said to be Urash.^[4] In a first millennium BCE text from Kalhu, which is also the source attesting that she could be viewed as Enlil's twin, her father is Ea,^[45] equated with Irhan, in this context understood as a cosmic river, "father of the gods of the universe."^[46] Elsewhere Irhan was often associated with Ishtaran.^[47] Wilfred G. Lambert notes that the text "seems to imply a desire not to have Anu as Nisaba's father,"^[47] though attestations of the sky god in this role are nonetheless known from other sources.^{[43][44]}

Nisaba and Nabu

Nabu gradually replaced Nisaba as a deity of writing^[31] in what has been described by Julia M. Asher-Greve as "the most prominent case of a power transferred to a god from a goddess" in Mesopotamian history.^[15] However, the process was complex and gradual. In the Old Babylonian and early Kassite periods Nabu's cult was only popular in central Mesopotamia (Babylon, Sippar, Kish, Dilbat, Lagaba), had a limited extent in peripheral areas (Susa in Elam, Mari in Syria) and there is little to no evidence of it from cities such as Ur and Nippur.^[48] Nabu has relatively few epithets in god lists from the second millennium BCE as well.^[49]

In late bronze age Ugarit Nisaba and Nabu coexisted, and colophons of texts reveal that a number of scribes described themselves as "servant of Nabu and Nisaba."^[48] Similar evidence is also known from Emar.^[31]

Andrew R. George assumes the reason why Nabu replaced Nisaba, while other deities associated with writing did not, was due to the generalized character of his connection to this art.^[50] He points out that while Ninimma and Ninurta were also associated with writing, the former occupied a different niche from Nisaba (which he compares to them functioning as a librarian and as a scribe or scholar, respectively), while the latter was only a divine scribe as an extension of his role as the archetypal good son helping his elderly father with his various duties (in this case - writing down Enlil's judgments on the Tablet of Destinies).^[50]

^dNISABA as logographic writing of other deities' names

In some documents from Syrian cities, for example Halab, the logogram ^dNISABA designates the god Dagan,^[51] while in Hurrian texts - Kumarbi.^[52] According to Alfonso Archi, both of these phenomena have the same source.^[52] In cities such as Ugarit, Dagan's name was homophonous with the word for grain (*dgn* in alphabetic Ugaritic texts), and the logographic writing of his and Kumarbi's names as ^dNISABA was likely a form of wordplay popular among scribes, relying on the fact that Nisaba's name could simply be understood as "grain" too.^[53] In theological texts, both Kumarbi and Dagan were compared to each other and Enlil rather than Nisaba due to all three of them playing the role of "father of gods" in their respective pantheons.^[54]

The name of the Hittite grain goddess Halki could be represented by the logogram ^dNISABA too.^[55]

Worship

Nisaba is one of the tutelary goddesses of specific cities already attested in the most ancient written sources, a status shared with Ezina, Nanshe, Inanna of Uruk and Inanna of Zabalam.^[7] Eresh was her original cult center,^[4] and there is evidence it was a city of considerable importance in the Early Dynastic times, including a reference to a possible king (lugal).^[4] Its existence is attested from between Uruk IV and Old Babylonian periods, though only a single reference, a year name of Sin-Muballit of Babylon, postdates the Ur III period.^[4] It is therefore assumed that it gradually declined, and that as a result its deities were transferred to Nippur.^[4]

It is assumed that Nisaba acquired broader significance outside her city in the Early Dynastic period already.^[56] She was worshiped in Shuruppak,^[57] Urukagina of Lagash left behind inscriptions in which he refers to her,^[57] while Lugalzagesi of Umma considered her his personal tutelary deity, and described himself as her high priest (lu-mah).^[20] She is also one of the goddesses mentioned in inscriptions of Naram-Sin of Akkad.^[58]

Temples of Nisaba attested in textual sources include Emulmul ("house of stars") in Eresh^[59] and Edubbagula ("large store house") in the Girsu-Lagash area.^[60] In Nippur she was worshiped in the temple of her daughter Ninlil alongside Nintinugga, Ninhursag and Nanna.^[61] A festival of Nisaba is also attested from Umma.^{[20][62]} The term "house of wisdom of Nisaba" is known from many texts, and Andrew R. George assumes that at least two shrines of Nisaba, one in Eridu and another in Uruk bore such a name.^[63] However, it is also possible this term functioned as a generic designation of scribal institutions.^[20]

In letters from the Old Babylonian period, Nisaba appears less often than the most popular goddesses (Ishtar, Ninsianna, Aya, Annunitum, Sarpanit, Gula) but more commonly than Ninlil or Nanshe.^[64] Old Assyrian evidence includes three references to Nisaba as a family deity.^[65] A reference to a prayer "before Ashur and Nisaba" is known from the same period and might be another attestation of her as a tutelary deity of a specific individual or family, like other similar prayers to Ashur and a second deity.^[66] Later she continued to be worshiped in the territories of the First Sealand dynasty.^[67]

In later periods Nisaba did not entirely cease to be an object of worship, though she largely existed "in the shadow of Nabu".^[68] She nonetheless acquired a new role one of the goddesses most commonly invoked in exorcisms, next to Kusu and Ningirima.^[69] Additionally, as late as during the reign of Marduk-apla-iddina I references were made to "wisdom of Nabu and Nisaba."^[70]



Stele Ur-Nanshe from Lagash. The goddess Nisaba appears on the frontal aspect. 26th century BCE. Iraq Museum, Baghdad

While references to Nisaba are known from texts from Ebla, Emar, Ugarit and Mari, it is uncertain whether she had an active, official cult anywhere outside Babylonia with the exception of the last of the aforementioned cities,^[3] where she is present on offering lists most likely dated to the reign of Yahdun-Lim or earlier.^[20]

As the choice of a personal god was often based on profession,^[71] Nisaba was a popular object of devotion among scribes.^[72] As an extension of this phenomenon, many Sumerian texts end with the formula "praise Nisaba," and some invoke her in the beginning too.^[20] Most cylinder seals of scribes from Lagash show a female deity, though it is uncertain if she can be always identified as Nisaba.^[72] Other deities commonly attested in personal names of members of this profession include Ninimma (in the Ur III and Old Babylonian periods)^[73] and Nabu (in the first millennium BCE).^[74]

Mythology

In mythological texts Nisaba is portrayed as the scribe and accountant of the gods.^[20] Many compositions mention her literacy, with over a half of the references to literacy and numeracy of goddesses in the texts included in the Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature referring to her according to a survey conducted by Eleanor Robson.^[24] In the myth *Enki and the World Order*, she is entrusted by Enki with measuring the land and with overseeing the harvest.^[75] In the *Kesh Temple Hymn*, she is tasked with writing down Enlil's words of praise for the city of Kesh.^[76] In this text the process of writing down words on a tablet is described in poetic terms as comparable to making a necklace out of individual beads.^[76]

According to various texts Nisaba was believed to be equipped with a lapis lazuli tablet inscribed with "heavenly writing," a term related to poetic comparisons between cuneiform signs and stars.^[77] It has also been suggested that it might be connected to the well attested practice of consulting the constellations to determine the best time for cultivation of specific crops.^[78]

Nisaba is also mentioned in the myth *Enmerkar and Ensuhgirana*, in which Sagburu, a native of Eresh^[79] described as "wise woman" mockingly notes that the antagonist, Urgirinuna from Hamazi, was foolish to think he could engage in sorcery in Nisaba's city.^[61] The passage hints at a close bond between Nisaba and her daughter, as Eresh is called "the beloved city of Ninlil."^[61] While references to goddesses breastfeeding are very rare in Mesopotamian literature, one of the few known exceptions refers to Nisaba and Sud.^[80]

Nisaba plays a central role in the myth *Enlil and Sud*.^{[81][14]} Much like in other sources, she is represented as a goddess of wisdom and mother of Sud.^[14] Enlil, represented unusually as a young bachelor, seeks to gain her permission to marry her daughter.^[79] Enlil's sukkal Nuska negotiates with her on his behalf.^[82] Nisaba, pleased with the latter's conduct and the gifts he brought for her and Sud, agrees to the proposal,^[83] and bestows various blessings on her daughter.^[84]

A late Akkadian composition known from Assur and Sultantepe describes a debate between Nisaba and personified wheat.^[31] In this text she is called the "Mistress of the underworld," an otherwise unknown association.^[31]

Unicode for the cuneiform sign NAGA

Unicode 5.0 encodes the NAGA sign at U+12240 𒀭 (Borger 2003 nr. 293). AN.NAGA is read as NANIBGAL, and AN.ŠE.NAGA as NÁNIBGAL. NAGA is read as NÍDABA or NÍSABA, and ŠE.NAGA as NIDABA or NISABA.

The inverted (turned upside down) variant is at U+12241 𒀭 (TEME), and the combination of these, that is the calligraphic arrangement NAGA-(inverted NAGA), read as DALHAMUN₇ "whirlwind", at U+12243 𒀭^𒀭. DALHAMUN₅ is the arrangement AN.NAGA-(inverted AN.NAGA), and DALHAMUN₄ is the arrangement of four instances of AN.NAGA in the shape of a cross.

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External links

- Enlil and Sud (<https://web.archive.org/web/20061230152532/http://www-etcsl.orient.ox.ac.uk/section1/tr122.htm>)
- A Hymn to Nisaba (<https://web.archive.org/web/20060925023315/http://www-etcsl.orient.ox.ac.uk/section4/tr4161.htm>)
- Senhora tingida como as estrelas celestes (Hino a Nisaba) (<https://www.notadotradutor.com/revista20.html>) (Portuguese translation of a hymn to Nisaba, by G. Lentz)



Ninazu

Ninazu (Sumerian: *𒂗𒈠; [D]NIN.A.SU] "lord healer"^[2]) was a Mesopotamian god of the underworld. He was also associated with snakes and vegetation, and with time acquired the character of a warrior god. He was frequently associated with Ereshkigal, either as a son, husband, or simply a member the same category of underworld deities.

His original cult centers were Enegi and Eshnunna, though in the later city he was gradually replaced by a similar god, Tishpak. His cult declined after the Old Babylonian period, though in the city of Ur, where it was introduced from Enegi, he retained a number of worshipers even after the fall of the last Mesopotamian empires, in the Achaemenid period.

Character and iconography

According to Julia M. Asher-Greve, Ninazu was initially considered a "high-ranking local god", similar in rank to Ningirsu.^[3] His name has Sumerian origin and can be translated as "lord healer", though he was rarely associated with medicine.^[2] It is nonetheless agreed that he could be considered a healing deity.^[4] He was regarded as the "king of the snakes" and as such was invoked in incantations against snakebite.^[5] Many of such texts were written in Elamite and Hurrian, rather than in Sumerian or Akkadian, even though they originated in Enegi.^{[6][7]} He was also associated with vegetation and agriculture.^[5]

It is possible that Ninazu was the oldest Sumerian god of the netherworld, and that he was only overshadowed by Ereshkigal and Nergal in later periods.^[8] He was referred to as a "steward of the great earth", "great earth" being a euphemism for the underworld, or as "lord of the underworld", though he shared this epithet shared with many deities, including his son Ningishzida, Nergal, Nirah and the primordial deity Enmesharra.^[9]

Ninazu was also regarded as a warrior deity, especially in Eshnunna.^[10] He was both described and possibly depicted as armed with two maces.^[9] While no artistic representations of him have been identified with certainty,^[11] his symbols mentioned in textual sources include snakes and the "snake-dragon" mushussu.^[9] In one of the Early Dynastic *Zame Hymns* he is also compared to a black dog, known from later Mesopotamian incantations and compendiums of omens as a symbol of death.^[12] "The Elam star", one of the Mesopotamian names of the planet Mars, was associated with Ninazu in astronomical texts.^[13]

Ninazu	
God of the underworld, snakes and vegetation	
Major cult center	Enegi, originally also Eshnunna
Symbol	snake
Genealogy	
Parents	Ereshkigal and Gugalanna Enlil and Ninlil Nanna unnamed deities referred to as "mighty cow" and "untamable bull"
Consort	Ningirida ^[1]
Children	Ningishzida two daughters Nintinugga
Equivalents	
Eshnunnean	Tishpak

Associations with other deities

Multiple traditions regarding Ninazu's parentage existed. He was regarded either as a son of Ereshkigal and a "Great Lord" (possibly to be identified with Gugalanna, known from the god list An = Anum and from the myth *Inanna's Descent to the Nether World*), who might have been analogous to anonymous deities described as "mighty cow" and "untamable bull" attested as his parents elsewhere, of Enlil and Ninlil (an association originating in Eshnunna but present also in other sources, including the myth *Enlil and Ninlil*), or of Suen.^[10] Frans Wiggermann assumes that the genealogies where Ereshkigal is listed as his mother represent the original tradition, and making Ninazu a son of Enlil and Ninlil was the result of absorption of some features of Nergal.^[10] In an Early Dynastic text from Shuruppak the god of Enegi, presumably Ninazu, is already referred to as "Nergal of Enegi".^[12] The existence of a tradition in which Gula was Ninazu's mother, occasionally proposed in scholarship, should be considered baseless according to Andrew R. George.^[14]

The god Ninmada, called the "snake charmer of An," was consistently regarded as Ninazu's brother.^[10] In the myth *How grain came to Sumer* the brothers gift grain and flax to mankind.^[15] In the myth Enlil and Ninlil Ninazu's brothers are instead Nanna, Nergal and Enbilulu,^[10] though he retains a connection with agriculture there nonetheless.^[16]

In most sources the goddess Ningirida is listed as Ninazu's wife (a relation first attested in the Ur III period) but less commonly he could be the husband of Ukulla (normally the wife of Tishpak), and there are also instances where Ereshkigal is referred to as his wife rather than mother.^[7] The children of Ninazu and Ningirida were the god Ningishzida and his two sisters, in a single incantation he is also addressed as the father of the healing goddess Nintinugga.^{[7][1]} The names of the two daughters associated with Ningishzida vary between sources, with the best attested being Amashilama, known from a myth about the death of this god.^[1]

Ninazu has no sukkal (attendant deity) in the major god lists, but it is possible that the viper god Ippu (or Ipahum), later known as the sukkal of Ningishzida, originally was a courtier of his father instead.^[7] According to Irene Sibbing-Plantholt, he might be one and the same as the vegetation god Abu best known from the myth Enki and Ninhursag.^[17]

In the god list An = Anum Ninazu appears in a sequence including Ereshkigal, Ningishzida, Tishpak, Inshushinak and Ishtaran.^[18] Based on their association in god lists and similar attributes, Wiggermann proposes that these gods shared a similar origin somewhere in the "trans-Tigridian" area on the border between Mesopotamian and Elamite spheres of cultural influence.^[19]

A single god list from the first millennium BCE equates Ninazu with Ninurta, and his spouse Ningirida with Gula.^[20] An association between him and the latter goddess is also attested in the Gula Hymn of Bullutsa-rabi,^[20] composed at some point between 1400 BCE and 700 BCE (between the Kassite and Neo-Babylonian period).^[21] This text is considered an aretalogy^[22] and it might reflect the development of a form of henotheism in late theological traditions.^[23] As noted by Irene Sibbing-Plantholt, while it has been argued in the past that "this interpretation of Ninazu as a spouse of Gula goes back to the merge of Ninazu with Ninurta/Ningirsu (as son of Enlil and Ninlil), (...) this connection may also have been established through the link between (U)kulla(b), Ninazu's spouse, and Gula."^[20] Frans Wiggermann

notes that the hymn presents an "aberrant," otherwise unknown, genealogy of Ninazu, calling him "offspring of Mami," which according to him might entirely depend on implicit identification with Ninurta in this context.^[10] This god is addressed as "Mami's son" in the Anzû Myth (tablet II).^[24]

Outside Mesopotamia

A trilingual god list from Ugarit explains Ninazu as *ši-ru-hi* (meaning unknown) in the Hurrian column and possibly as *il mutema* ("god of death") in Ugaritic.^[12]

Worship

Ninazu's primary cult center was Enegi, a city located between Ur and Uruk.^[25] The association is first attested in an Early Dynastic document from Lagash.^[10] His main temple in that city was Egidda, "sealed house" or "storehouse".^[12] Offerings made to him in his cult center are mentioned in tablets from Puzrish-Dagan.^[26] Much like Ninazu himself, Enegi was associated with the underworld, and could be described as "pipe of Ereshkigal's quay" in literary texts in reference to a type of implement used in funerary libations.^[27] The cults of Enegi were likely influenced by Uruk, as in addition to Ninazu, typical Urukean deities like the messenger goddess Ninshubur, the demigod Gilgamesh and his mother Ninsun were venerated in this city.^[12]

A second cult center of Ninazu was Eshnunna, where his temple was the Esikil, "pure house".^[12] Frans Wiggermann maintains that the Ninazu of Eshnunna was identical with the Ninazu of Enegi.^[10] However, according to Irene Sibbing-Plantholt, it is uncertain if the latter was indeed identical, and thus a southern deity imported to a northern city, a different deity sharing the same name, or an epithet of a separate deity identical with the name of the god of Enegi.^[28] Starting in the Akkadian period, Ninazu apparently competed with the god Tishpak in Eshnunna, and ceased to be mentioned in documents from it altogether after Hammurabi's conquest.^[12] It is usually presumed that the later had foreign origin, and he might have been introduced to this city as early as in the late fourth and early third millennium BCE.^[28] While similar in character, Ninazu and Tishpak were not fully conflated, and unlike Inanna and Ishtar or Enki and Ea were kept apart in god lists.^{[12][29]}

In Lagash, Ninazu was one of the deities who were part of the official pantheon during the reign of Urukagina,^[30] but he is otherwise not attested there in the Early Dynastic period,^[31] with the exception of some theophoric personal names.^[32] Later Gudea built a temple dedicated to him, but its precise location and ceremonial name are not known.^[33]

From Enegi, Ninazu was also introduced to Ur, where his cult survived until late periods.^[12] A temple dedicated to him in this city was also named Egidda,^[30] and it has been proposed that it might have been where the center of his cult was relocated after the decline of Enegi suggested by its absence from records from the first millennium BCE.^[34] Other cities from which offerings to him are attested are Nippur, Umma^[16] and Adab.^[35] In the first millennium BCE, he was also venerated in Assur.^[12] Furthermore, the name of a temple dedicated to him, Ekurmaḥ, "house, exalted mountain," is known from the *Epic of Anzû*, but its location is unknown.^[36]

The last available evidence for cult of Ninazu are theophoric personal names from Ur invoking him, present in sources from the period of Persian rule over Mesopotamia.^{[30][16]} According to Paul-Alain Beaulieu, he must have remained a relatively popular deity in Ur.^[37] A peculiarity associated with the late worship of Ninazu in Ur is the use of both the basic form of his name and its Emesal equivalent, Umunazu, in personal names, with the latter being slightly more common - 25 names with Ninazu and 30 with Umunazu are presently known.^[38] It is possible that this situation was influenced by the role played by lamentation priests, who traditionally memorized texts written in the Emesal dialect, in the survival of Ninazu's cult.^[39] Other underworld deities, like his son Ningishzida, the deified snake Nirah and the incantation goddess Ningirima, also retained a degree of popularity, likely due to being envisioned as members of Ninazu's court.^[40]

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External links

- How grain came to Sumer (<https://etcsle.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/tr176.htm>) in the Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature
- Enlil and Ninlil (<https://etcsle.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/tr121.htm>) in the Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature

Retrieved from "<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Ninazu&oldid=1260683317>"



Ninegal

Ninegal (also spelled **Ninegalla**^[1]) or **Belat Ekalli** (**Belet-ekalli**) was a Mesopotamian goddess associated with palaces. Both her Sumerian and Akkadian name mean "lady of the palace."^[2]

From Mesopotamia the worship of Ninegal spread to Elam in the east and to Syria and the Hittite Empire in the west. She was particularly venerated in Mari and Qatna, and due to her presence in the pantheon of ancient Syria she was also incorporated into Hurrian religion. The Hurrians transcribed her name as Pentikalli (Pendigalli).

Especially in literary works, Ninegal could function as an epithet of Inanna, and they could be also associated with each other in other contexts. However, it is now generally assumed that they were distinct deities in origin. Additionally, Ninegal could be associated with the goddess of prisons, Nungal.

Character

While in the past it has been proposed that Ninegal was a form of Inanna in origin, or, as argued by Thorkild Jacobsen, that the name designated Inanna in a proposed hieros gamos ceremony, today it is considered more plausible that she originally developed as a distinct minor goddess, who served as the tutelary deity of palaces of kings and governors, and whose role was to guarantee their sovereignty.^[2] She only started to function as an epithet in literary works in the second and first millennia BCE.^[3] It has been pointed out that various cultic objects associated with Ninegal according to administrative texts, such as jewelry, are not identical with those dedicated to Inanna.^[4] The oldest source identifying Ninegal with Inanna might be a building inscription from the Isin-Larsa period which refers to her as a daughter of Sin.^[4] In god lists Ninegal usually appears near groupings of Inanna manifestations, though in the Nippur god list she and Ninsianna are placed together in a different section.^[5]

Belat Ekalli/Ninegal could be implored to act as an intermediary between a praying worshiper and her husband Urash, similar to other divine wives (Aya, Shala) in the case of their respective husbands^[6] or the attendant goddess Ninshubur in the case of Inanna.^[7]

Ninegal	
Goddess of palaces	
Other names	Belet Ekalli, Pentikalli
Major cult center	<u>Ur</u> , <u>Dilbat</u> , <u>Mari</u> , <u>Qatna</u>
Genealogy	
Consort	<u>Urash</u> (in Mesopotamia) <u>Teshub</u> (in Hurrian sources)
Children	possibly <u>Nanaya</u> and <u>Lagamal</u>
Equivalents	
Hittite	possibly Tešimi

Worship

The oldest known attestation of Ninegal comes from a god list from Early Dynastic Tell Fara, in which she appears between two deities the reading of whose names is uncertain.^[2] Other early references include a dedicatory inscription of a servant of Namma-abzu, an ensi of Nippur, and a month name in the local calendar of Ur.^[2] During the reign of Gudea, Ninegal was worshiped in Lagash, where she had a temple.^[4] Evidence for popular devotion to her from that city includes two minor officials who referred to themselves as "servant (*arad*) of Ninegal."^[4]

Multiple attestations are known from the Ur III period, and it is assumed Ninegal was worshiped in all of the major cities of southern Mesopotamia at the time.^[2] There is evidence that the first kings of the Ur III dynasty, Ur-Namma and Shulgi, were active participants in the cult of Ninegal.^[2] She also appears in offering lists from Nippur and Puzrish-Dagan.^[8] A temple dedicated to her, Egalmah (Sumerian: "exalted palace"), possibly built by Ur-Namma, existed in Ur.^[9] It is possible that Warad-Sin later rebuilt it as a temple of the medicine goddess Ninisina.^[2] Another temple of Ninegal existed in Umma. In this city she was apparently closely associated with offerings for deceased ensis.^[4] Further evidence for worship of this goddess in the Ur III period is a detailed list of cultic paraphernalia dedicated to her from Eresh.^[4]

Her Akkadian name, Belet Ekalli, is attested for the first time in the Ur III period texts from Assur.^[5] She had a temple in this city, Ekinam (Sumerian: "house, place of destinies"), first mentioned in an inscription of Zariqqa, a governor during the reign of Amar-Sin, who rebuilt it.^[10] In the Middle Assyrian period, it was repaired by Adad-Nirari I.^[11] A month named after her is mentioned in Old Assyrian texts from Kanesh.^[2]

It is unclear when Ninegal started to be worshiped in Dilbat, though it is possible she already belonged to the pantheon of this city in the Ur III period.^[11] Her temple in this city was Esapar (Sumerian: "house of the net"), possibly a part of E-ibbi-Anum, the temple of the local god Urash, rather than a fully separate building.^[11] However, in a document listing various temples Esapar is instead said to be the name of a temple of Nungal, with no location listed.^[12] As these two goddesses were associated, it is possible that there was only one Esapar.^[12]

Ninegal continued to be worshiped in the Old Babylonian period, especially in Ur and in Larsa, where a temple dedicated to her, E-a-ag-ga-kilib-ur-ur (Sumerian: "house which gathers all the instructions") was rebuilt by queen Simar-Eshtar, wife of Rim-Sîn I.^[4] She is however only sporadically mentioned in letters, compared to deities popular in the sphere of personal worship, such as Aya, Gula or Ishtar.^[13]

A late reference to Belet-Ekalli can be found in a letter from Babylon, in which a certain Mār-isar relays to the neo-Assyrian king Esarhaddon that a statue of Belet Ekallim meant for the Esagil temple complex was not yet finished.^[14]

Both the forms Ninegal^[4] and Belet Ekallim are attested in theophoric names.^[14]

Outside Mesopotamia

In the second millennium BCE the worship of Ninegal/Belet Ekallim spread from Mesopotamia to other areas in the ancient Near East, from the Hittite Empire in the west to Elam in the east.^[5]

Earliest attestations of Ninegal from outside Mesopotamia come from Mari, and indicate she might have been introduced to this city as early as in the Ur III period.^[11] It is possible that she was the tutelary deity of the ruling house in the Old Babylonian period.^[11] There is evidence that during Zimri-Lim's during some festivals she received the same number of sacrifices as the eight other most honored gods: the local tutelary god Itūr-Mēr, Dagan, Annunitum, Nergal, Shamash, Ea, Ninhursag and Addu.^[15] In a letter Zimri-Lim's wife Šibtu enumerated Dagan, Shamash, Itūr-Mēr, Belet Ekalli and Addu as "the allies for me" and the deities who "go by my lord's side."^[16] In offering lists she appears between Ninhursag and Ningal.^[11]

In addition to Mari, in Syria Belet Ekalli was also closely associated with Qatna, where she played the role of the city goddess.^[11] Some attestations are also known from Emar, where she was among the deities worshiped during the zukru festival.^[11] She is also attested in a god list, in which Belet Ekalli in the Akkadian column corresponds to ^dWe_e-el-ti-ga-li in the Hurrian one.^[17]

According to Alfonso Archi, in Hurrian sources Ninegal was referred to as Pentikalli.^[18] The name is also sometimes transcribed as Pendigalli.^[17] Archi assumes that the Hurrians received her from Syria, and that her importance in Mari played a role in her spread.^[19] Marie-Claude Trémouille describes her as a goddess from the circle of Hebat from Halab (modern Aleppo).^[17] In Hurrian texts, she is designated as a concubine of Teshub.^[20] She was assimilated with Pithanu, described as a goddess who sits on Teshub's throne.^[21] The later name likely meant "daughter from Hanu," and should be understood as a sign of her association with the middle Euphrates area.^[14] Depictions of Pentikalli are mentioned in texts from Hattarina and Lawazantiya.^[21] She is also known from texts from Ugarit, where her name is spelled alphabetically as pdgl, and possibly appears in a personal name, annpdgl, theoretically reconstructed as Anani-Pendigalli.^[17] It has also been proposed that the Ugaritic goddess b'lt btm/nhtm, "lady of the house," was derived from Belet Ekalli.^[5]

A triad consisting of ^dNIN.E.GAL, Nergal and Ea is attested in economic texts from Susa.^[5] A dossier of texts dealing with the sale of sheep from the same city mentions a "scribe in the service of Ninegal."^[22] In Susa Ninegal also occurs in an inscription of Atta-hushu, written in Akkadian, though it has been proposed in this case the name might be a logogram representing Pinikir.^[23] Furthermore, a deity whose name was written logographically as ^dNIN.E.GAL was one of the many Mesopotamian and Elamite gods and goddesses worshiped at Chogha Zanbil, built by Untash-Napirisha.^[24]

While Volkert Haas assumed that Hittite references to ^dNIN.E.GAL can be understood as indication of presence of the Mesopotamian goddess in Anatolia, Piotr Taracha argues that the name was only a logographic representation of the goddess Tešimi, concubine of the Weather god of Neric, in whose circle the presumed logogram occurs.^[25] In the treaty between Hittite king Šuppiluliuma I and Mitanni king Šattiwaza Ninegal appears after the couples Enlil and Ninlil and Anu and Antu in a list of "primeval gods" meant to serve as divine witnesses.^[26]

Associations with other deities

It is presently uncertain which deities were worshiped with Ninegal in her earliest history.^[2] In a tradition originating in Dilbat, the local agricultural god Urash was regarded as her husband.^[11] In a god list from neo-Babylonian period they are followed by Lagamal,^[11] who was regarded as a son of Urash.^[27] In a ritual text, also from the neo-Babylonian period, Ninegal and Urash appear in a formula alongside

Nanaya,^[28] a goddess referred to as "firstborn of the god Urash."^[29] A single inscription pairs Ninegal/Belet Ekalli with Amurru (^dMAR.TU).^[30] It is one of five similar Kassite period seals, which invoke either couples of deities (Marduk and Sarpanit, Ninurta and Gula) or individual deities (Ishtar or Marduk) to secure success and material wealth for the seal owner.^[31] According to Wilfred G. Lambert, unless an otherwise unknown tradition identified Amurru with Urash, he has nothing in common with Ninegal, making this specific inscription unusual.^[32]

According to the god list An = Anum, the sukkal (divine attendant) of Ninegal was the minor deity Dikum.^[33]

Wolfgang Heimpel proposes that in Mari, Ninegal was closely associated with Annunitum, possibly due to their shared connection with Inanna/Ishtar.^[34]

Ninegal as an epithet

The name Ninegal could function as an epithet of Inanna and other goddesses,^[3] sometimes impossible to identify.^[4] Examples of texts where the identification of Ninegal with Inanna explicit include the so-called *Ninegalla hymn*, in which the names occur in parallel.^[5]

In the *Hymn to Nungal* the eponymous goddess is apparently referred to as Ninegal.^[5] This association is also attested in a fragment of another, presently unidentified, hymn, and in two proverbs.^[5]

While the use of the name as an epithet was common in literary texts, the Shulgi hymns seem to be an exception, as they treat Ninegal as a distinct goddess.^[4]

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Ningal

Ningal (Sumerian: "Great Queen";^[2] Akkadian **Nikkal**^[3]) was a Mesopotamian goddess regarded as the wife of the moon god, Nanna/Sin. She was particularly closely associated with his main cult centers, Ur and Harran, but they were also worshiped together in other cities of Mesopotamia. She was particularly venerated by the Third Dynasty of Ur and later by kings of Larsa.

Character and iconography

Ningal's name has Sumerian origin and can be translated as "Great Queen".^[2] While she was a major deity in the Mesopotamian pantheon and the worship of her is attested from all periods of history of Mesopotamia, her character was largely "passive and supportive" according to Joan Goodnick Westenholz.^[4] She was the tutelary deity of Ur.^[5] She shared it with her husband Nanna (Akkadian Sin).^[6] She was referred to as the "lady" (NIN; Early Dynastic sources) or "mother" (AMA; Ur III sources) of Ur.^[4] She and the city could be compared to a mother and her child in literary texts.^[7] She was portrayed mourning over it in laments, such as Lament for Ur^[8] or Lament for Sumer and Ur.^[9]

Based on some of Ningal's epithets it has additionally been proposed that she was in part an astral deity, much like her husband.^[10] This aspect might have been reflected in titles such as Ninantagal, Ninmulnunna, Si-iminbi and possibly Kalkal,^[6] respectively "high lady", "lady, star of the prince", "sevenfold light" and "treasured".^[11]

Ningal's iconography was not consistent.^[12] It has been proposed that she could be represented as a seated goddess accompanied by the lunar crescent, a symbol of her husband.^[11] A type of bird, u₅-bi₂, was possibly associated with her, though the evidence is inconclusive.^[13] Proposed identities of this animal include the greylag goose and the whooper swan,^[11]

Ningal

Tutelary goddess of Ur



Old Babylonian fired clay plaque from Ur on display in the Sulaymaniyah Museum in Iraq depicting a goddess accompanied by Nanna's symbol, the lunar crescent. It has been proposed that depictions of a seated goddess accompanied by a symbolic representation of Nanna might be Ningal.^[1]

Major cult center Ur, Harran

Genealogy

Parents Ningikuga and Enki

Consort Nanna/Sin

Children Utu/Shamash and Inanna/Ishtar

Amarra-uzu and Amarra-he'ea

Ningublaga

Numushda

Manzat (according to Maqlû)

Pinikir (in a Hurrian source)

Nuska (in late sources from Harran)

Equivalents

Hurrian Nikkal

but it is assumed that even in Ur, statues of a

goddess accompanied by a water bird of the genus Anserini, well known from excavations, were more likely to represent Nanshe.^[14] Ningal was also called zirru, a term which might designate a female bird.^[13] Some en priestesses of Nanna, especially Sargon's daughter Enheduanna, were also referred to as zirru.^[15] On the Ur-Nammu Stele, Ningal is depicted sitting in her husband's lap.^[16] This type of depictions was meant to display the intimate nature of the connection between the deities and highlight their ability to act in unison, and is also attested for Bau and Ningirsu.^[17]

In medical treatises the term "hand of Ningal" referred to an unidentified skin disease; analogous names of diseases are attested for various other deities, for example Sin, Adad, Shamash and Geshtinanna.^[18]

Association with other deities

Ningal's mother was Ningikuga (Sumerian: "lady of the pure reed"), as attested in a *balbale* composition and in an emesal love song.^[19] This goddess could be identified as a consort of Enki.^[5] The god list An = Anum identifies her with Damkina directly, though in its Old Babylonian forerunner she is a separate deity in the circle of Enki.^[19] Ningikuga could also instead function as the name of a manifestation of Ningal, addressed as "the pure one who purifies the earth".^[20]

The lunar god Nanna (Akkadian Sin) was regarded as Ningal's husband.^[3] Her role as his wife is the best attested aspect of her character.^[5] Some of her epithets underlined her connection to him, for example Hegalnunna ("wealth of the prince").^[11] A derivative of Ningal were regarded as married to other moon gods in Hurrian (Kušuh or Umbu), Hittite (Arma) and Ugaritic (Yarikh) sources.^[3] In all of the corresponding languages her name was rendered as Nikkal, similarly as in Akkadian.^[5] The best attested children of Ningal and Nanna were Inanna (Ishtar), who represented Venus, and Utu (Shamash), who represented the sun.^[3] The view that Inanna was a daughter of Nanna and Ningal is the most commonly attested tradition regarding her parentage.^[13] The poem Agushaya refers to Inanna as Ningal's firstborn child.^[11] Due to her identification with Ishtar, the Hurrian and Elamite goddess Pinikir is referred to as a daughter of Sin and Ningal in a text written in Akkadian but found in a corpus of Hurro-Hittite rituals.^[21] Further relatively commonly attested children of Ningal and Nanna include the goddesses Amarra-uzu and Amarra-he'ea, known from An = Anum, Ningublaga (the city god of Ki'abrig) and Numushda (the city god of Kazallu).^[3] In Neo-Assyrian sources from Harran Nuska was regarded as the son of Ningal and her husband.^[5] In a Maqlû incantation, Manzat (Akkadian and Elamite goddess of the rainbow) appears as the sister of Shamash, and by extension as daughter of his parents, Ningal and her husband.^[22]

An = Anum indicates that Ningal was believed to have a sukkal (attendant deity), though the reading of their name, ^dME^{kà-kà}ME, remains uncertain.^[3] Richard L. Litke argued that the gloss is unlikely to point at an otherwise unknown pronunciation of the sign ME, and assumed that the deity in mention was named Meme, while an alternate version of the list had the name Kakka in the same line instead.^[23] Manfred Krebernik proposes that this deity is identical with the divine messenger Kakka.^[3] Litke instead concluded that in this case Kakka should be understood as a deity elsewhere equated with Ninkarrak,^[23] distinct from the messenger god.^[24] A medicine goddess named Kakka, associated with Ninkarrak and Ninshubur, is attested in sources from Mari.^[25]

An association between Ningal and Ninshubur is documented in the Early Dynastic god list from Abu Salabikh.^[26] In the Old Babylonian period Nanshe was incorporated into the circle of deities associated with her in Ur, though she is overall sparsely attested in sources from this city.^[27] It is possible that the

deity *Nin-é.NIM.ma*, best attested in texts from Larsa and the Sealand, was associated with Ningal as a member of her entourage starting with the reign of Kudur-Mabuk and his successors, though it has also been proposed that this name was her epithet.^[28]

Worship

Ningal is first attested the god lists from Early Dynastic Fara and Abu Salabikh.^[5] She is also mentioned in the Zame Hymns (from *za₃-me*, "praise"), where she appears after Nanna as "mother Ningal" (*ama Ningal*).^[4]

Ur

A temple dedicated to Ningal was located in Ur, and could be referred with the ceremonial Sumerian names Egarku and Agrunku ("house, sacred boudoir").^[29] In the earliest texts from this city, she is only attested in two theophoric names, but by the Ur III period she came to be invoked in them commonly.^[6] The Ur-Nammu Stele indicates that she was likely the highest ranked goddess in the local pantheon during his reign.^[30] A limestone bowl dedicated to Ningal by Ur-Nammu's daughter En-nirgal-ana, who served as the *en* priestess of Nanna, has also been discovered.^[31] Shulgi referred to Ningal as his mother.^[11] He also rebuilt the temple of Nanna in Ga'esh, Ekarzida ("house, pure quay") as a temple of Ningal in which she was known by the epithet Nin-Urimma, "lady of Ur".^[32]

The veneration of Ningal in Ur is well documented in sources from the Old Babylonian period as well.^[6] Anette Zgoll argues that her cultic importance increased compared to the preceding Ur III period.^[19] Shu-Ilishu of Isin mentions Ningal in a curse formula in an inscription found in Ur commemorating the recovery of the statue of Nanna from Anshan.^[33] Iddin-Dagan referred to himself as the "beloved of Nanna and Ningal".^[34] En-anatuma, *en* priestess of Nanna and daughter of Ishme-Dagan, dedicated a statue to Ningal.^[35] Kings of Larsa, especially Warad-Sin and Rim-Sîn I, considered Ur a city of particular religious and political importance and were active worshipers of Ningal.^[14] Sources from this period indicate that her temple was combined with the Gipar, the residence of the *en* priestess of Nanna, into a single complex.^[36] The ceremonial name Egarku was retained for her major sanctuary within it, and appears in inscriptions of kings such as Nur-Adad and Warad-Sin.^[29] Another shrine dedicated to her in the Gipar was Eidlurugukalamma ("house of the river ordeal of the land"), rebuilt by Silli-Adad.^[37] The work continued under the reign of his successor Warad-Sin.^[38] Sin-Iddinam mentions Ningal alongside Nanna in an inscription dealing with the construction of the walls of Ur.^[39]

In the Kassite period, Kurigalzu I built another temple of Ningal in Ur, but its name is presently unknown.^[40]

Ningal was still worshiped in Ur during the Neo-Babylonian period.^[41] Her main temple there was rebuilt by Nabonidus.^[42] Additionally a *bīt hīlṣī* ("house of pressing"), assumed to be a pharmacy accompanied by a garden where the ingredients for various medicines were grown) located in the same city in this period was associated with Ningal.^[18]

Harran

In Harran Ningal was worshiped in a shrine known under the name *giparu*.^[43] Andrew R. George assumes it was located in the Eḥulḥul,^[40] the temple of Sin located in this city.^[44] It is attested in sources from the reign of Ashurbanipal.^[40] An inscription of this king states that Ningal and Nanna crowned him in Harran.^[6] According to inscriptions of Nabonidus, during the repairs undertaken at his orders in the Eḥulḥul the temple was provided with refurbished statues of its divine inhabitants, including Sin, Ningal, Nuska and Sadarnunna.^[45]

Harran most likely influenced the Aramaic center of the cult of Ningal, known from sources from the first millennium BCE, Nereb (Al-Nayrab) located in the proximity of Aleppo.^[46]

Other cities

Offerings to Ningal are mentioned in texts from Nippur from the Ur III period.^[9] According to the so-called *Nippur Compendium*, she was worshiped in this city in the local temple of Nanna,^[47] as well as in a sanctuary referred to as *bīt dalīlī* ("house of praise") alongside Nisaba, Kusu, Shamash and Bēl-ālīya.^[48] A seal inscription from the Kassite period mentions "Ningal of Nippur" alongside the local goddess Ninimma.^[49]

From lower Mesopotamia Ningal was introduced to Mari, where she was already known in the Ur III period.^[50] In an early offering list she appears after Belet-ekallim and Lugal-Terqa ("lord of Terqa").^[51] One masculine^[52] and one feminine theophoric name invoking her have been identified in Old Babylonian sources from this city.^[53]

A document from Old Babylonian Sippar mentions that statues of Ningal and Nanna were used as witnesses of a transaction.^[54] They were also invoked together on cylinder seal inscriptions from this city from the same period, though not as commonly as Shamash and Aya or Adad and Shala.^[55]

References to veneration of Ningal in the Old Babylonian period are also available from multiple other cities, including Babylon, Isin, Kisurra, Larsa, Tutub and Urum.^[6] A joint cult center of Ningal and her husband whose location is uncertain was also patronized by kings of the Manana Dynasty near Kish.^[56]

A single attestation of Ningal is known from the archive of the First Sealand dynasty.^[27] She occurs in this context as a recipient of offerings alongside Nanna.^[57] A settlement named after her, Quppat-Ningal, is also attested a handful of times in this text corpus, for example in a letter of an official named Nūr-Bau, presumably addressed to king Pešgaldarameš or his successor Ayadaragalama.^[58]

The *Canonical Temple List*, which dates to the Kassite period,^[59] lists two temples of Ningal whose location remains unknown, Eangim ("house like heaven") and Eengimkuga ("house pure like heaven").^[60]

One of the inscriptions of the Assyrian king Esarhaddon commemorates the construction of a temple dedicated jointly to Ningal, Sin, Shamash and Aya in Nineveh.^[61] A shrine dedicated to her was also located in Dur-Sharrukin,^[62] a new royal city constructed during the reign of Sargon II.^[63] It was located within his palace.^[64] The king implored her in an inscription to intercede with her husband to grant him a long life and to guarantee his successors will continue to rule over "every inhabited region forever".^[65] Ningal is also attested in a number of theophoric names from Assyria.^[6]

Letters from the reign of Ashurbanipal indicate that Ningal and her husband replaced Inanna and Dumuzi as the tutelary deities of Kissig in late periods.^[66] Nabonidus restored a temple of Ningal bearing the ceremonial name Eamaškuga ("house, pure sheepfold") in this city,^[67] which according to Andrew R. George might be identical with Eamašku, attested in association with Inanna in earlier literary texts, including *Inanna's Descent*.^[68] This event is commemorated by an inscription on a poorly preserved cylinder dated to 546 BCE discovered during excavations in Tell al-Lahm, which might be the site of Kissik.^[69] The king asked Ningal to intercede with her husband on his behalf in it.^[70]

Ningal was also worshiped in Uruk in the Seleucid period.^[71] However, the attestations are limited to a single source, the ritual text K 7353, which shows astrological influence, but ultimately remains obscure.^[72] She is absent from earlier Neo-Babylonian sources^[71] and according to Julia Krul presumably was incorporated into the local pantheon due to her status as the wife of Sin, similarly to other spouses, children and servants of locally venerated deities who first appear in Uruk in Seleucid sources.^[73]

Outside Mesopotamia

The cult of Ningal spread from Mesopotamia to other areas, including Hurrian kingdoms such as Kizzuwatna, as well as Ugarit and the Hittite Empire, where she developed into Nikkal.^[74] In Ugarit, where she could be referred to as Nikkal-wa-Ib,^[75] she belonged both to the Ugaritic and Hurrian pantheons of the city, and is attested as the wife of both local moon god Yarikh and his Hurrian counterpart Kušuh.^[76] In an Ugaritic myth she is associated with an otherwise unknown god Hrḥb, who was possibly regarded as her father and most likely originated in Hurrian tradition.^[77] Non-Hurrian non-Ugaritic attestations of Nikkal from areas where West Semitic languages were spoken in the second and first millennia BCE are very infrequent, though it might be the result of preservation bias.^[78] According to Gina Konstantopoulos, the distinct western form of Ningal might be mentioned in the treaty between Ashur-nirari V and Mati-ilu of Arpad.^[79]

In the east Ningal is attested in Akkadian theophoric names from Susa in Elam, with the oldest examples occurring in sources from the Sargonic period.^[80] Additionally, a chapel dedicated to her was maintained there by an Akkadian-speaking family, possibly originally brought to the city as prisoners of war after the Elamite conquest of Ur.^[81] They maintained it over the course of four generations.^[82]

In Egypt Ningal (or Nikkal) is only attested once, in a single magical papyrus, in which she appears as a foreign deity implored to heal a disease.^[78]

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Ningishzida

Ningishzida (Sumerian: *𒀭 Ningišzida, possible meaning "Lord [of the] Good Tree") was a Mesopotamian deity of vegetation, the underworld and sometimes war. He was commonly associated with snakes. Like Dumuzi, he was believed to spend a part of the year in the land of the dead. He also shared many of his functions with his father Ninazu.

In myths he usually appears in an underworld setting, though in the myth of Adapa he is instead described as one of the doorkeepers of the sky god Anu.

Name

Thorkild Jacobsen proposed that the Sumerian name *Ningishzida* can be explained as "lord of the good tree." This translation is still accepted by other Assyriologists today.^{[1][2]} Various syllabic spellings are known, including ^d*Ni-gi-si-da*, ^d*Nin-nigi-si-da*, ^d*Nin-ki-zi-da* and ^d*Nin-gi-iz-zi-da*.^[1]

While "nin" can be translated as "lady" in some contexts, it was grammatically neutral in Sumerian and can be found in the names of many deities, both male (Ningishzida, Ninazu, Ninurta, etc.) and female (Ninlil, Ninkasi etc.).^[3]

Ningishzida could also be called Gishbanda ("little tree").^[4]

Functions

Ningishzida's titles connect him to plants and agriculture.^[4] He was frequently mentioned in connection with grass, which he was believed to provide for domestic animals.^[5] The death of vegetation was associated with his annual travel to the underworld.^[6] The "tree" in his name might be vine

Ningishzida
*𒀭 Ningišzida



Ningishzida, with snakes emanating from his shoulders, on a relief of Gudea, c. 2000 BCE

Major cult center Gishbanda, Lagash

Symbol Snake, mushussu

Genealogy

Parents Ninazu and Ningirida

Siblings Amashilama and Labarshilama

Consort Geshtinanna, Azimua, Ekurritum

according to some Assyriologists, including Wilfred G. Lambert, and an association between him and alcoholic beverages (specifically wine) is well attested, for example one text mentions him alongside the beer goddess Ninkasi, while one of his titles was "lord of the innkeepers."^[6]

Like his father Ninazu, he was also associated with snakes, including the mythical mushussu, ushumgal and bashmu and in one case Nirah.^[6] He was also an underworld god, and in this role was known as the "chair bearer (or chamberlain) of the underworld."^[7] Frans Wiggermann on the basis of these similarities considers him and his father to be members of the group of "Transtigridian snake gods," who according to him shared a connection with the underworld, justice, vegetation and snakes.^[8] A further similarity between Ningishzida and his father was his occasional role as a warrior god, associated with victory (and as a result with the goddess Irnina, the personification of it).^[7] However, not all of their functions overlapped, as unlike Ninazu, Ningishzida never appears in the role of a divine healer.^[4]

According to Frans Wiggermann, Ningishzida's diverse functions can be considered different aspects of his perception as a "reliable god," well attested in Mesopotamian texts.^[7]

The constellation Hydra could serve as his symbol, though it was also associated with Ishtaran and Ereshkigal.^[9]

Worship

The worship of Ningishzida is attested for the first time in the Early Dynastic III period.^[10] His main cult center was Gishbanda,^[2] likely a rural settlement^[11] located somewhere between Lagash and Ur.^[12] His main temple was known simply as E-Gishbanda,^[13] "house of Gishbanda," and it was commonly listed alongside the main temple of his father Ninazu, E-Gidda.^[14]

He also had a temple in Lagash, the E-badbarra, "house, outer wall."^[15] Yet another one was built in Girsu by Gudea, though its name is unknown.^[16] This ruler considered him to be his personal god.^[17] In one of his inscriptions, Ningishzida is named a participant in a festival celebrating the marriage between Ningirsu and Bau.^[18] In another, he is credited with helping Gudea with building new temples.^[19] In a later incantation which served as a part of temple renovation rituals, referred to as *The First Brick* by Wilfred G. Lambert,^[20] Ningishzida is mentioned in a similar context alongside many other deities, such as Lisin, Gukishbanda, Kulla, Lahar and Ninshar.^[21]

In Ur he was worshiped in the temple E-niggina, "house of truth," known from an inscription of Sin-Iqisham stating it was rebuilt during his reign.^[22] He is attested in offering lists from that city from the Ur III and Old Babylonian periods, sometimes alongside Ningubalaga.^[23] In later sources, up to the reign of the Persian emperor Darius I, he sometimes appears in theophoric names, likely due to association with Ninazu, who retained a degree of relevance in the local pantheon.^[24] Much like in the case of his father, some of them used the dialectical Emesal form of his name, Umun-muzida.^[25] It is presumed that the cause of this was the role lamentation priests, who traditionally memorized Emesal compositions, played in the preservation of cults of underworld gods in Ur.^[26]

As early as the Ur III period, Ningishzida was introduced to Uruk.^[27] He was also present in Kamada, possibly located nearby, as attested in documents from the reign of Sin-kashid.^[27] During the reign of Marduk-apla-iddina I, he was worshiped in a chapel in the Eanna complex that was originally built during

the reign of the Old Babylonian king Anam.^[16] He continued to appear in theophoric names from neo-Assyrian, neo-Babylonian and Hellenistic Uruk, though only uncommonly.^[28]

Ningishzida was also worshipped in Isin, which was primarily the cult center of the medicine goddess Ninisina, but had multiple houses of worship dedicated to underworld deities as well. Other deities worshipped at Isin included Nergal, Ugur, and an otherwise unknown but most likely chthonic goddess, Lakupittu, who according to Andrew R. George was likely the tutelary deity of Lagaba near Kutha.^[13]

Further locations where he was worshipped include Umma, Larsa, Kuara, Nippur, Babylon, Eshnunna and Kisurra.^[29] From most of these places, evidence is only available from the Ur III or Old Babylonian periods, though in Babylon he still had a small cult site in Esagil by the neo-Babylonian period.^[29] A single object inscribed with a dedication to Ningishzida is also known from Susa, though it might have been brought there as booty from some Mesopotamian polity.^[10]

Associations with other deities

Ningishzida was the son of Ninazu and his wife Ningiridda.^[1] One of the only references to goddesses breastfeeding in Mesopotamian literature is a description of Ningirida and her son.^[30] His sisters were Amashilama and Labarshilama.^[29]

References to Ningishzida as a "scion" of Anu are probably meant to indicate the belief in a line consisting out of Anu, Enlil, Ninazu and finally Ningishzida, rather than the existence of an alternate tradition where he was the son of the sky god.^[1]

Multiple traditions existed regarding the identity of Ningishzida's wife, with the god list An = Anum listing two, Azimua (elsewhere also called Ninazimua)^[31] and Ekurritum (not attested in such a role anywhere else^[4]), while other sources favor Geshtinanna, identified with Belet-Seri.^[13] However, Azimua shared Gesthinanna's role as an underworld scribe,^[1] and her name could also function as a title of Gesthinanna, attested in contexts where she was identified as Ningishzida's wife.^[32] At the same time, Belet-Seri could also function as an epithet of Ashratum, the wife of Amurru, or of her Sumerian counterpart Gubarra, in at least one case leading to conflation of Amurru and Ningishzida and to an association between the former and Azimua and Ekurritum.^[33] In one case Ekurritum was simply identified as an alternate name of Ashratum as well.^[4] The tradition in which Gesthinanna was Ningishzida's wife had its origin in Lagash, and in seals from that city she is sometimes depicted alongside a mushussu, symbol of her husband, to indicate they're a couple.^[34] One inscription of Gudea refers to her as Ningishzida's "beloved wife."^[35]

Ningishzida's sukkal was Alla,^[4] a minor underworld god,^[36] depicted as a bald beardless man, without the horned crown associated with divinity.^[4] Wilfred G. Lambert notes that he was most likely another Dumuzi-like deity whose temporary death was described in laments.^[37] He is also attested in lists of so-called "seven conquered Enlils,"^[38] deities associated with Enmesharra.^[39] Another deity also identified as Ningishzida's sukkal was Ipahum or Ippu, a viper god, also known as the sukkal of his father Ninazu.^[4] Other deities who belonged to his court include Gishbandagirizal, Lugalsaparku, Lugalshude, Namengarshudu, Usheg^[29] and Irnina.^[4]

Ningishzida could be associated with Dumuzi, on account of their shared character as dying gods of vegetation.^[40] A lamentation text known as "In the Desert by the Early Grass" lists both of them among the mourned deities.^[6] The absence of both of them was believed to take place each year between mid-summer and mid-winter.^[41] The association is also present in astrological treatises.^[10] Some lamentations go as far as regarding Ningishzida and Dumuzi as one and the same.^[35] As dwellers of the underworld, both of them could be on occasion associated with Gilgamesh as well.^[42]

Another temporarily dying god Ningishzida could be associated with was Damu.^[43]

In some inscriptions of Gudea, Ningishzida was associated with Ningirsu, with one of them mentioning that he was tasked with delivering gifts for the latter's wife Bau.^[18] Such a role was customarily associated with trusted associates and close friends in ancient Mesopotamian culture, indicating that despite originally being unrelated, these two gods were envisioned as close to each other by Gudea.^[18]

Mythology

In the Middle Babylonian myth of Adapa, Ningishzida is one of the two doorkeepers of Anu's celestial palace, alongside Dumuzi.^[6] This myth appears to indicate that these two gods are present in heaven rather than underworld when they are dead, even though other Sumerian and Akkadian myths describe Ningishzida's journey to the underworld.^[6] Little is known about the circumstances of his annual return, though one text indicates an unidentified son of Ereshkigal was responsible for ordering it.^[6]

A reference to Ningishzida is present in the Epic of Gilgamesh.^[44] The eponymous hero's mother Ninsun mentions to Shamash that she is aware her son is destined to "dwell in the land of no return" with him.^[44] In another Gilgamesh myth, Death of Gilgamesh, the hero is promised a position in the underworld equal to that of Ningishzida.^[45]

Gallery



Ningishzida on the libation vase of Gudea, circa 2100 BCE



The "libation vase of Gudea" with the dragon Mušhuššu, dedicated to Ningishzida, circa 2100 BCE (short chronology). The caduceus-like symbol (right) is interpreted as a representation of the god himself. Inscription: "To the god Ningiszida, his god, Gudea, Ensi (governor) of Lagash, for the prolongation of his life, has dedicated this"



The name Ningishzida inscribed on a statue of Ur-Ningirsu.



Seal of Gudea depicting him being led by Ningishzida (figure with snakes emerging from his shoulders)



Detail, headless statue dedicated to Ningishzida, 2600-2370 BCE.
[Iraq Museum](#).

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27. Beaulieu 2003, p. 345.

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29. Vacín 2011, p. 254.
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External links

- Ancient Mesopotamian Gods and Goddesses: Ningišzida (god) (<http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/amgg/listofdeities/ningizida/>)
- ETCSLsubcorpus: balbales and hymns to Ningišzida (http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=c.4.19*#)

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Ninlil

Ninlil (𒀭𒉿 𒀭𒂗 𒀭𒂔 D_{NIN}.LÍL; meaning uncertain) was a Mesopotamian goddess regarded as the wife of Enlil. She shared many of his functions, especially the responsibility for declaring destinies, and like him was regarded as a senior deity and head of the pantheon. She is also well attested as the mother of his children, such as the underworld god Nergal, the moon god Nanna or the warrior god Ninurta. She was chiefly worshiped in Nippur and nearby Tummal alongside Enlil, and multiple temples and shrines dedicated to her are attested in textual sources from these cities. In the first millennium BCE she was also introduced to Hursagkalamma near Kish, where she was worshiped alongside the goddess Bizilla, who was likely her sukkal (attendant deity).

At an early date Ninlil was identified with the goddess **Sud** from Shuruppak, like her associated with Enlil, and eventually fully absorbed her. In the myth *Enlil and Sud*, Ninlil is the name Sud received after marrying Enlil. Nisaba, the goddess of writing, and her husband Haya are described as her parents. While Ninlil's mother bears a different name, Nunbarsegunu, in the myth *Enlil and Ninlil*, the god list An = Anum states that it was an alternate name of Nisaba. Syncretism with Sud also resulted in Ninlil acquiring some of her unique characteristics, such as an association with healing goddesses and with Sudağ, a name of the wife of the sun god Shamash. References to these connections can be found in various Mesopotamian texts, such as a hymn referring to Ninlil as a healing goddess or a myth apparently confusing her with Sudağ in the role of mother of Ishum.

In Syrian cities such as Mari, Emar and Ugarit, Ninlil was closely associated with the local goddess Shalash, the spouse of Dagan, a god regarded as analogous to Enlil. This equivalence is also attested in Hurrian religion, in which Shalash was the spouse of Kumarbi, another god regarded as similar to Enlil. However, Ninlil is also attested as a distinct deity in Hurrian texts, and could serve as a divine witness of treaties in this context.

Ninlil	
	Wife of Enlil
Other names	Sud, Kutušar, Mullilu
Major cult center	<u>Nippur</u> , <u>Tummal</u> , <u>Hursagkalamma</u> (as Ninlil) <u>Shuruppak</u> (as Sud)
Genealogy	
Parents	<u>Nisaba</u> and <u>Haya</u>
Consort	<u>Enlil</u>
Children	<u>Nergal</u> , <u>Nanna</u> , <u>Ninurta</u> (sometimes, otherwise addressed as the son of <u>Ninhursag</u>)
	<u>Pabilsag</u> (through identification with <u>Nintur</u>)
	<u>Ninazu</u> (possibly due to analogies with Nergal)
	<u>Enbilulu</u> (in the myth <i>Enlil and Ninlil</i>)
	<u>Ishum</u> (in a single source, due to confusion between Sud and Sudağ)
Equivalents	
Syrian	<u>Shalash</u>
Ugaritic	<u>Athirat</u>
Assyrian	<u>Mullissu</u> and possibly <u>Šerua</u>

In the Neo-Assyrian Empire Ninlil was reinterpreted as the spouse of the supreme Assyrian god Ashur, and in this role developed into Mullissu, who in turn could be identified with various deities from the pantheon of Assyria, such as Šerua or local forms of Ishtar from cities such as Nineveh.

Name

Through most of the third millennium BCE, Ninlil's name was written with the Sumerian cuneiform sign LÍL (KID^[1]), while Enlil's with identically pronounced É.^[2] From the Ur III period onward LÍL started to be used in both cases.^[3] The causes of these phenomena remain unknown.^[4] The pronunciation *Ninlil* is confirmed by a phonetic gloss rendering the name syllabically as *ni-in-lil*.^[5] The meaning of the second element of the name is not certain, though a late explanatory text translates the name Ninlil as GAŠAN za-qí-qí, "lady of the breeze", which matches a common theory according to which Enlil's name should be understood as "lord wind".^[6]

A variant Akkadian form of the name was Mullilu, in Neo-Assyrian sources spelled as Mullissu, in Aramaic texts as *mlš*, and in Mandaic as *mwlyt*.^[5] This form of the name was also known to Greek authors such as Herodotus (who transcribes it as "Mylitta") and Ctesias.^[5] It is possible that it originally developed as a feminine equivalent of Enlil's dialectical Emesal name Mullil (derived from *Uum-lil*, *umun* being the Emesal form of *en*).^[5] The names Mullil and Mullissu could also be connected with the Akkadian word *elēlu*, and therefore it is possible they were understood as "he who makes clean" and "she who makes clean", respectively.^[5]

According to the god list An = Anum, an alternate name of Ninlil was Sud,^[7] written ^dSU.KUR.RU.^[8] It originally referred to the tutelary deity of Shuruppak, who was syncretised with Ninlil.^[8] Jeremiah Peterson proposes that the Sumerian writing of Sud's name was misunderstood as an Akkadian noun based on a single copy of the Nippur god list in which a deity named ^d*su-kur-ru-um* occurs.^[9] A different interpretation has been suggested by Manfred Krebernik, who argues this entry has no relation to Sud and represents a deified cult emblem, specifically a lance (Akkadian: šukurrum).^[10] The deified lance is elsewhere attested in association with the god Wer.^[11]

Character

As the wife of Enlil, Ninlil was believed to be responsible for similar spheres of life, and stood on the top of the pantheon alongside him.^[12] Like him, she was believed to be in charge of the determination of fates, and in a few inscriptions even takes precedence over him in this role.^[13] A late hymn states that she was the ruler of both earth and heaven, and that Enlil made no decision without her.^[12] Kings from the Third Dynasty of Ur considered both of them to be the source of earthly royal authority.^[13] In literary texts, she could be described as responsible for appointing other deities to their positions alongside her husband. For example, a hymn credits the couple with bestowing Inanna's position upon her.^[14] Another states that Nergal was entrusted with the underworld by them both.^[15] In yet another composition, they are also credited with giving Ninisina "broad wisdom created by an august hand".^[15] Nuska was also believed to owe his position to a decree of both Enlil and Ninlil.^[16] It has been suggested that an entire standardized series of hymns describing how various deities were appointed to their positions this way existed.^[17]

Due to Enlil's position as the father of gods, Ninlil could be analogously viewed as the mother of gods.^[10] In the Temple Hymns (ETCSL 4.80.1. in the Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature) she is one of the four goddesses described as *ama*, "mother", the other three being Nintur (a goddess of birth), Ninisina and Bau.^[18] It is possible that Ninlil could also be referred to with the epithet *tamkartum*, a rare feminine form of the word *tamkarum*, "merchant".^[19] Enlil could be described as a divine merchant (^d*dam-gar*₃), which according to Jeremiah Peterson might mean that ^d*ta-am-kart-tum* attested in a fragment of a non-standard Old Babylonian god list from Nippur is a name of Ninlil referring to a similar role.^[19]

Like many other deities, she could be compared to a cow, though this does not indicate an association with cattle or theriomorphic character in art.^[12] It is possible that she is depicted as a seated enthroned goddess on at least one cylinder seal from the Ur III period.^[20] Another might depict her as a tall goddess wearing the horned headdress of divinity leading a supplicant, followed by a shorter goddess, possibly representing Nintinugga, whose devotee the owner of the seal was according to accompanying inscription.^[21]

In Mesopotamian astronomy, Ninlil was associated with two constellations, the ^{mul}*mar-gíd-da* ("wagon") corresponding to Ursa Major and the ^{mul}UZ ("goat"), corresponding to Lyra, as attested in the compendium MUL.APIN and other sources.^[12]

It has been argued that through the history of ancient Mesopotamian religion, the domain of Ninlil continued to expand,^[22] sometimes at the expense of other goddesses.^[23]

Ninlil and Sud

It is agreed that Ninlil fully absorbed the goddess Sud,^[24] like her viewed as the spouse of Enlil.^[25] Her association with this god goes back to the Early Dynastic period.^[8] A mythological explanation made Ninlil a name Sud received after getting married.^[26] The syncretism between them is attested in the god list An = Anum,^[7] but in the older Weidner god list Sud appears not with Enlil and Ninlil, but rather among the medicine goddesses, next to Gula.^[10]

The process of conflation meant that some associations originally exclusive to Sud could be transferred to Ninlil as well.^[27] For example, the Hymn to Gula composed by Bulluṣa-rabi attests that she could be viewed as a goddess of healing, which has been identified as a possible result of Sud's association with Gula.^[22] Sud could also be associated with Sudağ, one of the names of the wife of sun god Shamash.^[27]

Hurrian reception

Ninlil was also incorporated into Hurrian religion, where she and Enlil were regarded as two of the so-called "primeval gods",^[28] a group of deities belonging to the former divine generations who resided in the underworld.^[29] Other senior Mesopotamian deities like Anu and Alalu could be listed among them too.^[30] They could be invoked as divine witnesses of treaties.^[30]

Assyrian reception

From the reign of Tiglath-Pileser I onward, Ninlil started to be viewed as the wife of the Assyrian head god, Ashur.^[31] The equivalence between Ninlil understood as spouse of Enlil and Mullissu understood as spouse of Ashur is well attested in Neo-Assyrian sources.^[32]

It has been argued that Mullissu's newfound position might have resulted in conflation with Šerua, as in scholarship it is often assumed that this goddess was the original wife of Ashur.^[31] It has also been proposed that while originally regarded as his wife, she later came to be replaced (rather than absorbed) by Mullissu, and was demoted to the position of a daughter or sister.^[33] A different theory, based on Aramaic inscriptions from the Parthian period, makes Šerua's initial position that of a daughter of Ashur, who later came to be viewed as his second wife alongside Mullissu.^[33] Mullissu also came to be conflated with Ishtar of Nineveh, who was also recast as Ashur's consort in the Neo-Assyrian period.^[34] It has been argued that especially in texts from the reign of Ashurbanipal, the names are synonymous.^[34] Similar process is also attested for Ishtar of Arbela and Ishtar of Assur.^[34] At the same time Ishtar without any epithets indicating association with a specific location could appear in Assyrian texts separately from the goddesses of Nineveh and Arbela identified with Mullissu, indicating that they coexisted as separate members of the pantheon.^[35]

Associations with other deities

Family

Ninlil's husband was Enlil.^[8] As early as in the Early Dynastic Period, they are attested as a couple in sources from Abu Salabikh and Ur.^[36] The relationship between them is further affirmed by most of the later major god lists: the Weidner god list, the Nippur god list, the Isin god list, the Mari god list, Old Babylonian An = Anum forerunner and An = Anum itself.^[8] As Ninlil's husband, Enlil could be called "the allure of her heart" (Sumarian: *hi-li šag₄-ga-na*).^[37] It has been pointed out that in some cases, they functioned as unity in religious texts.^[38] A certain Enlilalša, a governor of Nippur, acted as a priest of both Enlil and Ninlil, though the terms used to refer to these functions are not identical (*nu-eš₃* and *gudu₄*, respectively).^[39]

The myth Enlil and Sud indicates that Ninlil was regarded as the daughter of Nisaba, the goddess of writing, and her husband Haya.^[31] In Enlil and Ninlil her mother is instead a goddess named Nunbaršegunu, who according to the god list An = Anum was identified with Nisaba.^[31] Eresh, the cult center of Nisaba, could be called the "beloved city of Ninlil", as attested in the composition Enmerkar and En-suhgir-ana.^[40] However, it is not known if a temple dedicated to her actually existed there.^[41]

As the wife of Enlil, Ninlil could be regarded as the mother of Ninurta, as attested for example in Ninurta's Return to Nippur (Angim), though other goddesses, such as Nintur, Ninhursag or Dingirmah are attested in this role too.^[42] She was also practically without exception regarded as the mother of Nergal.^[43] As the mother of those two gods, she could be referred to with the epithet Kutušar.^[44] It is attested in association with the city of Tummal.^[44] It also occurs in an inscription of Shamshi-Adad V, in which Kutušar is called "the lady equal to Anu and Dagan" (Akkadian: *bēlti šinnat Anum u Dagan*), with

Dagan most likely serving as a name of Enlil due to the long-standing association between those two gods.^[45] Ninlil was also the mother of the moon god Nanna.^[46] By extension, Inanna (Ishtar) and Utu (Shamash) could be viewed as her grandchildren.^[47]

While a number of sources attest that Ninlil could be regarded as the mother of Ninazu, according to Frans Wiggermann this tradition might only be a result of the growing influence of Nergal on this god's character, which was also responsible for his role as a divine warrior.^[48] He points out that in other sources Ninazu was the son of Ereshkigal and a nameless male deity, presumably to be identified with Gugalanna, which reflected his own character as a god of the underworld.^[48] Ninazu is nonetheless one of the children born in the myth *Enlil and Ninlil*, where his brothers are Nanna, Meslamtaea (Nergal) and Enbilulu.^[48] The last of these deities was responsible for irrigation, and in another tradition was a son of Ea, rather than Enlil and Ninlil.^[49]

Ninlil could also be identified with Nintur, who was regarded as the mother of another of Enlil's sons, Pabilsag.^[50] In a hymn, she is credited with bestowing various titles and abilities on Ninisina,^[51] who is well attested as Pabilsag's wife.^[52]

Court

Ninlil's sukkal (attendant deity) was most likely the goddess Bizilla.^{[53][54]} In a star list, Bizilla corresponds to the "star of abundance," *mul hé-gál-a-a*, which in turn is labeled as the sukkal of Ninlil in the astronomical compendium MUL.APIN.^[53] In most other contexts, Bizilla was closely associated with the love goddess Nanaya.^[55] An explanatory temple list known from Neo-Babylonian Sippar,^[56] arranged according to a geographic principle, states that a temple of Bizilla existed in Hursağkalama, a cult center of Ninlil.^[57]

Ningidru (written ^dNIN.PA; a second possible reading is Ninĝešduru^[58]) fulfills the role of a sukkal in a hymn to Sud, where she is described as responsible for receiving visitors in her mistress' temple.^[59] She is also mentioned alongside Sud in a fragment of an inscription of an unidentified ruler (ensi) of Shuruppak from the Sargonic period.^[58] Christopher Metcalf assumes that Ningidru should be considered a male deity,^[58] but other authors consider her to be a goddess.^{[60][59]} Her name indicates she was a divine representation of the sceptre, and she was closely associated with the deified crown, Ninmena.^[59]

Another courtier of Ninlil was her throne bearer Nanibgal,^[61] who was initially synonymous with Nisaba but came to be viewed as a distinct deity later on.^[62] Her other servants, known from the god list An = Anum, were an udug (in this context the term denotes a protective spirit) of her temple Kiur named Lu-Ninlilla and a counselor named Guduga.^[61]

A hymn to Sud from the reign of Bur-Suen of Isin refers to Asalluhi as her doorkeeper.^[59] Christopher Metcalf, who translated this composition, does not consider this to be an indication that he was closely associated with her otherwise, as the connection is not present in any other presently known texts,^[58] but Jeremiah Peterson in a review of Metcalf's publication notes that it is not impossible that it had a longer tradition.^[63] He suggests that as the god of Kuara, Asalluhi might have been associated with Sud and Shuruppak due to both of those cities being viewed as predating the mythical great flood in Mesopotamian tradition.^[64]

Ninlil and Shalash

The god list *An = Anum* attests that the Syrian goddess Shalash (not to be confused with the weather goddess Shala^[65]) was viewed as analogous to Ninlil, similar to how their respective husbands, Dagan and Enlil, were viewed as equivalents.^[66] It is possible that in Mari, Ninlil's name was used as a logographic representation of Shalash's.^[67] She is also attested alongside Dagan in an offering list from Emar, though she most likely simply represents his local spouse,^[68] presumably also Shalash.^[69] She is otherwise absent from Emar, the only other exception being an imported Mesopotamian god list, a variant of the Weidner god list.^[70] Especially in Mari, Shalash could also be identified with Ninhursag instead.^[71]

A trilingual list from Ugarit attests the equivalence between Mesopotamian Ninlil, Ugaritic Athirat and a Hurrian goddess only labeled as Ašte Kumurbineve,^[72] which means "wife of Kumarbi" in the Hurrian language.^[73] Kumarbi was a god considered analogous to Dagan^[74] and due to this association Shalash also came to be viewed as his wife.^[28] As a pair, they could also be equated with Enlil and Ninlil.^[28]

Worship

Ninlil was chiefly worshiped in the cult centers of her husband Enlil.^[61] Nippur was therefore also associated with her, as already attested in sources from the Early Dynastic Period.^[41] One of the oldest texts mentioning the worship of Ninlil might be an inscription of a certain Ennail, possibly a ruler (lugal) of Kish, who states that he collected first fruit offerings for Enlil and Ninlil.^[46] The text is only known from copies from the Ur III period, but a fragment of a statue from Nippur indicates that a ruler named Ennail reigned at some point before the Sargonic period.^[75] In the Ekur temple complex, Ninlil was worshiped in the Kiur (Sumerian: "leveled place"),^[76] which can be itself described as a "complex" in modern scholarly literature.^[77] It appears in inscriptions of Ur-Ninurta of Isin and Burnaburiash I of the Kassite dynasty of Babylon.^[76] The same name was also applied to a shrine of Ninlil which was a part of a temple of Ninimma in the same city.^[76] Further locations within the Ekur temple complex dedicated to her include the Eitimaku, alternative known as Eunuzu ("house which knows no daylight"),^[78] a shrine described as her bedchamber,^[79] and the Ekurigigal ("house, mountain endowed with sight") which was a storehouse dedicated jointly to her and Enlil, mentioned as early as during the reigns of Damiq-ilishu and Rim-Sîn I.^[80] Multiple small shrines in Nippur were also dedicated to her, including the Ešutumkiagga ("house, beloved storeroom") built by Ur-Nammu,^[81] the Emi-Tummal (translation of the first element uncertain),^[82] a shrine called Abzu-Ninlil ("Apsu of Ninlil"), attested in documents from the Ur III period,^[83] which according to Manfred Krebernik was a water basin,^[41] and a further sanctuary distinct from those three whose name is not fully preserved, also known from documents from the Ur III period.^[84]



Ruins of a temple at the site of ancient Nippur (Tell Nuffar), one of the cities associated with Ninlil

A further cult center of Ninlil was Tummal, attested in sources from the Ur III period already.^[85] It was located in the proximity of Nippur and Puzrish-Dagan, and might correspond to modern Tell Dalham, located 21 kilometers south of the former of those two ancient cities in modern Iraq.^[85] Piotr Steinkeller

proposes that it was initially a cult center of Ninhursag, and that she was replaced at some point with Ninlil, but this view is not supported by other researchers.^[86] E-Tummal also functioned as an alternate name of Ninlil's main temple in Nippur.^[87] In the Ur III period, a festival taking place in Tummal was centered on Ninlil symbolically renewing the king's legitimacy by decreeing his fate.^[88] It has been suggested that it was also a celebration of her marriage to Enlil, and that various songs referring to sexual encounters between them might be related to it, though no direct evidence for the latter theory is currently available.^[89]

It has been proposed that a further location associated with Ninlil was NUN.KID from the *Archaic City List*, a document from the Early Dynastic Period, but this is unlikely as the orthography of the name varies between sources, and there is no basis to assume it was read as Ninlil or associated with her in some way.^[90]

It is possible that a temple of Ninlil attested in inscriptions of Rim-Sîn I, Eninbišetum ("house worthy of its lady") was located in Ur.^[91] It should not be confused with a similarly named temple of Ninshubur, Eninbitum (also "house worthy of its lady"), mentioned by the same ruler and most likely located in the same city.^[91]

Ninlil was also worshiped in Dur-Kurigalzu, and a temple dedicated to her, the Egašanantagal ("house of the lady on high") was built there by king Kurigalzu I from the Kassite dynasty of Babylon.^[92]

In the first millennium BCE, according to Joan Goodnick Westenholz specifically during the reign of Marduk-apla-iddina II (721-710 BCE), Ninlil was also introduced to Ḫursağkalamma, a part of Kish, replacing the older deity worshiped there, Ishtar.^[54] The details of this process are presently unknown, though it is possible the goddess of Ḫursağkalamma was at this point understood not as a manifestation of Ishtar but as an *ištaru*, a generic term referring to female deities, and therefore could be assigned the name Ninlil without any type of syncretism occurring.^[54] Ninlil's temple there was known as E-Ḫursağkalamma ("house, mountain of the land").^[93] A ziggurat possibly dedicated to her, Ekurmah ("house, exalted mountain"), also existed in the same location.^[80] It has also been proposed that she was worshiped in the akitu temple of Zababa in Kish.^[94] A festival held in Babylon in honor of Gula involved Ninlil, as well as Bizilla, both of whom acted as the divine representatives of Kish, alongside Belet Eanna (Inanna of Uruk), Belet Ninua ("Lady of Nineveh") and the deity ^dKAŠ.TIN.NAM, possibly to be identified as a late form of the beer goddess Ninkasi.^[95]

A further temple of Ninlil, Emebišedu (house built for its me), which was also a temple of Enlil, is known from the *Canonical Temple List*, but its location is not known.^[96]

Sud in Mesopotamian religion

Sud's main cult center was Shuruppak (modern Fara).^[61] The name of the city was written the same as that of its tutelary goddess, though with a different determinative, SU.KUR.RU^{ki} rather than ^dSU.KUR.RU, similar to how the names of Enlil and Nisaba could be used to represent Nippur and Eresh, respectively.^[61] Much information about the religious life of this city has been obtained from administrative texts, and it is known that in addition to Sud, deities such as Nisaba, Ninkasi, Ninmug and Ninshubur were also worshiped there.^[97] Sud's importance in the local pantheon is reflected in the number of theophoric names invoking her.^[61] At the same time, there is relatively little evidence regarding her worship outside of Shuruppak, and she is absent from earliest sources from cities such as Lagash and Ur.^[61] She is nonetheless attested in early texts from Abu Salabikh,^[61] such as the Zame

Hymns,^[98] and Adab.^[99] In the latter of these two cities she appears in theophoric names from the Early Dynastic period, such as Sud-anzu and Sud-dazi.^[99] She does not appear in any offering lists from Adab predating the Sargonic period.^[99]

It is commonly assumed that Sud ceased to be worshiped under own name with the decline of Shuruppak,^[27] which is typically dated to the beginning of the second millennium BCE.^[25] However, Christopher Metcalf points out that Sud was still actively worshiped by kings of the Isin dynasty, namely Bur-Suen and Enlil-bani.^[100] He also notes that it cannot be precisely established how long Shuruppak remained inhabited due to lack of archeological data, as erosion only left the oldest layers of the city to excavate.^[101] At the same time, he acknowledges the fact that Shuruppak retained a degree of religious importance does not necessarily indicate that it was still an administrative center or a major urban settlement in the Isin-Larsa period.^[102]

A recently published hymn mentioning Bur-Suen indicates that Sud was regarded as responsible for granting him the right to rule.^[25] It has been proposed that the Isin dynasty's interest in Sud was based on her association with Gula, as medicine deities were particularly venerated in Isin, but there is no reference to her fulfilling such a role in this composition.^[100] One of Bur-Suen's successors, Enlil-bani, rebuilt a temple dedicated to her, Edimgalanna (Sumerian: "house, great bond of heaven"; more literally "house, mooring pole of heaven").^[103] It is generally agreed that it was located either in Shuruppak or close to it.^[102] A further temple of Sud was Ekisiga ("house of funerary offerings"),^[104] possibly also located in this city.^[105] The name is homophonous with that of a temple of Dagan in Terqa, but the latter has a different meaning ("house, silent place").^[104] Ekisiga and Edimgalanna appear side by side in a number of texts, for example in a lamentation describing the destruction of Shuruppak.^[100] It is also possible that Esiguz ("house of goat hair") located in Guaba was a temple of Sud, but this is uncertain, and it is better attested in association with Inanna of Zabalam.^[106] A further temple which seemingly was primarily dedicated to Sudağ but possibly could have been associated with Sud as well was Ešaba ("house of the heart"), whose location is presently unknown.^[107]

In the Old Babylonian period, Shuruppak became a subject of antiquarian interest for Mesopotamian scholars.^[102] It continued to be referenced in literature even after abandonment.^[108] Utnapishtim, the protagonist of the flood myth which forms a part of the Epic of Gilgamesh, is described as a Shuruppakean,^[108] while the text referred to as Nippurian Taboos 3 in modern scholarship alludes to the belief that a confrontation between the primordial deity Enmesharra and either Enlil or Ninurta took place there.^[109] A late occurrence to Sud herself as an independent figure can be found in the Canonical Temple List,^[110] which has been dated to the Kassite period.^[111]



Drawing of an impression of a cylinder seal of Bur-Suen, a king whose devotion to Sud is mentioned in a hymn dedicated to her.

Mythology

Enlil and Ninlil

Ninlil appears in the myth *Enlil and Ninlil*.^[26] Most of the known copies come from Nippur, though it was apparently also known in Sippar.^[112] In the beginning Ninlil, portrayed as inexperienced, is warned by her mother, in this composition named Nunbaršegunu,^[31] to avoid the advances of Enlil.^[26] After encountering him, Ninlil initially resists, but after consulting his advisor Nuska Enlil accomplishes his goal and seduces and impregnates her.^[26] For his transgression, he has to be judged by the "fifty great gods" and "the seven gods of destinies."^[113] According to Wilfred G. Lambert, both terms are rare in Mesopotamian religious literature, and presumably refer to major deities of the pantheon treated as a group.^[113] They deem him ritually impure and exile him from Nippur.^[26] It is a matter of ongoing debate in scholarship if Enlil's crime was rape or merely premarital sex resulting in deflowering.^[114] Ninlil follows him during his exile, even though he refuses to see her, and eventually ends up becoming pregnant multiple times,^[115] giving birth to Nanna, Nergal, Ninazu and Enbilulu.^[116] Alhena Gadotti argues that while the first encounter between them is arguably described as nonconsensual,^[117] this does not seem to apply to the remaining three ones.^[118] There is no indication that Enlil and Ninlil became husband and wife in the end, and only he receives praise in the closing lines of the composition.^[119]

Ninlil's status in *Enlil and Ninlil* has been described as that of a "subordinate consort".^[119] It has been pointed out that this portrayal does not appear to reflect her position in Mesopotamian religion, especially in the state pantheon of the Third Dynasty of Ur.^[119] The absence of Ninurta among the children has also been noted.^[31]

Enlil and Sud

Ninlil is also one of the main characters in the myth *Enlil and Sud*, also known as *Marriage of Sud*.^[120] Due to the difference in her portrayal, it is sometimes contrasted with *Enlil and Ninlil* in scholarship.^[26] It describes how she became Enlil's wife.^[121] Copies are known from Nippur, Susa, Nineveh, Sultantepe and possibly Sippar.^[122] Miguel Civil noted that the text had "wide diffusion attested not only by the relatively high number of sources preserved and their geographical distribution, but also by its long survival through Middle-Babylonian times and into the Assyrian libraries."^[123] For uncertain reasons, no reference to Shuruppak is made as any point, and Sud lives with her mother Nisaba^[100] in Eresh.^[120]

In the beginning of the composition Enlil, who is portrayed as a young bachelor traveling to find a wife,^[120] encounters Sud on the streets of Eresh and proposes to her.^[124] However, he also calls her shameless.^[120] She tells him to leave her sight in response,^[120] and additionally remarks that past suitors made her mother angry with their dishonest offers.^[124] Enlil consults his sukkal Nuska, and sends him to negotiate with Nisaba on his behalf.^[124] He is tasked with listing various gifts Enlil can bestow upon her daughter if she will let him marry her.^[124] Enlil also says that as his wife, Sud will be able to declare destinies the same way as he does.^[124] Nisaba is happy with the offer and with Nuska's conduct, and agrees to the proposal, declaring that she will become Enlil's mother-in-law.^[125] After Enlil keeps his promise and the gifts are delivered to Eresh, Nisaba blesses Sud.^[126] Aruru, in this myth portrayed as Enlil's sister,^[127] leads her to Nippur and helps her prepare for the wedding.^[128] Sud and Enlil subsequently get married, and she received the name Ninlil,^[128] promised to her in the beginning of the

composition.^[124] She is described as a former "no-name goddess" (Sumerian: *dingir mu nu-tuku*), but after assuming her new identity she is instead a goddess who "has a great name" (*mu gal tuku*).^[100] It has also been argued that name Nintur is bestowed on her,^[129] though Jeremy Black instead presumed that the goddess who receives it should be identified as Aruru, not Sud.^[27] This event is followed by a short description of a sexual encounter between the newlyweds, which according to Jeremiah Peterson can be compared to similar episodes in love songs.^[89]

It has been suggested that the portrayal of Ninlil in *Enlil and Sud* was informed by her position in the state pantheon of the Third Dynasty of Ur.^[119]

Other myths

Sud appears in some copies of *Nanna-Suen's Journey to Nippur*, though more known copies mention the goddess Ninirigal in the same passage instead.^[61] Manfred Krebernik assumes this might indicate they were sometimes conflated.^[10] Ninirigal, "lady of the Irigal," was the wife of Girra.^[130] This goddess appears in association with healing deities such as Gula/Meme and Bau elsewhere, but contrary to conclusions in older scholarship shows no affinity with Inanna, despite also being associated with the territory of Uruk.^[131]

Ninlil is mentioned in a myth only known from a single Old Babylonian fragment detailing the origin of the god Ishum.^[132] He is described as a son of Ninlil and Shamash who was abandoned in the streets.^[132] It is assumed that this myth represents a relic of the association between Sud, identified with Ninlil, and Sudağ, one of the names of the wife of sun god.^[27] Ishum was usually regarded as the son of this couple instead.^[27] Manfred Krebernik considers the composition to be the result of confusion between the names Sud and Sudağ, and thus between Ninlil and Ishum's mother, rather than syncretism.^[133]

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External links

- *Enlil and Ninlil* (<https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.2.1>) in the *Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature*
 - *Enlil and Sud* (<https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.2.2>) in the ETCSL
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 - *The Temple Hymns* (<https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.4.80.1>) in the ETCSL
 - *Nanna-Suen's Journey to Nippur* (<https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.5.1>) in the ETCSL
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Ninshubur

Ninshubur (𒀭𒊩𒌆𒃠, Ninšubur, "Lady of Subartu" or "Lady of servants"^[2]), also spelled **Ninšubura**,^[3] was a Mesopotamian goddess regarded as the *sukkal* (divine attendant) of the goddess *Inanna*. While it is agreed that in this context Ninshubur was regarded as female, in other cases the deity was considered male, possibly due to syncretism with other divine messengers, such as *Ilabrat*. No certain information about her genealogy is present in any known sources, and she was typically regarded as unmarried. As a *sukkal*, she functioned both as a messenger deity and as an intercessor between other members of the pantheon and human petitioners.

Due to the belief that she could intercede with higher ranking deities, Ninshubur was popular in everyday religion, and many theophoric names invoking her and other references to personal worship are known. Her original cult center was Akkil, but in the Early Dynastic Period she was already worshiped in nearby Uruk. She was also introduced to the pantheon of the state of Lagash, where her cult center was Girsu. Multiple kings of this area regarded her as their personal deity. In the Ur III period she was also introduced to Ur. Further cities where Ninshubur was worshiped include Adab, Nippur, Malgium, and more.

In myths, Ninshubur is portrayed as a companion of *Inanna* and helps her during various exploits. In *Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld*, she is responsible for securing *Inanna*'s return by pleading with *Enlil*, *Nanna* and *Enki*. After being resurrected, *Inanna* protects her from the *galla* demons sent to find someone to replace her in the land of the dead. Ninshubur's mourning is contrasted with Dumuzi's attitude which leads to his death in this composition. In *Inanna and Enki*, Ninshubur helps *Inanna* escape from *Enki*'s servants after theft of the *me*.

Ninshubur



Sukkal of Inanna, An and the divine assembly



Sargonic cylinder seal depicting Inanna resting her foot on the back of a lion while Ninshubur stands in front of her paying obeisance, c. 2334-2154 BCE^[1]

Major cult center Akkil, Uruk, Girsu

Symbol staff

Genealogy

Spouse usually none, but rarely Nergal

Equivalents

Akkadian Ilabrat

Seleucid Uruk Papsukkal

Names

Ninshubur

Frans Wiggermann translates Ninshubur's name as "Lady of Subartu". or alternatively "Lady of servants" (or "Lady of Subarian servants") based on another meaning of the second element, *šubur*, "servant,"^[2] and in reference to her role as a benevolent intercessory deity.^[4] Earlier translations, for example Wilfred G. Lambert's from 1976,^[5] which relied on two lexical lists from the first millennium BCE explaining it as *bel erseti* - "lord of the earth" or "lord of the underworld" - are regarded as erroneous, as no other sources explain the meaning of *šubur* as *erseti*.^[6] It is possible this uncommon understanding was based on a local tradition associating Ninshubur with Nergal.^[7]

The Sumerian term Shubur or Subir (Subartu) originally designated areas north of Mesopotamia.^{[8][9]} Both in ancient documents and in past scholarship the terms "Subartu" and "Subarians" usually refer to Hurrians.^{[10][a]} Ninshubur is described as a resident of the "mountain-lands of Subartu (*kur šubur*)" brought to Mesopotamia by Utu in the Early Dynastic UD.GAL.NUN text CUT 4,^[13] a narrative dealing with the sun god traveling to various mountainous areas to bring deities or animals from them.^[14] It is possible that echoes of Ninshubur's association with Subartu survived as late as in the Neo-Assyrian period in texts pertaining to Papsukkal.^[15]

While ^dnin-šubur was the standard writing of Ninshubur's name in cuneiform, a variant with a genitive suffix (-ak) is attested in a variety of sources as well, including personal names from the Ur III period and Old Babylonian literary texts.^[2] Wiggermann additionally argues that sometimes the name was rendered simply as Shubur,^[2] but this assumption is not universally accepted.^[16] Additionally, two forms of Ninshubur's name in the Emesal dialect are known, Gashanshubur, referring to the female form of this deity, and Umunshubur, referring to the male one, though the latter is only known from a single source.^[2]

Ninakkil

Ninakkil, "lady and Akkil", was a title applied to Ninshubur as the tutelary goddess of Akkil.^[17] Frans Wiggermann assumes that it already occurs in the Zame Hymns, based on the possible identification of the teonym AB.KID.KID as Akkil and its namesake tutelary deity as Ninakkil.^[18] The thirty ninth (out of seventy) hymn is dedicated to her.^[19] This identification is also supported by Joan Goodnick Westenholz.^[17] Manfred Krebernik and Jan Lisman in their commentary of this text argue that it cannot be established with certainty that AB.KID.KID and its deity ^dNIN.AB.KID.KID are necessarily Akkil and Ninakkil, respectively, as usually assumed based on the later convention of writing the toponym Akkil as AB.KID, though they do not rule out this possibility.^[20] They ultimately conclude that ^dNIN.AB.KID.KID must have been at least analogous to Ninshubur as both deities are described fulfilling the same role in relation to Inanna.^[21]

Nin-ŠUBUR.AL

The theonym *Nin-ŠUBUR.AL* might be either an alternate form of Ninshubur's name or a separate, though similarly named, deity.^[22] Manfred Krebernik and Jan Lisman suggest reading this name as *Ninšuburmaḥ*.^[23] In the Zame Hymns the sixty fourth hymn is dedicated to this deity, with the

corresponding cult center being GIN₂.U₉.ŠA₃.GA (reading uncertain).^[24] The same deity is also attested in the Early Dynastic god list from Fara, between two separate entries for Ninshubur, but is absent from an analogous text from Abu Salabikh, where only the two Ninshuburs occur.^[23] Ultimately the identity of this deity remains uncertain.^{[18][23]}

Sukkalanna

Sukkalanna, "heavenly vizier", is attested as a further alternate name of Ninshubur.^[25] It is her most common epithet, and additionally occurs as a theophoric element in names from the Ur III period.^[18] From the Old Babylonian period onwards, it starts to alternate with *sukkal-zi-Eanna*, which according to Frans Wiggermann likely indicates that the element *anna* was understood as the abstract noun "heaven" and not as a reference to the god Anu.^[26]

Other names

A total of fourteen names and titles of Ninshubur are listed in the god list An = Anum (tablet I, lines 31-44).^[27] In addition to the primary name they include Kakka, Meninnuanna ("fifty ordinances of heaven"), Iggalla ("big door", originally a distinct deity^{[28][b]}), Kabaninukurru ("whose promise cannot be changed"), Anzaggalla ("seat of honor"), Anšarkin ("who directs the totality of heaven"), Anšargia ("who exercises authority over the totality of heaven"), Enḥun ("appeasing lord"), ^den-ḥun-ga₂-ŠE₃ ("lord involved in appeasing"), ^dŠUBUR-ḥa-mun and Sagilla ("who exalts").^{[7][30]} Since all of the names are provided with complex Sumerian explanations, Ryan D. Winters proposes that this section might have been incorporated into An = Anum from another source.^[27] The Old Babylonian forerunner of An = Anum only lists two names of Ninshubur,^[31] Ninshubur and ^dḥa-mun-ŠUBUR.^[32]

Additional names of Ninshubur can be found in An = Anum ša amēli (lines 61-69), an explanatory god list focused on epithets of major deities, in which her section appears between Shala's and Ninurta's.^[33] In addition to the primary name they include ^dSUKKAL (a logographic writing of the name^[34]), Papsukkal, Papgal, Iggalla, Gandu, Gangu, ^dLAMMA and Dukuga.^[35] The names Gandu and Gangu are likely variants of each other and might be related to a term referring to a part of a door; Dukuga is derived from the Duku, a mythical location after which a type of seat located in temples was named.^[34]

Character

Ninshubur is regarded by Assyriologists as "the earliest and most important" *sukkal*, linked to the deities she served "not as cause and effect, but as command and execution".^[26] Her two main functions were these of "intercessory goddess"^[36] and "archetypal attendant of the gods".^[37] She served Inanna, but also Anu and by extension the entire divine assembly.^[38] The association with Anu is known from sources from the reign of Third Dynasty of Ur onward, and might be a secondary development, with Inanna being her primary and original mistress.^[4] As Inanna's *sukkal*, Ninshubur was believed to implement divine rules and regulations on her behalf.^[4] Her role as a popular intercessory deity in Mesopotamian religion was derived from her position as a servant of major deities, which resulted in the belief that she was capable of mediating with her masters on behalf of human petitioners.^[39] A hymn (CBS 14073) describes her as a servant of not only her usual masters, but also Enlil, Enki, Damgalnuna, Nanna, Ningal, Ninurta,

Ninhursag and Utu.^[40] Frans Wiggermann notes that Ninshubur's association with the divine assembly treated as a whole indicates that even though she shared many of her roles with another well attested *sukkal*, Nuska, she was ultimately considered the higher-ranked member of the pantheon.^[41]

In addition to her usual title, Ninshubur could also be called *sukkal anna*, "heavenly attendant".^[18] An inscription of Rim-Sîn I refers to her as a *sukkalmaḥ*.^[42] According to Wiggermann, while this term is attested as an administrative rank and in this context refers to an official responsible for managing the activities of multiple people holding the rank of *sukkal*, there is no indication that it had a similar meaning when applied to deities, and in this context its use is most likely only meant to exalt the bearer.^[43] Ninshubur was also referred to as *sukkalmaḥ* in Malgium,^[44] though according to Raphael Kutscher in this case the use of this title should be considered the result of Elamite cultural influence.^[45] Ninshubur could also be referred to as SAL.HÚB₂.^[46] This term is sparsely attested overall,^[47] and it is assumed that it referred to a deity considered to be a *sukkal* who was viewed as emotionally close to their lord or lady.^[48] In most of cases SAL.HÚB₂ appears in literary texts in parallel with "sukkal".^[47] Ninshubur is the only deity referred to as SAL.HÚB₂ in more than one or two sources, with seven instances known as of 2014.^[48] dNIN.AB.KID.KID, who might be identical with Ninshubur,^[18] is already described as the SAL.HÚB₂ of Inanna in the thirty ninth of the *Zame Hymns*.^[49] Ninshubur is also referred to with this title in an Old Babylonian dedicatory inscription from the reign of Samsuiluna.^[50] In another text, she is described as the "beloved SAL.HÚB₂ of Inanna", and appears in a short list of members of her family right after Dumuzi.^[38]

A number of references to Ninshubur as the "mother of the land" are known.^[36] A theological text composed during the reign of the Third Dynasty of Ur states that "Ninshubur occupies the land" and includes her among the highest ranking gods, alongside Enlil, Ninlil, Nanna, Inanna, Enki, Nergal, Ninurta and Nuska.^[51] The deified hero Gilgamesh appears in it as well, seemingly to elevate his standing among gods due to his role in the royal ideology of that time period.^[52] Gábor Zólyomi notes that a hymn focusing on Ninshubur in the role of "mother of the land" (BL 195, known from the tablet Ash. 1911.326 from the Ashmolean Museum^[53]) employs multiple *topoi* related to abundance in Sumerian literature, for example building of cattle pens and sheepfolds under her command, otherwise not associated with her.^[54] Another hymn (CBS 14073) mentions both her role as a divine attendant and that of "mother of the land".^[40] In addition to this metaphorical role, Ninshubur was also referred to as a "mother" in personal names.^[55] However, references to her as an actual "birth mother" are uncommon and unusual according to Julia M. Asher-Greve.^[56] It is possible that this aspect of her character was responsible for her unusual and unparalleled placement in the Old Babylonian Mari god list,^[57] where she occurs after Ninhursag and Nintur and before Aruru.^[58]

Some hymns indicate that the role of a divine healer was occasionally ascribed to Ninshubur.^[59]

Gender

The modern consensus view among Assyriologists is that Ninshubur was always identified as a female deity when associated with Inanna.^{[60][61]} At the same time, many authors propose that Ninshubur was male when associated with Anu.^[37] While the second millennium BCE god list *An = Anu ša āmeli* explains that "Ninshubur is Papsukkal when Anu is concerned", Papsukkal being the name of a male messenger deity,^[62] Frans Wiggermann argues that the only texts from the third millennium BCE which identify Ninshubur's gender state that she was a goddess, rather than a god.^[18] However, Manfred

Krebernik and Jan Lisman suggests that two separate Ninshuburs, one male (Inanna's) and one male (Anu's) were already recognized in the Early Dynastic period as the name occurs twice in the god lists from Abu Salabikh and Fara.^[23] Gábor Zólyomi nonetheless translates a passage related to Ninshubur's role as a servant of Anu as referring to her as a female deity.^[63] Texts from Lagash from the Early Dynastic period refer to Ninshubur exclusively as a goddess according to Toshiko Kobayashi.^[64] According to Marcos Such-Gutiérrez, the evidence from Adab is not entirely conclusive, though might point at the female version of this deity being worshiped there too, despite attested connection to Anu.^[65]

In most Akkadian texts Ninshubur was regarded as male, though it is possible exceptions did exist.^[18] According to Raphael Kutscher, Ninshubur might have been viewed as female in Malgium when worshiped alongside Ulmašītum,^[44] though Douglas Frayne treats this deity as male in his translation of an inscription from this location.^[66] In the Old Babylonian and Kassite periods in Nippur Ninshubur was also considered female.^[67] However, whether her name on Kassite seals refers to a god or a goddess is presently unknown.^[68]

Uri Gabbay proposed that Ninshubur's identity was a mirror of the gala clergy, but this view is not supported by other researchers, as regardless of gender Ninshubur was never described as a gala, and the only similarity between her and this class of clergy was their shared ability to appease specific deities.^[61] Wolfgang Heimpel suggested another solution, namely that three separate deities shared the same name, one female (according to him found for example in association with Inanna in Ur) and two male (one associated with Anu and yet another worshiped in Girsu), with no ambiguity of gender in any case.^[69] However, the matter of Ninshubur's gender was in some cases already unclear to ancient scribes, with one Old Babylonian hymn (CBS 15119+) possibly being an attempt at reconciling conflicting accounts by describing Ninshubur (identified as female in this context by Frans Wiggermann) as dressed in both feminine (left side) and masculine (right side) robes.^[18]

The view that Ninshubur was male as a servant of An in Sumerian texts from the third millennium BCE relies on the widely accepted assumption that a deity's sukkal matched their gender.^{[70][69]} However, Amasagnudi, regarded as a goddess in known sources and in one case equated with female Ninshubur, was also said to be a sukkal of Anu in an Old Babylonian document.^[71] Ninshubur herself appears as the sukkal of Nergal instead of Ugur or Ishum (both of them male) in a Sumerian text dated to the Old Babylonian period.^[72]

Ninshubur was not the only Mesopotamian deity whose gender varied in ancient sources, other examples include Ninkasi (the deity of beer, female in earlier sources but at times male later on), the couple Ninsikila and Lisin, whose genders were in some instances switched around,^[3] Uṣur-amāssu, described as a son of Adad in the god list An = Anum but as his daughter in sources from Uruk from the first millennium BCE,^[73] and the Venus deity Ninsianna, whose varying gender might be connected to dual role as personification of both the morning star and the evening star.^[74]

Syncretism with male deities

It has been proposed that the variance in Ninshubur's gender is related to syncretism between her and the male Akkadian god Ilabrat.^[36] In texts from the second millennium BCE, Ninshubur and Ilabrat coexisted.^[37] It is assumed that at least some cases Ninshubur's name, when treated as masculine, was a

logographic spelling of Ilabrat's, for example in Mari in personal names.^[18] However, Ichiro Nakata nonetheless lists a single instance name from this city in which Ninshubur according to his analysis is treated as a female deity.^[75]

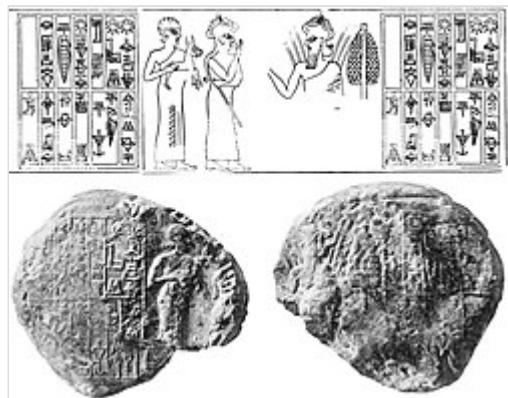
Ninshubur was additionally syncretised with Papsukkal,^[37] originally the *sukkal* of Zababa, tutelary god of Kish.^[76] Papsukkal's rise to prominence at the expense of other similar figures, such as Ninshubur, was likely rooted in the presence of the word *sukkal* in his name.^[77] While an association between the two is attested in the god list An = Anum already,^{[78][c]} the conflation was only finalized in the Seleucid period in Uruk.^[79] Papsukkal was not worshiped in that city in earlier periods,^[80] and in contrast with Ninshubur appeared only infrequently as a family deity or in personal names,^[25] but in the context of the so-called "antiquarian theology" relying largely on god lists, which developed in Uruk under Achaemenid rule,^[81] he was fully identified with Ninshubur and thus became Anu's *sukkal* and one of the eighteen major deities of the city.^[79] The late syncretic Papsukkal was not regarded as the *sukkal* of Anu and Ishtar, but rather Anu and Antu as a pair instead.^[82]

Despite the syncretism leading to perception of Ninshubur as a male deity, it is possible that the goddess Amasagnudi, worshiped alongside Papsukkal in Seleucid Uruk, was originally an epithet of female Ninshubur, a manifestation of her or at least a similar goddess sharing the role of *sukkal* of Anu.^[71] Frans Wiggermann translates this name as "mother who cannot be pushed aside".^[28]

Julia Krul suggests that the conflation between two deities from the court of Enki, male Isimud and female Ara, might have been influenced by the similar process involving Ninshubur.^[83] In An = Anum (tablet II line 275) Ninshubur is also equated with another deity associated with Enki, Gadala-abzu,^{[84][d]} "linen-clad of the abzu", though in this case both figures are understood as male.^[25]

Attributes and iconography

Ninshubur's attribute was a staff,^[56] a sign of her office as a *sukkal* representing right to rule granted to her by her masters.^[86] It is possible that it was believed Ninshubur therefore bestowed similar privileges upon kings.^[56] Other gods' divine attendants were depicted holding staffs too, including Alla (Ningishzida's), Isimud (Enki's) and Nuska (Enlil's).^[87] A *sukkal* was expected to walk in front of their master, leading the way with their staff.^[88] Other objects associated with Ninshubur included doors and shoes, and her epithet in a single source is "pure minister of the lapis lazuli shoes."^[86] According to Julia Krul, said title is bestowed upon Ninshubur by Inanna in a late variant of one of the city laments, and might reflect her "arduous travels in her lady's service".^[89]



A seal of Lugal-ushumgal as servant of Naram-Sin, possibly depicting Ninshubur

Very few depictions of female Ninshubur have been identified with certainty, though it is possible she is the deity on seals of Lugal-ushumgal, governor of Lagash during the reigns of Naram-Sin of Akkad and his son Shar-Kali-Sharri.^[90] It is also known that during building rituals figures of Ninshubur were buried

under temples of other gods in some cases.^[91] A "letter-prayer" possibly referring to a statue of Ninshubur^[92] mentions that the deity had a "face exuding allure",^[93] and describes Ninshubur's physique in terms similar to these sometimes applied to Inanna.^[94]

It has been proposed that in Girsu, where Ninshubur was regarded as the wife of Meslamtaea (in this context a name of Nergal), she can be identified as a goddess accompanied by his symbolic composite animal, the "lion-griffin", similar to how Geshtinanna was accompanied by mušḫuššu, a symbol of her husband Ningishzida,^[55] and that on Old Babylonian seals the double lion-headed mace associated with Nergal might represent Ninshubur in the role of a deity related to him.^[7]

The constellation Orion, known in ancient Mesopotamia as Sipazianna,^[95] "the true shepherd of heaven",^[96] was regarded as the astral symbol of Ninshubur,^[97] as well as Ilabrat and Papsukkal.^[95]

Association with other deities

Family and court

No clear evidence exists regarding Ninshubur's parentage, which is considered unusual in the light of her importance in Mesopotamian religion.^[7] In early sources she usually did not have a spouse.^[7] In Girsu, she was the spouse of Meslamtaea,^[55] in this context to be understood as a byname used to refer to Nergal in early sources from southern Mesopotamian cities.^[98] Marcos Such-Gutiérrez notes that it is possible that this tradition was also known in Adab, where Ninshubur appears alongside Meslamtaea in two lists of offerings.^[99] Frans Wiggermann notes that the pairing of Nergal with Ninshubur is unusual, as she was the only goddess sometimes regarded as his wife who had a well defined role other than that of his spouse, the other exception being Ereshkigal.^[100] He assumes that since many of Nergal's attested spouses, such as Mammittum or Admu, were possibly associated with the earth,^[101] this role of Ninshubur was tied to her function as "lady of the earth".^[72] No other examples of Ninshubur being regarded as another deity's wife are known.^[7] A single source refers to Ninshubur as Nergal's *sukkal* rather than wife.^[72] Dina Katz on the basis of the connection between those two deities suggests that a tradition connecting Ninshubur to the underworld might have existed in early periods, but notes that no potential references to it occur in any sources postdating the Old Babylonian period.^[42]

An = Anum contains lists of five daughters (tablet I, lines 48-52) and fourteen sons (tablet I, lines 53-66) of the male Ninshubur, who are not attested anywhere else.^[27] According to Frans Wiggermann it cannot be automatically assumed that they were associated with the female Ninshubur in earlier periods, though due to her greater importance it is nonetheless possible at least some of the information pertaining to family and courtiers mentioned in *An = Anum* originated in texts focused on her rather than any of her male counterparts.^[7] The daughters include ^dPAP.PAP, Hedu, Ninḥedubi, Ninkita and Munus-saga.^[30] The reading of the first name is uncertain, with both Kurkur and Papa, a widespread hypocoristic name in the third millennium BCE, being considered possible.^[102] Ninḥedubi is also attested alongside Papsukkal in a ritual dealing with the restoration of a door.^[7] The names of this goddess, as well as her sister Hedu, likely were originally derived from the term *ḥé-du*, literally "may it befit", metaphorically "adornment", but later came to be reinterpreted as references to architectural terms, since *ḥé-du* (loaned into Akkadian as *ḥittu*) could also mean "architrave".^[71] It is also possible that Ninkita's name can be interpreted as "lady of the doorstep".^[4]

An = Anum refers to Māgiru ("obedient") as the "herald" (*gu-za-lá*) of Ninshubur's sanctuary in Akkil (tablet I, line 255), though the same deity is also mentioned alongside Šeri as one of the two bulls of Adad (tablet III, lines 233-234), which according to Wilfred G. Lambert should be considered unusual.^[103] Daniel Schwemer states the latter attestation is likely to be a scribal mistake, as Šeri was conventionally paired with Hurri, not Māgiru.^[104] Both the Old Babylonian forerunner of *An = Anum* and *An = Anum* itself (tablet I, line 48) also provide Ninshubur with an *udug* (in this context a type of minor protective deity) named Egubidugga ("who lets the house resound pleasantly").^[4]

Ninshubur and Inanna

Ninshubur, under the variant name Ninakkil, is already regarded as a servant of Inanna in the Zame Hymns from Early Dynastic Abu Salabikh.^[18] Frans Wiggermann describes the relation between them as very close.^[26] It was believed that Inanna bestowed Ninshubur's titles upon her and made her a *sukkal*.^[105] In a hymn (CBS 14073), Inanna addressed Ninshubur endearingly as "my mother".^[26] In another, she is called the "beloved attendant" and appears right after Dumuzi and before other relatives.^[106] Ninshubur was regarded as a guardian of Inanna's secrets and as her adviser,^[26] though according to one text the latter could scoff at offered advice, both incorrect and correct.^[107] Ninshubur was also capable of "appeasing" Inanna,^[86] and one of her epithets was "who flatters the heart of Inanna".^[59] Various epithets related to this function are preserved in the god list *An = Anum*.^[108] Additionally, a temple dedicated to her whose location is not presently known bore the name E-šatezu, "house which knows the soothing of the heart".^[109] It is attested in a hymn dedicated to king Shulgi, though it is uncertain if it corresponds to structures dedicated to Ninshubur mentioned in texts from his reign.^[110]

The role of a mediator between a major deity and worshipers played by Ninshubur in the cult of Inanna has been compared to that played by the spouses of other major gods, for example Aya in the relation to Shamash or Shala in relation to Adad.^[111]

Sumerian literary catalogs list at least 7 hymns dedicated to Ninshubur^[112] which based on surviving incipits described her lamenting over something that happened to Inanna.^[113]

Ninshubur and *Lamma* goddesses

Ninshubur was associated with the *Lamma*, a class of minor goddesses,^{[114][115]} likely due to their shared role in intercession between mortals and higher ranking deities.^{[116][e]} In *An = Anum ša amēli*, ^d*Lamma* is listed as the title of Ninshubur as a deity associated with these goddesses (*ša la-ma-si*).^[35] Julia M. Asher-Greve explains the character of Lamma as that of "protective and tutelary goddesses" and notes that they are the figures most commonly appearing in so-called "presentation scenes" in ancient Mesopotamian art, in which a minor goddess (Lamma) leads a human to a seated major deity.^[118] Lamma could also be a designation for specific goddesses in contexts in which their functions were analogous to these usually fulfilled by this category of deities,



Depictions of Lamma goddesses from the Isin-Larsa period, 2000-1800 BCE.
Oriental Institute Museum, University of Chicago.

with Gudea occasionally calling the Anuna (in this context a collective term for the major deities) gods "Lamma of all countries".^[119] The nature of Lamma can be compared to that of the modern concept of guardian angel.^[120]

Other associations

In Mari Kakka, a local healing goddess, attested only in personal names,^[121] was associated with Ninshubur, but also with the medicine goddess Ninkarrak.^[111] This deity most likely should be regarded as distinct from Kakka, the *sukkal* of Anshar, known from the god list An = Anum (where the medicine goddess Kakka appears separately in Ninkarrak's section) and from the later myth Enuma Elish.^[122] Ninshubur was identified with the latter Kakka in An = Anum, but only in the specific role of "one who holds the great scepter" (tablet I, line 31).^[122] The connection is not yet attested in the Old Babylonian An = Anum forerunner, in which Kakka occurs in a context indicating the female deity is meant.^[123] According to Ryan D. Winters it is possible that the male Kakka was a secondary development and his role in literary texts was patterned on male Ninshubur.^[124]

A single Old Babylonian letter associates Ninshubur with Lugalnamtarra, a deity possibly analogous to Namtar, and invokes both of them to bless the recipient.^[125] Lugalnamtarra, as well as a deity whose name was written as ^dSUKKAL, who according to Odette Boivin might be analogous to Ninshubur, both appear in association with Shamash in texts from the archives of the First Sealand dynasty in place of his usual attendants (such as Bunene).^[126] Akurduana, one of the kings of Sealand, included the title "servant of Utu and Ninshubur" in his royal titulature.^[127] In Isin, Ninshubur was seemingly instead incorporated into the entourage of the medicine goddess Ninisina.^[128] She accordingly appears in the Isin god list in the section enumerating deities linked to both Ninisina and Inanna.^[57] Other members of this group who shared this status include Ninigizibara and Ninjinuna.^[129] Frans Wiggermann states an attestation of Ninshubur appearing alongside Alammuš in the court of Nanna is also known.^[41] In the Early Dynastic Abu Salabikh god list she appears next Nanna's wife Ningal.^[57] In Malgium in the Old Babylonian period, she seemingly fulfilled the role of a *sukkal* in relation to Ulmašitum.^[44] In Nippur at least in the sphere of cult she was linked to the circle of the local goddess Nintinugga.^[57]

In a greeting formula in a letter from Old Babylonian Larsa, Ninshubur is paired with the otherwise unknown goddess Mārat-ūmi, "daughter of the day" or "daughter of the storm".^[130] In a single incantation dated to the end of the third millennium BCE, possibly a part of a building ritual, she appears alongside the divine potter Nunura.^[131] She is rare in magical texts otherwise, though she is attested in an incantation from the Ur III period alongside Asalluhi, and in a late liver omen text "hand of Ninshubur" is listed one of the possible diagnoses.^[2]

Worship

There is evidence for creation of cult statues and votive offerings dedicated to Ninshubur from various locations in the Early Dynastic period already.^[132] Due to her intercessory role, she was popular in the sphere of personal worship, for example as a family deity.^[55] She was also among the deities invoked in theophoric names in many periods.^[86]

Akkil, Uruk and Badtibira

Akkil, where Ninshubur was worshiped as an attendant of Inanna, was considered her primary cult center.^[18] She is the goddess of this location in the Temple Hymns, though Walther Sallaberger notes that she can be considered one of the members of a group of deities associated with Uruk in this context nonetheless, similar to Dumuzi and Ningirima.^[133] Frans Wiggermann is uncertain if Akkil should be interpreted as a town or as a temple,^[18] and favors the latter interpretation due to lack of references to it in economic texts.^[134] Joan Goodnick Westenholz in a more recent publication instead concluded it was a town located close to Bad-tibira.^[17] Ninshubur's temple located in that settlement was E-(a)akkil, whose ceremonial name has been translated as "house of lamentation" by Andrew R. George.^[135] The city is to be distinguished from a temple of Papsukkal in Kish also known as Akkil,^[28] and from a sanctuary of Manungal, the goddess of prisons, also bearing such a name.^[134] A number of objects dedicated to "Ninshubur of Akkil" are known, including artifacts from the Early Dynastic period and a vessel inscribed by a *sanga* priests of Inanna from Uruk in the Ur III period.^[18] Some of the former have been dedicated to her by an individual Ur-Akkilla, who was presumably particularly devoted to her, as reflected by his own name, as well as the name of his daughter Gan-Šubur.^[136]

In the Early Dynastic period Ninshubur's cult was already established in Uruk, as indicated by votive inscriptions,^[137] and it is considered possible that it was transferred there from Akkil.^[134] She continues to appear in sources from this city in the Ur III period,^{[138][139]} when Shulgi built a new temple dedicated to her there.^[133] A year name of either this king or his predecessor Ur-Nammu mentions the building of a "temple kitchen" of Ninshubur, which might be related to a foundation tablet dedicated to her found in Uruk, though this remains uncertain.^[110]

A document from the reign of Shu-Sin indicates that Ninshubur was also worshiped in Bad-tibira.^[140]

Lagash and Girsu

Ninshubur is well attested in sources from the state of Lagash.^[141] Offerings were typically made to her in the city of Girsu.^[142] She was already worshiped there when the area was under the rule of Lugalanda (around 2400 BCE), during whose reign she was celebrated during festivals of Nanshe and Ningirsu and received offerings from the king's wife, Barnamtarra.^[143] There is no evidence pertaining to Ninshubur from the reign of Lugalanda's predecessor Enentarzi, which makes it possible she a deity worshiped by commoners at first, and only started to receive offerings from the official administration during the period of the latter monarch's rule.^[143] A temple dedicated to her, E-ešbarmeluhha, "house of decisions which cleans the *me*," existed in Girsu.^[144] It is possible, though not certain, that E-mekilibrasagil, "house which lifts on high all the *me*," known from later royal inscriptions, was also located in this city.^[145] Only a single theophoric name invoking Ninshubur is known from the Lagash area from the Early Dynastic period, Ninshubur-amamu, "Ninshubur is my mother".^[142]

A later ruler of Lagash, Urukagina, regarded Ninshubur as his personal deity.^[56] In offering lists from his reign she was placed above Mesandu, who possibly had an analogous role during the reigns of earlier local kings.^[146] Puzer-Mama, who ruled Lagash around 2200 BCE, mentions Ninshubur in his royal inscriptions, possibly in reference to Urukagina's reverence for her, as it is likely that they came from the same family and thus shared the same personal goddess, though he might also have considered her a divine mediator guaranteeing Lagash its territorial rights, regained from rulers of the Akkadian Empire.^[56] Another ruler of Lagash who regarded her as his personal goddess was Nammahani, brother

in law of Gudea.^[55] Gudea himself referred to Ninshubur as his *nin* ("mistress").^[55] Statues dedicated for the life of a ruler to Ninshubur and to Ningishzida are also known from the periods of Nammahani's and Ur-Ningirsu II's rule.^[147]

Ur and Enegi

Ninshubur is first attested in Ur in the Ur III period.^[134] E-ninbitum ("house fit for a lady"), a temple dedicated to her, or according to Wolfgang Heimpel a cella in a temple dedicated to Inanna, is attested in texts from this city.^[69] It might be the same temple as E-aggasummu,^[148] "house which gives decrees,"^[149] also presumed to be located in Ur.^[148] Shulgi referred to her as "mistress".^[55] However, she does not appear in the official cultic calendars and offering lists from this location from the reign of his dynasty, despite being a popular deity, which according to Julia M. Asher-Greve finds a parallel in Nanshe's position in the local pantheon.^[150] References to "Ninshubur of Enegi" appear in texts from Ur as well.^[134] It has been suggested she was introduced to the latter city from Uruk, as the local pantheon included other typically Urukean deities, such as the deified hero Gilgamesh and his mother Ninsun.^[151] References to Ninshubur receiving offerings there appear in texts from Puzrish-Dagan too.^[152] In one case, Ninshubur of Enegi is called the "small Ninshubur" (Ninshubur-banda), in contrast with Ninshubur of Akkil or Uruk, referred to as "great Ninshubur" (Ninshubur-gula).^[95]

During excavations of Ur, chapels of Ninshubur and Hendursaga, as well as votive objects to dedicated to them from Isin-Larsa period have been found.^[153] It is uncertain if a statue found in the Ninshubur chapel represents any deity, or a human, for example a princess or *en* priestess, though it has been noted that she lacks the horned crown associated with divinity.^[154] A "letter-prayer" to Ninshubur (UET 6/1, 7) which indicates that such texts were presented to a statue of the deity, is also assumed to be from Ur,^[92] though it is regarded as likely that it was sent by a king of Larsa, possibly Rim-Sîn I.^[93] Records indicate that he built temples of both female and male Ninshubur.^[150] In an inscription commemorating the building of a temple of Ninshubur in Ur, he refers to this deity as a goddess,^[155] while in a later one commemorating the defeat of Uruk - as a god.^[156] It is likely he was particularly devoted to this deity.^[93]

Other cities

Ninshubur appears in sources from Nippur in the Early Dynastic period already, and it is possible she was introduced to the local pantheon directly from Akkil, like in the case of Uruk.^[134] In the Old Babylonian period, she received offerings in the temple complexes of Enlil and Ninurta.^[67] Her temple in this city was Eakkilduku, "house of lamentation, the pure mound".^[149] It is possible it can be identified with a nameless sanctuary mentioned in an inscription dated to the reign of Ibbi-Sin.^[157]



A tablet mentioning sacrifices made to various gods worshiped in the state of Lagash, including Ninshubur. [Louvre](#).

Since before the Sargonic period, Ninshubur was also present in the pantheon of Adab.^[65] Meskigal, a ruler of this city, considered her his personal deity and dedicated a statue to her for the life of himself, his wife and children.^[158] A document dealing with distribution of bread to the Adab's temples indicates that one of them was dedicated to Ninshubur, and that its staff included a *nin-dingir* priestess.^[159] While Ninshubur's position in offering lists indicates she was a major deity in the local pantheon, very few theophoric names invoking her are attested.^[65]

Ninshubur is also attested in Early Dynastic texts from Shuruppak, the cult center of Sud.^[160] In Umma, she was worshiped alongside Inanna of Zabalam.^[161]

According to Jennie Myers, Ninshubur is also attested in Sippar, where the theonym according to her should be read phonetically in Sumerian names, and as "Ilabrat" in less common Akkadian ones.^[162] The worship of Ninshubur in this city is no longer attested after the reign of Sin-Muballit.^[163] The reasons behind this are unknown.^[164]

In Malgium, a kingdom located to the south of Eshnunna,^[165] Ninshubur was worshiped in a temple built by the local king Takil-ilissu in the Old Babylonian period.^[166] An inscription states that various festivals dedicated to this deity were held in the courtyard of the temple of Ulmašītum,^[44] which bore the ceremonial name Emaš (possibly erroneous writing of Eulmaš).^[167] In the same text Ninshubur is invoked in a curse formula alongside Anu, Ulmašītum, Annunitum, and the divine lions Dan-bītum and Rašub-bītum to guarantee that nobody removes Takil-ilissu's name from the foundation of the temple.^[166]

In Tell Ishchali a sanctuary of Ninshubur was a part of the temple complex of the local goddess Kitītum.^{[168][169]} Its staff might have included an *en* priest.^[170]

Other cities where Ninshubur was apparently worshiped include Akkad (in the Sargonic period), Isin, Larsa, Mari and in the Old Babylonian period, and later on Babylon and Kish, but it is difficult to tell if the deity in mention was female Ninshubur, male Ninshubur, or Ilabrat.^[95]

Mythology

In literary texts, Ninshubur frequently accompanies Inanna.^[137]

Inanna's descent to the Netherworld

Ninshubur appears in the myth *Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld*.^[171] It is presently known from a total of fifty eight copies from the Old Babylonian period, with most found during excavations in Ur and Nippur, as well as from a fragment from the Middle Babylonian period.^[172] It is assumed it belonged to the curriculum of scribal schools.^[173] However, no first millennium BCE examples are known.^[174]

Before Inanna embarks on her journey to the land of the dead, seemingly motivated by a desire to take over it,^[175] she instructs Ninshubur what to do if she will not return after three days.^[176] It is assumed that this scene is supposed to establish that she is not going to be trapped in the underworld permanently.^[171] After this period time passes, Ninshubur, following her mistress' instructions, mourns her death by lamenting and wearing rags and pleads with the gods Enlil, Nanna and Enki in an effort to persuade them to rescue Inanna.^{[177][178]} In all three cases, she repeats the same formula:

(...) do not let your daughter bow down (before) anybody in the Netherworld! Do not let your beautiful precious metal mix with the dirt of the Netherworld! Do not let your beautiful lapis lazuli be split apart like the stone cutter's stone! Do not let your boxwood be cut like the carpenter's wood! Do not let maiden Inana bow down in the Netherworld!^[179]

Victor Hurowitz considered it possible that the terms which Ninshubur uses to illustrate the possible dreadful fate of Inanna in the netherworld during her attempts to persuade other gods to help her might be a mythical reflection of a ritual of renewal of a damaged statue.^[180] While the first two gods Ninshubur approaches, Enlil and Nanna, refuse to help her, she eventually manages to secure the aid of Enki.^[181] He creates two beings, *galatura* and *kurgara*, who subsequently bring Inanna back.^[182]

After Inanna returns to the world of the living, Ninshubur, who was waiting at the gates of the underworld, throws herself at her feet.^{[183][f]} The *galla* demons accompanying Inanna suggest they can take Ninshubur to replace her in the underworld, but she protests:

(...) This is my minister of fair words, my escort of trustworthy words. She did not forget my instructions. She did not neglect the orders I gave her. She made a lament for me on the ruin mounds. She beat the drum for me in the sanctuaries. She made the rounds of the gods' houses for me. She lacerated her eyes for me, lacerated her nose for me. In private, she lacerated her buttocks for me. Like a pauper, she clothed herself in a single garment. All alone she directed her steps to the E-kur, to the house of Enlil, and to Urim, to the house of Nanna, and to Eridug, to the house of Enki. She brought me back to life. How could I turn her over to you?^[183]

Since Ninshubur is a faithful servant who mourned her properly, the demons are not allowed to take her.^[181] Inanna also does not allow them to take two further servants they meet, Shara and Lulal.^[183] Eventually they reach Dumuzi's city Bad-tibira, where it turns out that he did not mourn Inanna's death, which angers her.^[185] His behavior, contrasted with Ninshubur's (as well as Shara's and Lulal's), is meant to justify his eventual fate.^[186] Inanna lets the *galla* take him away.^[181] Ninshubur is not mentioned in the surviving lines of the remaining section of the narrative, which is focused on Dumuzi's attempt at escaping his fate and his confinement in the underworld.^[187]

Alhena Gadotti notes that an "inverted parallelism" exists between the role of Ninshubur in *Inanna's Descent* and that of Gilgamesh in another composition dealing with similar themes, *Gilgamesh, Enkidu and the Underworld*: in the former, a servant seeks help on behalf of her mistress, while in the latter text the roles are reversed, and it is Gilgamesh who wants to bring his companion Enkidu back.^[188] Dina Katz suggests that since *Inanna's Descent* was a widely circulated text, it is plausible that this part of the latter narrative was in part inspired by it.^[189]

Papsukkal takes Ninshubur's role in an Akkadian adaptation of *Inanna's Descent* focused on the counterpart of Inanna, Ishtar,^[28] but he is not directly designated as her personal servant, and the text states that he was serving "the great gods" as a group.^[190]

Inanna and Enki

In the myth *Inanna and Enki*, Ninshubur assists her mistress in escaping from enemies sent after her by Enki in the Boat of Heaven,^[191] *ma₂an-na*, also referred to as the "Both of An" in modern literature.^[192] The name of the boat is also attested in a fragment of an otherwise unknown narrative about Inanna and Enmerkar and in texts from Puzrish-Dagan, where it appears in association with Inanna and Nanaya during a festival, and in lists of offerings from Old Babylonian Isin, Larsa and Nippur.^[193]

After Inanna's theft of the *me*, Enki's monstrous servants attack the boat six times,^[191] but each time she repeats the formula "water has not touched your hands, water has not touched your feet" to Ninshubur, which according to Bendt Alter is meant to indicate that as long as the stay out of water they are out of the reach of Enki.^[194] After successfully escaping, they reach Uruk, and Ninshubur asks Inanna where she plans to unload the stolen items.^[195] The rest of the myth is poorly preserved.^[196]

Poem of Agushaya

In an Akkadian myth known under the title *Poem of Agushaya*^[197] or *Hymn of Agushaya*^[198] Ninshubur is tasked with providing Ishtar (the counterpart of Inanna) with information about the fearsome Saltu ("discord"), an opponent Ea (the counterpart of Enki) created for her, meant to serve as her mirror image.^[197] A peculiarity of this text are recurring misspellings of specific words in Ninshubur's speech.^[199] While it has been proposed that they are simply scribal errors, Benjamin R. Foster assumes this is implausible as all of them occur in two successive lines, and proposes that they were employed purposely to represent Ninshubur stuttering in shock due to Saltu's fearsome nature and her resemblance to Ishtar,^{[199][197]} translating the text accordingly:

She is b-bizarre in her actions, she b-behaves unreasoningly (...)^[200]

Gallery



A seal of Lugal-ushumgal as servant of Shar-Kali-Sharri, possibly depicting Ninshubur



The name of the deity Ninshubur is mentioned on the right shoulder. From Adab, Iraq. 2600-2370 BCE. Iraq Museum.



Ancient Sumerian calcite-alabaster figurine of a male worshiper. 2500 BCE - 2250 BCE. The inscription on his right arm mentions Ninshubur.



Statue from Der dedicated to Ninshubur by Enzi and his son Amar-kiku. 2400 BCE. British Museum, BM 22470.

Notes

- a. Beate Pongratz-Leisten notes that Hurrians were never regarded as outsiders in Mesopotamian sources, unlike other neighboring groups such as the Gutians, most likely due to their culture also having an urban character.^[11] According to Tonia Sharlach, the inhabitants of Subartu were viewed as "neighbors whose language (and perhaps culture) were worthy of closer knowledge."^[12]
- b. Evidence for the worship of Iggalla is available from Old Babylonian Uruk, where according to seal inscriptions he was considered the purification specialist (*išib*) of Eanna.^[29]
- c. Ninshubur and Papsukkal are directly equated in line 41 of tablet I.^[30]

- d. Ryan D. Winters argues that while no explicit statement to that effect can be found in this text, Gadala-abzu can implicitly be considered a child of Enki due to occurring after an enumeration of his sons and a daughter.^[85]
- e. A similar association with Lamma was also attributed to Nanaya, regarded as "lady of Lamma"^[116] She was viewed as a servant of Inanna much like Ninshubur, and in god lists, for example in the Weidner god list, she usually appears after the latter, before any further related deities (such as Kanisurra, Gazbaba or Bizilla).^[117]
- f. The term *ganzir*, used to refer to this location in this passage, is sparsely attested in Sumerian literature, only appearing in Gilgamesh, Enkidu and the Underworld otherwise.^[184]

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External links

-  Media related to Ninshubur at Wikimedia Commons
- Compositions dedicated to Ninshubur (https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=c.4.25*#) in the Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature

- Inana's descent to the nether world (<https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.4.1#>) in the ETCSL
 - Inana and Enki (<https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.3.1#>) in the ETCSL
 - Ancient Mesopotamian Gods and Goddesses: Papsukkal (god) (<http://oracc.museum.uopen.edu/amgg/listofdeities/papsukkal/>)
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Ninurta

Ninurta (Sumerian: : D₁NIN.URTA, possible meaning "Lord [of] Barley"),^[1] also known as **Ningîrsu** (Sumerian: : D₁NIN.GIR₂.SU, meaning "Lord [of] Girsu"),^[2] is an ancient Mesopotamian god associated with farming, healing, hunting, law, scribes, and war who was first worshipped in early Sumer. In the earliest records, he is a god of agriculture and healing, who cures humans of sicknesses and releases them from the power of demons. In later times, as Mesopotamia grew more militarized, he became a warrior deity, though he retained many of his earlier agricultural attributes. He was regarded as the son of the chief god Enlil and his main cult center in Sumer was the Eshumesha temple in Nippur. Ningîrsu was honored by King Gudea of Lagash (ruled 2144–2124 BC), who rebuilt Ningîrsu's temple in Lagash. Later, Ninurta became beloved by the Assyrians as a formidable warrior. The Assyrian king Ashurnasirpal II (ruled 883–859 BC) built a massive temple for him at Kalhu, which became his most important cult center from then on.

In the epic poem *Lugal-e*, Ninurta slays the demon Asag using his talking mace Sharur and uses stones to build the Tigris and Euphrates rivers to make them useful for irrigation. In a poem sometimes referred to as the "Sumerian *Georgica*", Ninurta provides agricultural advice to farmers. In an Akkadian myth, he was the champion of the gods against the Anzû bird after it stole the *Tablet of Destinies* from his father Enlil and, in a myth that is alluded to in many works but never fully preserved, he killed a group of warriors known as the "Slain Heroes". His major symbols were a perched bird and a plow.

It has been suggested that Ninurta was the inspiration for the figure of Nimrod, a "mighty hunter" who is mentioned in association with Kalhu in the *Book of Genesis*, although the view has been disputed.^[3] He may also be mentioned in the *Second Book of Kings* under the name Shendu.^[a] In the nineteenth century,

Ninurta	
God of agriculture, hunting, and war	
	
Assyrian stone relief from the temple of Ninurta at Kalhu, showing the god with his thunderbolts pursuing Anzû, who has stolen the <i>Tablet of Destinies</i> from Enlil's sanctuary (Austen Henry Layard <i>Monuments of Nineveh</i> , 2nd Series, 1853)	
Abode	Eshumesha temple in Nippur Later Kalhu, during Assyrian times
Planet	Saturn, Mercury
Symbol	Plow and perched bird
Mount	Beast with the body of a lion and the tail of a scorpion
Parents	Enlil and Ninhursag As Urash, An
Consort	As Ninurta: Gula As Ningîrsu: Bau
Equivalents	
Greek	Cronus

Assyrian stone reliefs of winged, eagle-headed figures from the temple of Ninurta at Kalhu were commonly, but erroneously, identified as "Nisrochs" and they appear in works of fantasy literature from the time period.

Caananite	<u>Attar</u>
Eblaite	<u>Aštabi</u>
Roman	<u>Saturn</u>

Worship

Ninurta was worshipped in Mesopotamia as early as the middle of the third millennium BC by the ancient Sumerians,^[4] and is one of the earliest attested deities in the region.^{[4][1]} His main cult center was the Eshumesha temple in the Sumerian city-state of Nippur,^{[4][1][5]} where he was worshipped as the god of agriculture and the son of the chief-god Enlil.^{[4][1][5]} Though they may have originally been separate deities,^[1] in historical times, the god Ningirsu, who was worshipped in the Sumerian city-state of Girsu, was always identified as a local form of Ninurta.^[1] According to the Assyriologists Jeremy Black and Anthony Green, the two gods' personalities are "closely intertwined".^[1] As the city-state of Girsu declined in importance, Ningirsu became increasingly known as "Ninurta".^[2] He became primarily characterized by the aggressive, warlike aspect of his nature.^[1]

In later times, Ninurta's reputation as a fierce warrior made him immensely popular among the Assyrians.^{[4][6]} In the late second millennium BC, Assyrian kings frequently held names which included the name of Ninurta,^[4] such as Tukulti-Ninurta ("the trusted one of Ninurta"), Ninurta-apal-Ekur ("Ninurta is the heir of [Ellil's temple] Ekur"), and Ninurtatukulti-Ashur ("Ninurta is the god Aššur's trusted one").^[4] Tukulti-Ninurta I (ruled 1243–1207 BC) declares in one inscription that he hunts "at the command of the god Ninurta, who loves me."^[4] Similarly, Adad-nirari II (ruled 911–891 BC) claimed Ninurta and Aššur as supporters of his reign,^[4] declaring his destruction of their enemies as moral justification for his right to rule.^[4] In the ninth century BC, when Ashurnasirpal II (ruled 883–859 BC) moved the capital of the Assyrian Empire to Kalhu,^[4] the first temple he built there was one dedicated to Ninurta.^{[4][7][6][8]}

The walls of the temple were decorated with stone relief carvings, including one of Ninurta slaying the Anzû bird. Ashurnasirpal II's son Shalmaneser III (ruled 859–824 BC) completed Ninurta's ziggurat at Kalhu and dedicated a stone relief of himself to the god.^[4] On the carving, Shalmaneser III's boasts of his



Gudea dedication tablet to God Ningirsu:
"For Ningirsu, Enlil's mighty warrior, his
Master; Gudea, ensi of Lagash"



The Gudea cylinders, dating to c. 2125 BC, describe how King Gudea of Lagash rebuilt the temple of Ningirsu in Lagash as the result of a dream in which he was instructed to do so



1853 restoration of what the city of Kalhu, Ninurta's main cult center in the Assyrian Empire, might have originally looked like, based on the excavations of the British archaeologist Austen Henry Layard there in the 1840s

from the city record that those who violated their oaths were required to "place two minas of silver and one mina of gold in the lap of Ninurta residing in Kalhu."^[4] The last attested example of this clause dates to 669 BC, the last year of the reign of King Esarhaddon (ruled 681 – 669 BC).^[4] The temple of Ninurta at Kalhu flourished until the end of the Assyrian Empire,^[4] hiring the poor and destitute as employees.^[4] The main cultic personnel were a šangû-priest and a chief singer, who were supported by a cook, a steward, and a porter.^[4] In the late seventh century BC, the temple staff witnessed legal documents, along with the staff of the temple of Nabu at Ezida.^[4] The two temples shared a qēpu-official.^[4]

Iconography

On kudurrus from the Kassite Period (c. 1600 – c. 1155 BC), a plough is captioned as a symbol of Ningirsu.^[1] The plough also appears in Neo-Assyrian art, possibly as a symbol of Ninurta.^[1] A perched bird is also used as a symbol of Ninurta during the Neo-Assyrian Period.^[9] One speculative hypothesis holds that the winged disc originally symbolized Ninurta during the ninth century BC,^[6] but was later transferred to Aššur and the sun-god Shamash.^[6] This idea is based on some early representations in which the god on the winged disc appears to have the tail of a bird.^[6] Most scholars have rejected this suggestion as unfounded.^[6] Astronomers of the eighth and seventh centuries BC identified Ninurta (or Pabilsag) with the constellation Sagittarius.^[10] Alternatively, others identified him with the star Sirius,^[10] which was known in Akkadian as šukūdu, meaning "arrow".^[10] The constellation of Canis Major, of which Sirius is the most visible star, was known as qaštu, meaning "bow", after the bow and arrow Ninurta was believed to carry.^[10] In the

military exploits^[4] and credits all his victories to Ninurta, declaring that, without Ninurta's aid, none of them would have been possible.^[4] When Adad-nirari III (ruled 811–783 BC) dedicated a new endowment to the temple of Aššur in Assur, they were sealed with both the seal of Aššur and the seal of Ninurta.^[4]

After the capital of Assyria was moved away from Kalhu, Ninurta's importance in the pantheon began to decline.^[4] Sargon II favored Nabu, the god of scribes, over Ninurta.^[4] Nonetheless, Ninurta still remained an important deity.^[4] Even after the kings of Assyria left Kalhu, the inhabitants of the former capital continued to venerate Ninurta,^[4] who they called "Ninurta residing in Kalhu".^[4] Legal documents



Male figure in an Assyrian winged sun emblem from the Northwest Palace at Kalhu; some authors have speculated that this figure may be Ninurta, but most scholars reject this assertion as unfounded

MUL.APIN Ninurta is consistently identified with Mercury,^{[11][12][13]} as it is read: "Mercury whose name is Ninurta travels the (same) path the Moon travels." However, in Babylonian times, Ninurta was associated with the planet Saturn,^[14] while Mercury became associated with Nabu.

Family

Ninurta was believed to be the son of Enlil.^[1] In Lugal-e, his mother is identified as the goddess Ninmah, whom he renames Ninhursag,^[15] but, in Angim dimma, his mother is instead the goddess Ninlil.^[16] Under the name Ninurta, his wife is usually the goddess Gula,^[1] but, as Ningirsu, his wife is the goddess Bau.^[1] Gula was the goddess of healing and medicine^[17] and she was sometimes alternately said to be the wife of the god Pabilsag or the minor vegetation god Abu.^[17] Bau was worshipped "almost exclusively in Lagash"^[18] and was sometimes alternately identified as the wife of the god Zababa.^[18] She and Ningirsu were believed to have two sons: the gods Ig-alima and Šul-šagana.^[18] Bau also had seven daughters, but Ningirsu was not claimed to be their father.^[18] As the son of Enlil, Ninurta's siblings include: Nanna, Nergal, Ninazu,^{[19][20]} Enbilulu,^[21] and sometimes Inanna.^{[22][23]}



Limestone bust of a goddess from Girsu, possibly Ninurta's consort Bau, wearing a horned cap

Mythology

Lugal-e

Second only to the goddess Inanna, Ninurta probably appears in more myths than any other Mesopotamian deity.^[24] In the Sumerian poem Lugal-e, also known as Ninurta's Exploits, a demon known as Asag has been causing sickness and poisoning the rivers.^[15] Ninurta confronts Asag, who is protected by an army of stone warriors.^{[6][4][25]} Ninurta slays Asag and his armies.^{[6][4][25]} Then Ninurta organizes the world,^{[6][4]} using the stones from the warriors he has defeated to build the mountains, which he designs so that the streams, lakes and rivers all flow into the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, making them useful for irrigation and agriculture.^{[6][15]} Ninurta's mother Ninmah descends from Heaven to congratulate her son on his victory.^[15] Ninurta dedicates the mountain of stone to her and renames her Ninhursag, meaning "Lady of the Mountain".^[15] Finally, Ninurta returns home to Nippur, where he is celebrated as a hero.^[4] This myth combines Ninurta's role as a warrior deity with his role as an agricultural deity.^[6] The title Lugal-e means "O king!" and comes from the poem opening phrase in the original Sumerian.^[4] Ninurta's Exploits is a modern title assigned to it by scholars.^[4] The poem was eventually translated into Akkadian after Sumerian became regarded as too difficult to understand.^[4]

A companion work to the Lugal-e is Angim dimma, or Ninurta's Return to Nippur,^[4] which describes Ninurta's return to Nippur after slaying Asag.^[4] It contains little narrative and is mostly a praise piece, describing Ninurta in larger-than-life terms and comparing him to the god An.^{[26][4]} Angim dimma is believed to have originally been written in Sumerian during the Third Dynasty of Ur (c. 2112 – c. 2004

BC) or the early Old Babylonian Period (c. 1830 – c. 1531 BC),^[27] but the oldest surviving texts of it date to Old Babylonian Period.^[27] Numerous later versions of the text have also survived.^[27] It was translated into Akkadian during the Middle Babylonian Period (c. 1600 — c. 1155 BC).^{[4][27]}

Anzû myth

In the Old, Middle, and Late Babylonian myth of Anzû and the Tablet of Destinies, the Anzû is a giant, monstrous bird.^{[28][29][1]} Enlil gives Anzû a position as the guardian of his sanctuary,^{[28][30]} but Anzû betrays Enlil and steals the Tablet of Destinies,^{[31][32][1]} a sacred clay tablet belonging to Enlil that grants him his authority,^[33] while Enlil is preparing for his bath.^{[34][32]} The rivers dry up and the gods are stripped of their powers.^[30] The gods send Adad, Girra, and Shara to defeat the Anzû,^{[30][34]} but all of them fail.^{[30][34]} Finally, the god Ea proposes that the gods should send Ninurta, Enlil's son.^{[30][34]} Ninurta confronts the Anzû and shoots it with his arrows,^{[35][4]} but the Tablet of Destinies has the power to reverse time^[4] and the Anzû uses this power to make Ninurta's arrows fall apart in midair and revert to their original components.^{[35][4]}

Ninurta calls upon the south wind for aid, which rips the Anzû's wings off.^[35] The god Dagan announces Ninurta's victory in the assembly of the gods^[34] and, as a reward, Ninurta is granted a prominent seat on the council.^{[34][30][10]} Enlil sends the messenger god Birdu to request Ninurta to return the Tablet of Destinies.^[36] Ninurta's reply to Birdu is fragmentary, but it is possible he may initially refuse to return the Tablet.^[37] In the end, however, Ninurta does return the Tablet of Destinies to his father.^{[30][38][1][4]} This story was particularly popular among scholars of the Assyrian royal court.^[4]

The myth of Ninurta and the Turtle, recorded in UET 6/1 2, is a fragment of what was originally a much longer literary composition.^[39] In it, after defeating the Anzû, Ninurta is honored by Enki in Eridu.^[39] Enki senses his thoughts and creates a giant turtle, which he releases behind Ninurta and which bites the hero's ankle.^{[39][40]} As they struggle, the turtle digs a pit with its claws, which both of them fall into.^{[39][40]} Enki gloats over Ninurta's defeat.^{[39][40]} The end of the story is missing;^[41] the last legible portion of the account is a lamentation from Ninurta's mother Ninnah, who seems to be considering finding a substitute for her son.^[39] According to Charles Penglase, in this account, Enki is clearly intended as the hero and his successful foiling of Ninurta's plot to seize power for himself is intended as a demonstration of Enki's supreme wisdom and cunning.^[39]

Other myths

In Ninurta's Journey to Eridu, Ninurta leaves the Ekur temple in Nippur and travels to the Abzu in Eridu, led by an unnamed guide.^[42] In Eridu, Ninurta sits in assembly with the gods An and Enki^[34] and Enki gives him the me for life.^[43] The poem ends with Ninurta returning to Nippur.^[43] The account probably



Ninurta with his thunderbolts pursues Anzû, who has stolen the Tablet of Destinies from Enlil's sanctuary (Austen Henry Layard *Monuments of Nineveh*, 2nd Series, 1853)

deals with a journey in which Ninurta's cult statue was transported from one city to another and the "guide" is the person carrying the cult statue.^[34] The story closely resembles the other Sumerian myth of *Inanna and Enki*, in which the goddess Inanna journeys to Eridu and receives the *mes* from Enki.^[8] In a poem known as the "Sumerian *Georgica*", written sometime between 1700 and 1500 BC, Ninurta delivers detailed advice on agricultural matters,^{[1][44]} including how to plant, tend, and harvest crops, how to prepare fields for planting, and even how to drive birds away from the crops.^[1] The poem covers nearly every aspect of farm life throughout the course of the year.^[1]

The myth of the *Slain Heroes* is alluded to in many texts, but is never preserved in full.^[1] In this myth, Ninurta must fight a variety of opponents.^[45] Black and Green describe these opponents as "bizarre minor deities";^[2] they include the six-headed Wild Ram, the Palm Tree King, the seven-headed serpent and the Kulianna the Mermaid (or "fish-woman").^[10] Some of these foes are inanimate objects, such as the Magillum Boat, which carries the souls of the dead to the Underworld, and the strong copper, which represents a metal that was conceived as precious.^[2] This story of successive trials and victories may have been the source for the Greek legend of the Twelve Labors of Heracles.^[10]



Sumerian cylinder seal impression dating to c. 3200 BC showing an *ensi* and his acolyte feeding a sacred herd; Ninurta was an agricultural deity and, in a poem known as the "Sumerian *Georgica*", he offers detailed advice on farming

Later influence

In antiquity

In the late seventh century BC, Kalhu was captured by foreign invaders.^[4] Despite this, Ninurta was never completely forgotten.^[4] Many scholars agree that Ninurta was probably the inspiration for the biblical figure *Nimrod*, mentioned in *Genesis 10:8–12* as a "mighty hunter".^{[46][44][47][48]} Though it is still not entirely clear how the name *Ninurta* became *Nimrod* in Hebrew,^[44] the two figures bear mostly the same functions and attributes^[49] and *Ninurta* is currently regarded as the most plausible etymology for Nimrod's name.^{[44][4]} Eventually, the ruins of the city of Kalhu itself became known in Arabic as *Namrūd* because of its association with Ninurta.^[4]

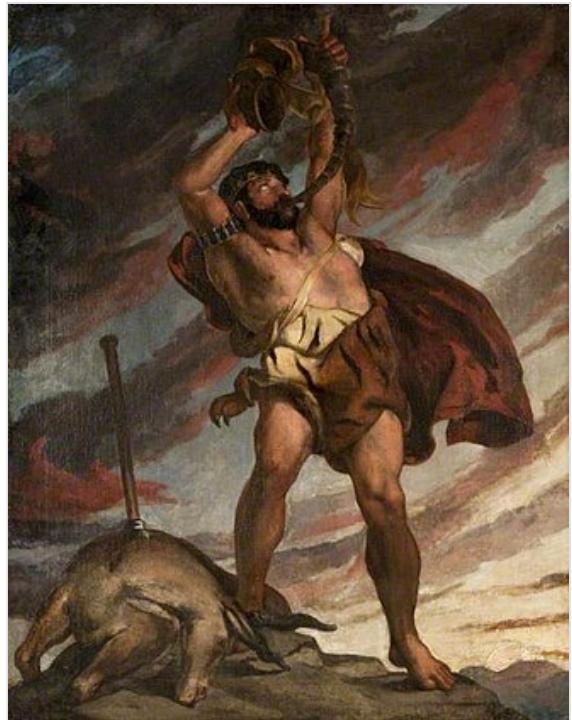
Later in the Old Testament, in both *2 Kings 19:37* and *Isaiah 37:38*, King Sennacherib of Assyria is reported to have been murdered by his sons *Adrammelech* and *Sharezer* in the temple of "*Nisroch*",^{[48][4][6][10][47]} which is most likely a scribal error for "Nimrod".^{[4][6][10][47]} This hypothetical error would result from the Hebrew letter *n* (mem) being replaced with *d* (samekh) and the letter *T* (dalet) being replaced with *ת* (kaf).^{[4][10]} Due to the obvious visual similarities of the letters involved and the fact that no Assyrian deity by the name of "Nisroch" has ever been attested, most scholars consider this error to be the most likely explanation for the name.^{[4][10][47][50]} If "Nisroch" is Ninurta, this would make Ninurta's temple at Kalhu the most likely location of Sennacherib's murder.^[50] Other scholars have attempted to identify Nisroch as *Nusku*, the Assyrian god of fire.^[48] Hans Wildberger rejects all suggested identifications as linguistically implausible.^[48]

Although the Book of Genesis itself portrays Nimrod positively as the first king after the Flood of Noah and a builder of cities,^[51] the Greek Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Bible refers to him as a giant^[51] and mistranslates the Hebrew words meaning "before Yahweh" as "in opposition against God."^[51] Because of this, Nimrod became envisioned as the archetypal idolator.^[51] Early works of Jewish midrash, described by the first-century AD philosopher Philo in his Quaestiones, portrayed Nimrod as the instigator of the building of the Tower of Babel, who persecuted the Jewish patriarch Abraham for refusing to participate in the project.^[51] Saint Augustine of Hippo refers to Nimrod in his book The City of God as "a deceiver, oppressor and destroyer of earth-born creatures."^[51]

In modernity

In the sixteenth century, Nisroch became seen as a demon. The Dutch demonologist Johann Weyer listed Nisroch in his Pseudomonarchia Daemonum (1577) as the "chief cook" of Hell.^[52] Nisroch appears in Book VI of John Milton's epic poem Paradise Lost (first published in 1667) as one of Satan's demons.^{[53][54]} Nisroch, who is described as frowning and wearing beaten armor,^[53] calls into question Satan's argument that the fight between the angels and demons is equal, objecting that they, as demons, can feel pain, which will break their morale.^[53] According to Milton scholar Roy Flannagan, Milton may have chosen to portray Nisroch as timid because he had consulted the Hebrew dictionary of C. Stephanus, which defined the name "Nisroch" as "Flight" or "Delicate Temptation".^[53]

In the 1840s, the British archaeologist Austen Henry Layard uncovered numerous stone carvings of winged, eagle-headed genii at Kalhu.^{[4][6]} Remembering the Biblical story of Sennacherib's murder, Layard mistakenly identified these figures as "Nisrochs".^{[4][6]} Such carvings continued to be known as "Nisrochs" in popular literature throughout the remaining portion of the nineteenth century.^{[4][6]} In Edith Nesbit's classic 1906 children's novel The Story of the Amulet, the child protagonists summon an eagle-headed "Nisroch" to guide them.^[4] Nisroch opens a portal and advises them, "Walk forward without fear"



Nimrod (1832) by David Scott. Nimrod, the "great hunter" mentioned in Genesis 10:8–12, is believed by many scholars to be inspired by either Ninurta himself or the Assyrian king Tukulti-Ninurta I, named after him



Stone relief carving of an eagle-headed genius from the temple of Ninurta at Kalhu; such depictions were widely, but erroneously, identified as Ninurta in the nineteenth century and were popularly known as "Nisrochs"

and asks, "Is there aught else that the Servant of the great Name can do for those who speak that name?"^[4] Some modern works on art history still repeat the old misidentification,^[6] but Near Eastern scholars now generally refer to the "Nisroch" figure as a "griffin-demon".^[6]

In 2016, during its brief conquest of the region, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) demolished Ashurnasirpal II's ziggurat of Ninurta at Kalhu.^[7] This act was in line with ISIL's longstanding policy of destroying any ancient ruins which it deemed incompatible with its militant interpretation of Islam.^[7] According to a statement from the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR)'s Cultural Heritage Initiatives, ISIL may have destroyed the temple to use its destruction for future propaganda^[7] and to demoralize the local population.^[7]

In March 2020, archaeologists announced the discovery of a 5,000-year-old cultic area filled with more than 300 broken ceremonial ceramic cups, bowls, jars, animal bones and ritual processions dedicated to Ningirsu at the site of Girsu. One of the remains was a duck-shaped bronze figurine with eyes made from bark which is thought to be dedicated to Nanshe.^{[55][56]}

In February 2023, the E-ninnu temple (Temple of the White Thunderbird), the primary sanctuary of Ningirsu was identified during the excavations led by British Museum and Getty Museum archaeologists at the site of Girsu.^[57]

See also

- Kajamanu

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Notes

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External links

■ Texts

- Narratives about Ninurta
 - ETCSL website: Unicode version (https://web.archive.org/web/20110308035812/http://www-etcsl.orient.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=c.1.6*) and ETCSL website: ASCII version (https://web.archive.org/web/20090118182055/http://www-etcsl.orient.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=c.1.6*&charenc=j)
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Nuska

Nuska or Nusku,^[2] possibly also known as Našub,^[3] was a Mesopotamian god best attested as the sukkal (divine vizier) of Enlil. He was also associated with fire and light, and could be invoked as a protective deity against various demons, such as Lamashtu or gallu. His symbols included a staff, a lamp and a rooster. Various traditions existed regarding his genealogy, with some of them restricted to texts from specific cities. His wife was the goddess Sadarnunna, whose character is poorly known. He could be associated with the fire god Gibil, as well as with various courtiers of Enlil, such as Shuzianna and Ninimma.

The main cult center of Nuska was Nippur, where he is already attested in the Early Dynastic period. He was worshiped both in temples of his own and in the Ekur complex. He is attested in various documents from the Kassite period, including oath formulas and inscriptions, as well as in theophoric names. In later periods, he was introduced to the local pantheons of other cities, including Babylon, Ur and Uruk in the south and Assur and Harran in the north. The last of these cities might have served as his main cult center in the late first millennium BCE. Some attestations of the worship of Nuska are available from outside Mesopotamia, including inscriptions from Chogha Zanbil in Elam and Aramaic documents from Elephantine in Egypt.

In known myths, Nuska is typically portrayed as a servant of Enlil. He appears in this role in two different narratives about his marriage, *Enlil and Sud* and *Enlil and Ninlil*, in *Atrahasis*, in the *Anzû* narrative, and in other compositions. Hymns dedicated to him are known as well.

Nuska	
Sukkal of Enlil; god of fire and light	
	
Assyrian king Tukulti-Ninurta I praying to a symbolic representation of Nuska. ^[1] The cuneiform inscription on the base reads "Cult pedestal of the god Nuska, the grand vizier, the temple Ekur...", 13th century BCE. From Assur, Iraq. Pergamon Museum.	
Major cult center	Nippur. Harran
Animals	rooster
Symbol	staff, flame, lamp
Genealogy	
Parents	Enlil and Ninlil Sin and Ningal Anu and Antu Enul and Ninul
Spouse	Sadarnunna
Children	^d KAL, sometimes Gibil

Name

The etymology of Nuska's name is uncertain.^[4] Wilfred G. Lambert proposed that it was a shortened form of Sumerian *en-usuk-ak*, "lord of the scepter," though he noted the form *usuk* is speculative, and would require an interchange of a dental and sibilant in the uncommonly attested word *udug*, known from lexical lists.^[5] This proposal is implausible according to Jeremiah Peterson.^[6]

The standard cuneiform writing of the name was  (dPA+TÚG),^[7] though phonetic syllabic spellings are known too.^[8] Sometimes the two attested forms, Nuska and Nusku, are treated as, respectively, the Sumerian and Akkadian readings in modern literature.^[2] According to Michael P. Streck, the reading Nuska was older, though he asserts the form Nusku, written syllabically, appears already in Old Babylonian theophoric names, such as Ibi-Nusku and Idin-Nusku.^[8] However, Lambert pointed out that this assumption is mistaken, and Streck most likely misread unrelated names invoking Numushda.^[5] Gianni Marchesi in a more recent publication states that the reading Nusku is only attested after the Old Babylonian period.^[9] The logographic writing of Nuska's name could also be read as Enšadu, commonly etymologized as "the good hearted lord," but it remains uncertain if this was simply his alternate name, or an originally independent deity, possibly viewed as a divine shepherd.^[9]

Umunmuduru was the *emesal* form of Nuska's name.^{[10][2]} However, according to Mark E. Cohen this theonym initially referred to the deity Ningidru, who only came to be identified with Nuska at a later point in time.^[11]

In Aramaic, Nuska's name was spelled as *nsk* in texts from Babylonia and as *nšk* or *nwšk* in these originating elsewhere, in Assyria, Nerab and Elephantine.^[8] It is also possible that the theonym Našuh, attested in syllabic cuneiform texts from the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian periods in theophoric names from Harran and its surroundings, represents a second West Semitic derivative of Nuska's name.^[3]

Character

Nuska was considered the divine *sukkal* ("vizier") or *sukkalmaḥ* ("great vizier") of Enlil.^[8] While the holders of the historical office of *sukkalmaḥ* were the overseers of the regular *sukkals*, there is no indication that their divine counterparts also functioned this way, and Enlil had no other servants designated with either term.^[12] Nuska fulfilled all the functions usually assigned to this type of deities, namely acting as a doorkeeper and advisor of his master, overseeing his court, and mediating between him and human supplicants.^[4] He was also believed to be the keeper of Enlil's secrets^[13] and was said to gladden his heart.^[7] In Assyria, he was incorporated into the court of Ashur in the same role.^[14] A staff was considered the badge of the office of a vizier, and is therefore attested as Nuska's attribute.^[13] He could be called *en-ğidru*, the "lord of the scepter."^[15] While no text directly mentions Enlil bestowing a staff upon him, it is presumed that it was believed that like other analogous deities he received it from his superior.^[16] A text from the reign of Ishme-Dagan states that he owed his position to Enlil and Ninlil.^[17]

Extensive capabilities assigned to Nuska as a *sukkal* in texts dating to the Old Babylonian period or later most likely reflect the fact that he was a servant of a major deity, similar as *Ninshubur*, for whom an analogous phenomenon is attested.^[18] However, when the two of them appear together, *Ninshubur* appears to be understood as the higher ranked deity.^[19] Frans Wiggermann notes that the *sukkals* of the

most commonly worshiped deities, such as Nuska, Ninshubur (the sukkal of Inanna) or Alammuš (the sukkal of Nanna), seemingly did not originate as an extension of their respective masters, in contrast with deities such as Ninmgir, the deified lightning who served as Ishkur's sukkal, and it is not presently possible to explain how they acquired their respective positions as their servant.^[20]

Nuska was also associated with fire and light.^{[15][4]} He functioned as a protective deity at night, in absence of the sun god Shamash, and could be invoked against nightmares and demons.^[21] He appears in this role in Maqlû, on an amulet meant to protect the owner from the demon Lamashtu,^[2] and in a prayer invoking him against various demons, such as gallu.^[22] On occasion he was referred to as the "king of the night."^[15]

A bundle of flames occurs as the symbol of Nuska on Old Babylonian cylinder seals, but from the Kassite period onward he was most commonly associated with lamps in art.^[23] He is represented by a lamp symbol on a number of kudurru, inscribed boundary stones.^[2] A further symbol which could represent him as a god associated with providing light in the night was the rooster.^[15] A depiction of the Assyrian king Tukulti-Ninurta I praying to a staff placed on a socle is assumed to be a symbolic representation of Nuska as well.^[1] According to Frans Wiggermann, the interpretation of the object as a stylus, present in a number of older publications, is incorrect.^[24]

In a single astronomical text from Seleucid Uruk, the constellation Orion is linked to Nuska, though it was more commonly associated with Papsukkal.^[25]

Associations with other deities

Nuska was considered to be a son of Enlil, and by extension a brother of Ninurta.^[8] However, according to Ruth Horry, he was referenced as Enli's courtier more commonly than as his descendant.^[2] In the hymn Nuska B, Nuska's parents are instead Enul and Ninul,^[8] a pair of deities typically found in lists of ancestors of Enlil.^[26] According to Jeremiah Peterson, another pair of similar deities, Enki and Ninki, could occur in this role too.^[27] The ancestral Enki paired with Ninki is not to be confused with the homophonous god of wisdom, Enki.^[28]

In the first millennium BCE in Harran, Nuska came to be viewed as a son of the moon god Sin and his wife Ningal.^[8] Manfred Krebernik suggests that this tradition might have developed through Aramaic influence.^[29] Michael P. Streck instead argues that the new connection depended on the fact that Nuska and Sin were both believed to provide light during the night.^[8] Another alternate tradition, according to which Nuska was a son of Anu, developed due to the association between him and Gibil.^[8] Julia Krul suggests that the priests of Anu might have adhered to it in Uruk in the Seleucid period.^[1] However, she also notes Nuska retained the role of Enlil's servant in this context.^[30]

Gibil could sometimes be viewed as Nuska's son.^[2] According to Andrew R. George, the fire god was already associated with him and understood as acting on his behalf during the reign of Nazi-Maruttash, when they appear together in a kudurru inscription, while the earlier Weidner god list places him right behind Sadarnunna, a goddess regarded as Nuska's spouse.^[31] Her relation to him is her best attested feature, and her character is otherwise poorly known.^[32] According to the god list An = Anum Nuska also

had a daughter whose name was written logographically as ^dKAL.^[33] According to Richard L. Litke, she should be distinguished from other deities whose names could be represented by this sign.^[34] She was married to Inimmanizi,^[33] the sukkal of Ninurta.^[34]

As a servant of Enlil, Nuska could be associated with other members of his court, and in a number of texts he is grouped with Shuzianna, Ninimma, Ennugi, Kusu, Ninšar and Ninkasi.^[35] Kalkal, the divine doorkeeper of the temple Ekur, was considered his subordinate.^[36] A late esoteric explanatory text equates Nuska with Lumma.^[37] The equation between them most likely depended on their shared epithet udug Ekurrake, "guardian of Ekur."^[38] However, in offering lists, as well as in An = Anum, they occur separately from each other.^[38] The same explanatory text also equates Sadarnunna with Hadaniš,^[39] another divine guardian of Ekur, according to Gianni Marchesi identical with a king of Hamazi from the Sumerian King List.^[40] The Kassite god Shuqamuna also could be considered analogous to Nuska.^[23]

In Seleucid Uruk Nuska, Isimud and Papsukkal functioned as a group.^[41] In the texts specifically pertaining to the Akitu festival, the first two of them are grouped with Kusu instead.^[42] Pisangunug appears in ritual texts alongside members of these groups too.^[43]

Worship

The earliest evidence of the worship of Nuska is a theophoric name attested in a text from Shuruppak.^[8] However, he is absent from the Fara and Abu Salabikh god lists.^[44] He was worshiped in Nippur since the Early Dynastic period^[1] and in the third millennium BCE was already considered one of the main deities in the local pantheon, next to Enlil, Ninlil, Ninurta and Inanna.^[45] His temples in this city bore the ceremonial Sumerian names Emelamanna, "house of the radiance of heaven,"^[46] and Emelamḥuš, "house of awesome radiance."^[47] A text from the Old Babylonian period states that in addition to Nuska himself, Enlil, Shuzianna and the pair Lugalirra and Meslamtaea were worshiped in an unspecified temple dedicated to him located in Nippur.^[23] The last two of these deities functioned as its divine doorkeepers.^[48] Attested temple staff dedicated to him included six NIN.DINGIR priestesses, five pašišu priests, singers, doorkeepers and a snake charmer.^[23] Nuska was also worshiped alongside Sadarnunna in the Ekur complex in the Ešmah,^[49] "exalted house."^[50] Furthermore, a topographical text lists him as one of the nine deities worshiped in the temple of Ninimma.^[51]

The worship of Nuska continued in Nippur in the Kassite period.^[23] He is attested in multiple dedicatory inscriptions^[52] and in oath formulas.^[53] Furthermore, he appears commonly in theophoric names,^[54] in which he is attested locally with comparable frequency as Ninurta, Ishtar or Nergal.^[23] A total of fifty names invoking him were known as of 2017.^[55] He is overall the seventh most commonly occurring deity in them.^[56] The names are more sparsely attested in the first millennium BCE, and while Nuska continued to be worshiped in Nippur, references to him have only been identified in some of the texts from the city, and he is absent altogether for example from the šandabakku archive from the eighth century BCE.^[23]

Other southern cities

Starting with the Neo-Babylonian period, Nuska is also attested in documents from Uruk.^{[57][1]} His temple (É ^dNUSKU) was most likely a small independent sanctuary.^[58] Its staff included a šangû, translated as "pontiff" by Paul-Alain Beaulieu.^[58] Nuska is also attested in a single document from this

city the Achaemenid period.^[57] Later, under the rule of the Seleucids, he was worshiped in the Bit Rēš,^[41] "head temple," a complex of sacral buildings established in this period which was dedicated to Anu and Antu.^[59] He was believed to guard one of its gates, the Great Gate (*ká.gal*).^[41] While he appears in a variety of ritual texts, he is absent from theophoric names.^[60]

Nuska also was incorporated into the pantheons of other cities in the first millennium BCE, including Ur,^[1] where he was venerated in the Egipar, the temple of Ningal, as attested in a brick inscription of Sin-balassu-iqbi.^[61] His cultic seat located there bore the name Eadgigi, "house of the counselor."^[61] He is also attested in texts from Babylon,^[1] where he was worshiped in the Esagil complex, where his seat was the Eigrku, perhaps to be translated as "house of the pure oven," though the restoration of the second sign in the name is uncertain.^[62] He also had his own temple in this city, the Enunmaḥ,^[23] "house of the exalted prince," attested in a topographical text.^[63]

Northern Mesopotamia

While Nuska is not attested in sources from Assyria from the Old Assyrian period, he was worshiped there in the Middle Assyrian period already.^[23] For example, an Assyrian king who reigned in the twelfth century BCE bore the name Mutakkil-Nusku.^[64] Nuska is also mentioned in a hymn dedicated to wartime exploits of Tiglath-Pileser I, in which he is one of the gods who help the king vanquish his enemies during military campaigns.^[65] In a building inscription Ashurbanipal lists him as one of the deities who granted him the right to rule as his father's successor.^[66] He also appears in the Tākultu text from his reign, between Tashmetum and Ninurta.^[67] In Assur he was worshiped in a cella located in the Ešarra, the temple of Ashur.^[23]

The city of Harran functioned as a cult center of Nuska in the north.^[23] Julia Krul argues that it should be considered the main city in which he was worshiped in the first millennium BCE.^[1] He was venerated in the Emelamanna, "house of the radiance of heaven,"^[46] which might have been either an independent temple or a cella in the Eḥulḥul,^[23] "house which gives joy," the temple of Sin.^[68] It was rebuilt by Ashurbanipal.^[46] It is sometimes assumed that a deity still worshiped in Harran in the times of Jacob of Serugh (451-521 CE), Bar NMR', was a remnant of the original cult of Nuska.^[69]

Outside Mesopotamia

The Elamite ruler Untash-Napirisha built a sanctuary of Nuska in the Chogha Zanbil complex.^[23] A total of forty five bricks with various inscriptions commemorating this event in which the king asks Napirisha, Inshushinak and Nuska to accept this construction project as an offering have been found during excavations.^[70]

Arameans worshiped Nuska in Nerab near Aleppo, which was a cult center of their moon god Šahr, and in Elephantine in Egypt.^[69]

Mythology

In myths, Nuska is usually portrayed as a servant of Enlil.^[15]

Nuska appears in the myth *Enlil and Sud*, in which he is directly designated as a sukkal.^[71] Enlil, in this composition portrayed as a bachelor, sends him to consult a marriage proposal with Nisaba, the mother of Sud,^[72] a goddess who he earlier accidentally insulted,^[73] either by mistake or in a failed attempt to flirt with her.^[72] He also instructs him to bring a gift for Sud.^[73] He is told to carry it in his left hand, which according to Wilfred G. Lambert might indicate that he carried a staff in his right hand as a badge of his office.^[74] Miguel Civil argued that due to apparent Mesopotamian perception of right hand as ritually pure and thus more suitable for various activities, such as prayer, eating and baking, this might indicate that Enlil viewed Sud as impure,^[75] but Lambert disagrees with this interpretation, and suggests that the gift was simply meant to be kept hidden due to being an additional way to seal the negotiations.^[74] The exact nature of the gift is not known, and it is simply described as a "treasure" (*gi₁₆-sa*).^[76] Nisaba is pleased with Nuska's polite conduct, and agrees to Enlil's proposal.^[77] After returning, he reports his success to his master, who happily starts to prepare the wedding gifts.^[72] Afterwards Enlil marries Sud, who receives the name Ninlil as a result.^[78] In a myth presenting a different version of the relationship between Enlil and his spouse, *Enlil and Ninlil*, Nuska also appears as his servant.^[79] In this text, Enlil orders him to transport him across the river so that he can meet Ninlil.^[80]

Nuska also appears in *Atrahasis*.^[81] When the divine doorkeeper Kalkal notices the rebelling gods have surrounded the Ekur, he wakes up Nuska, who in turn wakes up Enlil to inform him about the situation.^[82] He subsequently carries messages between Enlil and the rebellious worker gods.^[83] Later he is tasked with summoning Shullat and Hanish,^[84] who start the flood at Enlil's command.^[85]

In *Ninurta's Return to Nippur*, Nuska appears briefly to greet and praise the eponymous god when he approaches Ekur after vanquishing various enemies.^[86] In the late version of the Anzû myth, Enlil tells Nuska to summon Birdu, who subsequently is sent to inquire Ninurta about his decision to keep the Tablets of Destiny.^[87]

A number of hymns dedicated to Nuska are known, including the compositions designated as *Nuska A*, *Nuska B* and *Ishme-Dagan Q* in the Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature.^[44]

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External links

- Hymns dedicated to Nuska (https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=c.4.29*) in the Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature
 - An *adab* (?) to Nuska for Išme-Dagan (Išme-Dagan Q) (<https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.2.5.4.17>) in the ETCSL
 - Myths about the marriage of Enlil (https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=c.1.2*#) in the ETCSL
 - *Ninurta's return to Nippur* (<https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.6.1>) in the ETCSL
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Azimua

Azimua, also known as **Ninazimua**,^[1] was a Mesopotamian goddess regarded as the wife of Ningishzida.

Name

Ninazimua is the original spelling of the name of this goddess, attested in sources from the Ur III period.^[2] Later the NIN sign was usually omitted.^[2] The form Ninazimua is attested in at least one theophoric name, Geme-Ninazimua.^[2]

Wilfred G. Lambert proposed that the element *a-zi* in her name can be interpreted as "water of life."^[3]

Position in the pantheon

Azimua was regarded as the wife of Ningishzida.^[2] However, multiple traditions regarding this god's marital status existed. The god list An = Anum identifies not only Azimua, but also Ekurritum (not attested in such a role anywhere else^[4]) as his wives, while other sources favor Geshtinanna, identified with Belet-Seri.^[5] In some cases, Azimua and Geshtinanna/Belet-Seri were conflated, for example in inscriptions of king Gudea of Lagash.^[6] A god list from Susa treats them as two names of the same deity, identified both as the wife of Ningishzida and sister of Dumuzi.^[7] According to Wilfred G. Lambert, Azimua's name could simply function as a title of Geshtinanna in contexts where the latter was identified as Ningishzida's wife.^[8]

Belet-Seri could also function as an epithet of Ashratum, the wife of Amurru, or of her Sumerian counterpart Gubarra, in at least one case leading to conflation of Amurru and Ningishzida and to an association between the former and Azimua.^[9]

Azimua could serve as the scribe of the underworld,^[10] a role also assigned to Geshtinanna.^[11]

Worship

It is likely that Azimua appears for the first time in a text from Early Dynastic Tell Fara, though the full name of the deity in mention is not preserved.^[12] A further early uncertain attestation comes from a Zame Hymn from Abu Salabikh, though Dina Katz notes that in absence of Ningishzida from this text corpus the restoration the presence of Azimua would be unusual.^[10]

She was worshiped in Ur, where a temple dedicated to her existed, and in Umma.^[10]

Mythology

Ninazimua appears in the myth *Ningishzida and Ninazumua*, which describes an exchange of messages between her and her temporarily deceased husband.^[13] It is regarded as similar to other myths dealing with temporary death of deities: *Damu and his sister*, *Dumuzi and his sisters*, *Dumuzi and Geshtinanna*, *Dumuzi's dream* and *Inanna's descent*.^[14] However, due to small number of known copies, possible scribal mistakes and other issues it is presently impossible to fully reconstruct its plot.^[15]

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Bitu

BITU or **Bitu** may refer to:

- [Born in the U.S.A.](#), a 1984 album by [Bruce Springsteen](#)
 - [Begho](#)
 - [Le petit bitu](#)
 - [Bustamante Industrial Trade Union](#) in Jamaica
 - [Bitu \(god\)](#), the doorkeeper of the underworld in Mesopotamian mythology
-

Retrieved from "<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Bitu&oldid=1087598444>"



Geshtinanna

Geshtinanna was a Mesopotamian goddess best known due to her role in myths about the death of Dumuzi, her brother. It is not certain what functions she fulfilled in the Mesopotamian pantheon, though her association with the scribal arts and dream interpretation is well attested. She could serve as a scribe in the underworld, where according to the myth Inanna's Descent she had to reside for a half of each year in place of her brother.

Evidence for the worship of Geshtinanna is mostly available from the Early Dynastic state of Lagash, where she had her own cult center, Sagub. She was also present in the pantheons of other cities, for example in Uruk and Tell al-Rimah. She ceased to be venerated after the Old Babylonian period, though even later on she was still mentioned in god lists and in literary texts, some of which were still copied during the period of Seleucid rule over Mesopotamia.

Name

The oldest writing of Geshtinanna's name was Amageshtin or Amageshtinanna, as attested in documents from Lagash from the Early Dynastic period.^[1] There is no agreement over whether Amageshtin was a shortened form of Amageshtinanna or if the suffix *-anna* was added to a pre-existing name, but Manfred Krebernik argues the latter is more likely, as Amageshtin is attested as an ordinary personal name in the Early Dynastic period.^[2] In later sources, the form "Geshtinanna" was the most commonly used one.^[1] It might have developed due to the prefix *ama* (Sumerian: "mother") being considered an epithet.^[2] In Emesal, a dialect of Sumerian, the name was rendered as Mutinanna.^[1] The conventional translation of the standard form of the name is "grapevine of heaven", though it is possible that the word *geštin* also had the metaphorical meaning "sweet" or "lovely".^[2]

A further variant of the name was Ningeshtinanna.^[3] The cuneiform sign NIN can be translated as "lady", "queen" or "mistress" when used in the names of female deities, and it could sometimes be added as a prefix to names of established goddesses, in addition to Geshtinanna for example Aruru or Aya.^[3] This form of Geshtinanna's is attested for example in the Canonical Temple List^[4] and in the name of a skin disease, hand of Ningeshtinanna.^[5] A shorter form also including the sign NIN, Ningeshtin ("lady of the vine") is known from inscriptions on seals from the Kassite period.^[6]

Geshtinanna

Scribe of the Underworld



Fragment of a marble bowl from Uruk inscribed with the name of Geshtinanna, currently housed in the British Museum

Major cult center Sagub

Genealogy

Parents Duttur

Siblings Dumuzi, Belili

Consort Ningishzida (in Lagash)
Amurru (rarely)

Equivalents

Akkadian Belet-Seri

It has additionally been pointed out that Ninedina, a direct Sumerian equivalent of the Akkadian name Belet-Seri, which designated a goddess who corresponded to Geshtinanna, can be found in the early Fara god list already, but it is unknown if this goddess was one and the same as Geshtinanna.^[1]

Andrew R. George argues that in Bad-tibira, the cult center of Dumuzi, Geshtinanna was known under the name Ninsheshegarra.^[7] He points out the existence of a reference to such a goddess being worshiped in the temple Esheshegarra ("house established by the brother") in this city.^[7]

Character

Geshtinanna's functions remain unclear.^[8] It is known that she was the *dubsar-mah aralike*, "chief scribe of the underworld".^[9] This role is described in detail in one of the *Udug-hul* incantations.^[9] She was believed to be responsible for keeping track of the dead, and for permitting them to enter the underworld.^[9] However, it is possible her association with the underworld was only a secondary development.^[8] Her association with scribal arts and surveying is also attested in other contexts, where she is a heavenly, rather than underworld, deity.^[6] The myth *Dumuzi's Dream* describes her as the "scribe proficient in tablets" and "singer expert in songs" and highlights her wisdom.^[10] Similar associations are present in various poems from the reign of Shulgi.^[8]

She was also associated with dream interpretation,^[11] though this function could generally be assigned to female deities.^[8] Tonia Sharlach additionally argues that she was connected with vegetation,^[12] but it is not known if her name has any relation to her role.^[8]

Her iconography is unknown,^[8] but it is possible that the depictions of a goddess accompanied by a *mushussu* known from Lagash can be identified as her, with the mythical beast serving as a representation of Ningishzida, her husband in the local tradition.^[13] The *mushussu* was portrayed looking at the goddess in such works of art.^[14]

Worship

The worship of Geshtinanna is attested for the first time in the Early Dynastic period.^{[15][8]} However, she was a goddess of minor importance overall.^[12] An early center of her cult was Sagub, a settlement located near Lagash.^[16] At least two references to *gudu* priests connected to her cult in the state of Lagash are known.^[17] Under the name Amageshtin, she appears in an inscription of Urukagina.^[18] She had a temple in Girsu, built by Ur-Baba.^[19] It is possible that another temple dedicated to her, the Esagug, was located in Sagub.^[16] It was rebuilt by Enannatum I, and subsequently desecrated during a raid of Lugalzaggesi.^[16] He reportedly plundered the precious metals and *lapis lazuli* the statue of Geshtinanna was decorated with, and then threw it into a well.^[17] A later ruler of Lagash, Gudea, dedicated multiple statues to Geshtinanna.^[13] While he invoked many members of the Mesopotamian pantheon in his inscriptions, three of them - Geshtinanna, Nanshe and Ningirsu - were singled out as those who "turned their *zi* gaze" to him, a term apparently normally referring to the way they looked at other deities.^[13]

Geshtinanna was also worshiped around Uruk as one of the deities associated with Inanna and Dumuzi.^[20] However, her connection with this city was not as pronounced as that between her and the territory of Lagash.^[21] It is possible that the temple Esheshegarra in Bad-tibira was dedicated to her.^[7] It was built by Ur-gigir of Uruk, son of Ur-nigin.^[7] A temple dedicated jointly to her and Dumuzi, the Eniglulu, "house of teeming flocks," is also attested, but its location is unknown.^[4] The Sumerian term *niglulu* often appears in compositions about Dumuzi and refers to his herds.^[22]

Later sources show that Geshtinanna continued to be worshiped through the Ur III period, as attested in documents from Girsu, Puzrish-Dagan and Umma.^[23] Those from the last of these cities identify the center of her local cult as KI.AN_{ki}, a nearby town which was associated with Shara.^[24] The Puzrish-Dagan texts indicate she was worshiped in one of the royal palaces, though not necessarily in a fixed location, with Ur, Uruk and Nippur all being possibilities.^[25] One of the royal celebrations dedicated to her might have been related to the funerary cult and involved a visit of the goddess in the palace.^[25] A single document mentions offerings made to her alongside those to Ninisina, Dagan and Išhara.^[26] A reference to Geshtinanna being celebrated in the temple of Ninsun in Kuara is also known.^[27] An unusual phenomenon attested in this period was the apparent identification of Shulgi's mother SI.A-tum (reading uncertain^[28]) as a manifestation of Geshtinanna.^[12] No other queen from the Third Dynasty of Ur was deified in any way, nor was Ur-Nammu,^[12] its founder and Shulgi's father.^[29]

In the Old Babylonian period, Geshtinanna was worshiped in Isin, Nippur, Uruk^[8] and Tell al-Rimah (Qattara).^[30] References to her are known from personal letters from this period, though they are uncommon.^[31] The frequency of her appearances in them is lower than that of popular deities, such as Ishtar, Annunitum, Aya, Ninsianna or Gula, and comparable to Ninmug's, Ninkarrak's or Ninegal's.^[31]

Only a few theophoric names invoking Geshtinanna are known.^[32] Examples include Gu-Geshtinannaka, Geme-Geshtinanna, Lu-Geshtinanna and Ur-Geshtinanna.^[32] Only a single attestation of one of them, specifically Ur-Geshtinanna, occurs in documents from Early Dynastic Lagash.^[17]

Active worship of Geshtinanna ceased after the Old Babylonian period, but she continued to appear in god lists and especially in literary texts about Dumuzi^[11] as late as in the Seleucid period.^[8]

Associations with other deities

Geshtinanna's brother was Dumuzi.^[1] It has been argued that she was imagined as older than him, since she could be referred to with epithets such as *ama* ("mother") and *umma* ("old woman" or "wise woman").^{[11][8]} Their mother was Duttur.^{[32][33]} An alternate tradition, attested in a hymn of Shulgi, refers to Anu and his wife Urash as Geshtinanna's parents.^[34] Belili was regarded as a sister of Geshtinanna^[8] and Dumuzi.^[35] It has been suggested that she could be viewed as an equivalent of Geshtinanna.^[11] However, Manfred Krebernik discusses Belili and Gesthinanna as two independent goddesses each of whom could be described as Dumuzi's sister.^[36] They also both appear in the myth *Dumuzi's Dream*, each in a separate role.^[37]

Due to Dumuzi's marriage to Inanna, Geshtinanna was the sister-in-law of this goddess.^[8] She is directly referred to as her "beloved sister-in-law" in the composition labeled as *Inanna D* in modern literature, though she is only listed after the members of her immediate family (Ningal, Suen, Utu, Dumuzi) and Ninshubur, addressed as the "beloved vizier."^[38]

A network of syncretic relations existed between Geshtinanna, Azimua, Belet-Seri and, by extension, with Ashratum (also known under the Sumerian name Gubarra).^[39] From the reign of Gudea of Lagash to the Ur III period, it was common for Geshtinanna to be identified with Azimua, who the wife of Ningishzida.^[1] In a tradition originating in Lagash, Geshtinanna came to be viewed as Ningishzida's spouse herself.^[13] However, in Old Babylonian god list she is kept apart from Ningishzida.^[40] From the same period onward,^[11] Belet-Seri started to be recognized as the Akkadian counterpart of Geshtinanna.^[6] However, Belet-Seri also functioned as an epithet of Ashratum.^[39] In a handful of cases Geshtinanna is therefore listed as the wife of Amurru instead of her.^[41] Julia M. Asher-Greve cites two examples of cylinder seals from Old Babylonian Sippar where Geshtinanna is paired with ^dMAR.TU (Amurru).^[42]

In the myth *Dumuzi's Dream*, Geshtinanna is assisted by the goddess Geshtindudu, described as her "adviser and girlfriend."^[43] The relationship between Geshtinanna and Geshtindudu is regarded as unique due to being based on friendship.^[44] It has been suggested that some works of art showing a pair of goddesses stands side by side might represent Geshtinanna and Geshtindudu.^[44]

In the Weidner god list, Geshtinanna is placed near the circle of deities associated with Ishkur, after his wife Shala, their son Misharu, Išħara and the deity ^dMAŠ-da-ad.^[45] Daniel Schwemer based on a later text assumes ^dMAŠ-da-ad was a form of the weather god himself worshiped in the city of Pada,^[46] but Manfred Krebernik argues it should be read as Pardat, "the dreadful," the name of a sparsely attested goddess also known from the god list An = Anum.^[47] He proposes that she, Išħara and Geshtinanna were placed one after another because of their shared association with the underworld.^[48] The association between Geshtinanna and Ishkur is not attested in any later god lists, but they are invoked together in some blessing formulas in letters from Tell al-Rimah.^[46] There is however no indication that they were regarded as a couple, and it is likely Geshtinanna appears in these texts due to being the personal deity of one of the writers.^[49]

Mythology

Geshtinanna commonly appears in compositions about the death of Dumuzi, where she is one of the three most frequently recurring mourning goddesses, next to Inanna and Duttur.^[50] Occasionally she also appears in texts about the death of other similar gods, for example Damu, normally mourned by his mother Ninisina and sister Gunura instead.^[51]

Dumuzi's Dream

In *Dumuzi's Dream*, Geshtinanna interprets the eponymous dream and informs Dumuzi that it foretells his death.^[52] She refers to the assailants as bandits, indicating that in this composition belonged to the tradition in which Dumuzi's death was caused by an attack of evil men,^[53] rather than any events pertaining to Inanna.^[54] However, Geshtinanna also identifies the attackers as galla.^[55] It is possible she uses the term in its historical, rather than mythical, sense, which is supported by the description of the assailants as inhabitants of specific Mesopotamian cities, though it is also possible that a secondary source used by the compiler belonged to a tradition involving demons of the underworld.^[56] The historical galla were most likely officials of the judiciary, possibly analogous to policemen or deputies, but in literary texts they can be described not only as agents of law, as bandits and finally as demons.^[57] While Dumuzi is in hiding, Geshtinanna and her adviser Geshtindudu wait for the galla to arrive to warn

him.^[43] Later the *galla* try to bribe her to offer them information about Dumuzi's whereabouts, but she refuses.^[58] They leave her alone and instead approach Dumuzi's unnamed friend instead.^[58] While with the help of Utu and Belili Dumuzi manages to escape them for a time, they eventually catch him when he returns to Geshtinanna's sheepfold.^[59]

Dumuzi and Geshtinanna

Another myth involving Geshtinanna is *Dumuzi and Geshtinanna*, though Dina Katz remarks that despite its conventional title this text focuses chiefly on the *galla* and the roles of Geshtinanna, Dumuzi, and Inanna are passive.^[60] Dumuzi hides in Geshtinanna's dwelling after being offered as a substitute to the *galla* by Inanna, who in this case was apparently approached by the demons in Uruk and handed her husband over out of fear.^[60] The *galla* torture Geshtinanna, but she refuses to disclose her brother's location.^[60] Katz points out that some elements of this myth overlap with Inanna's Descent, *but the similarity is limited, because the "journey to the netherworld is twisted and presented as a conspiracy of the galla to dispatch [Inanna] there against her will."*^[60] Furthermore, the account of Geshtinanna's torture finds no parallel in any other text.^[61]

Other myths

In *Inanna's Descent to the Underworld*, Geshtinanna is not addressed by name,^[8] but it is assumed that she eventually replaces Dumuzi for half of each year in the underworld, where he was himself placed as a replacement for Inanna.^[62]

Geshtinanna also appears in the fragmentary myth *Dumuzi and his sisters*,^[63] which has been compared to various compositions focused on Ningishzida.^[64] It involves two sisters, one younger and one older, mourning Dumuzi, who was seized by demons.^[64] Geshtinanna, the younger sister,^[63] mentions her attempts at confronting one of the captors and pours a funerary libation for her brother, though she eventually concludes this is in vain because he will not be able to receive it.^[64]

According to Wilfred G. Lambert, it is possible that a goddess named Ningestinna known from the late myth *Theogony of Dunnū* corresponds to Geshtinanna.^[65] The name of the deity she is paired with is not preserved, and due to the unusual nature of this text it is possible that he was not one of the gods usually associated with her.^[66]



An Old Babylonian tablet inscribed with a lamentation over the death of Dumuzi, currently in the collection of Louvre Museum

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External links

- Compositions about Geshtinanna and Dumuzi (https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=c.1.4*#) in the [Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature](#)
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Gugalanna

In Sumerian religion, Gugalanna (𒂅𒈠𒀭𒉣 [GU₄.GAL.AN.NA] or *𒂄𒈠𒀭𒉣 [DGU₂.GAL.AN.NA]) is the first husband of Ereshkigal, the queen of the underworld.^[1] His name probably originally meant "canal inspector of An"^[1] and he may be merely an alternative name for Ennugi.^[1] The son of Ereshkigal and Gugalanna is Ninazu.^[1] In *Inanna's Descent into the Underworld*, Inanna, the goddess of love, beauty, sex, and war, tells the gatekeeper Neti that she is descending to the Underworld to attend the funeral of "Gugalanna, the husband of my elder sister Ereshkigal".^{[1][2][3]} Some scholars consider Gugalanna to be the same figure as the Bull of Heaven, slain by Gilgamesh and Enkidu in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*.^[4]

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Hušbišag

(Redirected from [Hushbishag](#))

Hušbišag or **Hushbishag** (𒀭 Hulušbišag) is a [Sumerian netherworld](#) goddess. She is the wife of [Namtar](#) and mother of [Hemdikug](#), a daughter.^{[1][2]}

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Isimud

Isimud (also *Isimu*;^[1] Akkadian: *Usmû*; Hurrian: *Izzummi*^[2]) was a Mesopotamian god regarded as the divine attendant (*sukkal*) of the god Enki (Ea). He was depicted with two faces. No references to temples dedicated to him are known, though ritual texts indicate he was worshiped in Uruk and Babylon. He was also incorporated into Hurrian religion and Hittite religion. In myths, he appears in his traditional role as a servant of Enki.

Name and character

Isimud (cuneiform: ^dPAP.SIG₇.NUN(.ME), ^dPAP.SIG₇.NUN.ME.EZEN×KASKAL; glossed *i-si-mu* in *An = Anum*) was the *sukkal* (divine “attendant”) of the god Enki (Ea).^[3] He was also known under the Akkadian name *Usmû*.^[2] Wilfred G. Lambert has noted that the latter resembles the adjective *usumia*, “two-faced”, which was used in omen texts, and on this basis concluded that the *theonym* was understood similarly, presumably through a *folk etymology*.^[3] A Hurrian form of the name, *Izzumi*, is also attested.^[2] It was originally considered uncertain if the names Isimud and Ara (^dŠA) were two separate deities.^[3] It has been argued that the latter was only his variant name.^[4] However, according to Julia Krul, based on Old Babylonian texts written in the *Emesal* dialect it can be now concluded that this name originally designated a female deity, who later came to be conflated with Isimud, possibly due to the influence of similar developments pertaining to *Ninshubur*.^[5]

As a *sukkal*, Isimud was believed to act as an advisor, messenger and doorkeeper of his master.^[6] However, as noted by Frans Wiggermann, similarly as the *sukkals* of other major city gods (for example *Alammuš* or *Nuska*) he most likely did not originate as a personification of a specific sphere of influence of his master, in contrast with deities such as *Nimgir*, deified lightning regarded as the *sukkal* of *Ishkur*.^[7]

In art, Isimud was depicted as a figure with two faces, either standing alone or in introduction scenes with his master.^[5] While most *sukkals* can only be identified in art because of their badge of office, a staff, Isimud on the account of his two faces is an exception, and it has been noted that he does not always hold this attribute.^[8] His appearance has been compared to Roman Janus.^[1] Depictions are known from between the Akkadian and Kassite periods.^[5] According to Rainer Michael Boehmer, examples from the earliest period from which certain attestations are available are the most common.^[9] Examples are also known from outside Mesopotamia, from Syria and the Hittite Empire.^[5]

Isimud

Sukkal of Enki



A cylinder seal from the Akkadian Period depicting the deities Inanna, Utu, Enki, and Isimud, who is characteristically shown with two faces.

Major cult center

Uruk

Worship

Attestations of Isimud are available from between the Early Dynastic and Late Assyrian periods.^[3] However, no temples dedicated to him are mentioned in known texts.^[5]

In the first millennium BCE, Isimud received offerings in building rituals.^[5] He was also one of the deities belonging to the local pantheon of Uruk in the Seleucid period.^[10] It is not certain if he was already worshiped in this city in the Neo-Babylonian period,^[5] though this possibility is accepted by Julia Krul.^[10] According to Paul-Alain Beaulieu, the attestations are limited to two possible references in ritual texts, but the reading of the theonym is uncertain.^[1] He speculates that since no references to a separate sanctuary dedicated to him have been identified, he might have been worshiped in the Eanna complex like many other minor deities.^[11] Later on, a cella dedicated to him existed in the Bīt Rēš,^[5] a newly built temple dedicated to Anu and Antu.^[12] It was likely located near the main gate, but as there is no agreement which of the entrances fulfilled this role, two separate rooms discovered during excavations have been identified as Isimud's dwelling, 48 and 79b (the latter alternatively assumed to be the cella of Kusu).^[13] He might have been regarded as one of the divine guards of the temple complex, alongside Nuska, Papsukkal and Pisangunug.^[14] While absent from legal texts and theophoric names, he is attested in ritual texts.^[10] He is mentioned for example in descriptions of the akītu ceremony.^[15] In this context, he forms a trio with Nuska and Papsukkal.^[16]

Either in the Neo-Babylonian period or later, Isimud was also worshiped in Babylon, and appears in a ritual text in which priests follow him to various temples.^[5] He is mentioned in a text describing a procession taking place on the fourth day of the month Kislīmu, which involved a slave riding on the back of a bull.^[17]

Hurrian and Hittite reception

Isimud was incorporated into the Hurrian pantheon as well.^[18] According to Alfonso Archi, he was received by the Hurrians from Mesopotamia alongside Ea and his wife Damkina.^[2] He was also among the Hurrian deities who were introduced to Hattusa.^[19] Hittites similarly worshiped him alongside Ea.^[20] A single theophoric name invoking him has been identified among the names of princes and officials of the Hittite Empire, in which only four other Hurrian deities, Hebat, Šarruma, Šauška and Teššub are otherwise attested.^[21] During the AN.TAH.ŠUM festival, he received offerings of meat and bread, as well as ritual libations.^[22]

Mythology

In myths, Isimud acts as an attendant of Enki (Ea).^[5] He appears in the composition Inanna and Enki, where he informs his master that he handed over the me to the eponymous goddess while he was intoxicated,^[23] and subsequently acts as a messenger, telling Inanna to return the mes to Enki or face the consequences.^[24] He also appears in Enki and Ninhursag, where he navigates Enki's boat,^[25] acts as his messenger and emissary,^[24] and later cuts the plants Enki subsequently eats.^[26] Further myths he plays a role in include Enki's Journey to Nippur,^[27] Ninurta and the Turtle,^[28] Enūma Eliš, and Atraḥasīs, where he is tasked with informing the eponymous protagonist about the fate which will befall the world.^[5] He also appears as Enki's servant in the text The Heron and the Turtle.^[29] While similar to the so-called

"debate poems" such as *Sheep and Grain*, it is instead presumed to be a *fable*, though the full restoration of the plot is not impossible.^[30] In Hurrian context he appears in the *Song of LAMMA*, where Ea instructs him to visit the eponymous deity because despite his newfound status as the "King in Heaven" (king of the gods) he did not hold any meetings of the divine assembly.^[31] He also instructs him to go to the "Dark Earth" (the underworld) to bring a message to the deities *Nara* and *Napšara*.^[32]

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Namtar

Namtar (Sumerian: 𒀭𒈪, lit. 'fate') was a figure in ancient Mesopotamian religion who, depending on the context, could be regarded both as a minor god and as a demon of disease. He is best attested as the sukkal (attendant deity) of Ereshkigal, the goddess of the underworld. Like her, he was not the object of active worship, though references to it are made in literary texts, and additionally some incantations entrust him with keeping various other malevolent forces in the underworld.

Namtar	
Attendant of <u>Ereshkigal</u>	
Abode	Ancient Mesopotamian underworld
Genealogy	
Parents	Mardula'anki (mother)
Spouse	<u>Hušbišag</u>
Children	<u>Hedimmeku</u>

Character and functions

Namtar's name means "fate" in Sumerian.^[1] It can be differentiated from the ordinary word "fate" in Sumerian texts due to being preceded by the dingir sign, so-called divine determinative, used to identify the names of deities.^[1] The same name was used in Akkadian, written as ^dnam-ta-ru.^[2] Jacob Klein notes that true to his name, Namtar was most likely understood as the personification of unavoidable fate, implicitly understood as death.^[3] Aicha Rahmouni compares the role of Namtar in Mesopotamian beliefs to that played by Mot, the personified death, in Ugaritic texts.^[4]

The primary roles of Namtar in the Mesopotamian pantheon were those of a minor god of the underworld and of a disease demon,^[3] especially strongly associated with headaches and heart pain.^[5] While his two roles were interconnected, according to Jacob Klein the precise development of his character is presently impossible to discern.^[3] Barbara Böck proposes that he was initially only a disease demon, and developed into Ereshkigal's sukkal at some point in the second millennium BCE.^[6]

His appearance was typically described as fearsome, with references to such traits as "twisted hands" or "mouth filled with venom."^[7] The Underworld Vision of an Assyrian Prince states that he could be depicted slaying a man with a sword.^[8]

No attestations of Namtar as a deity are known from before the Old Babylonian period.^[3] While the word namtar, without the divine determinative, does appear in personal names from the earlier Ur III period,^[3] they are unlikely to refer to him, as according to Dina Katz, theophoric names invoking him are not known from later periods, similar as in the case of his mistress Ereshkigal.^[9]

Namtar is generally absent from offering lists, indicating he had no active cult.^[9] Making offerings to him is nonetheless mentioned in a few literary texts, including Death of Gilgamesh and Death of Ur-Namma, in both cases being undertaken by the eponymous protagonist.^[3]

Incantations indicate that the medicine goddess Ninisina was invoked to counter Namtar's influence.^[10] The same function was also attributed to Asalluhi.^[11] However, Namtar could in turn be implored to take care of other demons, for example an incantation against Mimma Lemnu, the personified "Any Evil," entrusts him with keeping this being imprisoned in the underworld.^[12] An incantation addressed to the fire god Girra asks him to hand over the enemies of the petitioner to Namtar.^[5]

Associations with other deities

Namtar served as the sukkal of Ereshkigal,^[3] though less commonly he could also be referred to as the sukkal of Nergal.^[7] Some texts simply refer to him as "sukkal of the underworld," *sukkal ereseti^{ki}*.^[13]

According to the god list An = Anum, Namtar had a wife, Hušbišag, known also from various myths and incantations.^[3] She was called the "stewardess of the underworld."^[14] Their daughter was Hedimmeku,^[3] though she is also mentioned as a daughter of Enki in a different section of the same god list.^[15] Namtar's mother is identified as Mardula'anki, already attested in this role in earlier lists.^[3] A single source applies the name Humussiru ("mouse") to her, though it was more commonly applied to the god Amurru and it is unclear how it came to be associated with Namtar's mother.^[16] Only a single Udug-hul incantation instead refers to Namtar as a son of Enlil and Ereshkigal.^[3] A single late text, *Underworld Vision of an Assyrian Prince*, might also mention a feminine counterpart of Namtar, Namtarlu, though the restoration of the name is uncertain.^[3]

As a disease demon, Namtar was often paired with Asag in incantations, with the two of them regarded as the most dangerous sources of diseases.^[7]

On occasion, the god Šulpae could be compared to Namtar, or even addressed with his name.^[5]

A single Old Babylonian letter associates Lugal-namtarra, a deity possibly analogous to Namtar, with Ninshubur, and invokes both of them to bless the recipient.^[17] Lugal-namtarra, as well as a deity whose name was written as ^dSUKKAL, who according to Odette Boivin might be analogous to Ninshubur, both appear in association with Shamash in texts from the archives of the First Sealand dynasty in place of his usual attendants (such as Bunene).^[18]

Mythology

Namtar appears in the role of Ereshkigal's sukkal in the myth *Nergal and Ereshkigal*.^[3] As the queen of the land of the dead cannot travel to heaven, he partakes in a banquet taking place there as her representative.^[19] While most of the gathered gods pay respect to him, Nergal refuses to, which is the reason behind Ereshkigal's demand to have him sent down to the underworld.^[19] Later Namtar is sent to heaven once again to bring Nergal back after he escapes from the underworld while Ereshkigal is asleep.^[20]

Another myth casting him in the same role is *Ishtar's Descent*, where Ereshkigal tasks him with inflicting her sister Ishtar with sixty diseases, and later with reviving her and leading her back to the world of the living to find a substitute.^[3] This element of the story is absent from the earlier Sumerian myth *Inanna's Descent*, in which Namtar is not mentioned and Inanna dies as a result of a verdict of divine judges.^[21]

In *Atrahasis*, Enlil initially plans to rely on Namtar to deal with noise created by mankind.^[7]

In the myth *Enki and Ninmah* Namtar is mentioned in passing as one of the gods invited to the banquet celebrating the creation of mankind.^[7]

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Ninimma

Ninimma was a Mesopotamian goddess best known as a courtier of [Enlil](#). She is well attested as a deity associated with scribal arts, and is variously described as a divine [scholar](#), [scribe](#) or [librarian](#) by modern [Assyriologists](#). She could also serve as an assistant of the birth goddess [Ninmah](#), and a hymn describes her partaking in cutting of [umbilical cords](#) and determination of fates. It has also been suggested that she was associated with [vegetation](#). In the [Middle Babylonian period](#) she additionally came to be viewed as a [healing](#) deity.

[Nippur](#) was Ninimma's main cult center, though she is also known from documents from other cities, such as [Adab](#) and [Uruk](#). In various sources, she appears alongside deities such as [Nisaba](#), who like her was associated with scribes, or other members of Enlil's court, such as [Shuzianna](#) and [Ninkasi](#). She is sparsely attested in literary texts, with only two hymns dedicated to her presently known. She also appears in the myth [Enki and Ninmah](#) and in a variant of [Enki and Ninhursag](#).

Character

Ninimma's history has been characterized as long and complex.^[1] The meaning of the second element of her name, written in cuneiform as SIG₇ (correct reading is confirmed by [phonetic](#) spellings in lexical lists and other sources^[2]) remains unknown, with past proposals including "green growth," "brick," or a pun on a term referring to the [vulva](#).^[3] A further possibility is that the name was understood as ^d[nin-im-ak](#), "lady of [clay](#)" or "lady of the [clay tablet](#)".^[4] Her role as a goddess associated with scribal arts is well attested.^[5] According to Julia Krul this was the oldest aspect of her character.^[1] Christopher Metcalf characterizes her as a goddess associated with wisdom and writing who was "appealing to the mind of an ancient [scholar](#) of Sumerian literature."^[6] She has been variously described as fulfilling the role of a divine scholar, [scribe](#)^[7] or [librarian](#) by modern authors.^[5]

A further role attested for Ninimma is that of a goddess of birth.^[8] In an [Old Babylonian](#) hymn, she is described as a helper of [Aruru](#) who partakes in creation of life and assists her in cutting the [umbilical cord](#) and determining fates.^[9] Ninimma might have also been associated with [vegetation](#).^[10] This aspect of her character might be tied to her role as a goddess of birth.^[11]

From the [Middle Babylonian period](#) onward, Ninimma could also be regarded as a [healing](#) goddess.^[12] A reference to this role can be found in the incantation series [Šurpu](#), where she appears in a sequence of deities invoked to break a curse, after [Lugal-Marada](#) and [Imzuanna](#), and before [Shuzianna](#), [Šulpae](#), [Sadarnunna](#), [Belet-ili](#), [Sud](#), [Siris](#) and [Ningishzida](#).^[13]

Ninimma	
Divine scribe, scholar or librarian	
Member of the court of Enlil	
Major cult center	
Major cult center	Nippur
Genealogy	
Parents	Enki , Enlil or Enmesharra (father) Ninkurra (mother)
Spouse	Kusibanda or Ninurta
Children	Utu (in a variant of the myth <i>Enki and Ninmah</i>)

A possible reference to an association between Ninimma and a type of birds (KUR.GI^{mušen}, translation uncertain, possibly geese) has been identified by Karen Focke.^[11]

While the view that Ninimma was primarily a male deity is not considered credible today,^[14] sporadic references to male Ninimma are nonetheless known.^{[12][15]} One possible example is a god list where Ninimma is described as "Ea of the Scribes,"^[14] $d\text{nin}.\text{imma} = d\text{é-a šá lú tūpšarri}$.^[16]

Associations with other deities

As of 1999, the only known text directly referring to Ninimma's parentage is a variant of the myth *Enki and Ninhursag*, according to which her parents were Enki and Ninkurra.^[17] A hymn published in 2019 also identifies this god as her father, though only indirectly, but her mother is left nameless.^[9] In Seleucid Uruk, Ninimma instead came to be viewed as one of the seven children of Enmesharra.^[1] This tradition most likely was not yet known in earlier periods, and relied on equating her with the deity Zisummu, well attested in this role.^[18] According to Karen Focke, in the god list An = Anum Ninimma is labeled as a sister of Ninurta, which would make her a daughter of Enlil, who is also called her father in a Neo-Assyrian incantation.^[19] However, based on the recently published hymn, which refers to her as Ninurta's wife, Christopher Metcalf has challenged this interpretation, pointing out that only a single manuscript of An = Anum refers to Ninimma as *nin d nin-[urta]-ke₄*, literally "lady of Ninurta," and this phrase might also be interpreted as referring to her status as his wife, rather than sister, as previously assumed.^[20] Joan Goodnick Westenholz in an earlier publication pointed out that Ninimma could be linked to Ninnibru, the title of Ninurta's wife, though she assumed this association reflected her role as Ninurta's sister, rather than spouse.^[21] Elsewhere, the god Kusibanda is described as Ninimma's husband.^{[19][1][20]} He was considered the deity of goldsmiths.^[22] In a variant of the myth *Enki and Ninhursag*, the eponymous god impregnates Ninimma, who subsequently gives birth to Uttu.^[8]

Ninimma was regarded as one of the members of the court of Enlil, specifically as a scribe in his service.^[7] She is already attested as a member of his circle in the Old Babylonian An = Anum forerunner.^[19] In An = Anum itself she is also said to be a nurse of his children,^[23] notably Suen.^[24] The same role could be attributed to Shuzianna as well.^[25] Julia M. Asher-Greve notes that direct references to goddesses breastfeeding, such as the designation of Ninimma as a nurse of Sin are rare in Mesopotamian literature.^[26] Outside An = Anum, Ninimma appears in association with the moon god only in a single Neo-Assyrian fragmentary god list where her entry follows his.^[24]

Ninimma could also be associated with Nisaba (for instance in god lists she often follows her and her spouse Haya) and possibly acquired some of her characteristics as a result.^[27] It has been argued that they fulfilled a similar role in the pantheon of Nippur.^[12] However, Andrew R. George argues that their character was not identical, and that Ninimma's main role can be compared to a modern librarian, while Nisaba functioned as a scribe and scholar.^[5] A single Old Babylonian letter invokes Nisaba and Ninimma together in a greeting formula in which the sender wishes the recipient to receive wisdom from these goddesses.^[28]

Various ritual texts indicate Ninimma was associated with Shuzianna, who also appears alongside her in the myth *Enki and Ninmah* among the eponymous goddess' helpers aiding her in creation of mankind.^[29] They both were also members of a group of deities from the court of Enlil which according to Wilfred G. Lambert is known from an offering list from the Ur III period and a later theological commentary, which

also included Nuska, Ennugi, Kusu, Ninšar and Ninkasi.^[30] Ninimma additionally appears alongside these five deities and Ninmada in sections dedicated to Enlil's courtiers in An = Anum and the *Canonical Temple List*.^[31]

The name of Ilda, a minor goddess from the pantheon of Nippur who was associated with the underworld, appears as a title of Ninimma in the Old Babylonian forerunner of An = Anum, but according to Karen Focke they are not associated with each other in any other texts, which likely indicates this is an ancient scribal error.^[19] In An = Anum itself, Ilda appears after the section dedicated to Ninimma.^[19]

According to Frans Wiggermann Ninimma was sometimes confused with the obscure creator goddess Nammu, which might be why the latter was sporadically referred to as the "true housekeeper of Ekur".^[7] Wilfred G. Lambert instead considered it possible that Nammu and Ninimma were etymologically related, rather than merely confused with each other, and suggests that Ninimma was at some point in time functionally analogous to Nammu, and like her was regarded as a primordial creator deity.^[32]

Worship

The oldest attestation of Ninimma is an entry in the Early Dynastic Fara god list.^[19] She was chiefly associated with the city of Nippur,^[33] where she was already worshiped prior to the rise of the Akkadian Empire in the third millennium BCE.^[14] She is well attested in offering lists from this city and Puzrish-Dagan from the Ur III period.^[34] However, only two such documents are known from later times, one from the Old Babylonian period and another from the reign of the Neo-Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar II.^[35] A temple dedicated to her existed in Nippur.^[36] It bore the ceremonial Sumerian name Emekilibšudu, "house which perfects all the me".^[37] The *Nippur Compendium* indicates that it housed chapels dedicated to Enlil,^[38] Ninlil^[39] and Ninurta.^[40] Another temple of Ninimma known from lexical lists, Enamengarra, "house which establishes dominion",^[41] was also located in Nippur according to Karen Focke.^[42] Furthermore, she was worshiped in the temple of Gula in the same city.^[43] She was one of the deities who took part in a procession during a festival connected to this location known from sources from the Achaemenid period.^[44]

Theophoric names from Nippur from the Ur III and Old Babylonian periods, such as Ur-Ninimma and Ku-Ninimma, indicate that Ninimma enjoyed a certain level of popularity.^[35] A number of scribes bearing the latter name are known.^[45] In the sphere of personal religion, the worship of Ninimma continued in the Kassite period, as indicated by prayers and seal inscriptions.^[46] She also appears in Middle Babylonian theophoric names, such as Ninimma-kipišu or Ninimma-andul.^[28]

In addition to various attestations of Ninimma from Nippur, a temple dedicated to her is also mentioned in a text from Adab either from the Early Dynastic or Sargonic period.^[33] A text from the palace of Sennacherib in Nineveh^[47] indicates that a cultic seat dedicated to her, Nidana-geštu,^[48] "(house of) learning and understanding," existed in the library of the Ešarra temple in Assur.^[49] According to Andrew R. George, its existence might have been the result of patterning the cult of Ashur on that of Enlil.^[47] Another seat dedicated to her was located in the temple of Ningal in Ur.^[50]

An Early Dynastic statuette from Uruk might be inscribed with Ninimma's name, but the reading is not certain, and there is no other evidence in her early presence in this city.^[34] In a ritual text from the same city from the Seleucid period, she appears alongside deities such as the local goddess Uṣur-amāssu,

Šilamkurra, elsewhere described as a daughter of Ninsun, and otherwise unknown Ninurbu.^[1] However, she is not attested in earlier Neo-Babylonian sources from this city, and does not appear in theophoric names or legal texts.^[51]

Literature

Ninimma is sparsely attested in Mesopotamian literature.^[9] An Old Babylonian hymn focused on her role as a divine scribe^[10] until 2019 was the only known composition dedicated to her, though references to an unpublished lament from the Ur III period can also be found in Assyriological literature.^[9] Since then, only a single further hymn dedicated to her has been identified.^[52] In addition to describing Ninimma's usual roles, it also portrays her as an adviser to various deities, including Enki and Inanna,^[9] in this composition referred to with the epithet *in-nin*, "mistress" (typically used in texts highlighting her warlike character), rather than with the proper theonym.^[20] It also describes Ninimma as the wife of Ninurta, and implores her to mediate with him on behalf of a worshiper,^[53] identified in the closing lines king Nanni (also spelled Nanne), who is also known from the Tummal Chronicle, which counts him among the members of the Second Dynasty of Ur and attributes the creation of the garden of the Ekur, Enlil's temple in Nippur, to him.^[6] Christopher Metcalf assumes that he came to be viewed as a literary character in the Old Babylonian period, when the discussed text was composed.^[9] Jeremiah Peterson notes that no other cultic song circulated in this period mentions any historical or legendary rulers earlier than Gudea, and on this basis tentatively speculates that Nanni's presence in this text might be a form of cryptography based on the similarity of his name to the word *nanni*, "someone", meant to make the composition appropriate for any ruler.^[52] Both hymns dedicated to Ninimma are assumed to be scholarly compositions, and according to Metcalf they might be disconnected from active worship of this goddess, with their main purpose being to "glorify the scholarly author's own craft."^[54] However, Peterson does not agree with this assumption, and points out that Ninimma's presence in offering lists makes it plausible that hymns dedicated to her were in active circulation as part of her cult.^[52]

Ninimma also appears in the myth Enki and Ninmah, where she is one of the seven goddesses who help with the creation of mankind.^[29] The remaining six members of this group are Shuzianna, Ninmada, Ninšar, Ninmug, Mumudu and Ninnigina.^[55] They do not appear together elsewhere,^[56] and the criteria based on which the compilers of this text selected them are unknown.^[28] Collectively the helpers of Ninmah could be referred to as Šassūrātu.^[57] In god lists this group was treated as analogous to foreign goddesses of similar character, Hurrian Hutena and Hutellura and Ugaritic Kotharāt.^[58]

A further myth which mentions Ninimma is Enki and Ninhursag, according to which she was a daughter of Ninkurra and Enki and mother of Uttu.^[59] In the version from Nippur she is absent^[60] and Ninkurra gives birth to Uttu instead.^[59] It is not certain why these specific goddesses were selected for their respective roles.^[3]

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External links

- *A hymn to Ninimma (Ninimma A)* (<https://web.archive.org/web/20110716163153/http://www-etcsl.orient.ox.ac.uk/section4/tr4211.htm>) in the [Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature](#)
 - *Enki and Ninmah* (<https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/tr112.htm>) in the [Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature](#)
 - *Enki and Ninhursag* (<https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.1.4>) in the [Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature](#)
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Ninkasi

Ninkasi was the Mesopotamian goddess of beer and brewing. It is possible that in the first millennium BC she was known under the variant name **Kurunnītu**, derived from a term referring to a type of high quality beer. She was associated with both positive and negative consequences of the consumption of beer. In god lists, such as the *An = Anum* list and the *Weidner god list*, she usually appears among the courtiers of the god *Enlil*, alongside deities such as *Ninimma* and *Ninmada*. She could also be paired with *Siraš*, a goddess of similar character, who sometimes was regarded as her sister. A possible association between her and the underworld deities *Nungal* and *Laš* is also attested, possibly in reference to the possible negative effects of alcohol consumption.

A number of works of Mesopotamian literature refer to Ninkasi, for example the myths *Lugalbanda in the Mountain Cave* and *Lugalbanda and the Anzud Bird*. A hymn dedicated to her, known simply as the *Hymn to Ninkasi*, is also known. It is commonly discussed and quoted in modern literature.

Name

Ninkasi's name, written in cuneiform as *dNin-ka-si*,^[2] means "mistress of beer."^[3] The explanation "lady who fills the mouth" has been proposed in the past but according to *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie* should be considered implausible.^[2] A possible earlier writing of the name, *dNin-ka₁₅kaš-si*,^[2] has been tentatively translated as "mistress barmaid," though its precise etymology remains a matter of debate.^[4] Like many other names of deities originating in the Sumerian language, it is assumed to be a combination of the grammatically neutral word *nin*, which appears in names of both male and female deities, and the name of a product, place or object.^[3] In one of the earliest Mesopotamian god lists, some forty percent of the deities have names starting with *nin*.^[5]

It has been proposed that the deity *dKAŠ.DIN.NAM* should be understood as a late form of Ninkasi.^[6] A second attested spelling of this name is *dKAŠ.DIN.NU*.^[1] The Sumerian compound KAŠ.DIN represents the word *kurun* (Akkadian: *kurunnum*), a type of beer regarded, in Mesopotamian texts, as being of a particularly high quality.^[1] According to Paul-Alain Beaulieu, the name was most likely read as Kurunnītu,^[1] though Kurunnam has also been proposed.^[7] Beaulieu considers the former option to be more likely, as the syllabic spelling *ku-ru-ni-tu₄* is also attested.^[1] The equivalence between this deity and Ninkasi is directly attested in two lamentations.^[1]

Ninkasi	
	Goddess of beer
Other names	<i>dKAŠ.DIN.NAM</i> (Kurunnītu?) ^[1]
Major cult center	<i>Nippur</i>
Symbol	possibly a cup
Genealogy	
Parents	<i>Enki</i> and <i>Ninti</i>
Siblings	<i>Siraš</i>
Children	<i>Mejuš</i> , <i>Mekù</i> , <i>Ememete</i> , <i>Kitušgirizal</i> , <i>Nušiligga</i> , possibly <i>Ninmada</i>

Character

Ninkasi was the goddess of beer, and as such was associated with its production, consumption and effects - both positive and negative.^[8] Jeremy Black described her as "one of (...) minor deities without a strongly defined personality who merely symbolise the object or phenomenon that they are associated with."^[9] While he also described her as a divine barmaid,^[9] Manfred Krebernik argues that she was not connected with the sale of beer and with professions related to it.^[8]

The proposal that Ninkasi was also associated with wine, common in older literature, is no longer regarded as plausible.^[8]

While typically regarded as a goddess, in some late sources Ninkasi could appear as a male deity,^[4] a phenomenon also attested in the cases of the artisan goddess Ninmug and Ninshubur, the sukkal (attendant deity) of Inanna.^[10]

It is possible that in art Ninkasi was depicted holding a cup.^[11] Furthermore, she might be among the deities shown in banquet scenes on items such as gaming boards and fragments of musical instruments.^[12]

Worship

Ninkasi was already worshiped in the Early Dynastic period,^{[8][4]} but there is no evidence that she was the tutelary deity of a specific city at any point in time.^[8] She was instead worshiped as a "universal" deity in various parts of Mesopotamia.^[4] While a city is mentioned in the *Hymn to Ninkasi*, it should be understood not as a reference to a hitherto unknown cult center, but rather as a poetic indication that any city where beer was drunk can be considered a city of Ninkasi.^[13]

The worship of Ninkasi is attested in Early Dynastic administrative documents from Shuruppak, the cult center of Sud.^[14] It is also possible that in the same period she had a sanctuary in Eridu.^[4] In the Ur III period, she was worshiped in Umma.^[8] She is also well attested as one of the members of the pantheon of Nippur,^[15] where she appears for the first time in offering lists from the Ur III period.^[8] According to a Middle Babylonian metrological text she had her own temple in this city.^[16] Two temples of Ninkasi are mentioned in the *Canonical Temple List*, but their names are lost and their locations are uncertain.^[16] There is also evidence that she was worshiped in Egiparku, a sanctuary of Ningal in Ur.^[17] A socle dedicated to her, E-ušumgalanna ("house of the ušumgal," translated by Andrew R. George as "dragon of heaven") was built there by the official Sin-balassu-iqbi,^[17] who was active during the period of neo-Assyrian rule over Babylonia, before the rise of the Neo-Babylonian Empire.^[18]

Attestations of worship of Kurunnītu are rare.^[19] In Nippur she was venerated in the temple of Gula.^[1] A festival held in Babylon in honor of the same goddess involved Kurunnītu (^dKAŠ.DIN.NAM), as well as Belet Eanna (Inanna of Uruk), Belet Ninua ("Lady of Nineveh"), Ninlil and Bizilla (who both acted as the divine representatives of Kish in this case).^[6] A few documents indicate that she was worshiped in Uruk, and the Eanna archive attests that during the reign of Nabopolassar various elements of jewelry were

prepared for her statue.^[20] Sennacherib plundered a statue of her from Uruk in 693 BC.^[19] Another was returned to Der by Esarhaddon.^[1] She is also attested in a kudurru (boundary stone) inscription from the reign of Marduk-apla-iddina I.^[1]

Theophoric names invoking Ninkasi are already known from the Early Dynastic and Sargonic periods, examples include Amar-Ninkasi and Ur-Ninkasi.^[21] The name Kurunnītu appears in two neo-Babylonian theophoric names, both of them feminine: ^dKAŠ.DIN.NAM-šarrat and ^dKAŠ.DIN.NAM-tabni.^[1]

Associations with other deities

Ninkasi's parents were Enki and Ninti, but according to the *Hymn to Ninkasi*, she was raised by Ninhursag rather than by her mother.^[22] Ninhursag was generally not associated with raising children otherwise, and the childhood of deities is typically not described in Mesopotamian texts.^[22] It is possible that a deity corresponding to Ninti precedes Ninkasi and Siraš (also known as Siris), another goddess associated with beer, in the Nippur god list.^[23]

Ninkasi and Siraš were commonly associated with each other,^[2] but the nature of the connection between them varies between sources.^[24] In the god list An = Anum they are equated with each other and in a bilingual Neo-Assyrian version of one of the myths about Lugalbanda Ninkasi in the Sumerian version corresponds to Siraš in Akkadian, but in a version of the Weidner god list from Assur with an explanatory column they are stated to be sisters instead.^[23] According to Richard L. Litke, a tradition in which Ninkasi was the wife of Siraš, in this case seemingly treated as a male deity, might be attested in a single source, most likely a late copy of an Old Babylonian list of deities, though he notes it might also be interpreted as a reference to the two being sisters instead.^[24] According to Manfred Krebernik, no references to either of them having a spouse is known.^[8] A further deity associated with both of them was Patindu,^[7] a god linked with ritual libations whose name might mean "he who makes the stream of wine sweet."^[25]

The god list An = Anum mentions a group of five children of Ninkasi. According to Manfred Krebernik, their names seem to allude to terms related to beer, binge drinking and inebriation: Meħuš ("glowing me"), Mekù (or Menkù, "beautiful me" or "beautiful crown"), Ememete (or Menmete, "ornate speech" or "ornate crown"), Kitušgirizal ("magnificent seat") and Nušilingga ("not drying up").^[8] Additionally, according to Andrew R. George, the snake charmer deity Ninmada could be regarded as Ninkasi's daughter.^[26]

Ninkasi was also regarded as the "brewer of Ekur," and in this role appears in lists of courtiers of Enlil alongside deities such as his scribe Ninimma, his butcher Ninšar, or his snake charmer Ninmada.^[26] For example, Ninimma, Ennugi, Kusu, Ninšar, Ninkasi and Ninmada appear in sequence in at least two sources, An = Anum and the *Canonical Temple List*.^[26] Another similar group, consisting of Šuzianna, Nuska, Ninimma, Ennugi, Kusu, Ninšar and Ninkasi appears in an offering list from the Ur III period and in an esoteric explanatory text.^[27] It has been proposed that Ninkasi's classification as a deity from the circle of Enlil relied on his link with Nisaba, commonly regarded as his mother in law, who in addition to being a goddess of writing was also associated with grain, which was also indirectly linked to Ninkasi as the main resource used to produce beer.^[8] A single document in which Ninkasi appears alongside Šala also likely depends on a similar connection.^[28]

The Weidner god list places both Ninkasi and Siraš between Nungal, the goddess of prisons, and LaŞ, the wife of Nergal.^[7] Similarly, Kurunnītu in multiple documents appears in association with the goddess Bēlet-balāti, who might be a late form of Manungal, and as such was likely an underworld deity.^[29] It has been proposed that this possible association between beer and underworld deities was meant to serve as a reflection of negative effects of alcohol consumption.^[8]

In the incantation series Šurpu Ninkasi appears alongside the fire god Gibil, possibly in reference to the use of fire in beer production,^[7] though it has been called into question if it was necessary, and experiments show that it is plausible that Mesopotamian brewers relied on cold mashing.^[30] A grouping of Ninkasi, Irḥan, Šakkan and Ezina is also attested, but the reasons behind the juxtaposition of these deities are not known.^[31]

Literature

Hymn to Ninkasi

A hymn dedicated to Ninkasi is known.^[32] A translation was published by Miguel Civil in 1964,^[32] with later revisions made in 1991.^[33] It is commonly quoted in professional literature today.^[34] Three copies are presently known, one from Nippur and two from unknown locations.^[35] Due to lack of references to historical events and the purposely archaic style of literary texts it is not possible to precisely date the composition of the hymn, but it is agreed that the known tablets come from the Old Babylonian period.^[36]

It is assumed that it is a poetic description of the process of brewing.^[32] It indicates that the main ingredient used was bappir, presumably a type of bread, assumed to be dry and similar to modern biscotti.^[37] However, recent studies conducted by archaeologist Adelheid Otto, brewing technician Martin Zarnkow and Assyriologist Walther Sallaberger indicate that the instructions given in the hymn as usually translated do not fully align with known information about the production of beer in ancient Mesopotamia, which creates the need for further analysis and a retranslation of fragments of the composition in accordance with newer discoveries.^[38] Sallaberger argues that the term bappir is likely to refer to sourdough.^[13] It is also likely that the references to honey present in the hymn are a purely literary device meant to highlight the quality and aroma of beer prepared by Ninkasi, as it was an expensive luxury good and as such was not used to prepare any ordinary drinks.^[39] In administrative texts, only barley and occasionally emmer products are attested as ingredients used in brewing, not honey or herbs.^[40] Even researchers who do assume aromatics were actually used admit it is uncertain if the flavor would survive fermentation.^[41]

Other texts

In the myth Lugalbanda and the Anzud Bird, the eponymous hero describes Ninkasi and her activity in detail while planning a banquet for the Anzû's family.^[9] He refers to her as "the expert woman, who redounds to her mother's credit," and states that her fermenting vat is made of lapis lazuli, while her cask - from silver and gold.^[42] According to Jeremy Black, the passage about the goddess should be understood as a part of an elaborate metaphorical description of beer Lugalbanda plans to serve, and she

is not herself a participant in the events of the myth.^[43] She is also referenced in passing in *Lugalbanda in the Mountain Cave*, where at one point "the wooden *dahaša* (a type of vessel) of Ninkasi" puts the hero to sleep, which is most likely another metaphor pertaining to the consumption of beer.^[44]

A fragment of a myth known from *Abu Salabikh* mentions Ninšar slaughtering cattle and sheep while Ninkasi brewed beer.^[45]

Ninkasi is one of the eight deities born in the end of the myth *Enki and Ninhursag*.^[46] Her name is reinterpreted as a pun on the word *ka*, "mouth," in this composition, and like in the other passages her birth corresponds to Enki announcing a specific body part.^[46] Ninti makes a similarly brief appearance as her sister, rather than mother, according to Dina Katz because the names of the eight deities in this scene were "not selected for theological reasons but to suit body parts," with Ninti's name being reinterpreted as a pun on the word *ti*, "rib."^[46]

Modern relevance

The asteroid *4947 Ninkasi*, discovered in 1988 by Carolyn S. Shoemaker and Eugene Merle Shoemaker at the *Palomar Observatory*, is named after the goddess.^[47]

Ninkasi Brewing Company from *Eugene, Oregon*, founded in 2006, is named after her as well.^[48] As of 2013, it was the third largest *craft beer brewery* in the state.^[48]

The *American Homebrewers Association* annually issues a "*Ninkasi Award*" during their National Homebrew Competition.^[49]

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See also

- [History of beer](#)

External links

- [Hymn to Ninkasi \(Ninkasi A\)](https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.4.23.1) (<https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.4.23.1>) in the Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature
- [Lugalbanda and the Anzud Bird](https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.8.2.2) (<https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.8.2.2>) in the ETCSL
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Ninsianna

Ninsianna (Sumerian: "Red Queen of Heaven"^[7]) was a Mesopotamian deity considered to be the personification of Venus. This theonym also served as the name of the planet in astronomical texts until the end of the Old Babylonian period. There is evidence that Ninsianna's gender varied between locations, and both feminine and masculine forms of this deity were worshiped. Due to their shared connection to Venus, Ninsianna was associated with Inanna. Furthermore, the deity Kabta appears alongside Ninsianna in many texts, but the character of the relation between them remains unclear.

The oldest evidence for the worship of Ninsianna comes from the Ur III period, and includes references to the construction of two temples of this deity. Many further attestations are available from the Isin-Larsa and Old Babylonian periods, including royal inscriptions, personal letters, seals and theophoric names. The use of Ninsianna's name to refer to the planet Venus declined later, though the feminine form of this deity continued to be worshiped, for example in Nippur. In the Hellenistic period, she appears in ritual texts from Uruk,

Character

Ninsianna, the "Red Queen of Heaven," was a divine representation of the planet Venus.^[7] In the second millennium BCE this theonym could be used to represent the astral body in various works of Mesopotamian astronomy, though in the first millennium BCE the name Dilbat came to be used more commonly instead, with the exception of Neo-Babylonian Venus tablet of Ammisaduqa, which relied on Old Babylonian sources.^[3] It refers to Ninsianna as the name of Venus during the month of Nisan.^[1]

Many of Ninsianna's epithets highlight a connection to light and radiance.^[3] A text from Sippar-Amnanum uses the phrase *ilum elum*, "radiant god."^[8] A late source from Uruk calls Ninsianna the "mistress who illuminates heaven."^[9] It has been proposed that in art, for example on cylinder seals,

Ninsianna

Personification of Venus



The Venus tablet of Ammisaduqa. Ninsianna is mentioned as a name for the planet Venus.^[1]

Major cult center Nippur,^[2] possibly Ur^[3]

Planet Venus

Symbol a star^[4]

Gender variable^[4]

Genealogy

Spouse possibly Kabta^[5]

Equivalents

Hurrian Pinikir^[6]

Ninsianna was depicted in the form of a goddess with a star on her horned crown, or a goddess accompanied by a star.^{[4][10]}

Ninsianna was occasionally associated with haruspicy, like a number of other astral deities.^[3] A compendium of oil omens states that oil spreading into the shape of a star is an omen pertaining to Ninsianna.^[11]

An inscription of Rim-Sîn I presents Ninsianna both as a deity of justice, "judge, supreme advisor, who distinguishes between truth and falsehood," and as a divine warrior.^[3]

Gender

Ninsianna's gender varies between known sources.^[12] A scholarly tablet from the archive of Ur-Utu, who served the chief lamentation priest (*kalamāḥu*) of Annunitum in Sippar-Amnanum, indicates that it is possible that as a personification of Venus, the deity was viewed as female at sunset and male at sunrise.^[8] Joan Goodnick Westenholz has characterized Ninsianna as a "dimorphic (...) goddess,"^[12] while Julia M. Asher-Greve—as a "bi-gendered deity."^[4] It has been proposed that Ninsianna was originally considered to be female, but her gender became variable due to contact between Sumerians and speakers of Semitic languages who represented the same celestial body as a male deity.^[3] However, according to Westenholz Ninsianna's case is distinct from instances of deities whose gender changed due to syncretism, such as Ninshubur.^[8]

Gender of Ninsianna seems to vary based on location as well.^[12] It is generally accepted that in Sippar, he was worshiped as a male deity.^[13] Similar evidence is known from Ur and Girsu.^[14] Rim-Sîn I of Larsa on at least one occasion referred to Ninsianna as male, calling him as a "king" (*lugal*) who helped him in battles against his enemies.^[1] Douglas Frayne nonetheless translates the inscription as if a feminine deity was meant, "for the goddess Ninsianna, my lord,"^[15] though Manfred Krebernik in a review notes this is incorrect.^[16] Frayne himself acknowledges that *lugal* is otherwise exclusively a title of gods, not goddesses.^[17] According to Daniel Schwemer, direct references to masculine Ninsianna are overall relatively common.^[18] However, some evidence in favor of interpreting specific references to Ninsianna as designating this deity as a god rather than a goddess, for example an inscription of Iddin-Sin of Simurrum, is uncertain, as it is possible that the Akkadian word *ilu* in such cases might be employed as a gender neutral term, similar to Sumerian *dingir*.^[8] Prayers from Kassite archives appear to present Ninsianna as a goddess, rather than a god, as evidenced by the connection to the *šuba* stone mentioned in them.^[19] Ninsianna was also considered female in the context of the worship of this deity in Nippur,^[2] Isin^[20] and Uruk.^[3]

Associations with other deities

The god list An = Anum states that Ninsianna was regarded as "Ishtar of the star," *Ištar kakkabi*.^[1] The same explanation of her name is given in an emesal vocabulary.^[21] Jeremiah Peterson instead favors the translation "goddess of the star."^[22] The association between Ninsianna and Inanna goes back to the Ur III period.^{[3][10]} The latter goddess' own association with the planet Venus goes back to the Uruk period.^[23] However, their functions in Mesopotamian religion were separate.^[13] In Larsa, Ninsianna and Inanna were worshiped separately from each other, with only the former serving as a divine representation of the planet Venus.^[12] Separate cults of them both are also attested in sources from

Nippur.^[2] As an extension of the association between Inanna and Ninsianna, in the Isin-Larsa period, the former was partially syncretised with Isin's dynastic goddess Ninisina, with the justification relying partially on the similarity between the names of Ninsianna and Ninisina.^[7]

A deity named Kabta ("star") or Maḥdianna ("lofty one of heaven") was frequently associated with Ninsianna.^[5] They appear together in multiple god lists.^[21] A certain Sîn-išmeanni described himself as "servant of Ninsianna and Kabta" on a cylinder seal.^[24] However, the exact nature of the relationship between these two deities, and even Kabta's gender, remain uncertain due to scarcity and state of preservation of available sources.^[5] Wilfred G. Lambert considered it possible that the deity was male and functioned as the spouse of Ninsianna,^[5] but there is also evidence in favor of viewing Kabta as a goddess, including a seal depicting two goddesses who might be Ninsianna and Kabta.^[3] According to Jeremiah Peterson, in the god list An = Anum and in the lexical text Proto-Diri, Ninsianna, Kabta and Maḥdianna are all explained as *Ištar kakkabi*, and thus as goddesses.^[22]

The goddess Timua frequently appears in god lists and other lexical lists alongside Ninsianna and Kabta, and is also explained with the same phrase as both of them in An = Anum.^[25] She is also attested in prayers from the Kassite period.^[26] A variant spelling of her name, Simua, might indicate that it was derived from *si-mu₂*, "horn growing,"^[27] though Manfred Krebernik remarks this even if this assumption is correct, it might only be the reflection of a folk etymology.^[28] An = Anum also lists ^dALAM as a byname of Timua, though according to Wilfred G. Lambert this is most likely a reference of the concept of deified statues, and does not indicate any relation to other deities whose names could be written with the same logogram, such as Alala and Belili.^[29]

A god list from Emar indicates that the Hurrians viewed Pinikir as analogous to Ninsianna.^[6] Pinikir's gender varies in Hurrian religious texts.^[6]

A late hymn which uses "rare and unusual lexical equations" to identify Antu with other deities equates her with Ninsianna.^[9] According to Julia Krul, the goal was to establish Antu as "Ištar's superior in the domain of the heavens" as a part of a broader phenomenon of extending the scope of her cult in Uruk in the Hellenistic period.^[30]

Worship

Ninsianna was worshiped in various locations in Mesopotamia^[4] and is attested for the first time in texts from the Ur III period, such as an inscription of Shulgi pertaining to the construction of a temple for this deity.^[3] According to Walther Sallaberger, a tablet from the reign of Amar-Sin which mentions the construction of a different temple of Ninsianna might pertain to a house of worship located in Nippur, though other locations have been proposed as well in the past, including Sippar, which he considers unlikely,^[23] and Uruk.^[3]

The cult of Ninsianna is well attested in the following Isin-Larsa and Old Babylonian periods as well.^[3] She was worshiped by the kings of dynasty of Isin, such as Iddin-Dagan.^[20] A temple dedicated to Ninsianna, É-ešbarzida ("House of True Decisions"), was rebuilt by Rim-Sîn I of Larsa, and might have been located in Ur,^[31] where a clay cone with an inscription commemorating this event has been found.^[17] Ninsianna is also mentioned in a curse formula of Iddin-Sin of Simurrum.^[32] A second similar formula has been attributed either to him, to his son Zabazuna, or less plausibly to Anubanini.^[33]

Ninsianna, according to Julia M. Asher-Greve treated as a goddess in this context, is one of the female deities most commonly mentioned in personal letters from the Old Babylonian period, in which she appears less often than Ishtar, but with comparable frequency to Aya or Gula.^[34] One of them invokes her in the role of a tutelary deity of a specific family.^[35] In another, the same deity and Ilabrat are asked for a blessing for the person it was addressed to.^[36] Many seal inscriptions mentioning Ninsianna are known too.^[13] For example, three have been found in Sippar.^[37] Some such seals mention this deity alongside Adad.^[18] Occasionally Ninsianna appears as a theophoric element in personal names, with known examples including Ur-Ninsianna, Lu-Ninsianna, and Mariote Yar'ip-Ninsianna.^[1] In Old Babylonian sources from the city of Babylon itself Ninsianna is one of best attested goddesses in various documents, next to Ishtar, Inanna of Zabalam, Annunitum and Zarpanit.^[13] According to Rivkah Harris, a temple of Ninsianna must have existed in Sippar, as a *pašišu* priest of this deity is attested in one document.^[37] A text from this location deals with an oracular inquiry to Ninsianna about the well-being of Ur-Utu.^[38] A reference to a city gate of Ninsianna is also known, though the tablet is broken making the context it appears in difficult to ascertain.^[37]

The use of Ninsianna's name to refer to Venus declined after the Old Babylonian period.^[3] However, there is evidence that the feminine form of Ninsianna continued to be worshiped in the Kassite period.^[26] The existence of a temple dedicated to her^[2] in Nippur is attested in a Middle Babylonian metrological text, but its ceremonial name is not listed in it.^[39] A Neo-Assyrian version of the *Mîs-pî* rituals involved offerings to Ninsianna, as well as the astral representations of other deities.^{[3][40]} While absent from texts from Uruk from Neo-Babylonian period, Ninsianna also came to be worshiped in this city in the late first millennium BCE.^[41] She is attested in the description of a parade of deities accompanying Ishtar during a parade celebrating the New Year festival (*akītu*^[42]), which also involved Nanaya, Ninigizibara, Išartu, Ninmeurur, Ilid-eturra, Šâgepada, Ninsun and other goddesses, most of whom are known for association with either Ishtar or the city of Uruk.^[43] According to Julia Krul, she was introduced to the local pantheon in this period because of her association with Inanna-Ishtar.^[44]

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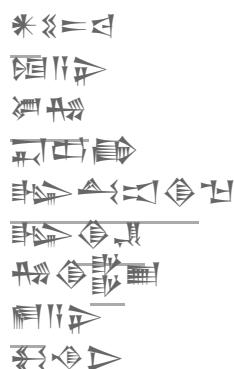
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Nimintabba

Nimintabba



＊ ≈ ≈	DNimintabba..... "For Nimintabba"
≡ ≡ ≡	NIN-a-ni..... "his Lady,"
≡ ≡ ≡	SHUL-GI..... "Shulgi"
≡ ≡ ≡	NITAH KALAG ga..... "the mighty man"
≡ ≡ ≡	LUGAL URIM KI ma... "King of Ur"
≡ ≡ ≡	LUGAL ki en..... "King of Sumer"
≡ ≡ ≡	gi ki URI ke..... "and Akkad,"
≡ ≡ ≡	E a ni..... "her Temple"
≡ ≡ ≡	mu na DU..... "he built" ^[3]

Foundation tablet of king Shulgi (c. 2094–2047 BC), for the Temple of Nimintabba in Ur. ME 118560 British Museum.^{[1][2]} Inscription "For his Lady Nimintabba, Shulgi the mighty man, King of Ur and King of Sumer and Akkad, has built her Temple":^[3] The traditional orientation is vertical, but modern transcription is based on the rotated script.



Location of the Nimintabba Temple in Ur.

Nimintabba (＊ ≈ ≈ DNimin-tab-ba, previously read **Dimtabba**) was a Goddess of Sumer.^[4] She is thought to have been a local deity of the city of Ur, as her only known temple was located there. Her worship was particularly associated with king Shulgi (reigned c. 2094 – c. 2046 BC), and there are no previous attestations of her.

Attestations

A Temple was built for her at Ur by the Sumerian king Shulgi, circa 2100 BCE.^[4] The remains of the Temple were excavated in Ur by Wolley.^[5] Various artifacts with the name Nimintabba were found in the vicinity of the Temple.^[4] She seems to have been a rather minor, local deity.^{[6][4]}

Nimintabba is also known from a famous dedicatory inscription by Shulgi, found in the foundation of the Nimintabba Temple of Ur, and now in the British Museum (ME 118560).^{[7][8]}

A foundation figurine was also found under the northeastern wall of Temple of the Goddess Nimintabba, encased within baked brick boxes, and accompanied by steatite tablets, with the figurine positioned standing and leaning north east. The steatite tablets rested on the bottom of the sealed box.^[9] The male figurine represents the king Shulgi, a connection provided by the historical implication of the figure's posture. The posture of the figurine replicates the posture associated with royal iconography established in the mid-third millennium BCE.^[9] The basket atop the head of the figurine also resembles images of Assurbanipal (686-627 BCE) with a basket on top of his head. Inscriptions connect this image with the construction of the temple.^[9] These pieces of evidence combined with the inscription on the lower half of the figures contribute to the probability that the figurine under the Temple of the Goddess Nimintabba was a dedication to Nimintabba by Shulgi, claiming responsibility for the construction of the temple.^[9]



Bronze foundation figurine of Shulgi from the Temple of Nimintabba at Ur.^[10]

Location of Nimintabba Temple at Ur.^[11]

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Ninsun

Ninsun (also called **Ninsumun**, cuneiform: ^d_{NIN.SUMUN₂}; Sumerian: *Nin-sumun(ak)* "lady of the wild cows"^[3]) was a Mesopotamian goddess. She is best known as the mother of the hero *Gilgamesh* and wife of deified legendary king *Lugalbanda*, and appears in this role in most versions of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. She was associated with *Uruk*, where she lives in this composition, but she was also worshiped in other cities of ancient Mesopotamia, such as *Nippur* and *Ur*, and her main cult center was the settlement KI.KAL^{ki}.

The degree of Ninsun's involvement in Gilgamesh's life varies between various versions of the *Epic*. She only plays an active role in the so-called "Standard Babylonian" version, in which she advises her son and interprets his dreams, petitions the sun god *Shamash* to protect him, and accepts *Enkidu* as a member of her family. In the Old Babylonian version her role is passive, with her actions being merely briefly discussed by *Shamhat*, while a Hittite translation of the text omits her altogether. She is additionally present in older Sumerian compositions, including *Gilgamesh and the Bull of Heaven*, as well as a poorly preserved and very early myth describing her first meeting with Lugalbanda and their marriage.

Kings from the *Third Dynasty of Ur* regarded Ninsun as their divine mother, and Gilgamesh as their brother, most likely to legitimize their claim to rule over Mesopotamia. *Ur-Nammu* and *Shulgi* both left behind inscriptions attesting their personal devotion to this goddess, and a prince only known from a single attestation bore the theophoric name *Puzur-Ninsun*.

The god list *An = Anum* mentions multiple children of Ninsun and her husband Lugalbanda separately from Gilgamesh. A sparsely attested tradition additionally regarded her as the mother of the dying god *Dumuzi*, indicating a degree of conflation with his usual mother *Duttur*. She could also be equated with the medicine goddess *Gula*, especially in syncretic hymns.

Ninsun

Goddess of wild cows, mother of Gilgamesh



Relief with an inscription mentioning Ninsun.

Louvre Museum.

Other names	Ninsumuna
Major cult center	KI.KAL ^{ki} , <i>Uruk</i> , <i>Ur</i> , <i>Lagash</i>
Abode	Egalmah in Uruk (according to <i>Epic of Gilgamesh</i>)
Animals	wild cow

Genealogy

Parents	Anu and Urash (possibly) ^{[1][2]}
Consort	<i>Lugalbanda</i>
Children	<i>Gilgamesh</i> ten other children, including Šilamkurra <i>Dumuzi</i> (occasionally, through conflation with <i>Duttur</i>)

Character

Ninsun's name was written ^dNIN.GUL.^[4] The cuneiform sign GUL could be read as both *sun* and *sumun* in Sumerian, as attested by syllabic glosses in lexical lists, but its meaning was the same in both cases, "wild cow".^[4] It is possible the name was initially understood as "lady wild cow", but in most of the ancient sources it was interpreted as a genitive compound, "lady of wild cows".^[4] Ninsun was often compared to these animals, and in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* she is at one point referred to with the Akkadian epithet Rimāt-Ninsun, "wild cow Ninsun".^[5]

In texts from Lagash, Ninsun is sometimes referred to as a *lamma*.^[6] In this context, *lamma* most likely should be understood as a designation of a deity's function, namely their involvement in granting long and prosperous life to devotees.^[7] It is possible that "Lamma-Ninsumuna" was depicted leading Lugalbanda by the wrist, even though *lamma* goddesses were usually described as walking behind the person they protected.^[8] It is also probable that in some cases Ninsun was believed to bestow a *lamma* upon kings.^[9] An inscription of Ur-Ningirsu I identifies her with the goddess Lammašaga,^[10] usually viewed as the sukkal of Bau.^[11] Claus Wilcke argues that in this case the name Lammašaga should be only understood as a descriptive epithet.^[12]

The so-called "Pennsylvania tablet" of the Old Babylonian version of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* attests that Ninsun was believed to be capable of dream interpretation.^[13]

Kings of the Third Dynasty of Ur, as well as Gudea of Lagash, regarded Ninsun as their divine mother.^[14] However, there is no evidence that Ninsun was ever regarded as a mother goddess similar to Aruru or Ninhursag.^[15]

Associations with other deities

Parentage and marriage

Ninsun refers to Anu and Urash as her father and mother in at least one text,^[1] which both Jacob Klein and Clause Wilcke interpret as literal statements regarding her parentage.^[2] On the other hand, Jan Lisman considers the identity of Ninsun's parents to be unknown, as in a myth describing her marriage the Anunna gods appear to collectively play the role which would customarily belong to parents of the bride, arranging the details of her marriage.^[16] Her husband was Lugalbanda, a deified legendary king of Uruk.^[17] They appear together in multiple sources, including the Weidner, An = Anum forerunner and An = Anum god lists, as well as the standard Emesal lexical list.^[12] However, in Mari Ninsun is attested in a god list without Lugalbanda.^[18]

Gilgamesh

Ninsun was regarded as the mother of the deified hero Gilgamesh, as already attested in the earliest Sumerian poems about him.^[19] She is consistently attested in this role in various versions of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*.^[20] The identity of Gilgamesh's father is not mentioned in the Old Babylonian version, and traditions where his identity was left unspecified are known, for example a king list simply refers to him

as a "phantom" (*lil-lá*^[21]), but due to the preexisting association with Ninsun Lugalbanda was widely accepted as the hero's father in Mesopotamian tradition,^[20] and references are known from other texts, for example the *Poem of the Mattock*.^[22] As there is no indication that Ninsun was ever envisioned as a mortal woman, rather than a goddess, references to deceased mother of Gilgamesh present in the text *Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld* most likely refer to an unrelated tradition regarding the hero's origin.^[23]

Other children

The god list *An = Anum* enumerates ten deities regarded as children of Ninsun and Lugalbanda alongside them.^[17] The first among them, a goddess named Šilamkurra, was worshiped in Uruk in the Seleucid period,^[24] where she appears in a ritual text alongside Uṣur-amāssu, Ninimma and otherwise unknown Ninurbu.^[25] In *An = Anum*, Gilgamesh occurs separately from Ninsun and her other family members on a different tablet, possibly in the company of Enkidu^[26] though the restoration of the latter's name is uncertain.^[13] A *sukkal* (attendant deity) of Ninsun appears in the same list after Lugalbanda's *sukkal* Lugalhegal, but the full name cannot be fully restored due to the state of preservation of the tablet.^[27] According to Richard L. Litke, the name starts with lugal and ends with an-na, but one more sign present between these two elements is not preserved.^[27]

Gula

There is evidence that as early as in the Old Babylonian period, Ninsun could be equated with Gula in theological texts, for example in two column versions of the Weidner god list.^[28] An association between these two goddesses is also present in the *Hymn to Gula* composed by Bulluṭsa-rabi, which identifies the eponymous goddess with a large number of other female deities, among them Nintinugga, Ninkarrak, Nanshe and Ninigizibara.^[29] Joan Goodnick Westenholz notes that while syncretism between different medicine goddesses is not unusual, the presence of Ninsun in this text is, especially since it preserves information about her usual character instead of reinterpreting her as another similar deity.^[30] A similar equation between Ninsun's and Gula's respective husbands, Lugalbanda and Ninurta, is also attested,^[28] though it was likely secondary and there is no evidence Ninurta was ever referred to as Gilgamesh's father like Lugalbanda was.^[31]

Duttur and Dumuzi

Ninsun could also be identified with the mother of Dumuzi, Duttur, which according to Manfred Krebernik indicates that the latter was likely viewed as a goddess associated with livestock in general rather than specifically with sheep, as originally proposed by Thorkild Jacobsen.^[32] It is also possible that this equation was the result of the network of associations between Dumuzi, Damu, and kings of the Third Dynasty of Ur, who referred to Gilgamesh as their brother.^[32] Dina Katz proposes that it was inspired by king lists, in which Dumuzi the Fisherman (a figure distinct from the god Dumuzi) is listed between Lugalbanda and Gilgamesh, though without being labeled as a son of the former.^[33] In at least one case, Dumuzi is called the son of both Ninsun and Lugalbanda.^[33] An indirect association between Dumuzi and Ninsun is also present in an inscription of Utuhegal, in which Gilgamesh, directly called the son of this goddess, assigns Dumuzi to him as a bailiff.^[34]

Worship

Third millennium BCE

Ninsun has been characterized as a "well-known goddess in all periods."^[6] She is already attested in the Early Dynastic god lists from Fara and Abu Salabikh,^[12] as well as in the Zame Hymns.^[35] Her main cult center was KI.KAL ki, but she was also worshiped in Lagash, Nippur, Ur, Uruk, Ku'ara, Umma and other settlements.^[36] A temple dedicated to Ninsun existed in Ur, as attested in an inscription of Ur-Nammu, which states that it was rebuilt by this ruler and that it bore the ceremonial name E-mah, "exalted house".^[37] A temple dedicated to her known as E-gula, "big house," is also known, but its location is not specified in any available sources, and the same name was also applied to a large number of other houses of worship in various parts of Mesopotamia.^[38]

An inscription of Gudea addresses Ninsun as his divine mother.^[39] However, there are also cases where he referred to Nanshe or Gatumdag as such.^[40] Kings of the Third Dynasty of Ur also described Ninsun as their divine mother.^[14] For example, in *Death of Ur-Nammu*, Ninsun is described as the mother of the eponymous ruler and mourns the passing.^[41] By extension, the rulers also treated Gilgamesh as their divine brother, and Ur-Nammu's successor Shulgi called Lugalbanda his divine father.^[28] It is possible that one of this king's daughters served as the *en* priestess of Ninsun.^[12] It is agreed that claiming descent from Ninsun was viewed as a way to legitimize their rule, but it is unknown whether it should be understood as a sign that the dynasty originated in Uruk, or if the only reason was the fact that Gilgamesh was recognized as a model of kingship.^[21] In addition to the kings, there is also evidence for worship of Ninsun by their families. A concubine of Shulgi, Šuqurtum, referred to Ninsun as "my goddess" in a curse formula on an inscribed vase.^[42] A prince (*dumu lugal*) bearing the theophoric name Puzur-Ninsun is also known, but no detailed information about his life is presently known, and the Puzrish-Dagan tablet attesting his existence is undated.^[43]

Later attestations

Sîn-kâšid, an Old Babylonian king of Uruk, built a temple of Lugalbanda and Ninsun^[12] which bore the name ceremonial name E-Kikal, "house, precious place".^[44] Sporadic references to Ninsun are also present in Old Babylonian personal letters.^[45] In cylinder seal inscriptions from Sippar from the same period, Ninsun and Lugalbanda occur less commonly than the most popular divine couples, such as Shamash and Aya and Adad and Shala, but with comparable frequency as Enlil and Ninlil or Nanna and Ningal.^[46]



Ur-Nammu's dedication tablet for the temple of Ninsun in Ur: "For his lady Ninsun, Ur-Nammu the mighty man, King of Ur and King of Sumer and Akkad, has built her temple"

Ninsun continued to be invoked in seal inscriptions from the Kassite period.^[47] In the "Standard Babylonian" edition of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, most likely compiled in the same period,^[48] mentions a temple dedicated to her located in Uruk, the Egalmaḫ ("exalted palace"), but an earlier inscription of Sînkâšid indicates it was originally a temple of Ninisina, while in a document from the first millennium BCE the deity worshiped in it is Bēlet-balāti, a manifestation of closely connected Gula.^[49]

In Seleucid Uruk, Ninsun was celebrated during the New Year festival of Ishtar.^[50] Most of the deities involved in it were well known as members of the pantheon of Uruk, in contrast with a different group which was celebrated during an analogous festival focused on Antu.^[50]

Mythology

Marriage of Ninsun and Lugalbanda

An Early Dynastic myth from Abu Salabikh describes the first meeting and marriage of Ninsun and Lugalbanda.^[51] The text is regarded as particularly difficult to translate and study, as only one most likely incomplete copy survives.^[51] In the surviving fragments Ninsun offers beer bread to Lugalbanda, and later spends a night with him in Iri'aza, a mountainous location in Elam.^[52] After waking up she receives an enclosed clay tablet, and after reading it most likely urges Lugalbanda to go with her to Uruk to visit the En (ruler) of the city.^[52] Once they arrive there, the goddess Inanna appears to instruct Lugalbanda how to approach Ninsun's nameless father to be allowed to marry her.^[52] The restoration of the ending is uncertain, but Jan Lisman proposes that the final known section involves Lugalbanda inviting both his own relatives and members of Ninsun's family to their wedding.^[52] It has been argued that this myth culminated in the birth of Gilgamesh, but this proposal is unproven and controversial.^[53]

Gilgamesh myths

Ninsun appears in some copies of the Sumerian myth *Gilgamesh and the Bull of Heaven*.^[54] She advises her son to reject Inanna's proposals and gifts.^[54]

Dream interpretation

In the Old Babylonian version of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the eponymous hero asks Ninsun to interpret his dreams foretelling the arrival of Enkidu.^[55] In the younger versions of the composition, this is not shown directly, but rather mentioned by Shamhat to Enkidu.^[55] Ninsun predicts that Gilgamesh and Enkidu will become close (according to Andrew R. George: that they will become lovers),^[55] which comes true after their subsequent duel.^[56] Both Ninsun and the dream sequences are absent from the Hittite translation of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* known from Hattusa.^[57]

Intercession with Shamash

In the "Standard Babylonian" version, the heroes later visit Ninsun in her temple in Uruk.^[58] She prays to Shamash to take care of her son, even though she is aware of the fate awaiting him.^[59] She also asks Shamash's wife Aya to intercede on Gilgamesh's behalf.^[58] She manages to convince Shamash to give Gilgamesh thirteen winds meant to help him on the way to the Cedar Forest.^[60] At one point, she acknowledges that he is destined to dwell in the underworld alongside deities such as Ningishzida and

Irnina.^[59] The final lines are damaged, but Ninsun seemingly holds Shamash responsible for Gilgamesh's plan to journey to distant lands, and therefore expects him to help him.^[61] It has been noted that overall the later version expands Ninsun's role,^[62] as in the Old Babylonian version, Gilgamesh prays to Shamash himself, without his mother's intercession.^[63]

Ninsun and Enkidu

In the Standard Babylonian edition of the Epic, after finishing her prayer to Shamash Ninsun decides to meet with Enkidu and proclaims him as equal to her son in rank and a member of her family.^[64] The scene has been conventionally interpreted as representing adoption.^[65] There is no evidence that an analogous plot point was present in the Old Babylonian versions.^[66] Andrew R. George proposes that the passage reflected a custom known from Neo-Babylonian and later documents from Uruk, according to which foundlings and orphans were raised in temples, though their divine protectors were the anonymous "Daughters of Eanna" rather than Ninsun.^[65] A different interpretation has been proposed by Nathan Wasserman, who assumes that by adopting Enkidu, Ninsun guaranteed his loyalty to Gilgamesh and the city of Uruk.^[67] He argues that Enkidu's actions during the confrontation with Humbaba indicate that he valued Ninsun's acceptance highly,^[68] as he seemingly tells Gilgamesh to ignore the monster's pleas because the latter earlier mocked him as a being with no family.^[69]

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Manungal

(Redirected from Nungal)

Nungal (Sumerian: * ^d*Nun-gal*, "great princess"), also known as **Manungal** and possibly **Bēlet-balāṭi**, was the Mesopotamian goddess of prisons, sometimes also associated with the underworld. She was worshiped especially in the Ur III period in cities such as Nippur, Lagash and Ur.

Her husband was Birtum, and she was regarded as a courtier and daughter in law Enlil. Texts also associate her with deities such as Ereshkigal, Nintinugga and Ninkasi.

Much of the available information about her role in Mesopotamian beliefs comes from a Sumerian hymn which was a part of the scribal curriculum in the Old Babylonian period.

Name

Nungal's name means "Great Princess" in Sumerian.^[1] A plural form of the name attested in some documents can be regarded as analogous to one of the collective terms for Mesopotamian deities, Igigi.^[1]

An alternate form of the name, Manungal, was possibly a contraction of the phrase *ama Nungal*, "mother Nungal."^[1] It is first attested in documents from the Ur III period, while in later times it commonly appears in place of the base form in texts written in Akkadian or in the Emesal dialect of Sumerian.^[1] A number of variant spellings of the name are attested in sources from Ugarit, for example ^d*Nun-gal-la*, ^d*Ma-ga-la*, ^d*Ma-nun-gal-la* or ^d*Ma-nun-gal-an-na*.^[2]

In the hymn *Nungal in the Ekur*, and in a fragment of an otherwise unknown composition, Ninegal functions as an epithet of Nungal.^[3] This name is otherwise attested either as an epithet of various goddesses, especially Inanna,^[4] or as an independent minor deity, associated with royal palaces.^[5]

It is possible that **Bēlet-balāṭi**, "mistress of life," a goddess known from sources from the first millennium BCE, was a late form of Manungal.^[6]

Nungal	
Goddess of prisons	
A tablet with part of the hymn to Nungal inscribed. <u>Oriental Institute Museum</u> , University of Chicago	
Other names	Manungal
Major cult center	<u>Nippur</u>
Genealogy	
Parents	<u>Ereshkigal</u> and <u>Anu</u>
Consort	<u>Birtum</u>
Children	<u>Dullum</u>
Equivalents	
Dilbat	<u>Ninegal</u>

Character

Jeremiah Peterson describes punishment and detention as the primary domain of Nungal.^[7] Her character is described in the hymn *Nungal in the Ekur*, known from a large number of Old Babylonian copies^[8] thanks to its role in the scribal school curriculum.^[9] Miguel Civil proposed that it was originally composed by a scribe accused of a crime which would warrant a severe penalty.^[9] It describes the fate of those who find themselves under the auspice of Nungal.^[10] According to this composition, the prison maintained by this goddess separates the guilty from the innocent, but also gives the former a chance to be redeemed, which is metaphorically compared to refining silver and to being born.^[11] The text likely reflected views about the idealized purpose and results of imprisonment, a punishment well attested in Mesopotamian records.^[12] The use of temporary imprisonment as part of the judicial process meant to help with determining if a person is guilty is also attested in the Code of Ur-Nammu.^[13]

Despite being the goddess of prisons, Nungal was regarded as a compassionate deity.^[14] Imprisonment was presumably viewed as compassionate compared to the death penalty,^[14] and it is likely that the goddess was regarded as capable of reducing the most severe punishments.^[7] She was also portrayed in various less fearsome roles, for example as a goddess of justice or as one associated with medicine and perhaps birth.^[15]

Nungal was also an underworld goddess, as evidenced by her association with Ereshkigal and by the epithet *Ninkurra*, "lady of the underworld," applied to her in incantations.^[7]

Worship

Wilfred G. Lambert proposed that originally Manungal and her spouse Birtum were worshiped in a presently unknown city which declined in the third millennium BCE, leading to the transfer of its tutelary deities to Nippur.^[16] An analogous process likely occurred also when it comes to other deities, such as Nisaba, whose cult was transferred from Eresh, which disappears from records after the Ur III period, to Nippur.^[17]

While Nungal is already attested in the Early Dynastic god list from Fara,^[1] worship of her is best attested in the Ur III period, when she was worshiped in Lagash, Nippur, Umma, Susa, Ur and possibly Uruk.^[15] In Nippur she was worshiped as one of the deities belonging to the court and family of Enlil,^[18] while in Ur she received offerings as one of the members of the circle of Gula instead.^[19] A single attestation of Nungal receiving offerings in an Inanna temple, alongside Anu, Ninshubur, Nanaya, Geshtinanna and Dumuzi is known too.^[20] There are also records of offerings being made to her alongside Inanna, Ninegal and Annunitum.^[21]

According to Miguel Civil, it is unlikely that the Ekur mentioned in the *Hymn to Nungal* was one and the same as the temple of Enlil in Nippur, contrary to early assumptions in scholarship.^[22] Other locations proposed for it include the Egalmah temple in Ur, or the city of Lagash.^[3]

In the Old Babylonian period she was also worshiped in Sippar, where she had a temple, as well as a city gate named in her honor,^[21] and possibly in Dilbat.^[23] In the last location there was a temple known as Esapar, "house of the net," dedicated to Ninegal.^[24] However, in a document listing various temples

Esapar is instead said to be the name of a temple of Nungal, with no location listed.^[23] Due to the existence of a well attested association between these two goddesses it is possible that there was only one Esapar.^[23]

Under the name Bēlet-balāti Nungal continued to be worshiped in Nippur in the first millennium BCE, for example in the temple of the local goddess Ninimma.^[6] She is also attested in sources linked to Babylon, Borsippa, Der and Uruk.^[25] According to an economic document from the late first millennium BCE, in the last of those cities she was worshiped in the temple Egalmah (Sumerian: "exalted palace"), which instead appears in association with Ninisina in an inscription of king Sîn-kāšid from the Old Babylonian period.^[26] In the so-called "Standard Babylonian" version of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* it is described as a temple of Ninsun.^[26] According to Andrew R. George, it is possible to reconcile the different accounts by assuming all three of these goddesses were connected with Gula and possibly functioned as her manifestations.^[26]

Theophoric names invoking Nungal are known from records from the Ur III period, one example being Ur-Manungal.^[21]

Associations with other deities

Nungal's spouse was Birtum, whose name means "fetter" or "shackle" in Akkadian.^[15] While the word is grammatically feminine, the deity was regarded as male.^[15] Birtum also appears among underworld gods linked to Nergal in god lists.^[15] As Nungal is called a daughter in law of Enlil, Birtum was likely his son.^[27] Nungal was also called the "true stewardess of Enlil," *agrig-zi-^dEn-lil-lá*.^[28] In the god list An = Anum the deity Dullum, whose name has been translated as "serfdom" ("Frondienst") by Antoine Cavigneaux and Manfred Krebernik, appears as Nungal's son.^[15] According to the *Hymn to Nungal*, her mother is Ereshkigal,^[7] while her father is Anu, though it is possible the later statement is not literal.^[29]

Various courtiers of Nungal are attested in Sumerian and Akkadian texts. Her sukkal (attendant deity) was Nindumgul ("lady/lord mooring pole")^[30], possibly regarded as a female deity.^[15] She appears to play the role of a prosecutor in the *Hymn to Nungal*.^[30] Another of her courtiers was Igalimma, a god who originated as a son of Ningirsu in the pantheon of Lagash.^[28] The deity Eḥ (Akkadian: Uplum), a deification of the louse, also appears in her circle, for example in the Nippur god list.^[31] It is also assumed that the goddess Bizila, associated with the love goddess Nanaya, occurs in the court of Nungal in some sources too,^[15] though Jeremiah Peterson considers it possible that there might have been two deities with similar names, one associated with Nungal and the other with Nanaya.^[32]

In the Isin, An = Anum and Weidner god lists Nungal is classified as one of the underworld deities.^[33] A fragmentary literary texts associates her with Nintinugga and Ereshkigal.^[34] With the exception of Nungal in the Ekur and this fragment she is very rare in known works of Mesopotamian literature.^[7] The Weidner god list places the beer deities Ninkasi and Siraš between Maungal and Laš, the wife of Nergal, who was also a deity associated with the underworld.^[35] Similarly, the goddess ^dKAŠ.DIN.NAM, most likely to be read as Kurunnītu,^[36] who is assumed to be a late form of Ninkasi^[37] appears in association with Bēlet-balāti.^[6] It has been proposed that the possible connection between beer and underworld deities was meant to serve as a reflection of negative effects of alcohol consumption.^[38]

The text *Nin-Isina and the Gods* appears to syncretise Nungal with the eponymous goddess.^[39] Similarly, Bēlet-balātī is attested as a form or member of the entourage of another medicine goddess, Gula.^[40]

Nungal appears in the description of a cultic journey of *Pabilsag* to Lagash.^[41] It has been proposed that he was associated with her as a judge deity, but it is also possible that he acquired a connection to the underworld because of her.^[42]

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Aya (goddess)

(Redirected from Sherida)

Aya was a Mesopotamian goddess associated with dawn. Multiple variant names were attributed to her in god lists. She was regarded as the wife of Shamash, the sun god. She was worshiped alongside her husband in Sippar. Multiple royal inscriptions pertaining to this city mention her. She was also associated with the Nadītu community inhabiting it. She is less well attested in the other cult center of Shamash, Larsa, though she was venerated there as well. Additional attestations are available from Uruk, Mari and Assur. Aya was also incorporated into Hurrian religion, and in this context she appears as the wife of Shamash's counterpart Šimige.

Aya	
<u>Goddess of dawn</u>	
Other names	Ayu-Ikalti, ^[1] Nin-Aya, ^[2] Sherida, Ninkar, Sudağ, Sudgan ^[3]
Major cult center	<u>Sippar</u> , <u>Larsa</u>
Genealogy	
Spouse	<u>Shamash</u> (Utu) <u>Šimige</u> (in <u>Hurrian religion</u>)
Children	<u>Mamu</u> , <u>Kittum</u> , <u>Ishum</u>

Names

Aya's name was written in cuneiform as $da-a$ (𒀭𒀫).^{[3][4]} It is sometimes romanized as Aia instead.^[5] It has Akkadian origin^[6] and means "dawn".^[7] Sporadically it could be prefixed with the sign NIN,^[2] with the variant form Nin-Aya attested in a dedicatory inscription of Manishtushu^[8] and in an offering list from Mari.^[9] NIN was a grammatically neutral title well attested as a part of theonyms, and in this context can be translated as "queen" or "mistress".^[10] It has been suggested that in Aya's case, it was used as a sumerogram representing the term "Lady".^[9] In Hurrian sources Aya was referred to as "Ayu-Ikalti".^[11] This form of the name was derived from the phrase Aya kallatu,^[11] "Aya the bride".^[12]

Multiple additional names of Aya are attested in god lists.^[3]

Sherida

Sherida (𒀭𒑷; $da-a$; $\overset{d}{\text{š}}\overset{d}{\text{E}}.\text{NIR}-da$, also $\overset{d}{\text{š}}\overset{d}{\text{E}}.\text{NIR}$, Šerida or Šerda^[13]) could function as a Sumerian equivalent of Aya's primary name.^[6] It has been suggested that it was a loanword derived from Akkadian šertum, "morning".^[14] However, this proposal is not universally accepted.^[13]

The name Sherida is already attested in the Early Dynastic god lists from Fara and Abu Salabikh.^[13] Additionally, the theophoric name Ur-Sherida is known from Lagash^[14] and Ur.^[13] Gebhard J. Selz notes that if the assumption that it was an Akkadian loanword is accepted, she would be one of the earliest deities bearing names of Akkadian origin to be integrated into the pantheons of Sumerian-speaking areas.^{[14][a]} The name Sherida appears for the last time in cultic context in sources from Sippar and Larsa from the Old Babylonian period.^[17]

Sudaĝ and related names

Sudaĝ (^dsud-áĝ or ^dsù-da-áĝ^[18]), "golden yellow shine" or "golden yellow shining rock/metal",^[19] is attested as a name of Aya in multiple god lists, including *An = Anum* (tablet III, line 131) and its Old Babylonian forerunner.^[20] A further name present in the same source, Sudgan (tablet III, line 130), might have a similar meaning ("light", "glow").^[21] Ninsudaĝ (^dnin-BU-áĝ, interpreted as ^dnin-sud4-áĝ), attested in the Early Dynastic god list from Fara and possibly in the Old Babylonian god list from Mari, might be a further variant of the name, though the reading is ultimately uncertain in this case.^[18]

Due to similarity of the names Sudaĝ and Sud, the tutelary goddess of *Shuruppak* equated with *Ninlil*, the latter appears in the role *Ishum*'s mother in a single myth.^[22] However, according to Manfred Krebernik Sud and Sudaĝ were only confused with each other rather than conflated or syncretised.^[20]

Ninkar

Ninkar or Ninkara (from kár, "to light up") was one of the names of Aya according to *An = Anum* (tablet III, line 126).^[23] However, this theonym initially referred to a separate deity,^[24] presumably considered to be the goddess of daylight.^[25] In the oldest available sources her name was written as ^dnin-kar, while ^dnin-kár(-ra) first attested in the Ur III period is presumed to be a later variant.^[26] Joan Goodnick Westenholz argued that she is mentioned in one of the Early Dynastic *Zame Hymns* from Abu Salabikh.^[25] Manfred Krebernik initially also tentatively accepted that this text might contain a reference to Ninkar.^[27] However, later on in a translation of the text he prepared in collaboration with Jan Lisman the corresponding passage has been interpreted as a reference to a "quay (kar) of Ningal" instead.^[28] It is known that a temple dedicated to Ninkar existed in Lagash.^[26] She is additionally attested in the theophoric name Ur-Ninkar, one of whose bearers might have been a deified king of Umma.^[24]

Krebernik assumes that in texts from Ebla, the name Ninkar also refers to the spouse of a sun deity, who he assumed was seen as male in this city.^[29] Alfonso Archi instead concludes that the Eblaite sun deity was primarily female based on available lexical evidence.^[30] Westenholz proposed that Ninkar in Eblaite texts should be interpreted as Ninkarrak rather than the phonetically similar but less well attested Mesopotamian Ninkar.^[31] She pointed out occasional shortening of Ninkarrak's name to "Ninkar" is known from Mesopotamian sources.^[32] The identification of Eblaite Ninkar with Ninkarrak is also accepted by Archi.^[30]

Other names

Further names of Aya attested in *An = Anum* include Nin-mul-guna ("lady colorful star"; tablet III, line 132)^[33] and Nin-ul-šutag (𒀭𒈰𒃲; "lady delighted with charm"; tablet III, line 134, the end of the Aya section).^[34] Paul-Alain Beaulieu additionally proposes that *Belet Larsa* ("Lady of Larsa") known from a number of Neo-Babylonian letters might be identical with Aya.^[35]

Character and iconography

Aya was considered the personification of dawn.^[7] She was associated with morning light and the rising sun.^[6] She was called the "morning-maker"^[12] Her other primary function was that of a divine bride, as exemplified by her epithet *kallatum* ("bride", "daughter-in-law"), and in this capacity she was regarded as

epitome of beauty and charm.^[12] She was also commonly invoked to intercede with her husband Shamash on behalf of worshipers.^[7] This function is also well attested for other spouses of popular deities, such as Ninmug and Shala, the wives of Ishum and Adad, as well as for Inanna's sukkal Ninshubur.^[36]

The astronomical compendium MUL.APIN states that Aya was associated with the constellation Ewe,^[37] typically represented by the sumerogram mulU₈, though a source referring to it with the phonetic Akkadian translation, "mulImmertu", is known too.^[38] It might have corresponded to the northeastern section of the constellation Boötes.^[39] However, ultimately its identification remains uncertain.^[40]

In Mesopotamian art Aya was commonly depicted frontally.^[6] Many depictions highlighted her beauty and sexual charm.^[41] On seals from Sippar she was often depicted wearing a type of garment which exposed her right breast, meant to emphasize her qualities as a charming and attractive bride.^[41] Ishtar and Annunitum (who in Sippar functioned as a separate goddess, rather than an epithet) were depicted similarly.^[41] The existence of an emblem representing Aya is mentioned in texts from Sippar, but no descriptions of it are known.^[42]

Associations with other deities

As the wife of Shamash, Aya was regarded as the daughter-in-law of his parents Suen and Ningal and sister-in-law of his sister Ishtar.^[12] Their daughters were Mamu (or Mamud), the goddess of dreams^[43] and Kittum, the personification of truth.^[3] According to Joan Goodnick Westenholz another deity considered to be their child was Ishum.^[22]

In Hurrian sources Aya was also viewed as the spouse of a sun god, Šimige.^[1] A trilingual Sumero-Hurro-Ugaritic edition of the Weidner god list from Ugarit attests the equivalence between Shamash (Utu), Šimige and the local sun goddess Šapšu.^[44] Apparently to avoid the implications that Shapash had a wife, the scribes interpreted the name of Aya, present in the Mesopotamian original, as an unconventional writing of Ea, with his Hurrian name Eyan corresponding to it in the Hurrian column and local craftsman god Kothar-wa-Khasis in the Ugaritic one.^[45]

A single god list dated to the Middle Babylonian period or later equates Lahar with Aya and explains that the former should be understood as "Aya as the goddess of caring for things" (^da-a šá ku-né-e), though Wilfred G. Lambert noted this equation is unusual, as Lahar was consistently regarded as male otherwise, and the evidence for connections between both goddesses and mortal women with herding sheep, a sphere of life he was associated with, is limited.^[4]

Worship

Aya was already worshiped in the Early Dynastic period.^[12] While she is overall less well attested in textual record than major goddesses such as Ishtar, Nanaya, Ninlil or Ninisina, it is nonetheless assumed that she was a popular target of personal devotion,^[46] as she appears commonly in personal names and on seals, especially in the Old Babylonian period.^[12] In personal letters she is attested with frequency lesser only than Ishtar.^[47]

Sippar

Aya was worshiped in Sippar in the temple of Shamash, known under the ceremonial name Ebabbar.^{[48][b]} They are the divine couple most often invoked together in seal inscriptions from this city, followed by Adad and Shala and Enki and Damkina.^[50] In legal texts, Aya often appears as a divine witness alongside her husband, their daughter Mamu and Shamash's sukkal Bunene.^{[50][c]}

In the Sargonic period, Manishtushu dedicated a mace head to Aya in this city.^[8] Hammurabi of Babylon referred to himself as the "beloved of Aya" in an inscription^[52] commemorating the construction of new walls of Sippar in the twenty fifth year of his reign.^[5] He also mentioned Aya in an inscription commemorating the construction of a canal named after her, Aya-hegal, "Aya is abundance".^[5] Samsuiluna called himself the "beloved of Shamash and Aya" and both renovated the Ebabbar and built walls around Sippar.^[53] It has also been noted that the Naditu community from this city were particularly closely associated with Aya, as evidenced by the fact that they addressed her as their mistress, commonly took theophoric names invoking her, and exclusively swore oaths by her.^[54] They were a class of women closely associated with Shamash.^[55] Their existence is particularly well attested in the Old Babylonian period,^[56] and it has been argued that the institution first developed around 1880 BCE, during the reign of Sumu-la-El of Babylon.^[57] Naditu lived in a building referred to as *gagûm*, conventionally translated as "cloister,"^[56] and Tonia Sharlach notes they can be compared to medieval Christian nuns.^[58] They are sometimes described as "priestesses" in modern literature, but while it is well attested that they were considered to be dedicated to a specific deity, there is little evidence for their involvement in religious activities other than personal prayer, and it is not impossible they were understood as a fully separate social class.^[59]

Other Babylonian cities

It has been argued that in contrast with her position in Sippar, Aya was less prominent in the other city associated with Shamash, Larsa, where she does not appear in official lists of offerings.^[12] It is assumed that his temple in this city, which also bore the name Ebabbar, was nonetheless also dedicated to her.^[60] Some references to her are also present in texts from the Neo-Babylonian period, with one text mentioning the priests from Larsa sent jewelry of Aya and of the "divine daughter of Ebabbar" to Uruk for repairs.^[61] References to a "treasury of Shamash and Aya" are known too.^[62]

While Aya was not worshiped in Neo-Babylonian Uruk, she appears in ritual texts from this city from the Seleucid period.^[63] Julia Krul suggests that her introduction into the local pantheon reflected a broader phenomenon of incorporating spouses, children and servants of deities already worshiped locally (in this case Shamash) into it.^[64] She was celebrated during the New Year festival.^[65] In this context she appears alongside Shamash and Bunene.^[66]

A house of worship dedicated to Aya, the Edimgalanna ("house, great bond of heaven"), is mentioned in the Canonical Temple List, but its location is unknown.^[67]

Outside Babylonia

Aya was worshiped in Mari in the Old Babylonian period.^[68] She appears in theophoric names of women from this city with comparable frequency to Shamash and Dagan, the head god of the region, though less commonly than Annu, Ishtar, Išbara, Kakka (regarded as a goddess in this city), Mamma and Admu.^[69] Examples include Aya-lamassi, Aya-ummi and Yatara-Aya.^[70]

A sanctuary dedicated to Aya, Eidubba ("house of storage bins") existed in Assur in Assyria.^[71]

Hurrian reception

Aya was among Mesopotamian deities incorporated into Hurrian religion.^[1] She is attested in the kaluti (offering lists) focused on Hepat and her circle.^[72] She is one of the Hurrian deities depicted in the Yazılıkaya sanctuary, where a relief of her can be seen in a procession of goddesses, between Nikkal and a figure who might represent Šauška.^[73] She is also attested in the itkalzi rituals.^[74]

Mythology

An UD.GAL.NUN text known from five copies from Abu Salabikh and one from Fara which focuses on Utu traveling to various mountainous areas to bring deities or animals from them^[75] lists Šerda as the final of the deities he transports and describes her as a resident of the "mountain-lands of Amurru" (*kur mar-tu*).^[76] According to Kamran Vincent Zand, this term should be understood as a designation of the Middle Euphrates in this context, and is the westernmost area mentioned.^[75] He also points out the next line of the text mentions Mari.^[76]

Buduhudug, a mythical mountain where the sun was believed to set, was regarded as "the entrance of Shamash to Aya" (*nēreb dŠamaš <ana> dAya*) - the place where they were able to reunite each day after Shamash finished his journey through the sky.^{[77][78]}

In the "Standard Babylonian" version of the Epic of Gilgamesh, Ninsun during her prayer to Shamash asks Aya three times to intercede on behalf of her son Gilgamesh to guarantee his safety both during the day and the night.^[79] Ninsun states that the optimal time for Aya to appeal to her husband is right after sunset, when he returns home from his daily journey.^[80]

Notes

- a. Other such examples, also identified in the Early Dynastic texts from Lagash, are Suen,^[14] a name of the moon god,^[15] and Ishtaran, a divine judge.^[16]
- b. Sumerian: "shining white house".^[49]
- c. Like Aya and Shamash, Mamu and Bunene were also regarded as a couple.^[51]

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Uğur

(Redirected from [Uğur](#))

Uğur is a common masculine [Turkish](#) and [Azerbaijani](#) given name. In both Turkish and Azerbaijani, the word "uğur" means "luck".

Given name

- [Uğur Albayrak](#) (born 1988), Turkish footballer
- [Uğur Boral](#) (born 1982), Turkish footballer
- [Uğur Çiftçi](#) (born 1992), Turkish footballer
- [Uğur Çimen](#) (born 1975), Turkish football coach
- [Uğur Dağdelen](#) (born 1973), Turkish former footballer
- [Uğur Demirkol](#) (born 1990), Turkish footballer
- [Uğur Demirok](#) (born 1988), Turkish footballer
- [Uğur Dündar](#) (born 1943), Turkish journalist, political commentator, and writer
- [Uğur Erdener](#) (born 1950), Turkish academic and physician
- [Uğur Erdoğan](#) (born 1987), Turkish footballer
- [Uğur Güneş](#) (born 1987), Turkish film and television actor
- [Uğur Güneş](#) (born 1993), Turkish volleyball player
- [Uğur Gürses](#), Turkish financial columnist
- [Uğur Işıkal](#) (born 1985), Turkish footballer
- [Uğur İbrahimhakkıoğlu](#) (born 1964), Turkish judge
- [Uğur İnceman](#) (born 1981), Turkish-German footballer
- [Uğur Kapısız](#) (born 1987), Turkish footballer
- [Uğur Rıfat Karlova](#) (born 1980), Turkish comedian, actor, and writer
- [Uğur Kavuk](#) (born 1979), Turkish footballer
- [Uğur Köken](#) (born 1937), Turkish former footballer
- [Uğur Arslan Kuru](#) (born 1989), Turkish footballer
- [Uğur Mumcu](#) (1942–1993), Turkish investigative journalist
- [Uğur Orel Oral](#) (born 1979), Turkish swimmer
- [Uğur Pamuk](#) (born 1989), Azerbaijani footballer
- [Uğur Pektaş](#) (born 1979), Turkish actor
- [Uğur Polat](#) (born 1961), Turkish actor
- [Uğur Soldan](#) (born 1978), Turkish author, critic, academic, and lecturer
- [Uğur Şahin](#) (born 1965), [Turkish-German](#) scientist, founder & CEO of [Biontech](#)
- [Uğur Taner](#) (born 1975), Turkish swimmer
- [Uğur Tütüneker](#) (born 1963), Turkish former footballer

Uğur

Pronunciation	Turkish: [u:r] Azerbaijani: [u'γur]
Gender	Masculine
Language(s)	Turkish Azerbaijani
Origin	
Language(s)	Old Turkic ^[1]
Word/name	uğur
Derivation	uğur
Meaning	"luck"
Other names	
Cognate(s)	Oğur

- Uğur Uçar (born 1987), Turkish footballer
- Uğur Uluocak (1962–2003), Turkish outdoorsman, photographer, and editor
- Uğur Ümit Üngör (born 1980), Dutch scholar
- Uğur Yıldırım (born 1982), Turkish footballer
- Uğur Yücel (born 1957), Turkish film actor, producer, and director

Surname

- Özkan Uğur (1953–2023), Turkish pop musician

Places

- Uğur, Düzce

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Uttu

Uttu was a Mesopotamian goddess associated with weaving. It has been suggested that she was connected with spiders, though the evidence is limited to a single text which might reflect scribal speculation. She was worshiped in Babylon and possibly in Early Dynastic Umma. She appears in multiple myths, such as *Enki and Ninhursag* and *Enki and the World Order*.

Uttu	
Goddess of weaving	
Major cult center	<u>Babylon</u> , possibly <u>Umma</u>
Animals	possibly spiders
Genealogy	
Spouse	<u>Ninkurra</u>

Name and character

Uttu's name was written TAG×TÙG, with the sign TAG (usually pronounced as *tuku*) referring to the action of weaving cloth.^[1] The word *uttu* could also denote a part of a loom.^[1] It is also possible that the name ^dTAG.NUN should be read as *Uttu*,^[1] though Joan Goodnick Westenholz rejected this interpretation and instead assumed that ^dTAG.NUN was one of the multiple writings of the name of Bizilla or a closely related goddess who like her came to be associated with Nanaya in later sources.^[2]

Uttu was regarded as the goddess of weaving.^[3] According to an esoteric explanatory text which links various materials with gods, she could be associated with colored wool.^[4]



It has been argued that Uttu was envisioned as a spider spinning a web, but the evidence in favor of this view is limited.

Uttu and spiders

Thorkild Jacobsen argued that Uttu was envisioned as a spider spinning a web.^[5] However, the connection between Uttu and spiders, or more precisely between her name and the Akkadian word *ettūtu* ("spider"), is limited to a single text, and it might represent a "learned etymology" (scribal speculation),^[3] a folk etymology^[1] or simply rely on the terms being nearly homophonous.^[6] Two copies of the text contain slightly different versions of the same passage, "the handiwork of a spider (*ettūtu*) will be steady in his house," or "the handiwork of Uttu will be steady in his house."^[7] *Ettūtu* was only one of the words for spiders present in Akkadian texts, the other two being *anzūzu* (written ŠÈ.GUR₄) and possibly *lummû*.^[3] In Sumerian, spiders were known as *aš*, *aš₅*, *lùm* or *si₁₄*.^[3] In Mesopotamian literature spiders are mostly attested in proverbs, with a particularly well attested one describing a spider (ŠÈ.GUR₄) putting a *hamitu* insect in fetters and then cutting it into pieces after it acted as a witness in a lawsuit against a *kuzāzu* insect.^[3] Most likely the meaning of it was that an evildoer should not act as a

witness.^[3] Another proverb mentions a spider (*ettūtu*) which prepared a net to catch a fly but ended up threatened itself by a lizard, possibly meaning that one responsible for evil deeds will be eventually defeated by a greater force.^[3] Spiders also occur as an art motif on Early Dynastic seals associated with female weavers.^[3]

Worship

Uttu was worshiped in the E-ešgar, "house of work assignment," which was a part of the Esagil temple complex in Babylon.^[8]

^dTAG.NUN, who might be the same deity as Uttu, had a temple in Umma in the Early Dynastic period,^[1] built by king Il.^[9] ^dTAG.NUN is also attested in a theophoric name, Ur-^dTAG.NUN.^[1]

Two bilingual Sumero-Akkadian incantations known from the neo-Assyrian period mention Uttu.^[10] In both cases, she is described cooperating with Inanna on spinning yarn.^[10]

Mythology

According to the myth *Enki and Ninhursag*, Uttu's parents were Enki and Ninkurra.^[11] In a late tradition, Ninkurra was instead a male deity and Uttu's husband.^[1] A variant of *Enki and Ninhursag* makes Ninkurra Uttu's grandmother and Ninimma her mother.^[11] Enki is also addressed as Uttu's father in a Neo-Assyrian incantation.^[1] However, another late text documents a tradition in which her father was Anu.^[12] In the late god list *An = Anu ša amēli*, Uttu is equated with Enki, which reflects a theological phenomenon of reinterpreting originally distinct deities responsible for specific professions as aspects of him even if they were originally viewed as female.^[13]

In *Enki and Ninhursag*, Uttu is the final goddess Enki (aided by his sukkal Isimud^[14]) tries to seduce while engaging in a series of incestuous encounters with his descendants (Ninšar, Ninkurra, in a variant of the text Ninimma, and finally Uttu).^[11] Unlike the other goddesses, Uttu receives advice from Ninhursag,^[11] and probably attempts to trick Enki with a false promise of marriage under the condition that he will supply her with fresh produce.^[15] While she is initially successful, Enki manages to obtain the requested cucumbers, apples and grapes from a farmer.^[15] He approaches her for a second time disguised as a gardener and this time Uttu becomes pregnant.^[16] Ninhursag intervenes and manages to remove Enki's seed from Uttu's body, which breaks the cycle of incestuous relationships.^[10] The scene is more detailed than the previous encounters between Enki and his daughters in the same myth.^[10] Curiously, the narrative makes no reference to Uttu's association with weaving.^[10]

Uttu also appears in the myth *Enki and the World Order*, where she is the last of the deities awaiting the assignment of a domain.^[10] She is called a "conscientious woman" and "the silent one".^[10] It has been pointed out that both in *Enki and Ninhursag* and in *Enki and the World Order*, Uttu's appearance marks a shift in the narrative: after her encounter with Enki in the former myth, the cycle of Enki's attempts at seducing and taking advantage of the goddesses ends, while in the latter, after her destiny is declared, Inanna and her complaints about not receiving an appropriate share of the universe take the center stage.^[10]

A reference to Uttu is also known from the debate poem *The Debate between Grain and Sheep*, which describes a distant time before she started to weave, symbolically representing the age before the advent of civilisation and technology.^[10]

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16. Katz 2008, pp. 320–321.

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External links

- *Enki and Ninhursag* (<https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.1.4>) in the Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature
- *Enki and the World Order* (<https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.1.3>) in the Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature
- *The debate between Grain and Sheep* (<https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.5.3.2#>) in the Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature



Asag

In the Sumerian mythological poem *Lugal-e*, **Asag** or **Azag** (Sumerian: 𒀭𒊏 𒀭 a₂-sag₃ Akkadian: asakku^[1]), is a monstrous demon, so hideous that his presence alone makes fish boil alive in the rivers. Azag is a personification of winter cold and sicknesses.^[2]

This demon lives either in the Abyss or in the mountains and is accompanied by an army of rock demon offspring—born of his union with the mountains themselves.^[2]

He was vanquished by the heroic Akkadian deity Ninurta, using Sharur, his enchanted talking mace, after seeking the counsel of his father, the god Enlil.^[3]

Asakku

The name **Asakku** is used by researchers as either a synonym of Azag^[4] or a "variation" in the form of multiple spirits and monsters that prey on humans and kill them by causing migraines.^[5]

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External links

- [Ninurta defeats the Asag—ETCSL tablet translation](http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.6.2&charenc=j#) (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.6.2&charenc=j#>)

Retrieved from "<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Asag&oldid=1279252427>"



Anzû

Anzû, also known as **^dZû** and **Imdugud** (Sumerian: *𒂗𒀭 **DIM.DUGUD**^{MUŠEN}), is a demon in several Mesopotamian religions. He was conceived by the cosmic freshwater ocean Abzu and mother Earth Mami, or as son of Siris.^[1] In Babylonian myths Anzû was depicted as a massive bird - also as an eagle with lion head - who can breathe fire and water. This narrative seems to refer to much earlier Sumerian myths, in which he appears as a half-human storm bird who stole the tablet of destiny, challenging Enlil's power over his organisation of different gods that provided Mesopotamia with agriculture (cf. the Flood epic Athrahasis).

Stephanie Dalley, in *Myths from Mesopotamia*, writes that the Epic of Anzu itself "is principally known in two versions: an Old Babylonian version of the early second millennium [BC], giving the hero as Ningirsu; and 'The Standard Babylonian' version, dating to the first millennium BC, which appears to be the most quoted version, with the hero as Ninurta". However, the Anzu character does not appear as often in some other writings, as noted below.

Name

The name of the mythological being usually called Anzû was actually written in the oldest Sumerian cuneiform texts as *𒂗𒀭 **AN.IM.MI**^{MUŠEN}; in context, the cuneiform sign **MI**, or MUŠEN, is an ideogram for "bird"). In texts of the Old Babylonian period, the name is more often found as *𒂗𒀭 **AN.IM.DUGUD**^{MUŠEN}.^[2] In 1961, Landsberger argued that this name should be read as "Anzu", and most researchers have followed suit. In 1989, Thorkild Jacobsen noted that the original reading of the cuneiform signs as written (giving the name "^DIM.DUGUD") is also valid, and was probably the original pronunciation of the name, with Anzu derived from an early phonetic variant. Similar phonetic changes happened to parallel terms, such as IMDUGUD (meaning "heavy wind") becoming ANSUK. Changes like these

Anzû

Divine monster



Ninurta with his thunderbolts pursues Anzû stealing the Tablet of Destinies from Enlil's sanctuary (*Austen Henry Layard Monuments of Nineveh*, 2nd Series, 1853)

Parents **Siris**



Alabaster votive relief of Ur-Nanshe, king of Lagash, showing Anzû as a lion-headed eagle in a Master of Animals motif, ca. 2550–2500 BC; found at Tell Telloh the ancient city of Girsu, (Louvre)

occurred by evolution of the *im* to *an* (a common phonetic change) and the blending of the new *n* with the following *d*, which was aspirated as *dh*, a sound which was borrowed into Akkadian as *z* or *s*.^[3]

It has also been argued based on contextual evidence and transliterations on cuneiform learning tablets, that the earliest, Sumerian form of the name was at least sometimes also pronounced Zu, and that Anzu is primarily the Akkadian form of the name. However, there is evidence for both readings of the name in both languages, and the issue is confused further by the fact that the prefix ✳ (AN) was often used to distinguish deities or even simply high places. AN.ZU could therefore mean simply "heavenly eagle".^[2]

Origin and cultural evolution

Thorkild Jacobsen proposed that Anzu was an early form of the god Abu, who was also syncretized by the ancients with Ninurta/Ningirsu, a god associated with thunderstorms. Abu was referred to as "Father Pasture", illustrating the connection between rainstorms and the fields growing in Spring. According to Jacobsen, this god was originally envisioned as a huge black thundercloud in the shape of an eagle, and was later depicted with a lion's head to connect it to the roar of thunder. Some depictions of Anzu therefore depict the god alongside goats (which, like thunderclouds, were associated with mountains in the ancient Near East) and leafy boughs. The connection between Anzu and Abu is further reinforced by a statue found in the Tell Asmar Hoard depicting a human figure with large eyes, with an Anzu bird carved on the base. It is likely that this depicts Anzu in his symbolic or earthly form as the Anzu-bird, and in his higher, human-like divine form as Abu. Though some scholars have proposed that the statue actually represents a human worshiper of Anzu, others have pointed out that it does not fit the usual depiction of Sumerian worshipers, but instead matches similar statues of gods in human form with their more abstract form or their symbols carved onto the base.^[3]



Inscribed head of a mace with Imdugud (Anzu) and Enannatum, the British Museum, London.

Sumerian and Akkadian myth

In Sumerian and Akkadian mythology, Anzû is a divine storm-bird and the personification of the southern wind and the thunder clouds.^[4] This demon—half man and half bird—stole the "Tablet of Destinies" from Enlil and hid them on a mountaintop. Anu ordered the other gods to retrieve the tablet, even though they all feared the demon. According to one text, Marduk killed the bird; in another, it died through the arrows of the god Ninurta.^[5]



Frieze of Imdugud (Anzu) grasping a pair of deer, from Tell al-'Ubaid.

Anzu also appears in the story of "Inanna and the Huluppu Tree",^[6] which is recorded in the preamble to the Sumerian epic poem *Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld*.^[7]

Anzu appears in the Sumerian [Lugalbanda and the Anzud Bird](#) (also called: The Return of Lugalbanda).

Babylonian and Assyrian myth

The shorter Old Babylonian version was found at Susa. Full version in *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, The Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others* by [Stephanie Dalley](#), page 222^[8] and at *The Epic of Anzû*, Old Babylonian version from Susa, Tablet II, lines 1-83, read by [Claus Wilcke](#).^[9] The longer Late Assyrian version from Nineveh is most commonly called *The Myth of Anzu*. (Full version in Dalley, page 205).^[10] An edited version is at *Myth of Anzu*.^[11] Latest editions of the Old Babylonian, Standard Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian (Late Assyrian) versions of the myth are published in the electronic Babylonian Library.^[12]



The Anzû, symbol of [Lagash](#), at the time of Entemena.

Literary References

- In [Faith Hunter's Jane Yellowrock urban fantasy books](#), the major character Girard DiMercy is an anzu, a bird-like magical species considered by ancient Babylonians as avatars of the storm god and that can take the shape of a human. In the novels, anzu have a symbiotic relationship with vampires, helping them control their unstable emotions as well as saving masters from killing vampire scions who fail to emerge from a feral state after being turned. In addition to being vampire Master of the City Leo Pellosier's "Mercy Blade," DiMercy serves as the Executioner for the Master of the City.

See also

- [Anzu wyliei](#), a theropod dinosaur named for Anzû
- [Asag](#), similar Mesopotamian deity
- [Griffin](#) or griffon, lion-bird hybrid
- [Lamassu](#), Assyrian deity, bull/lion-eagle-human hybrid
- [Tengu](#), Japanese magical creature half-man half-bird
- [Hybrid beasts in folklore](#)
- [List of hybrid creatures in folklore](#)
- [Tiamat](#)
- [Ziz](#), giant griffin-like bird in [Jewish mythology](#)
- [Zeus](#), Greek deity of sky and thunder
- [Zuism](#), Icelander protest against tax for religion

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- Ninurta's exploits (<https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.6.2#>) and The Exploits of Ninurta, or Lugal-e (<https://www.gatewaystobabylon.com/myths/texts/ninurta/expl>)

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Gallu

In Sumerian and ancient Mesopotamian religion, **gallûs**^[1] (also called **gallas**;^[2] Akkadian *gallû* < Sumerian GAL.LU) were demons or devils of the ancient Mesopotamian Underworld.



A cylinder seal of the god Dumuzid being tortured in the ancient Mesopotamian underworld by *gallas*

Role in mythology

Gallu demons hauled unfortunate victims off to the underworld. They were one of seven devils (or "the offspring of hell") of Babylonian theology that could be appeased by the sacrifice of a lamb at their altars.^[3]

The goddess Inanna was pursued by *gallu* demons after being escorted from the Underworld by Galatura and Kuryara.^{[4][3]} In the *Descent*, it is stated that said demons

know no food, know no drink, eat no flour offering, drink no libation. They never enjoy the pleasures of marital embrace, never have any sweet children to kiss. They snatch the son from a man's knee. They make the bride leave the house of her father in law.^[5]

Other uses

The word *gallu* may also refer to a human adversary, one that is dangerous and implacable.^[6]

See also

- Sumerian religion
- Asag
- Hulbazizi
- Udug
- Gello
- Ghoul

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Humbaba

(Redirected from [Huwawa](#))

Humbaba (𒄷ુમ્બા; 𒄷ુમ્બા, *Humbāba*,^[1] with an optional determinative *), originally known as **Huwawa** in Sumerian (𒄷ુવા, *Huwāwa*^[1]), was a figure in [Mesopotamian mythology](#). The origin and meaning of his name are unknown. He was portrayed as an anthropomorphic figure comparable to an [ogre](#) or [giant](#). He is best known from Sumerian and Akkadian narratives focused on the hero [Gilgamesh](#), including short compositions belonging to the curriculum of scribal schools, various versions of the [Epic of Gilgamesh](#), and several [Hurrian](#) and [Hittite](#) adaptations. He is invariably portrayed as the inhabitant or guardian of the [cedar forest](#), to which Gilgamesh ventures with his companion Enkidu. The subsequent encounter leads to the death of Humbaba, which provokes the anger of the gods. Humbaba is also attested in other works of Mesopotamian literature. Multiple depictions of him have also been identified, including combat scenes and [apotropaic](#) clay heads.

It has been suggested that the iconography of Humbaba influenced depictions of the [gorgons](#) in [Greece](#), in particular scenes of [Perseus](#) slaying [Medusa](#) with the help of [Athena](#). A late derivative of Humbaba also seems to be found in both [Jewish](#) and [Manichaean](#) versions of the [Book of Giants](#), where one of the eponymous beings is referred to as Ḫôbabiš, Ḫôbabis or Ḫôbâīš. While it is agreed the name is derived from his own, the context in which it appears shows no similarity to known myths involving him. Traces of Ḫôbabiš have also been identified in a number of later works belonging to [Islamic](#) tradition, such as religious polemics. A number of connections have also been proposed between Humbaba and figures such as Kombabos from the works of [Lucian](#) or biblical [Hobab](#), but they are not regarded as plausible.

Name

The name Humbaba (𒄷ુમ્બા) first occurs as an ordinary personal name in documents from the [Ur III period](#).^[2] The modern spelling reflects the [Neo-Assyrian](#) and [Neo-Babylonian](#) copies of the [Epic of Gilgamesh](#), where it is consistently written in cuneiform as *Hum-ba-ba*,^[1] but this variant is not attested before the first millennium BCE.^[3] The oldest attested form is conventionally rendered as Huwawa, though multiple cuneiform spellings are attested: *Hu-wa-wa*, *Hu-ba-ba* and *Hu-Ú-Ú*, the last of which has two possible readings due to the sign Ú standing for both *ba₆* and *wa_x*.^[2] In texts from [Mari](#) and [Tell](#)

Humbaba

Guardian of the [cedar forest](#)



Old Babylonian terracotta plaque depicting Humbaba from the [Louvre](#)

Harmal, in which the scribal conventions reflect the closely related traditions of the Middle Euphrates and the Eshnunna-influenced Diyala area, the name is instead spelled as Hu-bi-bi, which seemingly reflects the pronunciation /Huppi/.^[4] On lexical grounds it is presumed that similar reading of the name, even when it was written as Hu-wa-wa, might have also been the norm elsewhere in Syria, for example in Alalakh, as well as in Hittite and Hurrian sources, which might indicate Huppi was the default form in both north and west of the Mesopotamian cultural sphere of influence.^[1] Unique forms showing inflection are attested in copies from Ugarit (nominative Hu-ba-bu, genitive Hu-ba-bi) and from Assyria from the Middle Assyrian period (accusative Hu-ba-ba and genitive Hu-be-be).^[5] Additionally abbreviated forms, Huwa and Hu, are known from an Old Babylonian version of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* presently belonging to the Schøyen Collection.^[2]

Many of the variants of Humbaba's name are attested both with and without the so-called "divine determinative" (*dingir*).^[6] Examples of its use have been identified in texts from Kish, Ur, Nerebtum, Susa and possibly Larsa and Shaduppum.^[7] A fragment of a Hurrian literary text using it is also known.^[8] However, no sources indicate that Humbaba was necessarily regarded as a god.^[9] In modern literature, he is variously described as an "ogre",^[10] "demon"^[11] or "giant".^[12] In a passage from one of the Old Babylonian copies of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, he is described as *harharu*, based on context presumably "ogre", "monster" or "freak".^{[13][14]} He is generally portrayed as anthropomorphic.^[2]

Humbaba's name shows no obvious signs of specific linguistic affiliation^[2] and its meaning is unknown.^[15] Similarly structured names are sometimes referred to as "banana names" in Assyriology.^[2] It is sometimes assumed that they belong to a linguistic substrate, but this view is not universally accepted, and it is not certain if all of them come from the same language.^[16] Frans Wiggermann instead suggests that Humbaba's name might have originally been an onomatopoeia: he argues he was in origin an apotropaic grinning face hung on doors to ward off evil, with his name being a representation of the sounds he was believed to make.^[15] He assumes the myths involving him served as an etiology meant to explain this custom.^[17]

The phonetically similar names of a stone, *na₅hub-be-be*, and a lizard, *huwawītum*, were both derived from Humbaba's own.^[1]

Disproved proposals

While such a possibility has been suggested in older scholarship,^[6] the name Humhum does not refer to Humbaba, but to an unrelated minor god worshiped in Dūr-Šarrukku, as attested in a text from the reign of Esarhaddon mentioning the return of his statue.^[18]

It has also been argued that Humbaba was derived from the Elamite god Humban, but according to Andrew R. George this proposal is not plausible in the light of available evidence, and the most recent attempt at justifying this connection, undertaken by John Hansman in the 1970s, rests on "unsafe historical conclusions".^[19]

Humbaba and Gilgamesh

Humbaba appears in multiple works of Mesopotamian literature focused on the hero Gilgamesh, in which he invariably acts as his adversary during a quest to obtain cedar wood from a distant forest.^[20]

Gilgamesh and Huwawa A and B

The oldest composition describing the confrontation between Gilgamesh and Humbaba has two versions, the Sumerian *Gilgamesh and Huwawa A* and *Gilgamesh and Huwawa B* (Gilgamesh was previously read as *Bilgames A* and *Bilgames and Huwawa B*).^[21] ^[22] Copies of version A are more common.^[22] Of all known Gilgamesh texts it was seemingly the most often copied one,^[23] with between 85 and 92 examples identified by 2010.^[24] Their broad distribution reflects the use of the text in scribal training.^[25] It belonged to the so-called "decad",^[26] a set of texts which formed the basis of scribal education in the early second millennium BCE.^[27]



Gilgamesh and Enkidu slaying Humbaba
at the Cedar Forest
(from Iraq, 19th–17th century BCE,
Vorderasiatisches Museum Berlin)

In the early poems, Humbaba is described as an intimidating "mountain man" of unknown origin, but there is no indication that his appearance was distinct from that of a human, and he is chiefly set apart from mortals by his supernatural powers.^[28] The source of his invulnerability are his seven "auras" or "terrors",^[29] Sumerian *ni₂* or *me₂-lam*.^[30] While a singular aura was a common attribute of deities, seven auras are for the most part exclusively attested in connection to Humbaba, though an exception, the tablet CBS 7972 (STVC 40) + N 3718, a fragment of a hymn dedicated to Nergal, has been identified and subsequently published by Jeremiah Peterson in 2008.^[31]

The location of the forest where Humbaba lives is not precisely defined outside of a reference to "seven ranges" which need to be crossed to reach it, but it is commonly assumed that the heroes' destination was the Iranian highlands.^[32] Similar formulaic phrases are used to refer to this area in myths about Lugalbanda and Enmerkar known to partially take place in this area.^[33] It has been proposed that making an eastern location the target of the expedition was meant to symbolically reflect the geopolitics of the Ur III period.^[25] However, a western location, specifically Lebanon, is also sometimes proposed.^[34]

In version A, Gilgamesh encounters Humbaba after realizing the impermanence of life prompts him to embark on a quest to bring cedar wood to his city to acquire lasting fame.^[35] When Humbaba notices Gilgamesh and his companion Enkidu cut down one of the trees, he uses one of his auras to stun them.^[35] After awakening Gilgamesh vows that he will not go back before he finds out whether the attacker is human or divine.^[36] Enkidu doubts if they can defeat him, but he is eventually convinced by Gilgamesh's bravado.^[37] Due to the powers the auras grant to Humbaba, he cannot be defeated through conventional means, and Enkidu suggests tricking him into willfully casting them off.^[38] Gilgamesh accomplishes that by offering him various bribes, including goods not available in the remote forest such as fine flour, water in leather containers, small and big sandals, gemstones and other similar gifts,^[39] as well as a promise that he will be able to marry his sisters:

(I swear) by the life of my mother Ninsumuna and of my father, holy Lugalbanda:
Because no one knows your mountain dwelling, to make your mountain dwelling famous,
I will bring you Enmebaragesi,^[a] my elder sister, to be your wife in the mountains."
Once again (Gilgamesh) spoke to him:
(I swear) by the life of my mother Ninsumuna and of my father, holy Lugalbanda:

Because no one knows your mountain dwelling, to make your mountain dwelling famous,
I will bring you Peshtur, my little sister,^[b] to be your concubine in the mountains;
So hand me your protective sheens; I want to become a member of your family!^[42]

The scene is presumed to be humorous,^[43] and seems to portray Humbaba as lonely and gullible.^[44] Piotr Michalowski additionally notes the quoted passage might be a satire targeting the well attested custom of marrying the daughters from the royal line to rulers of neighboring kingdoms in the Ur III period.^[45] Similar interpretation has also been proposed by Andrew R. George.^[46] The episode is absent from the later editions of the narrative.^[47] Humbaba accepts Gilgamesh's proposal, and offers him his auras, which are described as cedar-like and possible to cut into logs for transport.^[39] According to George, their form might be an indication that while seemingly anthropomorphic, Humbaba was himself envisioned as partially tree-like.^[2] As soon as he gives up on the last of the auras and loses his invulnerability, Gilgamesh strikes him.^[39] After being punched in the face, he pleads to be let go.^[44] He first addresses Utu, lamenting that he never knew his parents and was instead raised by the sun god himself and by the mountains,^[c] and then Gilgamesh, who at first takes pity on him.^[50] He asks Enkidu if he agrees to let Humbaba go, but he rejects this proposal.^[51] Humbaba turns towards him, and complains that he has no place to advise on such matters because he is only a servant:

O Enkidu, you use wicked words to him about me, a hired man is hired for rations, behind another such man he follows. Why use wicked words to him?^[10]

In response, Enkidu cuts his throat.^[39] This constitutes a reversal, as through the earlier sections of the story he was meant to act as a voice of reason, advising Gilgamesh to act cautiously.^[44] He then cuts off his head and places it in a leather bag.^[52] The protagonists take their trophy to the god Enlil, angering him,^[53] possibly because he finds the abuse of Humbaba's trust unacceptable.^[44] He states that Gilgamesh should have treated him with respect, and that they both deserved to be similarly honored.^[54] However, neither Gilgamesh or Enkidu are punished for their actions in the end.^[55] Enlil subsequently redistributes Humbaba's auras:^[56]

He gave Huwawa's first aura to the fields.
He gave his second aura to the rivers.
He gave his third aura to the reed-beds.
He gave his fourth aura to the lions.
He gave his fifth aura to the palace.
He gave his sixth aura to the forests.
He gave his seventh aura to Nungal.^[54]

One of the copies might mention Humbaba in the closing formulaic doxology alongside Gilgamesh and Enkidu,^[57] which would indicate a degree of veneration, though the restoration of the name is uncertain and it has been proposed that the goddess Nisaba was meant instead.^[58]

The plot of version B is largely analogous.^[55] It is substantially shorter than version A, and it is often proposed that it is more archaic, though the available copies of both are contemporaneous with each other.^[59] A difference between the plots of the two versions occurs after the heroes wake up after being stunned by Humbaba's aura: in version B Gilgamesh doubts his ability, and invokes the god Enki to help him, which the latter does by apparently providing the instructions for tricking Humbaba through Enkidu,

enabling the rest of the events to unfold similarly.^[60] However, only the footwear is mentioned among the offered gifts.^[61] The ending of version B is not preserved,^[55] but it is sometimes argued that Humbaba was spared in it.^[60]

The defeat of Humbaba is also mentioned as one of the great deeds of Gilgamesh in *Bilgames' Death*,^[62] another of the early standalone Gilgamesh narratives.^[63]

Epic of Gilgamesh

A number of the early compositions about Gilgamesh were eventually adapted into the form of a singular epic, possibly either during the reign of Rim-Sîn I of Larsa or Hammurabi and Samsu-iluna of Babylon.^[64] The Humbaba narrative was among them, though the version known from the *Epic of Gilgamesh* is not a direct translation of the Sumerian texts, but rather an original composition influenced by them.^{[65][59]} As an explanation the existence of an independent Akkadian account of the battle between Humbaba and the heroes, later incorporated into the *Epic*, has been proposed by Daniel E. Fleming and Sara J. Milstein.^[66]

Old Babylonian version

The incorporation of Humbaba into the *Epic of Gilgamesh* is already attested in the Old Babylonian period.^[65] Multiple known copies preserve the section focused on Gilgamesh's journey to the cedar forest and on the encounter with its inhabitant.^[67] In contrast with the older Humbaba narratives, where he lives in the east, in the Old Babylonian version of the *Epic* he becomes a denizen of the west.^[25] Individual copies make references to the cedar forest being located in northern Syria or in its proximity, with direct references to Sirion and Lebanon, or alternatively Ebla and lands inhabited by Amorites.^[68] The change presumably reflected a different geopolitical situation, with closer links developing between Mesopotamia and western peoples and states in the Middle Euphrates and Khabur areas.^[69] Another possibility is that the change was influenced by the traditions focused on legendary deeds of the kings of the Akkadian Empire, as Naram-Sin was famed for seeking cedars in the Amanus Mountains in the west.^{[70][71]} According to Andrew R. George the mention of Ebla in particular supports the latter assumption, as this toponym also appears in literary texts about Naram-Sin and his predecessor Sargon.^[72]

Humbaba is first mentioned when Gilgamesh proposes an expedition to his forest to brighten the mood of Enkidu.^[73] In contrast with older narratives, he is apparently well known to the inhabitants of Uruk, rather than an unexpected encountered in the forest without prior notice.^[74] He is described as a fearsome figure with a strange face by the elders of Uruk, while Enkidu states that "everything is altered" about his appearance.^[75] However, there is no indication that he was necessarily larger than a human, and his power similarly as in earlier texts derives from his auras, here designated by the Akkadian words *melammū*.^[29] In contrast with the Sumerian narratives, they do not render him invulnerable, but the Akkadian version provides him with a new power instead: his voice has supernatural properties, with the copy of the epic presently in the Yale Babylonian Collection stating that "his voice is the Deluge, his mouth is fire, his breath is death" and a fragment from Tell Ishchali attributing the formation of Sirion and Lebanon to his roar.^[38] Another new addition is a reference to the possibility of defeating him with the help of divine forces of Shamash and Lugalbanda.^[76] He is also explicitly identified as a guardian of the forest, and his presence requires specific precautions.^[77] Enkidu also already encountered him in the

past, and tells Gilgamesh that he familiarized himself with him while still roaming the wilderness.^[78] He highlights that he is a dangerous adversary, and additionally states that the cedar forest where he resides is also guarded by the god Wer:^{[79][d]}

How can we go, my friend, to the Forest of Cedar?
The one who guards it is Wēr, he is mighty, never sleeping.
Ḫuwawa was appointed by Wēr,
Adad is the first, he the second!^[82]
In order to safeguard the cedar,
Enlil assigned him the Seven Terrors.^[83]

Andrew R. George assumes that Wer was nominally the ruler of the forest, and appointed Humbaba as his second in command, with Enlil only being responsible for confirming this decision.^[84] Daniel Fleming and Sara J. Milstein instead argue that Wer should be interpreted as a figure directly identified with Humbaba in this context instead.^[77]

The elders of Uruk also warn Gilgamesh about Humbaba, but he rejects the pleas and embarks on the journey to the cedar forest alongside Enkidu.^[85] The surviving copy of this section on the Yale tablet breaks off before the confrontation with Humbaba occurs.^[86] However, further details are provided by other, shorter fragments, which indicate that during the journey Gilgamesh had a number of dreams foretelling his confrontation with Humbaba,^[87] in which the guardian of the cedar forest appears in various symbolic non-anthropomorphic guises meant to highlight his power: as an avalanche, a thunderstorm, an Anzû bird and a wild bull.^[88] The dreams differ slightly between known copies.^[89] They might either originate in an earlier textual source which has yet to be discovered or oral tradition, or constitute an invention of the compilers of the epic.^[90] While no known sources describe the battle between Humbaba and Gilgamesh, a fragment from Tell Harmal seemingly does detail his submission, and might indicate that in this version he knew about his incoming defeat due to a dream vision sent by Shamash.^[91] A reference to his death occurs on a tablet from Tell Ishchali, and possibly on an unprovenanced one presently held in Baghdad, though the accounts differ and the latter might instead describe the fate of an unidentified figure belonging to his household.^[92] The former indicates that his demise was accompanied by an earthquake.^[10]

Standard Babylonian version

After the Old Babylonian period a new version of the epic referred to as “Standard Babylonian”^[93] or as the “Twelve Tablet Edition” emerged.^[94] Neo-Assyrian sources attribute this version of the Epic to the scribe Sin-leqa-unninni, who likely lived in the Kassite period.^[95] More precise dating is difficult due to small number of known fragments dated to the times between the Old Babylonian epic and the new canonical edition, though it can be assumed that it cannot be more recent than 1150 BCE due to the absence of references to either Marduk or Assur, the main Mesopotamian gods in the first millennium BCE.^[96] The Humbaba narrative occupies the fifth tablet, with copies recovered from Nineveh (Neo-Assyrian) and Uruk (Late Babylonian).^[97] Furthermore, in 2011 the Sulaymaniyah Museum acquired another example, dated to the Neo-Babylonian period and identified as a fragment of *Epic of Gilgamesh* by Farouk Al-Rawi, who subsequently prepared a translation alongside Andrew R. George, with additional help from Kamal Rashid Rahim, the director of antiquities in Sulaymaniyah, Hashim Hama Abdullah, the director of the Sulaymaniyah Museum, and other staff members of the latter institution.^[98]

In the Standard Babylonian edition, Humbaba is first mentioned when Gilgamesh proposes a journey to the cedar forest to Enkidu, similarly as in older narratives.^[99] Enkidu is initially reluctant, and describes Humbaba as a fearsome being assigned to his position by Enlil:

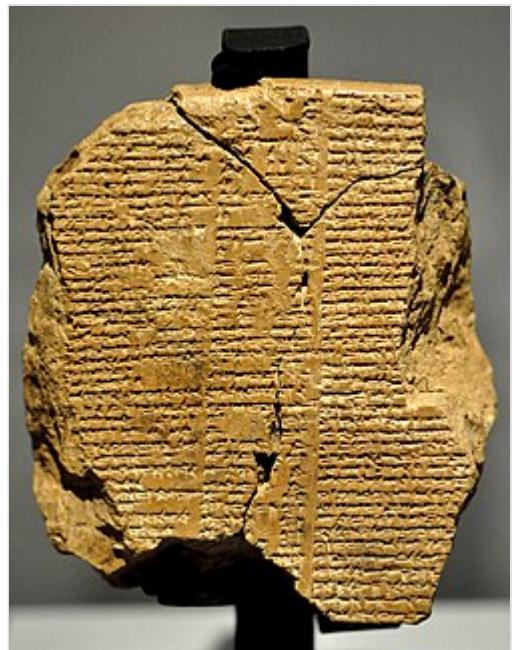
In order to keep the cedars safe,
Enlil made it his destiny to be the terror of the
people.
That journey is not one for the making,
that man is not one for the seeing.
He who guards the Forest of Cedar, his (...) are
wide,
Humbaba, his voice is the Deluge,
his speech is fire, his breath is death.
He hears the forest's murmur for sixty leagues;
who is there that would venture into his forest?^[100]

However, eventually the two heroes decide to embark together.^[101] While leaving, Gilgamesh mentions Humbaba announcing his plans to the inhabitants of Uruk:

During the days we travel there and back,
until we reach the Forest of Cedar,
until we slay ferocious Humbaba,
and annihilate from
the land the Evil Thing^[e] that Šamaš hates^[103]

After a long journey Gilgamesh and Enkidu reach the cedar forest.^[104] After entering it, they hear Humbaba's roar, which compared to the voice of Adad, the Mesopotamian weather god.^[105] A detailed description of his dwelling is preserved on the Sulaymaniyah copy, and constitutes one of the only known passages in Mesopotamian literature focused on landscape.^[106] It highlights the beauty of the entangled trees and states that the entire area was scented with cedar resin.^[107] Al-Rawi and George note that in light of the following passage, Humbaba himself is portrayed not as a "barbarian ogre", but rather as a foreign ruler enjoying music in his court much like how a Babylonian king would, though the musicians entertaining him are animals rather than humans, reflecting a motif well attested in Mesopotamian art.^[106]

Through all the forest a bird began to sing:
[...] were answering one another, a constant din was the noise,
A solitary(?) tree-cricket^[f] set off a noisy chorus,
[...] were singing a song, making the [...] pipe loud.
A wood pigeon was moaning, a turtle dove calling in answer.
At the call of the stork, the forest exults,
at the cry of the francolin, the forest exults in plenty.



The Sulaymaniyah Museum copy of tablet V of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, describing the encounter with Humbaba.

Monkey mothers sing aloud, a youngster monkey shrieks:
like a band(?) of musicians and drummers(?),
daily they bash out a rhythm in the presence of Humbaba.^[107]

In a broken passage, Humbaba learns about the arrival of intruders in his forest, seemingly guesses that one of them must be Enkidu, who he already met in the past, and possibly expresses joy about their reunion.^[106] After a lacuna, the story resumes after the confrontation between the protagonists and Humbaba has already begun.^[109] The latter criticizes Gilgamesh for coming to his forest, declaring that he was following the “advice of an idiot fellow”.^[109] He also insults Enkidu, calling him “spawn of a fish, who knew no father, hatchling of terrapin and turtle”, highlights that he “sucked no mother's milk”, referencing the unusual circumstances of his birth and early life; the second insult clarifies the purpose of the first, as the animals mentioned are not mammals and do not consume milk in infancy.^[78] He once again remarks that he already met Enkidu in the past,^[106] insinuates that bringing Gilgamesh to his forest constitutes treachery, and promises to kill the latter and feed him to carrion birds.^[109] Nathan Wasserman points out that since the confrontation between the heroes and Humbaba takes place after Enkidu already became close to Gilgamesh and has been adopted by Ninsun, the insults in addition to targeting what can be assumed to be his vulnerable spot also undermine his newly acquired status as a member of Gilgamesh's family.^[78] After Humbaba's speech, Gilgamesh loses his bravado and doubts if he can succeed, but Enkidu encourages him to not give up^[109] and the battle begins, with the ferocity of the three participants splitting the mountain apart.^[110] It continues until Shamash sends thirteen winds to tilt the scales in favor of Gilgamesh.^[111] He earlier prepared them at the request of Gilgamesh's mother, Ninsun.^[112] Humbaba is immobilized and blinded, and starts to beg for his life.^[111] He praises Gilgamesh, highlighting his descent from Ninsun, and offers that if kept alive, he will guard the forest on his behalf.^[111] However, Enkidu urges him to ignore his pleas.^[110] Wasserman argues that while he did not respond to Humbaba's insults in the earlier section of the text, it can be assumed that his choice in this passage was likely triggered by them.^[113] Humbaba tries to ask him to change his mind, but he is ignored once again.^[114] Enkidu instead urges Gilgamesh to kill him quickly to avoid the anger of the gods who might hear about their actions, singling out Enlil and Shamash in particular.^[115] Humbaba's reaction is not fully preserved, but it apparently angers Enkidu, who once again tells Gilgamesh to kill him.^[53] Humbaba curses his captors in response:

May they not [...]
May the pair of them never grow old,
apart from his friend Gilgameš, may Enkidu have nobody to bury him!^[116]

This prompts Enkidu to urge Gilgamesh to act yet again, this time successfully.^[10] Gilgamesh pulls out a dagger and stabs Humbaba in the neck.^[116] Enkidu then eviscerates him and pulls out his teeth; it has been suggested that the passage draws inspiration from imagery associated with elephant hunts, historically performed in Syria by both Mesopotamian and Egyptian rulers, and that the teeth might specifically be elephant-like tusks.^[10] Al-Rawi and George note that while it was already known before the discovery of the Sulaymaniyah copy that the heroes are aware that the slaying of Humbaba would be an affront of the gods, which presumably indicates it was immoral from the point of view of the compilers, the passage highlighting this is better preserved in it, revealing that after Humbaba's death Enkidu suddenly laments that their actions “have reduced the forest to a wasteland” and fearfully imagines Enlil questioning them.^[106] The same tablet indicates that afterwards the heroes decide to get rid of the only witnesses of the battle, the seven sons of Humbaba, apparently an otherwise unattested

personification of his auras, partially tree-like and partially comparable to demons.^[117] Al-Rawi and George point out the similarity between this passage and references to the seven sons of Enmesharra, a primordial deity similarly killed alongside his offspring, possibly in order to guarantee the creation of circumstances favorable to mankind.^[106] This scene seemingly reflects the perception of Humbaba as an evil force who had to be vanquished, present elsewhere in the epic, rather than the speech directly preceding it, which the translators compare to the actions a murderer rapidly coming up with a justification for the act by blaming the victim, which according to their judgment adds “to the poem’s reputation for insight into the human condition” and marks the poet behind it as a “shrewd observer of the human mind”.^[118]

Subsequently Enkidu suggests to Gilgamesh that they should fashion a great door from the cedars to offer it to Enlil to avoid his wrath.^[108] They decide to transport it to Nippur to present it to this god in his temple Ekur.^[119] They also take the head of Humbaba with them.^[53] Frans Wiggermann suggests that it was affixed somewhere in the Ekur as a trophy.^[120] Daniel Schwemer in a more recent publication notes that it is not impossible this interpretation is correct, but states that the traces of the passage which would have to allude to this event do not support such a restoration of the text of the epic, making the fate of Humbaba’s head impossible to ascertain.^[121] It plays no further role in the narrative.^[53] Humbaba is nonetheless mentioned again when Enkidu relays the dream he had in which the gods judged his actions and despite the pleas of Shamash declared he has to die because of the role he played in the deaths of the guardian of the cedar forest and the Bull of Heaven, apparently with nearly immediate effect.^[122] Humbaba’s curse thus comes true.^[10] His demise is also mentioned by Gilgamesh when he introduces himself to the alewife Siduri.^[123]

Hittite and Hurrian adaptations

Myths about Gilgamesh were adopted by Hurrians and Hittites.^[124] Both Hurrian and Hittite adaptations and circulation of Akkadian texts are attested.^[125] However, according to Gary Beckman, at least in Hattusa they were only used as scribal exercises and possibly as courtly entertainment.^[125] In the Catalogue des Textes Hittites, all of them are classified under entry CTH 341.^[96]

The Hittite adaptation of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, which shows a degree of Hurrian influence and uses a number of Hurrianized names,^[126] is known as the *Song of Gilgamesh*,^[127] though despite the title it is written in prose.^[128] It has been noted that its author seemingly showed a particular interest in the Humbaba narrative.^{[129][130]} The guardian of the cedar forest is first referenced when Gilgamesh states he would like to see him while meeting with Enkidu and a group of soldiers, seemingly serving as a replacement for the assembly of elders from the Mesopotamian original.^[131] The heroes similarly embark on the journey, cross the Mala river (Euphrates), and after sixteen days reach Humbaba’s dwelling.^[132] For unknown reasons the section of the narrative focused on Gilgamesh’s dreams about Humbaba was omitted, despite being preserved in the Akkadian version of the epic known to the Hittites.^[133] Humbaba notices Gilgamesh and Enkidu immediately after their arrival, and wonders why did they enter the forest.^[134] It is possible that the subsequent passage contains a reference to his musicians, best known from the Sulaymaniyah Museum copy of the Standard Babylonian version, which might indicate the events of tablet V of the latter version reflect an older tradition.^[135]

Humbaba spots the heroes for the second time when they start to cut down the cedars, and in anger confronts them, questioning their actions.^[134] They are then urged to kill him by the Sun god of Heaven, who unlike his Mesopotamian counterpart interacts with them directly.^[132] Humbaba then formally

challenges Gilgamesh and Enkidu:

[Huwawa] said to them: “I will [...] you up, and I will carry you to the heaven! I will smash you on the skull, and I will bring you down to the dark earth!”

The passage finds no direct parallel in other versions, but Gary Beckman notes similar scenes are typical for myths known from Hittite archives dated to the imperial period, and compares it to the stone giant Ullikummi taunting his adversary, the Hurrian weather god Teshub, in one of the myths belonging to the Kumarbi Cycle.^[136] A description of a fight follows.^[134] It contains elements absent from the Akkadian original, namely Gilgamesh and Enkidu dragging Humbaba by the hair, as well as apparent involvement of animals referred to simply as unidentified “equids” by Mary R. Bachvarova^[132] but as “posted horses” by Beckman in a more recent treatment of the text.^[134] Gilgamesh is then temporarily incapacitated by a dust cloud and asks the Sun god of Heaven for help, receiving nine (rather than thirteen, like in the Akkadian version) winds as a result, which leads to the immobilization of Humbaba, who offers to become his slave:^[132]

Huwawa said to Gilgamesh, “Release me, O Gilgamesh! You shall be my lord and I shall be your slave. Take(?) the cedars that I have raised for you. I will fell mighty beams(?) for you in [...] And a palace [...]”^[137]

However, Enkidu advises him to show no mercy.^[132] Humbaba's death is not directly described in the surviving fragments, but it is agreed that like in other versions of the narrative, he was killed, as the event is referenced later on.^[138] When the gods discuss the deeds of Gilgamesh and Enkidu and determine the latter should be killed, the Sun god of Heaven argues in favor of sparing him as he acted on his behalf during the confrontation with Humbaba, while Anu considers this act unforgivable.^{[139][140]}

Due to state of preservation of the tablets and the still imperfect understanding of the Hurrian language, the Hurrian versions of Gilgamesh myths are impossible to fully translate, though it is agreed that the colophon of one of the fragments refers to it as “the fourth tablet of Huwawa; not finished”.^[8] Mary R. Bachvarova proposes that this composition might have reflected the perception of Humbaba as a “local hero”.^[141] She argues that due to being portrayed as an inhabitant of northern Syria, he might have been an appealing character to western audiences, which in turn lead to retellings emphasizing his role.^[142] Yoram Cohen considers this proposal difficult to evaluate, though he tentatively accepts the existence of hitherto unknown western Humbaba-centric narratives as a possibility.^[8] The presumed existence of a standalone Hurrian Humbaba narrative might also support the proposal that a now lost Akkadian epic focused on the confrontation between him and Gilgamesh existed, as originally proposed by Daniel E. Fleming and Sara J. Milstein.^[126] The surviving fragments presumably do not constitute a direct adaptation of any Mesopotamian work, and according to Beckman can instead be compared to the incorporation of Mesopotamian motifs into the myths of Hurrian origin focused on Kumarbi.^[143] One of the fragments involves a woman pleading for the life of another, unnamed character, possibly Humbaba; while she is designated by the word šiduri, meaning “young woman” in Hurrian, it is assumed that she does not correspond to the barmaid Siduri, who instead bears the name Nahmizule in the Hurrian adaptation and some of the Hittite fragments influenced by it.^[144] It is however possible that in another passage Gilgamesh recollects the confrontation with Humbaba to the latter character.^[143] While the ending is not preserved, Bachvarova speculates that Humbaba might have either survived his meeting with Gilgamesh or Enkidu, or that his death was presented as a tragic event.^[145]

Other textual sources

Humbaba is also attested in a number of textual sources other than the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and its forerunners.^[146] He is referenced in the so-called *Ballad of Early Rulers*.^[147] This text is known from Mesopotamia, as well as from Ugarit and Emar, and constitutes an example of so-called “wisdom literature”.^[148] The line mentioning him is preserved in multiple copies of the text:

Where is Ḫuwawa, who was caught in submission?^[149]

It seemingly reflects a tradition in which he did not die after his confrontation with Gilgamesh.^[145] The text of the *Ballad of Early Rulers* itself is, as argued by Bendt Alster, a drinking song-like composition which brings up legendary ancient rulers as a pretext to explain the need to enjoy the present.^[150] It references other works in a seemingly humorous context, with the message possibly being comparable to the later *carpe diem* motif.^[151] In addition to Humbaba it also mentions Alulim, Etana, Gilgamesh, Ziusudra, Enkidu, Bazi and Zizi.^[147] Presumably the large number of literary allusions was meant to make the composition entertaining for its expected audience, namely scribes well versed in the canon of Mesopotamian literature.^[152]

Multiple omens alluding to Humbaba are known from Mesopotamian omen compendiums, and based on the frequent use of the spelling Ḫuwawa in this context it assumed they reflect a tradition originating in the Old Babylonian period.^[153] They typically pertain to the appearance of both adult and newborn humans as well as newborn lambs, considered comparable to that of the mythical figure due to the presence of a bulbous nose and large eyes.^[1] Additionally, the entrails of sacrificial animals used in hepatoscopy could be compared to Humbaba’s face, and a depiction of him representing his face as resembling the intestines of a sheep is known.^[18]

One fired clay mask, made in 1800BC-1600BC, was excavated in Abu Habba (Sippar). It had a face that represents the intestines of a sheep examined for divination. It had 5 lines of Akkadian cuneiform inscription on the other side:^[154]

If the coils of the colon resemble the head of Huwawa, (this is) an omen of Sargon who ruled the land. If, the house of a man will expand. (Written by) the hand of Warad-Marduk, diviner, son of Kubburum, diviner.

A praise hymn dedicated to Shulgi, referred to as *Shulgi O* according to the ETCSL naming system, might allude to a tradition in which Gilgamesh captured Humbaba and brought him back to Uruk, with the reference to “your captured hero” (*ur-sag dab₅-ba-zu*) sometimes interpreted as a reference to the monster.^[155] This phrase is better attested as a title of various enemies of Ninurta and presumably indicates that after their defeat they were displayed as trophies.^[120]

A prayer to Dumuzi imploring him to hand over the petitioner’s tormentors to another deity possibly casts Humbaba in the latter role, though it is also possible the deity meant is Lumma or Humban.^[19] According to Gianni Marchesi, Lumma was most likely present in the original version of the text, while the author of one of the two known Assyrian copies, unfamiliar with this god, replaced him with Humbaba, despite the latter not being attested in the roles of a “gendarme-demon” or underworld deity unlike the former.^[156]

Visual arts

Humbaba was commonly depicted in Mesopotamian art in the Old Babylonian period.^[6] However, often only his face was shown.^[15] Such depictions had an apotropaic purpose.^[120] An example has been identified as a decoration of the gate of an Old Babylonian temple excavated in Tell al-Rimah.^[121] Ornamental heads of Humbaba are also mentioned in multiple administrative texts from Mari^[2] and in a list of jewelry from Qatna.^[1] Multiple works of art showing the confrontation between Humbaba and Gilgamesh and Enkidu are also known, including clay plaques and cylinder seals from various locations in Mesopotamia and neighboring areas, and possibly a statue from the Louvre collection showing a hero standing on the head resembling these identified as depictions of Humbaba.^[157] While it can be assumed that depictions from Nuzi or from various Mitanni sites strictly reflect the Mesopotamian tradition, it is not certain if artists in western Iran or in Anatolia were necessarily using the motif in its original context, and might have instead reinterpreted it as a representation of unidentified local myths instead.^[158]

In later periods, the depictions of Humbaba are less frequent.^[6] Frans Wiggermann argues that he largely disappeared from visual arts after the Bronze Age,^[159] but a relief from Tell Halaf is presumed to be a first millennium BCE example,^[160] and according to Gary Beckman representations of Humbaba's defeat at the hands of Gilgamesh and Enkidu have been identified from as late as the Achaemenid period.^[124] Wilfred G. Lambert cited a seal from Ur from this period as the youngest known work of art showing this scene he was aware of, but it has alternatively been interpreted as a nude woman playing with cupids.^[161] A possible late depiction of the face of Humbaba has been identified in a tomb in Petra, which was assigned the number 649 during excavations, though similar works of art from Mesopotamia are limited to the Old Babylonian period.^[162] Similar faces are also known from tombs from another Nabataean side, Medain Saleh.^[163] In neither case the identification is certain.^[164] Judith McKenzie noted that if accepted, Humbaba's presence in Nabataean art would open the question whether Nabateans were familiar with the myths involving him.^[165]

Gallery



Terracotta Humbaba mask from Ur, Iraq. 2004–1595 BCE.
Sulaymaniyah Museum, Iraq



Terracotta mask of Humbaba from Ur, Iraq. 2004–1595 BCE.
Sulaymaniyah Museum, Iraq



Terracotta plaque with head of Humbaba, 2nd millennium BCE,
Louvre Museum, Paris



Terracotta plaque of Humbaba from Iraq. 2004–1595 BCE.
Sulaymaniyah Museum, Iraq



Neo-Hittite relief from Tell Halaf showing the defeat of Humbaba.
Walters Art Museum, Germany.

Humbaba and Pazuzu

Frans Wiggermann has suggested that another Mesopotamian demon, Pazuzu, can be considered a metaphorical “successor” of Humbaba, as both were commonly depicted in the form of disembodied heads and had similar apotropaic functions.^[166] He highlights that a link between the head of Humbaba and the personified west wind, another possible forerunner of Pazuzu, is present in art, with the two sometimes appearing together; both of them were also believed to reside in western mountains.^[167] Eckhart Frahm takes a more cautious position than Wiggermann, and notes that while the heads of Humbaba and Pazuzu did seemingly fulfill the same function, there is little direct iconographic overlap between the two.^[168] Several other competing theories regarding the origin of Pazuzu can be found in Assyriological literature; Frahm notes it is possible the name derived from the sequence Bazi-Zizi,^[168] the names of two pre-Sargonic kings of Mari from the Sumerian King List.^[169] The view that Pazuzu might have been modeled on the Egyptian god Bes also found a degree of support among researchers,^[168] starting with Anthony Green in the 1980s.^[170]



Stone head of Pazuzu. Neo-Assyrian period (900-612 BC). Room 56 of the British Museum

Another possible successor of Humbaba is a lahmu-like figure shown as a vanquished adversary of the gods on seals from the first millennium BCE.^[171]

Later relevance

Greek sources

It is assumed that the iconography of Humbaba influenced the image of Greek gorgons.^{[172][173]} Apotropaic functions are similarly attested for depictions of their heads.^[174] Additionally, works of art showing Perseus killing Medusa with Athena's help are considered a Greek adaptation of the Mesopotamian motif of Humbaba being killed by Gilgamesh and Enkidu.^[162] It is a matter of dispute if the art motif was transmitted alongside the myth it was rooted in.^[163] It is also unknown whether Greeks adopted a foreign motif to represent a preexisting local myth, or if either the imported art motif or the myth it was derived from influenced the formation of the story of Perseus.^[164]



Greek gorgoneion painted in the glazing on the bottom of an Ancient Greek cup, end of 6th century BCE, National Library of France, Paris

Book of Giants

One of the eponymous giants in the Book of Giants, variously referred to as Ḫôbabiš, Ḫôbabis or Ḫôbâiš, is assumed to be derived from Mesopotamian Humbaba.^[19] The connection was first noted by Józef Milik.^[175] He is attested both in the Aramaic version from Qumran, which reflects an older Jewish tradition, and in a later Michaean adaptation written in Middle Persian, found in Turfan.^[176] While the same sources also preserve the

name of Gilgamesh, reinterpreted as an evil giant, there is no indication that their compilers were familiar with the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, and they might have been aware of their names thanks to other cuneiform texts still in circulation in the first millennium BCE (for example omen compendiums) or from derived oral traditions.^[146] Yoram Cohen suggests that they might have been borrowed from an unknown western tradition about Humbaba.^[8] Matthew Goff proposed the author might have had indirect knowledge of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* which relied on information originally brought westwards by returning members of an eastern diaspora.^[177] The surviving sections do not indicate that either name is present in a context resembling the earlier Humbaba narratives, and according to Andrew R. George it is safe to say that both are only “incidental characters in a story that revolves around other giants and is unrelated to any episode of the Gilgamesh epic”.^[178] During an assembly held by giants, one of them, ‘Ohyah, informs them about “what *glgms* (Gilgamesh) has said to him, and what Ḫôbabis yelled”; the topic of this message is unknown, but apparently it inspired joy in the gathered crowd.^[179]

The form of Humbaba’s name preserved in the *Book of Giants* was seemingly also known to a number of later Arab writers, as indicated by a reference to a Manichaean “spirit of darkness” named Hummāmah in an Islamic polemic and to the presence of presumed corrupt forms of the name in incantations from the fifteenth century showing a degree of influence from Manichaeism,^[19] written by Al-Suyūṭī.^[180]

Disputed or disproved proposals

Attempts to connect Humbaba with the biblical Kenite Hobab are considered baseless, and the latter name is more likely to be derived from one of two unrelated Hebrew roots, either *ḥbb* (“cunning”) or *ḥbb* (“kindness”).^[20]

While accepted in older scholarship,^{[6][20]} a connection between Humbaba and Kombabos, a figure known from the writings of Lucian of Samosata, is not considered likely.^[19] The phonetic similarity between the names is most likely accidental, and the proposal relies on assumption that Kombabos is an unlikely amalgamation of Gilgamesh and Enkidu bearing a name derived from Humbaba’s.^[181]

It has also been proposed that a scene in the Apocryphon of Jannes and Jambres relaying how the mother of Jannes had a dream in which a sinner enters paradise as an intruder to fell a cypress tree reflects the Humbaba narratives, but this view is not regarded as plausible.^[182]

Footnotes

- a. It is possible the use of this name is a joke at Humbaba’s expense, revolving around Gilgamesh exploiting his unawareness that Enmebaragesi is the name of the father of his enemy, Aga of Kish, rather than his sister.^[40]
- b. Also read Matur.^[41] She is also attested as Gilgamesh’s sister in *Gilgamesh and the Bull of Heaven*.^[42]
- c. No known texts discuss Humbaba’s parentage.^[48] Dina Katz proposes that he might have been an orphan, and in the light of his declaration Utu acted as his foster father.^[49]
- d. Wer was a weather god worshiped chiefly in the Middle Euphrates and Diyala areas, in the north of Babylonia, and in Assyria.^[80] His presence in this passage presumably is supposed to highlight the western setting of the scene.^[81]

- e. Akkadian: *mimma lemnu*, a stock phrase from exorcistic literature referring to undefined distant forces opposed to mankind, here presumably Humbaba.^[102]
- f. Akkadian: *zizānu*; alternatively interpreted as a type of locust, or on the account of its apparently noisy behavior as a cicada.^[108]

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Mušhuššu

The *mušhuššu* (𒆠𒃲¹ ² ³) ; formerly also read as *sirrušu* or *sirrush*) or **mushkhushhu** (Akkadian pronunciation: [muʃ'xuʃ.sum]) is a creature from ancient Mesopotamian mythology. A mythological hybrid, it is a scaly animal with hind legs resembling the talons of an eagle, lion-like forelimbs, a long neck and tail, two horns on its head, a snake-like tongue, and a crest. The *mušhuššu* most famously appears on the Ishtar Gate of the city of Babylon, dating to the sixth century BCE.

The form *mušhuššu* is the Akkadian nominative of Sumerian: MUŠ.HUŠ, 'reddish snake', sometimes also translated as 'fierce snake'.^[2] One author,^[3] possibly following others, translates it as 'splendour serpent' (MUŠ is the Sumerian term for 'serpent'). The older reading *sir-ruššu* is due to a mistransliteration of the cuneiform in early Assyriology^[4] and was often used as a placeholder before the actual reading was discovered.^[5]

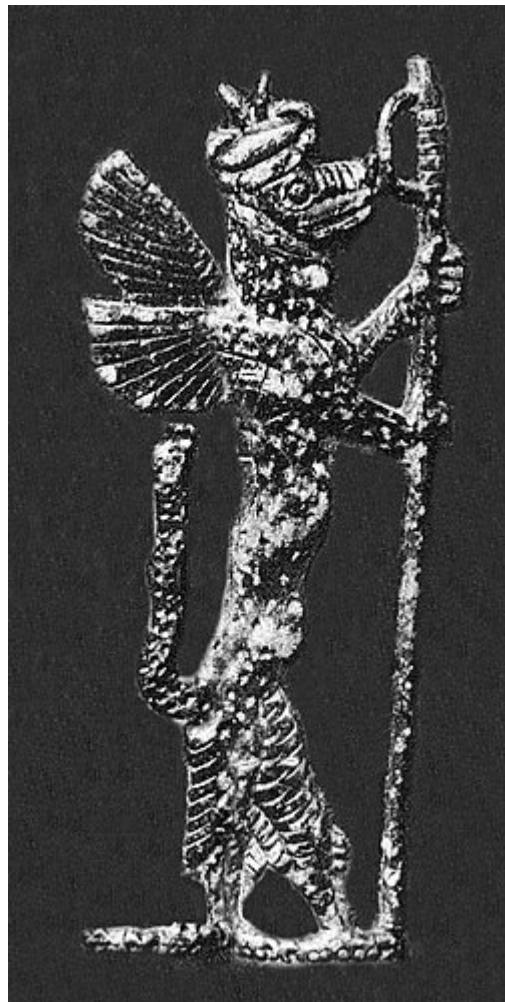
History

Mušhuššu already appears in Sumerian religion and art, as in the "Liberation vase of Gudea", dedicated to Ningishzida by the Sumerian ruler Gudea (21st century BCE short chronology).^{[1][6]}

The *mušhuššu* was the sacred animal of Marduk and his son Nabu during the Neo-Babylonian Empire. The dragon Mušhuššu, whom Marduk once vanquished, became his symbolic animal and servant.^[7] It was taken over by Marduk from Tishpak, the local god of Eshnunna.^[8]

The constellation Hydra was known in Babylonian astronomical texts as Bašmu, 'the Serpent' (* * MUL.d MUŠ). It was depicted as having the torso of a fish, the tail of a snake, the forepaws of a lion, the hind legs of an eagle, wings, and a head comparable to the *mušhuššu*.^{[9][10]}

Mušhuššu



Mušhuššu holding a gate post on a vase of Gudea c. 2100 BCE. Louvre Museum^[1]

Creature information

Other name(s)	Sirrush
Grouping	Mythological hybrid
Folklore	Babylonian mythology
Origin	
Region	Mesopotamia



9th century BCE depiction of the Statue of Marduk, with his servant dragon Mušhuššu at his feet. This was Marduk's main cult image in Babylon.



Mušhuššu bas-relief in the Pergamon Museum



Late Assyrian seal from the 8th century BCE showing a worshipper between Nabu and Marduk, standing on their servant dragon Mušhuššu.



Head of dragon dating from the Neo-Babylonian Empire (626 BCE – 539 BCE) from the Louvre Museum's collection

See also



- Ningishzida
- Set animal

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Notes

1.^ Similar to the Set animal in Egyptian mythology and the Qilin in Chinese mythology.

External links

- [The Excavations at Babylon](https://archive.org/details/ldpd_10797913_000) (https://archive.org/details/ldpd_10797913_000)

Retrieved from "<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Mušhuššu&oldid=1274495305>"



Udug

The **udug** (Sumerian: 𒌑), later known in Akkadian as the **utukku**, were an ambiguous class of demons from ancient Mesopotamian mythology found in the literature of Sumer, Akkad, Assyria and Babylonia. They were different from the **dingir** (Anu-nna-Ki and Igigi) and they were generally malicious, even if a member of demons (Pazuzu) was willing to clash both with other demons and with the gods, even if he is described as a presence hostile to humans. The word is generally ambiguous and is sometimes used to refer to demons as a whole rather than a specific kind of demon. No visual representations of the udug have yet been identified, but descriptions of it ascribe to it features often given to other ancient Mesopotamian demons: a dark shadow, absence of light surrounding it, poison, and a deafening voice. The surviving ancient Mesopotamian texts giving instructions for exorcizing the evil udug are known as the *Udug Hul* texts. These texts emphasize the evil udug's role in causing disease and the exorcist's role in curing the disease.

Appearance

Only a few descriptions of the udug are known^[1] and, according to Gina Konstantopoulos, no pictorial or visual representations of them have ever been identified.^[1] According to Tally Ornan, however, some Mesopotamian cylinder seals show a figure carrying a scepter alongside the benevolent guard demoness Lama, which may be identified as the udug.^[2] F. A. M. Wiggerman has argued that images of Lama and the udug were frequently used to guard doorways.^[3]

In a bilingual incantation written in both Sumerian and Akkadian, the god Asalluhi describes the "evil udug" to his father Enki:^[1]

O my father, the evil udug [*udug hul*], its appearance is malignant and its stature towering,
Although it is not a god (*dingir*) its clamour is great and its radiance [*melam*] immense,
It is dark, its shadow is pitch black and there is no light within its body,
It always hides, taking refuge, [it] does not stand proudly,
Its claws drip with bile, it leaves poison in its wake,
Its belt is not released, his arms *enclose*,
It fills the target of his anger with tears, in all lands, [its] battle cry cannot be restrained.^[1]

This description mostly glosses over what the udug actually looks like, instead focusing more on its fearsome supernatural abilities.^[1] All the characteristics ascribed to the "evil udug" here are common features that are frequently attributed to all different kinds of ancient Mesopotamian demons: a dark shadow, absence of light surrounding it, poison, and a deafening voice.^[1] Other descriptions of the udug are not consistent with this one and often contradict it.^[4] Konstantopoulos notes that "the udug is defined by what it is not: the demon is nameless and formless, even in its early appearances."^[1] An incantation from the Old Babylonian Period (c. 1830 – c. 1531 BC) defines the udug as "the one who, from the beginning, was not called by name... the one who never appeared with a form." One of the udug could be

Hanbi. In Sumerian and Akkadian mythology (and Mesopotamian mythology in general) Hanbi or Hanpa (more commonly known in western text) was the god of evil, god of all evil forces and the father of Pazuzu. Aside from his relationship with Pazuzu, very little is known of this figure.^[1]

List of udugs

- Akhkhazu/Dimme-Kurr
- Alû (Sumerian shadow demon without face)
- Ardat-lilî (Sumerian shadow demon partly woman, partly dog and partly scorpion, devourer of children)
- Hanbi (Sumerian lord of the shadow demon called udug)
- Labasù (Sumerian shadow demon disease bearer)
- Mimma Lemnu (Sumerian name used for a demon and for a ritual)^[5]
- Mukīl rēš lemutti (Sumerian shadow demon capable of possessing people's bodies and omen of misfortune)
- Namtar (Sumerian shadow demon ally with the dingir of the afterlife Ereshkigal)
- Pazuzu (Sumerian king shadow demon of the wind)
- Vardat Lilitu (Sumerian vampire shadow demon, devourer of children-the babylonians modified her origin)

Identity

Of all Mesopotamian demons, the udug is the least clearly defined.^[1] The word originally did not connote whether the demon in question was good or evil.^{[6][7]} In one of the two Gudea cylinders, King Gudea of Lagash (ruled c. 2144–2124 BCE) asks a goddess to send a "good udug" to protect him and a lama to guide him.^{[6][8]} Surviving ancient Mesopotamian texts giving instructions for performing exorcisms frequently invoke the "good udug" to provide protection or other aid as the exorcism is being performed.^[9] Mesopotamian magical texts, however, also mention a specific "evil udug" as well as plural "udugs", who are also referred to as evil.^[6] The phrase for "evil udug" is *Udug Hul* in Sumerian and *Utukkū Lemnūtu* in Akkadian.^[10] The evil udug is often a vector for physical and mental illnesses.^[11]

The word *udug* by itself without a qualifier usually connotes the evil udug.^[11] Exorcism texts sometimes invoke the "good udug" against the "evil udug".^[12] A text from the Old Babylonian Period (c. 1830 – c. 1531 BCE) requests, "May the evil udug and the evil *galla* stand aside. May the good udug and good *galla* be present."^{[13][14]} Sometimes the word *udug* does not even refer to a specific demon, but rather functions as an umbrella term for all the different demons in Mesopotamian demonology.^[4] On account of the udug's capacity for both good and ill, Graham Cunningham argues that "the term daimon seems preferable" over the term "demon", which is the one normally used to describe it.^[15]

Udug hul incantations

The canon of exorcism of the evil udug is known as *udug-hul*, the Akkadian expansion of which (known in Akkadian as *utukkū lemñūtu*) is in sixteen tablets.^{[16][17]} The tradition of *Udug Hul* incantations spans the entirety of ancient Mesopotamian history;^[18] they are among the earliest texts known written in

Sumerian in the third millennium BCE, as well as among the last Mesopotamian texts of late antiquity, written in cuneiform with Greek transliterations.^[18] The *udug-hul* incantations were originally unilingual and written in Sumerian,^[18] but these earliest versions were later converted into bilingual texts written in both Sumerian and Akkadian.^[18] They were also expanded with additions written only in Akkadian with no Sumerian precursors.^[18] The *udug-hul* incantations emphasize the role of the evil udug as the cause of sickness^[19] and focus primarily on attempting to drive out the evil udug to cure the illness.^[20] They frequently contain references to Mesopotamian mythology, such as the myth of *Inanna's Descent into the Underworld*.^[21]

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Further reading

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External links

- [An Overview of Mesopotamian Literature](http://www.gatewaystobabylon.com/introduction/literature.htm) (<http://www.gatewaystobabylon.com/introduction/literature.htm>)
- [Sources on Mesopotamian mythology](https://www.angelfire.com/tx/tintirbabylon/BIBLIOGR.html) (<https://www.angelfire.com/tx/tintirbabylon/BIBLIOGR.html>) (Viewed 2006.2.12)

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Rabisu

In Akkadian mythology the **Rabisu** ("the lurker"; Sumerian  Maškim, "deputy, attorney"^[1]), or possibly Rabasa, are vampiric spirits, daimons, or demons. The Rabisu are associated in mythology with the Curse of Akkad. A consistent translation of "Rabisu" is "Lingerers". The Rabisu, whether intending malicious actions or not, linger around those who have been found wayward or to be rewarded by the deity Enlil.^[2]

History of Scholarship

The reason some people may feel as though Rabisu (Akkadian) or Robes (Hebrew) is an evil spirit or evil demon can be attributed to a series of books published in 1903-1904. Assyriologist Reginald Campbell Thompson published the seventeenth volume of *Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets* and a two-volume series *Devils and Evil Spirits of Babylonia*. In both of these works, the Rabisu is denoted as an evil spirit. However, this caused substantive debate and is still contested by scholars today. In 1903, the claim that the Rabisu was an evil demon spirit was contested by Hans Duhm in *Die bösen Geister im Alten Testament*^[3] in which he, along with Assyriologist Charles-Francois Jean were able to compare Hebrew texts to Akkadian demonology to attest that the Rabisu was not a predatory being. In this literature, despite the assertion that the Rabisu was not evil, the entity was still referred to as a "demon" in some classifications. Some have stuck to this notion without question. However, Duhm's assertion has been challenged from multiple angles. Others who interpreted the Hebrew Bible also reached a separate conclusion that Rovetz ("lurking, crouching" in Hebrew) is not the same entity or in some cases not even the same religion as the spirit of the Rabisu (Akkadian Demon).

One of the main reasons people often mistake the Rabisu to be intrinsically evil is because of modern connotations of the word "demon". In ancient theology, a daimon had both an intrinsically evil and intrinsically good dichotomy. In vernacular usage, "demon" is often assumed to be evil or malicious. However this is a linguistic artifact.^[4] It is also understood by modern translation that Rabisu did not act without divine authority. That is, unless Enlil and his heavenly counsel specifically told or commanded the Rabisu to do something, they would not. Rather, they remained neutral spirits existing between the planes of heaven and earth.^[5]

Rabisu in the Bible

The book *The Religion of Babylonia and Assyria* by Theophilus Pinches describes the Rabisu as being "the seizer" which is "regarded as a spirit which lay in wait to pounce upon his prey".

Gen 4:6–7 (<https://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Genesis%204:6–7&version=nrsv>) read:

The Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it.”

The New American Bible translates this as

So the LORD said to Cain: "Why are you so resentful and crestfallen? If you do well, you can hold up your head; but if not, sin is a demon lurking at the door: his urge is toward you, yet you can be his master."

and adds as a footnote:

Demon lurking: in Hebrew, robes, literally "croucher," is used here, like the similar Akkadian term rabisu, to designate a certain kind of evil spirit.

It is possible that this displays a continued tradition in the emerging culture of the Hebrews.

Rabisu is listed in the rituals of Šurpu which have to do with burning, such as the symbolic burning of witches. The Shurpu ritual allows the banishment of Rabisu described as "a demon that springs unawares on its victims".^[6]

Nature of the Rabisu

The spirit identified by the Akkadians as "Rabisu" is not an inherently evil spirit. Despite the Hebrew Bible referring to demons as evil by nature, the demonology expressed by the Akkadians suggests that Rabisu, rather than being an entity of evil, was an entity with no particular moral implications. Rather, the Rabisu was a spirit sent out to correct the transgressions committed by humans. "In Gen 4:7, Robes, which is routinely thought to denote a demon [in which] Akkadian texts indicate that the rabisu is a neutral being that is nothing other than a current of wind dispatched by the deities to perform certain duties".^[7] When one refers to the spirit of the Rabisu as an evil entity (Evil Rabisu) it may be better interpreted as reference to malicious action performed by the Rabisu in response to the wayward actions of an afflicted human. That is, the malicious event does not reflect the Rabisu spirit as a whole.^[8]

The Sumerian and Akkadian deity, Enlil, a major god of the earth, sky, atmosphere and storms is the sender of the "windy beings" known as Rabisu. The Rabisu, rather than acting as predatory demons with their own malicious will, were more like links between the divine beings of Heaven and the Earth. In mythology, Enlil sent the spirit of the Rabisu as a sort of messenger. Whether the message entailed good or bad things for the receiver was not a reflection upon the Rabisu but rather the consequence of human actions, which themselves were of different moral character.^[9]

The Curse of Agade

The myth of the Curse of Akkad can now be understood with this context. The Curse of Akkad, or more correctly The Curse of Agade, is a story told by Sumerians during the Third Dynasty of Ur (2047-1750BCE) about the Akkadian king Naram-Sin who was the grandson and successor of Sargon the Great. Sometimes the Curse of Agade is described as Naram-Sin's fight with Enlil. Naram-Sin had grown discontent with himself and blamed the gods for not providing relief from his sorrows. Naram-Sin took

up arms against Enlil who, in turn, sent the Rabisu to correct Naram-Sin's transgressions. The story of the Curse of Agade ends with the complete destruction of the city of Akkad, Enlil triumphing over the earthly human domain.^[10]

Similarity to a Myth of Ubar

The story of the Curse of Agade is similar to a myth of the "lost city" of Ubar, sometimes referred to as "Atlantis of the Sands," located farther to the south in southeastern Oman. The Rabisu were noted to operate as a flock or unit, as opposed to individual spirits. It was believed that Enlil would send "flocks" of Rabisu in the form of storms of wind, sometimes carrying dust or sand storms.^[11] In one tablet from the Akkadian Empire, the author records that "A disfavorable storm arose against the land. It disturbed the people of the upper and lower territory... the awful storm, the (great) storm, that will neither be returned to the steppe-land, nor look back... Cities offer no protection, for such beings borne on the wind are able to penetrate the urban landscape. They pursue people. They invade dwellings and buildings."^[12] This story is nearly identical to a myth that refers to Ubar in which the gods, having grown angry with the residents of Ubar, struck it down in a great storm in which sand entirely engulfed the city and all its people.

Defeating the Rabisu

In mythology, the Rabisu, though believed to hold no moral implications, were often opposed by hero figures. In Sumerian texts, the hero is named Hendursanga, roughly translated as "Watchman of the Night." Other translations include "Isums" which is interpreted as "Herald of the Gods, Watchman of the Streets" (University of Chicago Press 3).

In Modern Literature and Popular Culture

In the 1977 grimoire *Simon Necronomicon* by Peter Levenda, which draws upon a blend of real myths including Sumerian and fictional creations, Rabisu are described as ancient demons. It talks about the god Marduk who battled Tiamat, Kingu, and Azag-Thoth. In the book, among the fifty Names of Marduk is the name Nariluggaldimmerankia, which is the sixth. Nariluggaldimmerankia is said to be the sub-commander of wind demons. He is described as the foe of Rabisu and all *maskim* who haunt humans. Marduk's seventh name, Asaruludu, is said to have the power using his sacred word Banmaskim to banish all Maškim (a.k.a. Rabisu).^[13]

Myths of the Rabiru as lingerers or lurkers may have inspired the title of *The Lurker at the Threshold* a horror novel by August Derleth.



In 2021, Supermassive Games released House of Ashes, an interactive drama horror video game set during the invasion of Iraq in 2003. A squad of American Marines find themselves trapped in an ancient Mesopotamian temple after a raid on a local village in search of weapons goes awry. Concurrently, bat-

like vampiric creatures awaken from their millennia-long slumber to roam the temple and stalk and terrorize their newfound human prey.

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Enkidu

Enkidu (Sumerian: 𒂘 𒅎 𒇻 EN.KI.DU₁₀)^[6] was a legendary figure in ancient Mesopotamian mythology, wartime comrade and friend of Gilgamesh, king of Uruk. Their exploits were composed in Sumerian poems and in the Akkadian *Epic of Gilgamesh*, written during the 2nd millennium BC. He is the oldest literary representation of the wild man, a recurrent motif in artistic representations in Mesopotamia and in Ancient Near East literature. The apparition of Enkidu as a primitive man seems to be a potential parallel of the Old Babylonian version (1300–1000 BC), in which he was depicted as a servant-warrior in the Sumerian poems.

There have been suggestions that he may be the "bull-man" shown in Mesopotamian art, having the head, arms, and body of a man, and the horns, ears, tail and legs of a bull.^[7] Thereafter a series of interactions with humans and human ways bring him closer to civilization, culminating in a wrestling match with Gilgamesh, king of Uruk. Enkidu embodies the wild or natural world. Though equal to Gilgamesh in strength and bearing, he acts in some ways as an antithesis to the cultured, city-bred warrior-king.

The tales of Enkidu's servitude are narrated in five surviving Sumerian poems, developing from a slave of Gilgamesh into a close comrade by the last poem, which describes Enkidu as Gilgamesh's friend.^[8] In the epic, Enkidu is created as a rival to king Gilgamesh, who tyrannizes his people, but they become friends and together slay the monster Humbaba and the Bull of Heaven; because of this, Enkidu is punished and dies, representing the mighty hero who dies early.^[9] The deep, tragic loss of Enkidu profoundly inspires in Gilgamesh a quest to escape death by obtaining godly immortality.^[10]

Enkidu has virtually no existence outside the stories relating to Gilgamesh. To the extent of current knowledge, he was never a god to be worshipped, and is absent from the lists of deities of ancient Mesopotamia. He seems to appear in an invocation from the Paleo-Babylonian era aimed at silencing a crying baby, a text which also evokes the fact that Enkidu would be held to have determined the measurement of the passage of time at night, apparently in relation to his role as herd keeper at night in the epic.^[11]

Enkidu



Representation of Enkidu (2027–1763 BC)^[1]

Aruru (creator)

Creature information

Grouping	Mythic humanoids
Sub grouping	Wild man
Folklore	Ancient Mesopotamian religion
	Origin
Country	Uruk
Region	Sumer
Details	Steppe (formerly)

^[1] The

Etymology

The name of Enkidu is Sumerian, and generally written in texts in this language by the sequence of signs **en.ki.du10**. The phrase **ki.du10** (*good place*) is well attested in the Early Dynastic personal names, and the name **en.ki.du10.ga** (*Lord of the good place*) is cited on the Fara tablets. The lack of genitive or any grammatical element was common until the late third millennium.^[12] However, an alternative translation has been proposed as *Creation of Enki*.

In the epic, his name is preceded by the determinative sign of the divinity *dingir* *, which means that this character was considered to be of divine essence.

Sumerian poems

"The envoys of Agga"

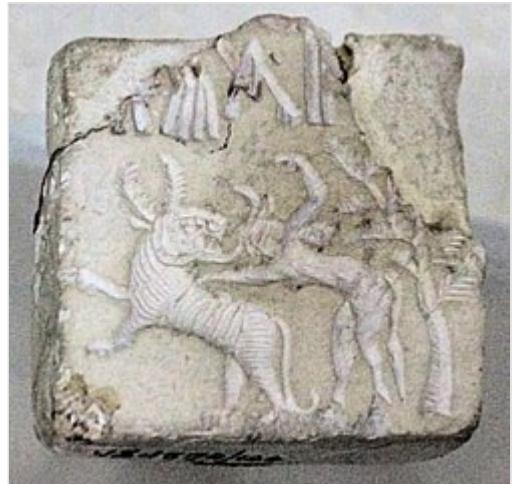
Uruk refuses to participate in the digging of wells for the benefit of Kish, whose kingdom had the hegemony of Sumer. Its king Agga submits the city to a siege. Enkidu is sent to prepare the weapons and wait for Gilgamesh's order. After the battle, Gilgamesh defeats Agga, and makes him return, defeated and humiliated, to Kish.^[14]

"The lord to the Living One's Mountain"

Gilgamesh, disturbed by the death of his subjects and by the brevity of human existence, decides to make a name for himself. The king of Uruk and Enkidu make an expedition to the Forest of the Cedars, where, with Utu's blessing, they traverse seven mountains. Enkidu warns the king that the monster Huwawa inhabits the mountain region, armed by seven supernatural Auras. However, Gilgamesh has no fear, and his fifty men cut the trees until Huwawa appears. Gilgamesh offers him seven gifts in exchange for leaving his seven Auras, but it is a trap. He strikes Huwawa several times, who asks for mercy. Although Gilgamesh softens his heart, Enkidu nevertheless decapitates the monster. Enlil reproaches them for his death, and distributes the seven auras to the fields, the rivers, the reed-beds, the lions, the palace, the forest and Nungal, which would explain the fear and fascination they give to the humans.^{[15][16]}

"Hero in battle"

Inanna is enraged with Gilgamesh, she forbids him from administering justice in her temple, the Eanna, causing unrest in the environment of the King of Uruk. Finally, Inanna demands, with threats, from her father the Bull of Heaven to kill Gilgamesh. The bull is released in Uruk, whose insatiable hunger destroys crops and rivers. Enkidu grabs the bull by his tail and Gilgamesh smashes its head. Finally they distribute the meat among the poor and transform the horns into cups for ointments for the Eanna.



Fighting scene between a beast and a man with horns, hooves and a tail, who has been compared to the Mesopotamian bull-man, suggestive of Indus-Mesopotamia relations.^{[2][3][4]} Mohenjodaro (seal 1357), Indus Valley civilization.^[5]

"Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld"

An oak tree grows on the banks of the Euphrates, the south wind blows it away and the goddess Inanna gathers it, planting it in her garden to use its wood as her throne. Suddenly, a snake takes refuge between its roots, a giant eagle on its top and a female demon between them.

Inanna asks her brother Utu for help, in vain, and then Gilgamesh. Gilgamesh cuts the tree, kills the serpent, expels the eagle to the mountain, and the demon to the desert. Inanna gives Gilgamesh a drum (ellag) and drumsticks (ekidma), in some versions a rod and a ring. Eventually they end up falling to the Netherworld.

Enkidu offers to recover them, but not before receiving instructions from Gilgamesh on how to behave in the underworld, to not seem alive in the residence of the dead. Enkidu however, ignores the directions; consequently, Enkidu ends up being held forever in the Netherworld.

After Gilgamesh pleads to the gods to set his companion free, Enki finally causes the shade of Enkidu to rise to briefly reunite with Gilgamesh. The latter interrogates the former (whom from now on he calls his "friend") the fate of the dead, Enkidu answers each of his questions. The text is lost here.^[17]

Did you see him who fell in battle?
I saw him [...] his father and mother are not there to hold his
head, and his wife weeps.



Bronze sword with hilt depicting Gilgamesh and Enkidu slaying Humbaba (1200-800 BC)^[13]

"The great wild bull is lying down"

Gilgamesh is dying. The gods judge his exploits. After his position as future judge of the underworld has been revealed to him, he offers gifts and sacrifices to the gods. Then he takes comfort in the words of the gods; after death, he will be reunited with his family, his priests, his warriors and his best friend, Enkidu. Finally, he dies.^[18]

Epic of Gilgamesh

The Akkadian epic Gilgamesh is found in various versions, including *Surpassing all other kings* (c. 1800 – c. 1600) and *He who saw the Deep* (c. 1300 – c. 1100), which was compiled by Sin-liqe-unninni from earlier texts, later discovered in the Library of Ashurbanipal in 1853.

Creation of Enkidu

Gilgamesh, king of Uruk, abuses his people. In response to complaints from the citizens, Anu, the supreme god, directs the goddess of fertility Aruru to create Enkidu in the steppe.^[19] Abundantly hairy and primitive, he lives roaming with the herds and grazing and drinking from rivers with the beasts. One

day a hunter watches Enkidu destroying the traps he has prepared for the animals. The hunter informs his father, who sends him to Uruk to ask Gilgamesh for help. The king sends Shamhat, a sacred prostitute, who seduces and teaches Enkidu. After two weeks with her, he becomes human, intelligent and understanding words, however the beasts flee when they see him. Shamhat convinces Enkidu to face the tyrant Gilgamesh in combat. Meanwhile, in Uruk, the king has two dreams prophesying the arrival of his enemy.

Enkidu faces Gilgamesh

Enkidu learns to behave like a man with the shepherds eating, drinking and defending them from wolves and lions at night. Upon reaching Uruk, Enkidu blocks the path of Gilgamesh who was going to sleep with a newlywed. Enraged, they fight brutally until the two end up tired, but at the end both appreciate each other's strength, and decide to be friends. Enkidu is depressed by having abandoned his old wild life, to which Gilgamesh proposes an expedition to the Cedar Forest to kill Humbaba. But his friend explains that he knew the forest while he was a wild being, and that the expedition is dangerous. At the end, Gilgamesh decides to march without fear. The decision is acclaimed by the citizens of Uruk, but not by the elders and advisers. Faced with Gilgamesh's disregard, the elders charge Enkidu to protect their king.

The one who goes on ahead saves the comrade.

The one who knows the route protects his friend.'Let Enkidu go ahead of you; he knows the road to the Cedar Forest.

In this same episode the goddess Ninsun adopts Enkidu and also entrusts him with protecting the king.^[20]

The forest of Humbaba

Ninsun, the mother of Gilgamesh adopts Enkidu as her son, and seeks protection of the sun-god Shamash (the protector of the Uruk dynasty). Gilgamesh and Enkidu journey to the Cedar Forest. They perform a dream ritual in every mountain they cross; although dreams are representations of Humbaba (falling mountains, a thunderbird that breathes fire...), Enkidu interprets them as good omens. At the entrance to the forest they hear the fearsome bellow of Humbaba, which petrifies them with fear.

Humbaba descends from the mountain face to face with both heroes, there accuses Enkidu of betrayal against the beasts and threatens Gilgamesh to disembowel him and feed his flesh to the birds. Gilgamesh is terrified, but Enkidu encourages him, and the battle begins. First, Gilgamesh strikes Humbaba so hard it splits the Mount Hermon in two, and the skies turn black and start "raining death". Shamash binds Humbaba with 13 winds and he is captured. Humbaba pleads for his life, offers to be his slave and to cut the sacred trees for him, Gilgamesh pities him, but Enkidu argues that his death will establish his



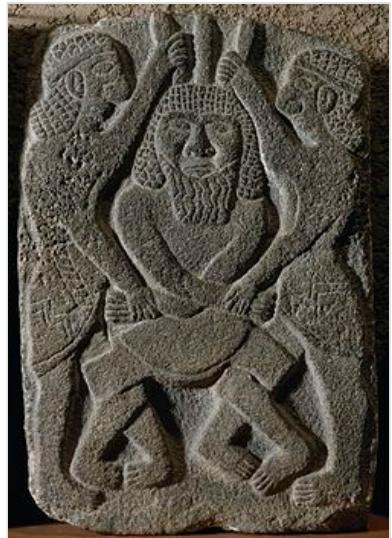
Cylinder seal with Enkidu vanquishing the Bull of Heaven - Walters 42786 - Side G

reputation forever. Humbaba then curses both heroes, but they strike him, decapitating him. They cut down cedars and a gigantic tree that Enkidu plans to use for a gate for the temple of Enlil. They return home along the Euphrates with the trees and the head of Humbaba.

Ishtar's seduction

The goddess Ishtar, fascinated by the beauty of Gilgamesh, offers to be his wife in exchange for wealth and fame; these offerings do not sway Gilgamesh, who recalls all the misadventures her previous loves had, such as Tammuz.

Ishtar, furious and crying, goes to her father Anu, to demand the Bull of Heaven take revenge, or she will scream so loudly that the dead will devour the living. Anu, in fear, gives her the Bull from Heaven in exchange for preparing food for the seven years of famine that the city will suffer from the destruction of the bull. Ishtar obeys (or lies) and releases the bull in Uruk, which kills a large percentage of people. Enkidu grabs the bull by the horns and Gilgamesh stabs his neck. Hearing Ishtar's cry, Enkidu ridicules the goddess by throwing a bull's leg at her head. The city prepares a great celebration at night.



Neo-Hittite relief of King Kapara (c. 950 – c. 875 BC). Two heroes pin down a bearded foe, while grabbing at his pronged headdress. The context may be related to the Gilgamesh epic, and display Gilgamesh and Enkidu in their fight with Humbaba.

Death of Enkidu

Enkidu has a dream where the gods decide that the heroes must die, since they have killed Humbaba and the Bull of Heaven. Samash protests against the decision, but that does not change anything, and Enkidu is sentenced to death. This makes Enkidu curse the door he built with the wood of the forest and Shamhat, for having changed his wild life. However then he repents and blesses her. He discusses his nightmares with Gilgamesh about witnessing before Ereshkigal, the queen of the underworld. After this, sick and bedridden for twelve days, he asks Gilgamesh not to forget him. Finally, he dies.

Gilgamesh calls upon the mountains and all of Uruk to mourn for his friend. He recalls their adventures together, makes a funerary statue of Enkidu and provides grave gifts, so Enkidu has a favourable life in the realm of the dead. Enkidu is buried in the river, like Gilgamesh in the Sumerian poem.



Tablet V of the Epic of Gilgamesh, discovered in 2015.^[21] It describes encountering Humbaba at the Cedar Forest.^[22]

Enkidu's descent to the Underworld

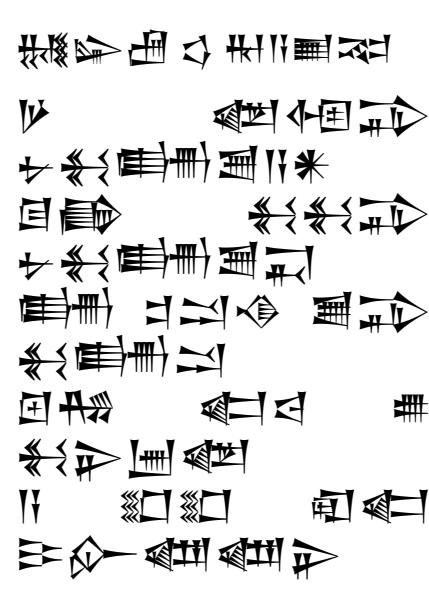
There is another non-canonical tablet in which Enkidu journeys into the underworld, but many scholars consider the tablet to be a sequel or add-on to the original epic inspired by the Sumerian poem Gilgamesh, Enkidu and the Netherworld.^[23]

Symbolism

Enkidu's wild life

It has often been suggested that these descriptions reflect the semi-nomadic Amorites who, from their homeland in the Syrian Desert, infiltrated southern Mesopotamia and came to dominate it in the early second millennium. The phraseology generally includes a reference to "not knowing", which is also used in the epic. Comparing their behaviour to animals, "people plotting destruction like beasts, like wolves". However, Amorites ate uncooked meat and lived in tents while Enkidu lived in the steppe and ate grass; meaning there is no correlation between both since Enkidu wasn't even a human yet.^[24] However, Morris Jastrow suggested that Enkidu's early life was modeled on a tradition that can be seen in etiological texts, in parallel to the description of Enkidu.^[24]

The Dispute Between Cattle and Grain

	<p>nam-lu2-ulu3 ud re-a-ke4-ne ninda gu7-u3-bi nu-mu-un- zu-uc-am3 tug2-ga mu4-mu4-bi nu-mu- un-zu-uc-am3 kalam jic-gen-na su-bi mu- un-jen udu-gin7 ka-ba u2 mu-ni-ib- gu7 a mu2-sar-ra-ka i-im-na8- na8-ne</p>	<p><i>Mankind of that time, Knew not the eating of bread, Knew not the wearing of garments, The people went around with skins on their bodies, They ate grass with their mouths like sheep, Drank water from ditches.</i></p>
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Possible depiction of Enkidu as a bull-man, fighting a lion, Akkadian Empire seal, circa 2200 BC.^{[25][7]}



Enkidu, Gilgamesh's friend. From Ur, Iraq. 2027–1763 BC. Iraq Museum

Becoming human

After bouts of love-making with Shamhat over two weeks, Enkidu tries to reunite with his herd. But the gazelles run from him, indicating that he is not accepted any more amongst the savage kind. Enkidu has lost his primitive nature, such as running as fast as a gazelle.

We can see here the motif of transferring negative or positive qualities (weakness or knowledge) from one being to another through intimate contact. Another motif is the role of women as seducer towards civilization, such as Adam and Eve in Genesis 3. By offering Adam the fruit of the tree of knowledge, Eve ultimately drew him to a life of sin and turmoil with Eve being to the pain of childbirth.^[26]

Jastrow and Clay are of the opinion that the story of Enkidu was originally a separate tale to illustrate "man's career and destiny, how through intercourse with a woman he awakens to the sense of human dignity..."^[27]

Civilization against nomadic life

There is a theme that contrasts life with human culture and the life without. It can be seen when Enkidu curses Shamhat, because she took him away from the wild life and brought him to civilization, leading to his death. The sun god Shamash convinces him that he had a new life worth enjoying.^[28]

Why, O Enkidu, do you curse the harlot Shamhat,
Who made you eat food fit for divinity,
Who gave you to drink wine fit for royalty,
Who clothed you with noble garments,
And made you have fair Gilgamesh for a comrade?

The same theme appears when the barmaid advises Gilgamesh to abandon his search for immortality.^[29]

As for you, Gilgamesh [...]
Let your head be washed; bathe in water.
Pay heed to a little one that holds on to your hand;
Let a spouse delight in your bosom.

As Jeffrey H. Tigay wrote in his book, *The Evolution of the Gilgamesh Epic*:

The rise of Enkidu to human culture underlines the values preferred by the epic. This preference may help explain the epic's enduring attraction. While military feats were for the few, the simple pleasures advocated by the barmaid were something many could strive for.^[29]

Modern rediscovery

The first translation of the Epic of Gilgamesh was produced in the early 1870s by George Smith, a scholar at the British Museum, who published the Flood story from Tablet XI in 1880 under the title The Chaldean Account of Genesis. There, Enkidu's name was originally misread as **Eabani**.

See also

- [Gilgamesh in popular culture](#)
- [Master of Animals](#)

Notes

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External links

- Enkidu sitting astride Gugalanna, the *Bull of Heaven* (<http://www.crystalinks.com/gilgamesh.html>)
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Enmerkar

Enmerkar^{[a][b]} (fl.^{c.} 2750 BC) was an ancient Sumerian ruler to whom the construction of the city of Uruk and a 420-year reign^[c] was attributed. According to literary sources, he led various campaigns against the land of Aratta.

He is credited in Sumerian legend as the inventor of writing.^[4] An excerpt of an ancient text states "Because the messenger's mouth was heavy and he couldn't repeat (the message), the Lord of Kulaba (Enmerkar) patted some clay and put words on it, like a tablet. Until then, there had been no putting words on clay." This is the earliest known story in history about the invention of writing.

Historical king

Late Uruk period

The tradition of Enmerkar as the founder of Uruk seems to date from the Jemdet Nasr period (3100–2900 BC) as found in the Ad-gi4 list. The lexical list mentions Enmerkar and his wife Enmerkarzi as the builders of a town and the bringers of agriculture. A bilingual edition of the list has been found at Nineveh, indicating that the tradition was transmitted into the first millennium.^[5]

Enmerkar and (his) wife Enmerkar-zi,
who know (how to build) towns (made) brick and brick pavements.
When the yearly flood reached its proper level,
(they made) irrigation canals and all kinds of irrigation ditches.

Despite his proclaimed divine descent from the poems, Enmerkar was not deified as his successors Lugalbanda and Gilgamesh. These two last kings were already listed in the god lists of Shuruppak and received offerings during the Ur III period (2112–2004 BC). It concluded that Enmerkar was only remembered as the founder and first king of Uruk.^[6]

Enmerkar



Priest-king of Uruk from the Late Uruk Period

King of Uruk	
Reign	c. 2750 BC ^{[1][2]}
Predecessor	Possibly <u>Meshkiangasher</u>
Successor	Possibly <u>Lugalbanda</u>
Dynasty	<u>Uruk 1</u>

Expeditions to Aratta

Some scholars have looked for historical matter in the literature deeds of Enmerkar and the land of Aratta. For example, an archaic tablet from Uruk recording the title "Lord of Aratta" was given as a reason to believe the traditions surrounding Enmerkar's deeds were based in reality.^[7] Moreover, there are suggestions that Enmerkar and his administration may be factually attributed as the first person/people to put cuneiform to clay tablets; and that writing did indeed exist before Enmerkar, citing the fact that the Lord of Aratta understood the message, but those writing were previously done in different materials.

Enmerkar's campaigns against Aratta	
Date	c. 3250 BC
Location	Aratta (now Iraq)
Result	Uruk victory
Belligerents	
Uruk	Aratta
Commanders and leaders	
Enmerkar	unknown
Casualties and losses	
unknown	unknown

However, assyriologist Dina Katz states that any attempt to find a historical explanation of the legendary account invalidates the claim that Enmerkar invented the clay tablet and the writing system, and weakens the important ideological purpose of the narrative. She further notices that the poem claiming writing as an invention by the founder of the first Sumerian city after the flood is a political and ethnic statement.^[6]

Akkadian Empire

During the reign of Naram-Sin of Akkad, the king accused Enmerkar of not recording his experience on a stele, so as a consequence he holds him responsible for a defeat in war and the devastation of Akkad.^[6]

Matter of Aratta

The *Matter of Aratta* is a group of four narrative poems in Sumerian, dealing with the various ways Enmerkar won supremacy over the legendary city of Aratta. The main motif of all four poems is the defeat of Aratta throughout the wilderness by nonmilitary means to win the favor of the goddess Inanna. The cycle originated in the Ur III period (2112–2004 BC) and were subjects of scribal schools from Ur and Nippur during the Isin-Larsa period (2017–1763 BC).^[8] The poems, aimed to praise the glorious past of Uruk, were a political movement of the Third Dynasty of Ur to consolidate themselves as the legitimate and spiritual heirs of the ancient rulers of Uruk.^[9]

Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta

In *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*, Enmerkar, king of Uruk, wants to embellish his city with precious metals and stones, goods that are only found in the wealthy city of Aratta, which lies behind the mountains. Inanna, which is the goddess of Aratta, favors Enmerkar and advises him to send a messenger with a challenge to Aratta, repositioning what he wants and enforcing his claim by stating that she favors him. Enmerkar casts the spell of Nudimmud, which makes Enlil reunite all the languages (of Shubur, Hamazi, Sumer, Akkad, and the Martu land) into one in order to be debates between kings. The lord of Aratta refuses but wants to enter into a contest with Enmerkar to see on which side Inanna lay. The unnamed lord of Aratta sends three riddles to reconsider his submission:

- To cart grain to Aratta in open nets instead of bags, Enmerkar uses sprouting barley to close the interstices of the nets so that no grain is spilled.
- To bring a scepter made of no existing material, Enmerkar prepares a gluelike plastic substance that he pours into a hollow reed; after it has hardened, he breaks away the reed mold.
- To bring a dog of no known color to fight his own dog, to which Enmerkar weaves a cloth of no known color.

The messenger complains that the messages have become too long and difficult to remember and reproduce. Enmerkar invents writing, which throws the lord of Aratta into despair. The land of Aratta suffers famine and drought. Inanna confirms her predilection for Enmerkar but also tells him to institute peaceful trade with Aratta from now on.

Enmerkar and Ensuhgirana

Ensuhgirana, lord of Aratta, claims to be the recipient of Inanna's favors and demands the submission of Uruk. Enmerkar refuses and points out that he is the only true and constant lover of Inanna, however, the lord of Aratta refuses to submit to Uruk. A sorcerer from Hamazi offers his services to break the stalemate, services which are accepted by Enshugirana. The wizard casts a spell on the cattle of the goddess Nisaba, and there is a famine in Sumer. Utu sends a wise woman who catches up with the wizard on the banks of the Euphrates, both start a competition of magic. The wizard throws fish spawn in the river and draws out an animal; five times the wise woman draws out another animal which hunts the wizard's animal. The wizard admits his defeat and pleads for his life, but he is killed and the spell is broken. Ensuhgirana admits defeat and submits to Enmerkar.

Lugalbanda poems

In the lugalbanda poems (Lugalbanda in the Mountain Cave and Lugalbanda and the Anzud Bird or a version that is a mixture of both) Enmerkar marches against Aratta, his warchief Lugalbanda falls ill and is abandoned in a cave. He feasts Anzud's chick and gains the legendary bird's favor. Lugalbanda is rewarded with the gift of speed and goes to Enmerkar, who is laying siege to Aratta. The king sends Lugalbanda to ask for Inanna's advice in Uruk, which does. At the end, Aratta submits. The text also mentions that fifty years into Enmerkar's reign, the Martu people had arisen in all of Sumer and Akkad, necessitating the building of a wall in the desert to protect Uruk.

Later influence

In antiquity

In a much later Greek legend related by Aelian^[10] (ca. AD 200), the king of Babylon, *Euechoros* or *Seuechoros* (also appearing in many variants as *Sevekhoros*, earlier *Sacchoras*, etc.), is said to be the grandfather of Gilgames, who later becomes king of Babylon (i.e., Gilgamesh of Uruk). Several recent scholars have suggested that this "Seuechoros" or "Euechoros" is moreover to be identified with Enmerkar of Uruk, as well as the fictional *Euechous* named by Berossus as being the first king of Chaldea and Assyria. This last name *Euechous* (also appearing as *Evechius*, and in many other variants) has, along with a number of other fictional and real Mesopotamian rulers, been identified with the historically unattested biblical figure of Nimrod.^[11]

Identification as Nimrod

The historian David Rohl has claimed parallels between Enmerkar, builder of Uruk, and Nimrod, ruler of biblical Erech (Uruk), who, according to some extra-biblical legends, was supposedly the architect of the Tower of Babel. One parallel Rohl has noted is between the epithet "the Hunter", applied to Nimrod, and the suffix *-kar* at the end of Enmerkar's name, which means "hunter". Rohl has also argued that Eridu near Ur is the original site of the city of Babel and that the incomplete ziggurat found there is none other than the Biblical tower itself.^[12]

Notes

- a. While the etymology stills unclear, "the 'Lord' (is / has) a glowing giant snake" has been proposed.^[3]
- b. Sumerian:  romanized: *Enmerkar*
- c. Some copies read 900 years.

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10. *De Natura Animalium* 12.21
11. Wouter F. M. Henkelman, "The Birth of Gilgamesh", in *Altertum und Mittelmeerraum: die antike Welt diesseits und jenseits der Levante*, p. 819.
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External links

- ETCSL - Texts and translations of Enmerkar legends (http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=c.1.8.2*#) (alternate site (<https://web.archive.org/web/20080517150822/http://www-etcsl.orient.ox.ac.uk/catalogue/catalogue1.htm#lugalbanda>))

Retrieved from "<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Enmerkar&oldid=1292088094>"



Etana

Etana (𒂗𒀭𒃲, *E.TA.NA*) was the thirteenth king of the first dynasty of Kish, according to the Sumerian King List. He is listed as the successor of Arwium, the son of Mashda, as king of Kish. The list also calls Etana "the shepherd, who ascended to heaven and consolidated all the foreign countries", and states that he ruled 1,560 years (some copies read 635) before being succeeded by his son Balih, said to have ruled 400 years. The kings on the early part of the *SKL* are usually not considered historical, except when they are mentioned in contemporary Early Dynastic documents. Etana is one of them.^[1]

Myth of Etana

A Babylonian legend says that Etana was desperate to have a child, until one day he helped save an eagle from starving, who then took him up into the sky to find the plant of birth. This led to the birth of his son, Balih.

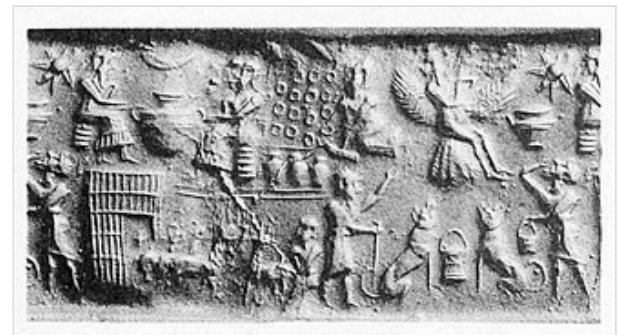
In the detailed form of the legend, there is a tree with the eagle's nest at the top, and a serpent at the base. Both the serpent and eagle have promised Utu (the sun god) to behave well toward one another, and they share food with their children.

But one day, the eagle eats the serpent's children. The serpent comes back and cries. Utu tells the serpent to hide inside the stomach of a dead bull. The eagle goes down to eat the bull. The serpent captures the eagle, and throws him into a pit to die of hunger and thirst. Utu sends a man, Etana, to help the eagle. Etana saves the eagle, but he also asks the bird to find the plant of birth, in order to become father of a son. The eagle takes Etana up to the heaven of the god Anu, but Etana becomes afraid in the air and he goes back to the ground. He makes another attempt, and finds the plant of birth, enabling him to have Balih.

So far, versions in three languages have been found. The Old Babylonian version comes from Susa and Tell Harmal, the Middle Assyrian version comes from Assur, and the Standard version is from Nineveh.^[2]

Etana
𒂗𒀭𒃲
<u>King of Kish</u>
<u>Ruler of Sumer</u>

Fragment of the Epic of Etana, Akkadian, c. 1895–1595 BC
King of the First dynasty of Kish
Reign Unknown
Predecessor <u>Arwium</u>
Successor <u>Balih</u>
Issue <u>Balih</u>



The Myth of Etana. Seal impression of the Akkadian Empire period.

Analysis

Folklorist scholarship recognizes that the tale of Etana helping an eagle fits into the Aarne–Thompson–Uther tale type ATU 537, "The Eagle as helper: hero carried on the wings of a helpful eagle".^{[3][4][5][6][7]} It has also been suggested that the myth of Etana originated the folk-type of later oral tradition.^{[8][9]}

See also

- [History of Sumer](#)
- [Mesopotamian mythology](#)
- [Aratta](#)

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Retrieved from "<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Etana&oldid=1276754485>"



Gilgamesh

Gilgamesh (/ˈgilgəmɛʃ/, [7] /gil'ga:mɛʃ/, [8] Akkadian: *Gilgameš, romanized: *Gilgāmeš*; originally Sumerian: *Bilgames) [9][a] was a hero in ancient Mesopotamian mythology and the protagonist of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, an epic poem written in Akkadian during the late 2nd millennium BC. He was possibly a historical king of the Sumerian city-state of Uruk, who was posthumously deified. His rule probably would have taken place sometime in the beginning of the Early Dynastic Period, c. 2900–2350 BC, though he became a major figure in Sumerian legend during the Third Dynasty of Ur (c. 2112 – c. 2004 BC).

Tales of Gilgamesh's legendary exploits are narrated in five surviving Sumerian poems. The earliest of these is likely "Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld", [12] in which Gilgamesh comes to the aid of the goddess Inanna and drives away the creatures infesting her *huluppu* tree. She gives him two unknown objects, a *mikku* and a *pikku*, which he loses. After Enkidu's death, his shade tells Gilgamesh about the bleak conditions in the Underworld. The poem *Gilgamesh and Aga* describes Gilgamesh's revolt against his overlord *Aga of Kish*. Other Sumerian poems relate Gilgamesh's defeat of the giant *Huwawa* and the *Bull of Heaven*, while a fifth, poorly preserved poem relates the account of his death and funeral.

In later Babylonian times, these stories were woven into a connected narrative. The standard Akkadian *Epic of Gilgamesh* was composed by a scribe named Sîn-leqi-unninni, probably during the Middle Babylonian Period (c. 1600 – c. 1155 BC), based on much older source material. In the epic, Gilgamesh is a demigod of superhuman strength who befriends the wild man Enkidu. Together, they embark on many journeys, most famously defeating *Humbaba* (Sumerian: *Huwawa*) and the *Bull of Heaven*, who is sent to attack them by Ishtar (Sumerian: Inanna) after Gilgamesh rejects her offer for him to become her consort. After



King of *Uruk*



Possible representation of Gilgamesh as Master of Animals, grasping a lion in his left arm and snake in his right hand, in an Assyrian palace relief (713–706 BC), from Dur-Sharrukin, now held in the Louvre^[1]

Reign c. 2900–2700 BC
(EDI)^{[2][3][4][5][6]}

Predecessor Dumuzid

Enkidu dies of a disease sent as punishment from the gods, Gilgamesh becomes afraid of his own death and visits the sage Utnapishtim, the survivor of the Great Flood, hoping to find immortality. Gilgamesh repeatedly fails the trials set before him and returns home to Uruk, realizing that immortality is beyond his reach.

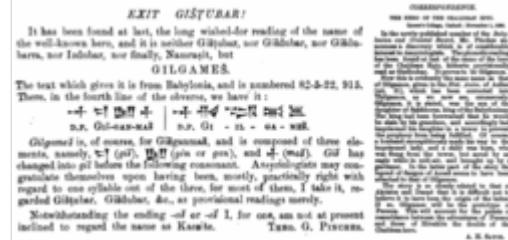
Successor	Ur-Nungal
Issue	Ur-Nungal
Father	Lugalbanda (in Sumerian poetry)
Mother	Ninsun (in Sumerian poetry)

Most scholars agree that the *Epic of Gilgamesh* exerted substantial influence on the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, two epic poems written in ancient Greek during the 8th century BC. The story of Gilgamesh's birth is described in an anecdote in *On the Nature of Animals* by the Greek writer Aelian (2nd century AD). Aelian relates that Gilgamesh's grandfather kept his mother under guard to prevent her from becoming pregnant, because an oracle had told him that his grandson would overthrow him. She became pregnant and the guards threw the child off a tower, but an eagle rescued him mid-fall and delivered him safely to an orchard, where the gardener raised him.

The *Epic of Gilgamesh* was rediscovered in the Library of Ashurbanipal in 1849. After being translated in the early 1870s, it caused widespread controversy due to similarities between portions of it and the Hebrew Bible. Gilgamesh remained mostly obscure until the mid-20th century, but, since the late 20th century, he has become an increasingly prominent figure in modern culture.

Name

The modern form "Gilgamesh" is a direct borrowing of the Akkadian  (GIL.GAMESH), rendered as *Gilgāmeš*. The Assyrian form of the name derived from the earlier Sumerian form  (BIL.GAM.MES), *Bilgames*. It is generally concluded that the name itself translates as "the (kinsman) is a hero", though what type of "kinsman" was meant is a point of controversy. It is sometimes suggested that the Sumerian form of the name was pronounced *Pabilgames*, reading the component *bilga* as *pabilga* () (the latter part of the name), a related term which described familial relations, however, this is not supported by epigraphic or phonological evidence.^[14]



Exit Gištubar! Theophilus Pinches' 1890 publication of the correct name of Gilgamesh, which had previously been deciphered as Izdubar. This was followed by Archibald Sayce noting that the name had appeared in Aelian's *De Natura Animalium* as Classical Greek: Γίλγαμος, romanized: *Gilgamos* in the early 200s CE.^[13]

Historical king

Most historians generally agree that Gilgamesh was a historical king of the Sumerian city-state of Uruk,^{[17][18][19][20]} who probably ruled sometime during the early part of the Early Dynastic Period (c. 2900–2350 BC).^{[17][18]} Stephanie Dalley, a scholar of the ancient Near East, states that "precise dates cannot be given for the lifetime of Gilgamesh, but they are generally agreed to lie between 2800 and 2500 BC".^[18] An inscription, possibly belonging to a contemporary official under Gilgamesh, was discovered in the archaic texts at Ur;^[21] his name reads: "Gilgameš is the one whom Utu has selected". Aside from this the Tummal Inscription, a thirty-four-line

historiographic text written during the reign of Ishbi-Erra (c. 1953 – c. 1920 BC), also mentions him.^[19] The inscription credits Gilgamesh with building the walls of Uruk.^[22] Lines eleven through fifteen of the inscription read:

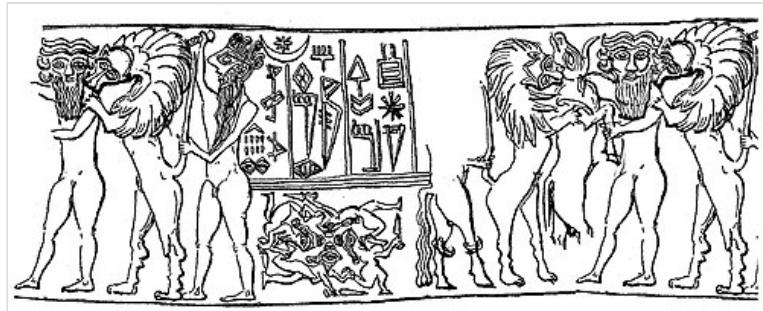
For a second time, the Tummal
fell into ruin,
Gilgamesh built the
Numunburra of the House of
Enlil.
Ur-lugal, the son of Gilgamesh,
Made the Tummal pre-eminent,
Brought Ninlil to the
Tummal.^[23]

Gilgamesh is also connected to King Enmebaragesi of Kish, a known historical figure who may have lived near Gilgamesh's lifetime.^[22] Furthermore, he is listed as one of the kings of Uruk by the Sumerian King List.^[22] Fragments of an epic text found in Mê-Turan (modern Tell Haddad) relate that upon his death Gilgamesh was buried under the river bed,^[22] and the workmen of Uruk temporarily diverted the flow of the Euphrates for this purpose.^{[24][22]}

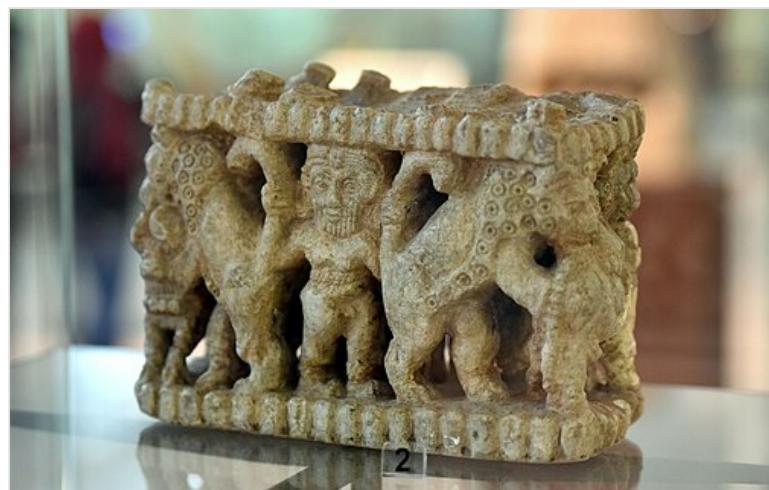
Deification and legendary exploits

Sumerian poems

It is certain that, during the later Early Dynastic Period, Gilgamesh was worshiped as a god at various locations across Sumer.^[17] In the 21st century BC, King Utu-hengal of Uruk adopted Gilgamesh as his patron deity.^[17] The kings of the Third Dynasty of Ur (c. 2112 – c. 2004 BC) were especially fond of Gilgamesh,^{[17][22]} calling him their "divine brother" and "friend."^[17] King Shulgi of Ur (2029–1982 BC) declared himself the son of Lugalbanda and Ninsun and the brother of Gilgamesh.^[22] Over the centuries, there may have been a gradual accretion of stories about Gilgamesh, some possibly



Seal impression of "Mesannepada, king of Kish", excavated in the Royal Cemetery at Ur (U. 13607), dated circa 2600 BC.^{[15][16]} The seal shows Gilgamesh and the mythical bull between two lions, one of the lions biting him in the shoulder. On each side of this group appears Enkidu and a hunter-hero, with a long beard and a Kish-style headdress, armed with a dagger. Under the text, four runners with beard and long hair form a human Swastika. They are armed with daggers and catch each other's foot.^[16]



Sculpted scene depicting Gilgamesh wrestling with animals. From the Shara temple at Tell Agrab, Diyala Region, Iraq. Early Dynastic Period, 2600–2370 BC. On display at the National Museum of Iraq in Baghdad.

derived from the real lives of other historical figures, such as Gudea, the Second Dynasty ruler of Lagash (2144–2124 BC).^[25] Prayers inscribed on clay tablets address Gilgamesh as a judge of the dead in the Underworld.^[22]

"Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld"

During this period, a large number of myths and legends developed surrounding Gilgamesh.^{[17][26][27][28]:95}

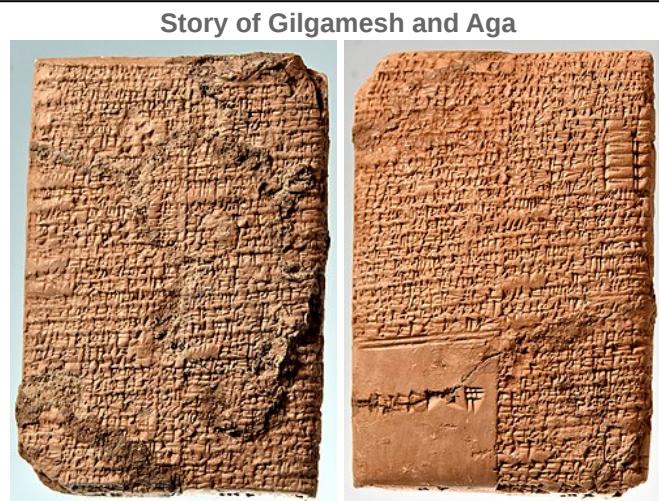
Five independent Sumerian poems have been discovered narrating his exploits.^[17] Gilgamesh's first appearance in literature is probably in the Sumerian poem "Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld".^{[29][22][30]} The narrative begins with a *huluppu* tree—perhaps, according to the Sumerologist Samuel Noah Kramer, a willow,^[31] growing on the banks of the river Euphrates.^{[31][22][32]} The goddess Inanna moves the tree to her garden in Uruk with the intention to carve it into a throne once it is fully grown.^{[31][22][32]} The tree grows and matures, but the serpent "who knows no charm," the *Anzû*-bird, and *Lilitu*, a Mesopotamian demon, invade the tree, causing Inanna to cry with sorrow.^{[31][22][32]}

Gilgamesh, who in this story is portrayed as Inanna's brother, slays the serpent, causing the *Anzû*-bird and *Lilitu* to flee.^{[33][22][32]} Gilgamesh's companions chop down the tree and carve it into a bed and a throne for Inanna.^{[34][22][32]} The goddess responds by fashioning a *pikku* and a *mikku* (perhaps a drum and drumsticks)^{[35][22]} as a reward for Gilgamesh's heroism.^{[36][22][32]} But Gilgamesh loses the *pikku* and *mikku* and asks who will retrieve them.^[37] His servant Enkidu descends to the Underworld to find them,^[38] but he disobeys its strict laws and can never return.^[38] In the remaining dialog, Gilgamesh questions the shade of his lost comrade about the Underworld.^{[17][37]}

Subsequent poems



Mace dedicated to Gilgamesh, with transcription of the name Gilgamesh (★ 𒀭 𒂗 𒈾 𒈾) in standard Sumero-Akkadian cuneiform, Ur III period, between 2112 and 2004 BC



Story of "Gilgamesh and Agga". Old Babylonian period, from southern Iraq. Sulaymaniyah Museum, Iraq

Gilgamesh and Agga describes Gilgamesh's successful revolt against his liege lord Agga, king of the city-state of Kish.^{[17][39]} Gilgamesh and Huwawa describes how Gilgamesh and his servant Enkidu, with the help of fifty volunteers from Uruk, defeat the monster Huwawa, an ogre appointed as guardian of the Cedar Forest by the ruling god Enlil.^{[17][40][41]}

In *Gilgamesh and the Bull of Heaven*, Gilgamesh and Enkidu slay the Bull of Heaven, who has been sent to attack them by the goddess Inanna.^{[17][42][43]} The details of this poem differ substantially from the corresponding episode in the later Akkadian *Epic of Gilgamesh*.^[44] In the Sumerian poem, Inanna remains aloof from Gilgamesh, but in the Akkadian epic she asks him to become her consort.^[42] Also, while pressing her father An to give her the Bull of Heaven, in Sumerian Inanna threatens a deafening cry that will reach the earth, while in Akkadian she threatens to wake the dead to eat the living.^[44]

A poem known as *The Death of Gilgamesh* is poorly preserved, but appears to describe a major state funeral followed by the arrival of the deceased in the Underworld. The poem may have been misinterpreted, and may actually depict the death of Enkidu.^{[45][17]}

Epic of Gilgamesh

Eventually, according to Kramer (1963):^[26]

Gilgamesh became the hero par excellence of the ancient world—an adventurous, brave, but tragic figure symbolizing man's vain but endless drive for fame, glory, and immortality.

By the Old Babylonian Period (c. 1830 – c. 1531 BC), stories of Gilgamesh's legendary exploits had been woven into one or several long epics.^[17] The *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the most complete account of Gilgamesh's adventures, was composed in Akkadian during the Middle Babylonian Period (c. 1600 – c. 1155 BC) by a scribe named Sîn-lêqi-unninni.^[17] The most complete surviving version of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* is recorded on a set of twelve clay tablets dating to the seventh century BC, found in the Library of Ashurbanipal in the Assyrian

capital of Nineveh,^{[17][22][50]} with many pieces missing or damaged.^{[17][22][50]} Some scholars and translators choose to supplement the missing parts with material from the earlier Sumerian poems or from other versions of the epic found at other sites throughout the Near East.^[17]

In the epic, Gilgamesh is introduced as "two thirds divine and one third mortal".^[51] At the beginning of the poem, Gilgamesh is described as a brutal, oppressive ruler.^{[17][51]} This is usually interpreted to mean either forced labor or sexual exploitation.^[17] As punishment for his cruelty, the god Anu creates the wild man Enkidu.^[52] After being tamed by a prostitute named Shamhat, Enkidu journeys to Uruk to confront Gilgamesh.^[47] In the second tablet, the two men wrestle and though Gilgamesh wins in the end,^[47] he is



The ogre Humbaba, shown in this terracotta plaque from the Old Babylonian Period,^[46] is one of the opponents fought by Gilgamesh and his companion Enkidu in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*.^[47]

Ancient Mesopotamian terracotta relief (c. 2250–1900 BC) showing Gilgamesh slaying the Bull of Heaven,^[48] an episode described in Tablet VI of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*.^{[47][49]}

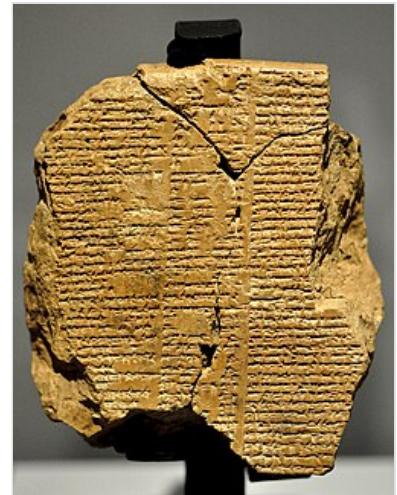
so impressed by his opponent's strength and tenacity that they become close friends.^[47] In the earlier Sumerian texts, Enkidu is Gilgamesh's servant,^[47] but, in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, they are companions of equal standing.^[47]

In tablets III through IV, Gilgamesh and Enkidu travel to the Cedar Forest, which is guarded by Humbaba (the Akkadian name for Huwawa).^[47] The heroes cross the seven mountains to the Cedar Forest, where they begin chopping down trees.^[53] Confronted by Humbaba, Gilgamesh panics and prays to Shamash (the East Semitic name for Utu),^[53] who blows eight winds in Humbaba's eyes, blinding him.^[53] Humbaba begs for mercy, but the heroes decapitate him.^[53] Tablet VI begins with Gilgamesh returning to Uruk,^[47] where Ishtar (the Akkadian name for Inanna) comes to him and demands him as her consort.^{[47][53][54]} Gilgamesh rejects her, reproaching her mistreatment of all her former lovers.^{[47][53][54]}

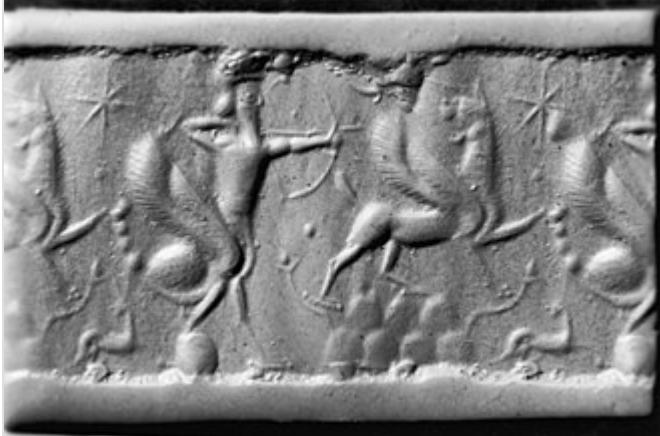
In revenge, Ishtar goes to her father Anu and demands that he give her the Bull of Heaven,^{[55][56][44]} which she sends to attack Gilgamesh.^{[47][55][56][44]} Gilgamesh and Enkidu kill the Bull and offer its heart to Shamash.^{[57][56]} While Gilgamesh and Enkidu are resting, Ishtar stands up on the walls of Uruk and curses Gilgamesh.^{[57][58]} Enkidu tears off the Bull's right thigh and throws it in Ishtar's face,^{[57][58]} saying, "If I could lay my hands on you, it is this I should do to you, and lash your entrails to your side."^{[59][58]} Ishtar calls together "the crimped courtesans, prostitutes and harlots"^[57] and orders them to mourn for the Bull of Heaven.^{[57][58]} Meanwhile, Gilgamesh holds a celebration over the Bull's defeat.^{[60][58]}

Tablet VII begins with Enkidu recounting a dream in which he saw Anu, Ea, and Shamash declare that either Gilgamesh or Enkidu must die to avenge the Bull of Heaven.^[47] They choose Enkidu, who soon grows sick.^[47] He has a dream of the Underworld, and then dies.^[47] Tablet VIII describes Gilgamesh's inconsolable grief for his friend^{[47][61]} and the details of Enkidu's funeral.^[47] Tablets IX through XI relate how Gilgamesh, driven by grief and fear of his own mortality, travels a great distance and overcomes many obstacles to find the home of Utnapishtim, the sole survivor of the Great Flood, who was rewarded with immortality by the gods.^{[47][61]}

The journey to Utnapishtim involves a series of episodic challenges, which probably originated as major independent adventures,^[61] but, in the epic, they are reduced to what Joseph Eddy Fontenrose calls "fairly harmless incidents".^[61] First, Gilgamesh encounters and slays lions in the mountain pass.^[61] Upon reaching the mountain of Mashu, Gilgamesh encounters a scorpion man and his wife;^[61] their bodies flash with terrifying radiance,^[61] but once Gilgamesh tells them his purpose, they allow him to pass.^[61] Gilgamesh wanders through darkness for twelve days before he finally comes into the light.^[61] He finds a beautiful garden by the sea in which he meets Siduri, the divine Alewife.^[61] At first, she tries to prevent Gilgamesh from entering the garden,^[61] and then attempts to persuade him to accept death as inevitable and not journey beyond the waters.^[61] When Gilgamesh persists in his quest, she directs him to Urshanabi, the ferryman of the gods, who takes Gilgamesh across the sea to Utnapishtim.^[61] When Gilgamesh finally arrives at Utnapishtim's home, Utnapishtim tells Gilgamesh that, to become immortal, he must defy sleep.^[47] Gilgamesh attempts this, but fails and falls into a seven-day sleep.^[47]



Tablet V of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. The Sulaymaniyah Museum, Iraq



Early Middle Assyrian cylinder seal impression dating between 1400 and 1200 BC, showing a man with bird wings and a scorpion tail firing an arrow at a giffin on a hillock. A scorpion man is among the creatures Gilgamesh encounters on his journey to the homeland of Utnapishtim.^[61]

and Gilgamesh is kind to Ishtar, despite the violent rivalry between them in Tablet VI.^[62] Also, while most of the parts of the epic are free adaptations of their respective Sumerian predecessors,^[63] Tablet XII is a literal, word-for-word translation of the last part of *Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld*,^[63] and was probably relegated to the end because it did not fit the larger epic narrative.^{[47][32][62]} In it, Gilgamesh sees a vision of Enkidu's ghost, who promises to recover the lost items^{[47][37]} and describes to his friend the abysmal condition of the Underworld.^{[47][37]}

In Mesopotamian art

Although stories about Gilgamesh were wildly popular throughout ancient Mesopotamia,^[64] authentic representations of him in ancient art are uncommon.^[64] Popular works often identify depictions of a hero with long hair, containing four or six curls, as representations of Gilgamesh,^[64] but this identification is known to be incorrect.^[64] A few genuine ancient Mesopotamian representations of Gilgamesh do exist, however.^[64] These representations are mostly found on clay plaques and cylinder seals.^[64] Generally, it is only possible to identify a figure as Gilgamesh if the work clearly depicts a scene from the *Epic of Gilgamesh* itself.^[64] One set of representations of Gilgamesh is found in scenes of two heroes fighting a demonic giant, clearly Humbaba.^[64] Another set is found in scenes showing a similar pair of heroes confronting a giant winged bull, clearly the Bull of Heaven.^[64]

Next, Utnapishtim tells him that, even if he cannot obtain immortality, he can restore his youth with a rejuvenating herb.^{[47][32]} Gilgamesh takes the plant, but leaves it on the shore while swimming and a snake steals it, explaining why snakes shed their skins.^{[47][32]} Despondent at this loss, Gilgamesh returns to Uruk,^[47] and shows his city to the ferryman Urshanabi.^[47] At this point the continuous narrative ends.^{[47][32][62]} Tablet XII is an appendix corresponding to the Sumerian poem of *Gilgamesh, Enkidu and the Netherworld* describing the loss of the *pikku* and *mikku*.^{[47][32][62]}

Numerous elements reveal a lack of continuity with the earlier portions of the epic.^[62] At the beginning of Tablet XII, Enkidu is still alive, despite having previously died in Tablet VII,^[62]



The Gilgamesh Dream tablet. From Iraq. Middle Babylonian Period, First Sealand Dynasty, 1732–1460 BC. Iraq Museum, Baghdad. This dream tablet recounts a part of the epic of Gilgamesh in which the hero (Gilgamesh) describes his dreams to his mother (the goddess Ninsun), who interprets them as announcing the arrival of a new friend, who will become his companion

Later influence

In antiquity

The *Epic of Gilgamesh* exerted substantial influence on the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the Homeric epic poems written in ancient Greek during the eighth century BC.^{[68][65][69][70]} According to classics scholar Barry B. Powell, early Greeks were probably exposed to and influenced by Mesopotamian oral traditions through their extensive connections to the civilizations of the ancient Near East.^[20] German classicist Walter Burkert observes that the scene in Tablet VI of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* in which Gilgamesh rejects Ishtar's advances and she complains before her mother Antu, but is mildly rebuked by her father Anu, is directly paralleled in Book V of the *Iliad*.^[71] In this scene, Aphrodite, the Greek analogue of Ishtar, is wounded by the hero Diomedes and flees to Mount Olympus, where she cries to her mother Dione and is mildly rebuked by her father Zeus.^[71]

Powell observes that the opening lines of the *Odyssey* seem to echo the opening lines of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, both praising and pitying their heroes.^[51] The storyline of the *Odyssey* likewise bears many similarities to the *Epic of Gilgamesh*.^{[72][73]} Both Gilgamesh and Odysseus encounter a woman who can turn men into animals: Ishtar (for Gilgamesh) and Circe (for Odysseus).^[72] Odysseus blinds the giant cyclops Polyphemus,^[65] while Gilgamesh slays of Humbaba.^[65] Both heroes visit the Underworld^[72] and both find themselves unhappy while living in an otherworldly paradise in the company of a seductive sorceress: Siduri (for Gilgamesh) and Calypso (for Odysseus).^[72] Finally, both have a missed opportunity for immortality, Gilgamesh when he loses the plant, and Odysseus when he leaves Calypso's island.^[72]

In the Qumran scroll the *Book of Giants* (c. 100 BC) the names of Gilgamesh and Humbaba appear as two of the antediluvian giants,^{[74][75]} rendered (in consonantal form) as *glgmš* and *hwbbys*. This same text was later



The episode involving Odysseus's confrontation with Polyphemus in the *Odyssey*, shown in this seventeenth-century painting by Guido Reni, bears similarities to Gilgamesh and Enkidu's battle with Humbaba in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*.^[65]



Indus valley civilization seal, with the Master of Animals motif of a man fighting two lions or tigers (2500–1500 BC), similar to the Sumerian "Gilgamesh" motif, an indicator of Indus-Mesopotamia relations.^{[66][67]}

used in the Middle East by the Manichaean sects, and the Arabic form *Gilgamish/Jiljamish* survives as the name of a demon according to the Egyptian cleric Al-Suyuti (c. 1500).^[74]

The story of Gilgamesh's birth is not recorded in any extant Sumerian or Akkadian text,^[64] but a version of it is described in *De Natura Animalium* (*On the Nature of Animals*) 12.21, a commonplace book written in Greek around 200 AD by the Hellenized Roman orator Aelian.^{[76][64]} According to Aelian, an oracle told King Seuechoros (Σευεχορος) of the Babylonians that his grandson Gilgamos would overthrow him.^[64] To prevent this, Seuechoros kept his only daughter under close guard at the Acropolis of Babylon,^[64] but she became pregnant nonetheless.^[64] Fearing the king's wrath, the guards hurled the infant off the top of a tall tower.^[64] An eagle rescued the boy in mid-flight and set him down in a distant orchard.^[64] The caretaker found the boy and raised him, naming him *Gilgamos* (Γίλγαμος).^[64] Eventually, Gilgamos returned to Babylon and overthrew his grandfather, proclaiming himself king.^[64] This birth narrative is in the same tradition as other Near Eastern birth legends,^[64] such as those of Sargon, Moses, and Cyrus.^[64] The Syriac writer Theodore Bar Konai (c. AD 600) also mentions a king *Gligmos*, *Gmigmos* or *Gamigos* as the last of a line of twelve kings contemporaneous with the patriarchs from Peleg to Abraham.^{[77][78]}

Modern rediscovery



In 1880, the English Assyriologist George Smith (left) published a translation of Tablet XI of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (right), containing the Flood myth,^[79] which attracted immediate scholarly attention and controversy due to its similarity to the Genesis flood narrative.^[80]

The Akkadian text of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* was first discovered in 1849 AD by the English archaeologist Austen Henry Layard in the Library of Ashurbanipal at Nineveh.^{[22][50][28]:95} Layard was seeking evidence to confirm the historicity of the events described in the Hebrew Bible, i.e. the Christian Old Testament,^[22] which was believed to contain the oldest texts in the world.^[22] Instead, his and later excavations unearthed much older Mesopotamian texts^[22] and showed that many of the stories in the Old Testament may be derived from earlier myths told throughout the ancient Near East.^[22] The first translation of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* was produced in the early 1870s by George Smith, a scholar at the British Museum,^{[79][81][82]} who published the Flood story from Tablet XI in 1880 under the title *The Chaldean Account of Genesis*.^[79] Gilgamesh's name was originally misread as *Izdubar*.^{[79][83][84]}

Early interest in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* was almost exclusively on account of the flood story from Tablet XI.^[85] It attracted enormous public attention and drew widespread scholarly controversy, while the rest of the epic was largely ignored.^[85] Most attention towards the *Epic of Gilgamesh* in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries came from German-speaking countries,^[86] where controversy raged over the relationship between *Babel und Bibel* ("Babylon and Bible").^[87]

In January 1902, the German Assyriologist Friedrich Delitzsch gave a lecture at the Sing-Akademie zu Berlin before the Kaiser and his wife, in which he argued that the Flood story in the Book of Genesis was directly copied from the *Epic of Gilgamesh*.^[85] Delitzsch's lecture was so controversial that, by September 1903, he had managed to collect thousands of articles and pamphlets criticizing this lecture about the Flood and another about the relationship between the Code of Hammurabi and the biblical Law of Moses.^[88] The Kaiser distanced himself from Delitzsch and his radical views^[88] and by the fall of 1904, Delitzsch was reduced to giving his third lecture in Cologne and Frankfurt am Main rather than in Berlin.^[88] The putative relationship between the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and the Hebrew Bible later became a major part of Delitzsch's argument in his 1920–21 book *Die große Täuschung (The Great Deception)* that the Hebrew Bible was irredeemably "contaminated" by Babylonian influence^[85] and that only by eliminating the human Old Testament entirely could Christians finally believe in the true, Aryan message of the New Testament.^[85]

Early modern interpretations

The first modern literary adaptation of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* was *Ishtar and Izdubar* (1884) by Leonidas Le Cenci Hamilton, an American lawyer and businessman.^[89] Hamilton had rudimentary knowledge of Akkadian, which he had learned from Archibald Sayce's 1872 *Assyrian Grammar for Comparative Purposes*.^[90] Hamilton's book relied heavily on Smith's translation of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*,^[90] but also made major changes.^[90] For instance, Hamilton omitted the famous flood story entirely^[90] and instead focused on the romantic relationship between Ishtar and Gilgamesh.^[90] *Ishtar and Izdubar* expanded the original roughly 3,000 lines of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* to roughly 6,000 lines of rhyming couplets grouped into forty-eight cantos.^[90] Hamilton significantly altered most of the characters and introduced entirely new episodes not found in the original epic.^[90] Significantly influenced by Edward FitzGerald's *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* and Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia*,^[90] Hamilton's characters dress more like nineteenth-century Turks than ancient Babylonians.^[91] Hamilton also changed the tone of the epic from the "grim realism" and "ironic tragedy" of the original to a "cheery optimism" filled with "the sweet strains of love and harmony".^[92]

In his 1904 book *Das Alte Testament im Lichte des alten Orients*, the German Assyriologist Alfred Jeremias equated Gilgamesh with the king Nimrod from the Book of Genesis^[93] and argued Gilgamesh's strength must come from his hair, like the hero Samson in the Book of Judges,^[93] and that he must have performed Twelve Labors like the hero Heracles in Greek mythology.^[93] In his 1906 book *Das Gilgamesch-Epos in der Weltliteratur*, the Orientalist Peter Jensen declared that the *Epic of Gilgamesh* was the source behind nearly all the stories in the Old Testament,^[93] arguing that Moses is "the Gilgamesh of Exodus who saves the children of Israel from precisely the same situation faced by the inhabitants of Erech at the beginning of the Babylonian epic."^[93] He then proceeded to argue that Abraham, Isaac, Samson, David, and various other biblical figures are all nothing more than exact copies of Gilgamesh.^[93] Finally, he declared that even Jesus is "nothing but an Israelite Gilgamesh. Nothing but an adjunct to Abraham, Moses, and countless other figures in the saga."^[93] This ideology became known as Panbabylonianism^[94] and was almost immediately rejected by mainstream scholars.^[94] The most



IZDUBAR TAKING LEAVE OF SÂBITÛ AND SÎDÛRÎ IN THE HAPPY HALLS.

Illustration of Izdubar (Gilgamesh) in a scene from the book-length poem *Ishtar and Izdubar* (1884) by Leonidas Le Cenci Hamilton, the first modern literary adaptation of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*^[89]

frequently discusses Gilgamesh in his early work *Symbole der Wandlung* (1911–1912).^[100] He, for instance, cites Ishtar's sexual attraction to Gilgamesh as an example of the mother's incestuous desire for her son,^[100] Humbaba as an example of an oppressive father-figure whom Gilgamesh must overcome,^[100] and Gilgamesh himself as an example of a man who forgets his dependence on the unconscious and is punished by the "gods", who represent it.^[100]

Modern interpretations and cultural significance

In the years following World War II, Gilgamesh, formerly an obscure figure known only by a few scholars, gradually became increasingly popular with modern audiences.^{[101][82]} The *Epic of Gilgamesh*'s existential themes made it particularly appealing to German authors in the years following the war.^[82] In his 1947 existentialist novel *Die Stadt hinter dem Strom*, the German novelist Hermann Kasack adapted elements of the epic into a metaphor for the aftermath of the destruction of World War II in Germany,^[82] portraying the bombed-out city of Hamburg as resembling the frightening Underworld seen by Enkidu in his dream.^[82] In Hans Henny Jahnn's magnum opus *River Without Shores* (1949–1950), the middle section of the trilogy centers around a composer whose twenty-year-long homoerotic relationship with a friend mirrors that of Gilgamesh with Enkidu^[82] and whose masterpiece turns out to be a symphony about Gilgamesh.^[82]

stalwart critics of Panbabylonianism were those associated with the emerging *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*.^[95] Hermann Gunkel dismissed most of Jensen's purported parallels between Gilgamesh and biblical figures as mere baseless sensationalism.^[95] He concluded that Jensen and other Assyriologists like him had failed to understand the complexities of Old Testament scholarship^[94] and had confused scholars with "conspicuous mistakes and remarkable aberrations".^[94]

In English-speaking countries, the prevailing scholarly interpretation during the early twentieth century was one originally proposed by Sir Henry Rawlinson, 1st Baronet,^[96] which held that Gilgamesh is a "solar hero", whose actions represent the movements of the sun,^[96] and that the twelve tablets of his epic represent the twelve signs of the Babylonian zodiac.^[96] The Austrian psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, drawing on the theories of James George Frazer and Paul Ehrenreich, interpreted Gilgamesh and Eabani (the earlier misreading for Enkidu) as representing "man" and "crude sensuality" respectively.^{[97][98]} He compared them to other brother-figures in world mythology,^[98] remarking, "One is always weaker than the other and dies sooner. In Gilgamesh this ages-old motif of the unequal pair of brothers served to represent the relationship between a man and his libido."^[98] He also saw Enkidu as representing the placenta, the "weaker twin" who dies shortly after birth.^[99] Freud's friend and pupil Carl Jung



Existential angst during the aftermath of World War II significantly contributed to Gilgamesh's rise in popularity in the middle of the twentieth century.^[82] For instance, the German novelist Hermann Kasack used Enkidu's vision of the Underworld from the *Epic of Gilgamesh* as a metaphor for the bombed-out city of Hamburg (pictured above) in his 1947 novel *Die Stadt hinter dem Strom*.^[82]

environmentalist lens,^[82] with Enkidu's death symbolizing man's separation from nature.^[82]

Theodore Ziolkowski, a scholar of modern literature, states, that "unlike most other figures from myth, literature, and history, Gilgamesh has established himself as an autonomous entity or simply a name, often independent of the epic context in which he originally became known. (As analogous examples one might think, for instance, of the Minotaur or Frankenstein's monster.)"^[103] The *Epic of Gilgamesh* has been translated into many major world languages^[104] and has become a staple of American world literature classes.^[105] Many contemporary authors and novelists have drawn inspiration from it, including an American avant-garde theater collective called "The Gilgamesh Group"^[106] and Joan London in her novel *Gilgamesh* (2001).^{[106][82]} *The Great American Novel* (1973) by Philip Roth features a character named "Gil Gamesh",^[106] who is the star pitcher of a fictional 1930s baseball team called the "Patriot League".^[106]

Starting in the late twentieth century, the *Epic of Gilgamesh* began to be read again in Iraq.^[104] Saddam Hussein, the former President of Iraq, had a lifelong fascination with Gilgamesh.^[107] Saddam's first novel *Zabibah and the King* (2000) is an allegory for the Gulf War set in ancient Assyria that blends elements of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and the *One Thousand and One Nights*.^[108] Like Gilgamesh, the king at the beginning of the novel is a brutal tyrant who misuses his power and oppresses his people,^[109] but, through the aid of a commoner woman named Zabibah, he grows into a more just ruler.^[110] When the United States tried to pressure Saddam to step down in February 2003, Saddam gave a speech to a group of his generals posing the idea in a positive light by comparing himself to the epic hero.^[104]

Scholars like Susan Ackerman and Wayne R. Dynes have noted that the language used to describe Gilgamesh's relationship with Enkidu seems to have homoerotic implications.^{[111][112][113]} Ackerman notes that, when Gilgamesh veils Enkidu's body, Enkidu is compared to a "bride".^[111] Ackerman states,

The Quest of Gilgamesh, a 1953 radio play by Douglas Geoffrey Bridson, helped popularize the epic in Britain.^[82] In the United States, Charles Olson praised the epic in his poems and essays^[82] and Gregory Corso believed that it contained ancient virtues capable of curing what he viewed as modern moral degeneracy.^[82] The 1966 postfigurative novel *Gilgamesch* by Guido Bachmann became a classic of German "queer literature"^[82] and set a decades-long international literary trend of portraying Gilgamesh and Enkidu as homosexual lovers.^[82] This trend proved so popular that the *Epic of Gilgamesh* itself is included in *The Columbia Anthology of Gay Literature* (1998) as a major early work of that genre.^[82] In the 1970s and 1980s, feminist literary critics analyzed the *Epic of Gilgamesh* as showing evidence for a transition from the original matriarchy of all humanity to modern patriarchy.^[82] As the Green Movement expanded in Europe, Gilgamesh's story began to be seen through an environmentalist lens,^[82] with Enkidu's death symbolizing man's separation from nature.^[82]

"that Gilgamesh, according to both versions, will love Enkidu 'like a wife' may further imply sexual intercourse."^[111]

In 2000, a modern statue of Gilgamesh by the Assyrian sculptor Lewis Batros was unveiled at the University of Sydney in Australia.^[102]

The Australian psychedelic rock band King Gizzard & the Lizard Wizard recorded a song titled "Gilgamesh" as the fifth track of their October 2023 album The Silver Cord, with references to the epic in the song's lyrics.^[114]



A modern statue of Gilgamesh stands at the University of Sydney.^[102]

See also

- Atra-Hasis
- Ziusudra
- Enūma Eliš

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Informational notes

- a. The name translates roughly as "The Ancestor is a Young-man",^[10] from *Bil.ga* "Ancestor", Elder^{[11]:33} and *Mes/Mesh3* "Young-Man".^{[11]:174} See also *The Electronic Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary* (<https://web.archive.org/web/20180924044239/http://psd.museum.upenn.edu/epsd1/nepsd-frame.html>). University of Pennsylvania. Archived from the original (<http://psd.museum.upenn.edu/epsd1/nepsd-frame.html>) on 24 September 2018. Retrieved 7 August 2014..

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Lugalbanda

Lugalbanda^[a] was a deified Sumerian king of Uruk who, according to various sources of Mesopotamian literature, was the father of Gilgamesh. Early sources mention his consort Ninsun and his heroic deeds in an expedition to Aratta by King Enmerkar.

Lugalbanda is listed in the *Sumerian King List* as the second king of Uruk, saying he ruled for 1,200 years, and providing him with the epithet of *the Shepherd*.^[3] Lugalbanda's historicity is uncertain among scholars. Attempts to date him in the ED II period are based on an amalgamation of data from the epic traditions of the 2nd millennium with unclear archaeological observations.^[4]

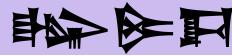
Mythology

Lugalbanda appears in Sumerian literary sources as early as the mid-3rd millennium, as attested by the incomplete mythological text *Lugalbanda and Ninsuna*, found in Abu Salabikh, that describes a romantic relationship between Lugalbanda and Ninsun.^[5] In the earliest god-lists from Fara, his name appears separate and in a much lower ranking than the goddess; however, in later traditions until the Seleucid period, his name is often listed along with his consort Ninsun.^[6]

There's evidence suggesting the worship of Lugalbanda as a deity originating from the Ur III period, as attested in tablets from Nippur, Ur, Umma and Puzrish-Dagan.^[7] In the Old Babylonian period Sin-kashid of Uruk is known to have built a temple called É-KI.KAL dedicated to Lugalbanda and Ninsun, and to have assigned his daughter Niši-īnī-šu as the *eresh-dingir* priestess of Lugalbanda.^[8]

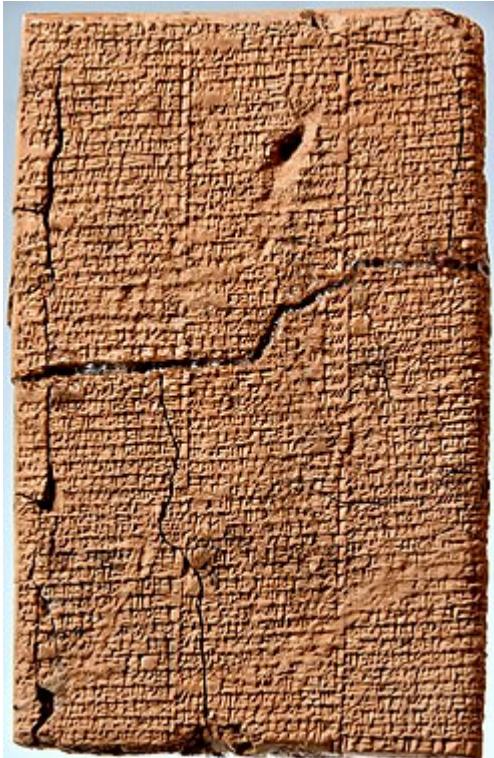
At the same time, Lugalbanda would prominently feature as the hero of two Sumerian stories dated to the Third Dynasty of Ur, called by scholars *Lugalbanda I (Lugalbanda in the Mountain Cave)* and *Lugalbanda II (Lugalbanda and the Anzu Bird)*. Both are known only in later versions, although there is an Ur III fragment that is quite different from either 18th century version^[9]

Lugalbanda



King of Uruk

Ruler of Sumer



The story of Lugalbanda in the Mountain Cave, Old-Babylonian period, from southern Iraq. Sulaymaniyah Museum, Iraqi Kurdistan.

King of the First dynasty of Uruk

Reign	c. 3400–3100 BC (<i>Late Uruk Period</i>)
Predecessor	Enmerkar
Successor	Dumuzid, the Fisherman
Dynasty	Uruk I

Lugalbanda in the Mountain Cave^[8]

Lugalbanda and the Anzu Bird^[9]

These tales are part of a series of stories that describe the conflicts between Enmerkar, king of Uruk, and Ensuhkeshdanna, lord of Aratta, presumably in the Iranian highlands. In these two stories, Lugalbanda is a soldier in the army of Enmerkar, whose name also appears in the *Sumerian King List* as the first king of Uruk and predecessor of Lugalbanda. The extant fragments make no reference to Lugalbanda's succession as king following Enmerkar.^[10]

In royal hymns of the Ur III period, Ur-Nammu of Ur and his son Shulgi describe Lugalbanda and Ninsun as their holy parents, and in the same context call themselves the brother of Gilgamesh.^[11] Sin-Kashid of Uruk also refers to Lugalbanda and Ninsun as his divine parents, and names Lugalbanda as his god.^[12]

In the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and in earlier Sumerian stories about the hero, Gilgamesh calls himself the son of Lugalbanda and Ninsun. In the *Gilgamesh and Huwawa* poem, the king consistently uses the assertive phrase: "By the life of my own mother Ninsun and of my father, holy Lugalbanda!".^{[13][14]} In Akkadian versions of the epic, Gilgamesh also refers to Lugalbanda as his personal god, and in one episode presents the oil filled horns of the defeated Bull of Heaven "for the anointing of his god Lugalbanda".^[15]

See also



- [History of Sumer](#)
- [Mesopotamian mythology](#)

Notes

- a. Sumerian: 𒆷𒁔𒀭, romanized: *lugal-banda₃^{da}*, Meaning "young/fierce king" in Sumerian.^{[1][2]}

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6. Exceptions exist. For a full summary of the god-list references refer to *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* 7, p. 118.
7. *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* 7, pp. 119–120. Nippur tablets indicate that all Ur III kings have made offerings to the deity Lugalbanda
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15. George, p. 629.

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External links

- ETCSDL - Texts and translations of Lugalbanda legends (http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcs.cgi?text=c.1.8.2*#) (alternate site (<https://web.archive.org/web/20080517150822/http://www-etcsl.orient.ox.ac.uk/catalogue/catalogue1.htm#lugalbanda>))
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Ziusudra

Ziusudra (Old Babylonian Akkadian:), romanized: *Síusudrá* [ši₂-u₄-sud-ra₂], Neo-Assyrian Akkadian: , romanized: *Síssudda*,^[1] Ancient Greek: Ξίσουθρος, romanized: *Xíouthros*) of Shuruppak is listed in the WB-62 Sumerian King List recension as the last king of Sumer prior to the Great Flood. He is subsequently recorded as the hero of the Eridu Genesis and appears in the writings of Berossus as Xisuthros.

Ziusudra is one of several mythic characters who are protagonists of Near Eastern flood myths, including Atrahasis, Utnapishtim, and the biblical Noah. Although each story displays its own distinctive features, many key story elements are common to two, three, or all four versions.

Literary and archaeological evidence

King Ziusudra of Shuruppak

In the WB-62 Sumerian king list recension, Ziusudra, or Zin-Suddu of Shuruppak, is listed as son of the last king of Sumer before a great flood.^[2] He is recorded as having reigned as both king and *gudug* priest for ten *sars* (periods of 3,600 years),^[3] although this figure is probably a copyist error for ten years.^[4] In this version, Ziusudra inherited rulership from his father Ubara-Tutu,^[5] who ruled for ten *sars*.^[6]

The lines following the mention of Ziusudra read:

Then the flood swept over. After the flood had swept over, and the kingship had descended from heaven, the kingship was in Kish.^[7]

The city of Kish flourished in the Early Dynastic period soon after a river flood archaeologically attested by sedimentary strata at Shuruppak (modern Tell Fara), Uruk, Kish, and other sites, all of which have been radiocarbon dated to ca. 2900 BC.^[8] Polychrome pottery from the Jemdet Nasr period (ca. 30th century BC), which immediately preceded the Early Dynastic I period, was discovered directly below the Shuruppak flood stratum.^{[8][9]} Max Mallowan wrote that "we know from the Weld Blundell prism [i.e.

Ziusudra	
First appearance	<u>Sumerian King List</u> c. 2000 BC
In-universe information	
Occupation	<u>King</u> (c. 2900 BC)
Family	<u>Ubara-Tutu</u> (father)



Sumerian King List, 1800 BC, Larsa, Iraq

WB-62] that at the time of the Flood, Ziusudra, the Sumerian Noah, was King of the city of Shuruppak where he received warning of the impending disaster. His role as a saviour agrees with that assigned to his counterpart Utnapishtim in the Gilgamesh Epic. ... both epigraphical and archaeological discovery give good grounds for believing that Ziusudra was a prehistoric ruler of a well-known historic city the site of which has been identified."^[10]

That Ziusudra was a king from Shuruppak is supported by the Gilgamesh XI tablet, which makes reference to Utnapishtim (the Akkadian translation of the Sumerian name Ziusudra) with the epithet "man of Shuruppak" at line 23.^[11]

Sumerian flood myth

The tale of Ziusudra is known from a single fragmentary tablet written in Sumerian, datable by its script to the 17th century BC (Old Babylonian Empire), and published in 1914 by Arno Poebel.^[12] The first part deals with the creation of man and the animals and the founding of the first cities Eridu, Bad-tibira, Larak, Sippar, and Shuruppak. After a missing section in the tablet, we learn that the gods have decided to send a flood to destroy mankind. The god Enki (lord of the underworld sea of fresh water and Sumerian equivalent of Babylonian god Ea) warns Ziusudra, the ruler of Shuruppak, to build a large boat; the passage describing the directions for the boat is also lost. When the tablet resumes, it is describing the flood. A terrible storm raged for seven days, "the huge boat had been tossed about on the great waters," then Utu (Sun) appears and Ziusudra opens a window, prostrates himself, and sacrifices an ox and a sheep. After another break, the text resumes, the flood is apparently over, and Ziusudra is prostrating himself before An (Sky) and Enlil (Lordbreath), who give him "breath eternal" and take him to dwell in Dilmun. The remainder of the poem is lost.^[13]

The Epic of Ziusudra adds an element at lines 258–261 not found in other versions, that after the flood^[14] "king Ziusudra ... they caused to dwell in the KUR Dilmun, the place where the sun rises". The Sumerian word "KUR" is an ambiguous word. Samuel Noah Kramer states that "its primary meanings is 'mountain' is attested by the fact that the sign used for it is actually a pictograph representing a mountain. From the meaning 'mountain' developed that of 'foreign land', since the mountainous countries bordering Sumer were a constant menace to its people. Kur also came to mean 'land' in general".^[13] The last sentence can be translated as "In the mountain of crossing, the mountain of Dilmun, the place where the sun rises".^[13]

A Sumerian document known as the Instructions of Shuruppak dated by Kramer to about 2600 BC, refers in a later version to Ziusudra. Kramer stated "Ziusudra had become a venerable figure in literary tradition by the middle of the third millennium B.C."^[15]

Xisuthros

Xisuthros (Ξίσουθρος) is a Hellenization of the Sumerian Ziusudra, known from the writings of Berossus, a priest of Bel in Babylon, on whom Alexander Polyhistor relied heavily for information on Mesopotamia. Among the interesting features of this version of the flood myth, are the identification, through interpretatio graeca, of the Sumerian god Enki with the Greek god Cronus, the father of Zeus; and the assertion that the reed boat constructed by Xisuthros survived, at least until Berossus' day, in the "Corcyrean Mountains" of Armenia. Xisuthros was listed as a king, the son of one Ardatus, and to have

reigned 18 *saroi*. One *saros* (*shar* in Akkadian) stands for 3,600 and hence 18 *saroi* was translated as 64,800 years. A *saroi* or *saros* is an astrological term defined as 222 lunar months of 29.5 days or 18.5 lunar years equal to 17.93 solar years.

Other sources

Ziusudra is also mentioned in other ancient literature, including *The Death of Gilgamesh*^[16] and *The Poem of Early Rulers*,^[17] and a late version of *The Instructions of Shuruppak*.^[18]

See also

- [History of Sumer](#)

Notes

1. [Oracc](#).
2. [Jacobsen 1939](#), pp. 75 and 76, footnotes 32 and 34.
3. [Langdon 1923](#), pp. 251–259.
4. [Best 1999](#), pp. 118–119.
5. [Tablet XI, line 23](#).
6. [Langdon 1923](#), p. 258, note 5.
7. [ETCSL: Sumerian king list n.d.](#)
8. [Crawford 1991](#), p. 19.
9. [Schmidt 1931](#), pp. 193–217.
10. [Mallowan 1964](#), pp. 62–82.
11. [Tablet XI, line 23](#), p. 110.
12. [Lambert & Millard 1999](#), p. 138.
13. [Kramer 1961](#).
14. [Lambert & Millard 1999](#), p. 97.
15. [Kramer 1967](#), p. 16, col.2.
16. [ETCSL: t.1.8.1.3](#).
17. [ETCSL: t.5.2.5](#).
18. [ETCSL: t.5.6.1](#).

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External links

- A comparison of equivalent lines in six ancient versions of the flood story (<https://web.archive.org/web/20060829004437/http://www.noahs-ark-flood.com/parallels.htm>)
 - Ancient Near East flood myths (<https://www.livius.org/articles/misc/great-flood>) All texts: (Eridu Genesis (<https://www.livius.org/articles/misc/great-flood/flood2-t>), Atrahasis (https://www.livius.org/articles/misc/great-flood/flood3_t-arahasis), Gilgamesh (https://www.livius.org/articles/misc/great-flood/flood3_t-gilgamesh), Bible (https://www.livius.org/articles/misc/great-flood/flood1-t-bible_1), Berossus (https://www.livius.org/articles/misc/great-flood/flood3_t-berossus), Greece (https://www.livius.org/articles/misc/great-flood/flood4_t-ovid), Quran (<https://www.livius.org/articles/misc/great-flood/flood1-t-quran>)), commentary, and a table with parallels (<https://www.livius.org/articles/misc/great-flood/flood6-parallels>)
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